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1. UNDERSTANDING DETERMINANTS OF MILITARY CONFLICT IN EAST ASIAN AUTHORITARIAN REGIMES

1.1 Introduction

One of the most interesting and important aspects of governments is the way that they resolve conflict with others —whether with violence, or with diplomacy. However, the hallmark of all authoritarian regimes—be they military juntas, single party states, or personalist dictatorships—is violence (Weeks 2012, 326). That violence, committed against their own people or against their neighbors, has resulted in several studies analyzing the tendencies of each variant, charting their willingness to engage in both internal violence and external conflict, and speculating what additional determinants of those choices are. **In East Asia—a region densely packed with authoritarian regimes, where history is often cherry-picked and institutionalized to feed the changing needs of those regimes—does this changing collective memory serve as a determinant of authoritarian regimes’ preferences for direct military conflict?**

Many studies have, by their realist nature, largely disregarded ideas and identity as immaterial to the behavior of regimes, favoring concepts such as regime type and elite organization as determinants of their conflict behavior . These forms of analysis leave out a key component necessary to understand preference formation and, while providing general caricatures of behavior, do so at the cost of in-depth understanding regarding specific cases. In order to support the future inclusion of sociological determinants in theories of regime behavior, this experimental study will deploy a two-part framework designed to first elucidate the existence of various forms of collective memory, then determine whether that collective memory plausibly behaved as a determinant of the conflict preferences of two key East Asian regimes: Imperial Japan during the Showa Era and China under the leadership of Xi Jinping.

1.2 Relevance of Research

Today, understanding the conflict tendencies of authoritarian regimes is as important as it was 30 years ago at the fall of the Soviet Union. In the mid-1990s during the Taiwan Strait crisis the US government and Western academics feared the possibility of an invasion, or several invasions of nations in the region—conflicts that could erupt into a larger region-

wide conflict (Fravel 2005, 46). While some academics and Western Democratic governments believed, based on the Democratization Theory common at the time, that authoritarian regimes would slowly transition to democracies over time and exposure to capitalist markets—today, the majority of the world lives under non-democratic systems and East Asia is governed almost exclusively by non-democratic regimes (Przeworski and Limongi 1997, 156). In a well-recorded phenomenon, Democracies are more likely to pursue peaceful settlement of territorial disputes through negotiation—a fact which is made concerning by the accompanying statistic: two-thirds of territorial disputes are between non-democracies (Fravel 2005, 48-49). It is from this concerning reality that authoritarian regime typology theory, and later authoritarian conflict theories were generated in an attempt to understand how regime transition occurs, what the likelihood of democratic transition is, and which of those regimes are the greatest threat to their neighbors. This information was particularly important to Western democracies who hoped to engage with countries like China and Russia economically and bring them into political alignment. However, decades later after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the tension between democracies and regimes like China and Russia are instead growing—governments are scrambling to predict if China will follow the Russian example and invade (Park 2023, 172). This pressure is particularly salient in East Asia where the security arrangements between democracies are less concrete than their European counterparts and NATO—a fact which is putting considerable pressure on governments to strengthen their ties and address historical animosities in order to bolster their inadequate organization and prevent worst-case-scenario outcomes should conflict arise (Park 2023, 173-174).

Previous empirical studies of authoritarian regimes, conducted by Barbara Geddes and Jessica Weeks, have provided concrete generalized understanding of these regimes backed up by large-N studies of regimes and their behavior over time in attempts to provide answers to these questions and to shed light on various regime types' behaviors (Geddes 1999; Weeks 2012). These studies resulted in categorization of several core regime types by their elite relationships, each assigned a generalized behavioral trait regarding military conflict and spending. However, these generalizations can only help to explain so much about regimes. While attempting to understand authoritarian regimes' military expenditure tendencies, conflict preferences, and repressive tendencies is well trodden territory by academics, these studies have focused on a select few core determinants of authoritarian

regimes' behavior, resulting in a system of behavior prediction that is by no means a perfect science.

Guided by previous researchers efforts, I previously explored whether a hybrid regime between personalist and party—China—would behave as an amalgam of the two as defined in Barbara Geddes and Jessica Weeks' typology, or if its behavior would be unique when compared to static regime types in their systems. I conducted a small analysis of Chinese military expenditure and conflict engagement over time using data from the SIPRI military expenditure database in an attempt to answer the question: does transition from one type of authoritarian system to another result in an amalgamation of regime characteristics or do hybrid regimes represent a different type of authoritarianism altogether. Based off my research on China and the relationship between regime type, military expenditure, and engagement in external conflict, I found that existing models were incongruent with the China's actions and expenditure data¹. In my analysis of SIPRI and the US Department of Arms Control and Disarmament military expenditure estimates, China's expenditure data was—and is—in contention with previous studies of military expenditure (Bove and Brauner 2016). Existing models were created before the transition of the CCP from single party to a more personalist regime during Xi's ascension in 2012, but even then, could not explain the fluctuations in China's earlier military actions under Mao or during the party rule 'liberalization' period. Based on the evidence available from SIPRI and the US State Department, the CCP was making its military expenditure budget and making its conflict engagement strategies differently than the existing regime change literature would predict—both in the period of party rule and of personalist rule (Sun and Yu 1999, 32). It appears, based on the best data available, that China's expenditure is growing proportionally to both its GDP and GNP and had, contrary to previous literature, decreased in spending between the personalist and party periods (Sun and Yu 1999, 32). This expenditure grew well within ranges expected of any emerging nation—mirroring the economic development within the country rather than reflecting a military aspiration of the government (Furuoka, Oishi, and Karim 2016, 155). In addition to inconsistency relating to military expenditure, military conflict data was also inconsistent. The research revealed that while under its first personalist period, China did have many border disputes with its neighbors yet resolved the vast majority

¹ Kyle Cote-Houghton 2022. *The Effect of Authoritarian Transition on Authoritarian Regimes' Military Conflicts* [Unpublished Manuscript].

of them through diplomacy (Fravel 2005, 46). Additionally, some of China's greatest aggressive acts took place after the death of Mao—namely, the full scale invasion of Vietnam in 1979 and subsequent border skirmishes into the 80's. This analysis showed that regime type, while a strong determinant of behavior, was not the key to explaining the various authoritarian regimes' behavior.

Some academics have already begun researching into alternative determinants which impact political phenomena—Jessica Weeks herself hints at this at the end of her analysis of authoritarian regimes' conflict behavior by saying,

“my argument suggests that the background experiences of domestic audiences matter by shaping views about the use of force. This approach of blending measurable features of institutions with more sociological or constructivist insights about the sources of foreign policy preferences suggests productive lines of future research... Scholars of all theoretical orientations would do well to understand what shapes the worldviews and therefore preferences of influential actors in both democratic and authoritarian regimes” (Weeks 2012, 343).

Here, Weeks hints at the large body of literature considering the impact of determinants such as identity and ideas in forming the preferences of political actors. Collective memory, or historical memory studies has long been the umbrella study of identity formation, idea formation, and the intersection of identity with nation and history. Pioneered in the mid-20th century by historians and sociologists such as Maurice Halbwachs and methodologically codified by later academics like Zheng Wang, collective memory is the process of national identity building. A process by which the past is continually interpreted and reinterpreted to fit the needs of a group over time—both by elites and the common person (Wang 2012, 24). This reinterpretation can happen institutionally, as a tool of government. When institutionalized in this way, certain collective memory narratives can be driven by elites to reshape the way that the population frames—or understands—the material world around them and their place in it in order to achieve their political gains (Wang 2012, 24). This type of framing has the ability to impact the domestic audiences of regimes, the elites within it, and even the leaders of those states if reinforced for long enough. This is particularly salient as regimes like China seemingly remain stable and resilient for generations—allowing continual institutionalization of collective memory to impact the

identity of those in the regime and change the framing through which they view the world, their neighbors, and the political options at their disposal.

Collective memory has, however, been left out of academic considerations for lack of a concrete methodology through which to establish causality or impact. However, pioneering academics have, in the last 10 years, generated more effective frameworks in order to support the analysis new sociological historical determinants in political science research. These new frameworks are designed to elucidate the different forms of collective memory that exist within a society and then further break down the different avenues of its impact on society through predefined analytical criteria (Goldstein and Keohane 2019, 8-21). This framework addresses the impact of identity and collective memory on politics generally, but works particularly well in authoritarian regimes such as China where the types of polling data and large-N studies are impractical, impossible, or untrustworthy (Wang 2012, 19). This makes collective memory a natural focal point for future research into authoritarian regimes where the well-established empirical studies of regime formation and organization have failed to encompass all determinants underlying political decision making—particularly the decision to go to war. This new experimental methodology is necessary to better understand the determinants of conflict engagement in authoritarian regimes beyond the concrete realist understanding of preference and, as Jessica Weeks herself argues, into an in depth understanding of the socio-cultural aspects that determine preference for political actors and their audiences, and what determinants limit the framing of issues and therefore restrict preferences (Weeks 2012, 343).

With the South China Sea being one of many regional disputes across East Asia and the world more broadly, academics and governments alike must be aware of the collective identities of the countries involved in conflicts in order to better understand what forces govern their understanding of policy, of their available choices, and their understanding of their relations with the countries around them. Understanding the way that identity is constructed in authoritarian regimes can provide governments and academics with more context with which to understand authoritarian regimes behavior regarding disputes such as contested borders. Understanding the role of collective memory can provide a deeper understanding of how these determinants cause individual regimes to frame conflicts in the way that they do and help negotiators to create better strategies to avoid military conflicts—strategies that focus on the formation of each individual actors' preferences and the pressures put on them by their domestic audiences rather than their generalized behavior based around

understandings gleaned from studies of dozens of regimes over time. Beyond generating useful data, the purpose of applying these frameworks to East Asian authoritarian regimes is to lend credibility to collective memory as a determinant—providing a starting point for future research into the avenues and impacts of collective memory in specific cases.

2. EXISTING LITERATURE ON AUTHORITARIAN REGIMES AND INTERNATIONAL CONFLICT

2.1 Overview

This study has been directly influenced by a large body of literature, from key literature regarding regime typology, to key literature on collective memory, to literature which attempts to span the monumental gaps between the two and establish more common frameworks. This section depicts the various approaches of academics regarding regime typology and authoritarian conflict behavior—illustrating some of the major works, methods, and models. Additionally, this section traces the progress of the discipline towards the development of a union between empirical and sociological methods—some sources eschewing collective memory as a determinant and others focusing on various sociological phenomena exclusively. This serves both as the methodological roots of this study and the research design itself, but also provides a great deal of background information on various sources of data necessary to evidence this study into collective memory as a determinant of conflict behavior in authoritarian regimes.

2.2 Regime Typology

In the late 20th century, many scholars believed that economic development could eventually lead authoritarian regimes to transition to more democratic forms of government (Geddes 1999, 117). Perhaps hopeful after the fall of the Soviet Union, a new wave of scrutiny of the remaining authoritarian states ensued. Previous studies had treated authoritarian states as monoliths and this had led to the “theoretical intractability” of regimes more generally (Geddes 1999, 121). Thus, researchers concluded that before regimes could be evaluated for characteristics, they first had to be defined in a consistent framework. The

discussion began with researchers focused on creating a typology of regimes which could be used to better understand differences in behavior amongst authoritarian regimes. Regimes come in a myriad of different forms—each type characterized by unique structural characteristics which determine their domestic policy, international politics, and the likelihood of their continued survival or trajectory of their governmental transition (Geddes 1999, 121). One of the earliest, and certainly the most influential researchers to delineate these regime types and characteristics, was Barbara Geddes. Geddes carefully outlines the various types of regimes in her 1999 piece, *What Do We Know About Democratization After Twenty Years?* Here, she describes a core set of regime types—personalist, military, single-party, or amalgams of the core three (Geddes 1999, 121). To categorize regimes, Geddes defines them by the elites who control access to the political sphere—military officers, a single party, or a single leader (Geddes 1999, 121-122). In order to categorize these regimes empirically she devised a system of yes or no questions designed to elucidate whether certain structures related to each regime type existed. For personalists, the two metrics required were that the regime had experienced a struggle for power between several would-be leaders, after which one leader would prevail while maintaining support from the political system and limiting the influence of other political actors (Geddes 1999, 123). In the case of single party regimes and military juntas, Geddes established different metrics for their categorization. For single party regimes, they are defined by elections and competition—not unlike a democracy. This is allowed within the party and with opposition parties designed to evoke the appearance of democratic process (Geddes 1999, 124). For juntas on the other hand, a group of military elite must convene and choose a leader. However, what is perhaps most important to Geddes is that in both cases the political elite who elect or choose the leader maintain some form of political control over them—otherwise, the leader will likely fulfill the criteria for qualification as a personalist authoritarian (Geddes 1999, 124).

Revisiting the topic in a 2014 article, Geddes expanded upon her research—instead of focusing exclusively on democratic transition, including transition to other forms of authoritarianism to the equation. This change was spurred by the contemporary spat of revolutions during the Arab Spring and the subsequent non-democratic regime transitions. Geddes qualifies the inclusion of the metric by saying, “In the 75 years since World War II... more than half of regime breakdowns were transitions from one autocracy to another” (Geddes 2014, 313). It is through this piece that we know, based on the regimes studied, transition to another form of authoritarianism is far more commonplace than a transition to a

new democratic government (Geddes 2014, 316). This was, however, at a tipping point in the 2010's when transition to democracy finally became more common than in the past—a threat to liberalizing regimes such as China (Geddes 2014, 316-317). Still, though articulating that transition to a new authoritarian system is more common and showcasing the need for further research into the particulars of each regime type, Geddes does not continue and describe what that transition system looks like or discuss the behavior of hybrid regimes that may occur as a result of that transition. Additionally, due to her primary interest in regime transition, Geddes leaves out analysis of the static behavior of such regimes—particularly their conflict behavior—presenting and leaving unexplored, the idea that these regimes—particularly volatile personalist regimes—are the most willing to engage in conflict both abroad and domestically when threatened or pressured (Geddes 2014, 328).

2.3 Conflict Behavior of Authoritarian Regimes

Geddes, touched on a theme that was of equal interest to researchers—violence. Violence and authoritarian regimes often go hand and hand and what is regularly studied is their tendency towards internal violence and repression, however, understanding what drives regimes to engage in external conflict with neighboring states is of equal value. Because authoritarian states often exist clustered together in regions like East Asia, military conflict between authoritarian states represented a natural locus of expanding interest for academics. This is precisely where early scholarship on the subject of authoritarian conflict began.

Mark Peceny homed in on inter-authoritarian conflict in his small-scale analysis in 2004, *The Conflict Behavior of Authoritarian Regimes*. In his study of various regimes, Peceny found that personalist regimes are not only more likely to engage in direct military conflict with other authoritarian states but are also more likely to be confronted by other authoritarian states. Machines or single party states, on the other hand, are less likely to engage or be engaged in conflict by another authoritarian state (Peceny and Butler 2004, 579). Peceny attributes this to a variety of factors but argues that having a large, or small winning coalition or domestic audience is the main determinant impacting conflict engagement—large domestic audiences like in democracies or single-party states restrain the actions of the executive while personalist regimes with a narrow base of support are able to execute their will with impunity (Peceny and Butler 2004, 579). Peceny and Butler do suggest that further research is needed, particularly in the post-Cold War era—however, they

do not address other possible determinants of conflict and do not attempt to complicate the typology set out by Geddes by providing more nuanced analysis of regimes or their constituent elite.

Later research from Jessica Weeks, however, expands upon Peceny's work as well as the Geddes typology and addresses additional determinants that could impact military conflict—providing more nuance to the monolithic term “personalist regime.” In order to conduct her study of regimes, Weeks took all available authoritarian regimes between 1946 and 1999 and categorized them using an improved version of the Geddes typology—by degree of personalization and military leadership. Using this categorized data, she tracked the occurrences of conflict year by year to assess which regimes were more or less likely to engage in conflict (Weeks 2012, 337-338). However, Weeks' analysis featured unique features which differentiated it from previous attempts to explain regime behavior.

In order to complicate the term ‘personalist regime’, Weeks provides several improvements to the Geddes typology by dividing personalists into those with military backgrounds and those without. This is because, by overly simplifying the term, researchers have placed military linked leaders like Pinochet and civilian personalists like Saddam Hussein in the same category (Weeks 2012, 336). This error, weeks argues, would categorize both Stalin's Soviet Union and the post-Stalin Soviet Union as single party regimes when Stalin had chosen the majority of the leaders of the politburo which could have otherwise exercised some control over his policy (Weeks 2012, 336). Weeks' analysis improves upon the Geddes typology by providing additional questions and metrics to differentiate between personalists and parties or juntas, but also to differentiate between different varieties of personalists. Weeks' separates personalists into two distinct camps: Bosses, those with civilian backgrounds, and Strongmen, those with backgrounds in the country's military (Weeks 2012, 336-337). Comparing the two variants, Weeks shows that while there is a small difference between them with strongmen initiating conflict more often due to their strong elite relationship to the military, both are more willing to engage in military conflict than other regime types and engage in military conflict at somewhat similar rates (Weeks 2012, 336). Weeks, similar to Geddes and other authors writing on the subject, attributes this to the fact that in fully consolidated personalist regimes the smaller domestic audience results in a lack of criticism over choices made. Weeks, however, also posits that losing a conflict is likely not threatening for established personalist leaders who have less to lose when faced with military defeat when compared to other leaders less insulated from critique and with less

loyalist following (Weeks 2012, 335). The results of the study show that, out of all the authoritarian regimes, machines or single-party states are the least likely to engage in external conflict and are at times “less belligerent than democracies” (Weeks 2012, 342). In regards to military juntas, they engage in conflict far more often than machines, but within a similar range to bosses, or non-military personalists (Weeks 2012, 342). The data also showed concretely that personalists of military and non-military background are both more than twice as likely to engage in armed conflict than machines, or single-party regimes (Weeks 2012, 342).

Not only does Weeks expand upon typology and transition theory, but she also throws light onto possible problems inherent to previous studies into regimes’ conflicts. In Peceny and Butler’s analysis, due to its reliance on outdated typology, Mao and Stalin’s regimes were treated as single-party regimes even if the base of support was incredibly narrow and all positions were handpicked by the two leaders—a problem avoided by the newly improved typology (Weeks 2012, 342).

In her analysis of the results, she disproves the arguments of other researchers which suggested that the level of personalization was of less importance than a strong base of support and a party’s ability to co-opt dissent. Weeks piece serves to highlight a need for more in-depth understanding of the innerworkings of regimes that ties to level of personalization and control over elites (Weeks 2012, 342). Her analysis alone shed a great deal of light on the behavior of personalists, showing that in countries where personalization is low “even in relatively small-coalition regimes such as... modern China... regime insiders knew that they could jettison an incompetent or reckless leader and survive politically” (Weeks 2012, 328). This is furthered in her section discussing the factors constraining regimes decisions where Weeks discusses the potential costs of conflict on society and on the regime itself. It is here that Weeks demonstrates that in authoritarian regimes, the costs of conflict are evenly distributed and often higher in general than in democracies (Weeks 2012, 331). Authoritarians face a myriad of unique challenges when compared to their democratic peers—nowhere is this more pressing than in a conflicts’ ability to weaken a key boon of repressive support: the military (Weeks 2012, 332). This is, according to Weeks, not the only unique struggle. Authoritarians are also less able to simply increase taxes to compensate themselves for economic losses incurred by conflict—this is because they rely heavily on the loyalty of their constituents which relies on a combination of the aforementioned repression and the stability of the economy (Weeks 2012, 332). This creates a curious situation which

Weeks describes as a society with a potentially higher acceptance of violence as a solution, but a society which also is less insulated from the consequences of that violence and therefore as, or even more critical of war (Weeks 2012, 332). By deconstructing the uniform notion of a regime and arguing that the internal workings of the government, coalition, or domestic audience impact the likelihood of a personalist leaders' removal, Weeks opens the door for theories including other determinants of conflict beyond regime typology while maintaining and expanding upon the importance of regime type in conflict determinacy.

This data alongside Geddes studies into regime transition, provide a great deal of detail on fixed regime types—analyzing subsets of personalist dictatorships, elucidating the different ways in which elites can constrain power and personalism, and displaying how those aspects determine military conflict behavior. As her core focus is on regime typology as a determinant, however, she does not delve into the determinants that act to constrain or bolster authoritarians independent of elite relations. Weeks does, in her conclusion, allude that there may be additional factors which impact domestic audience members preference on military conflict. She argues first that in understanding elite preference it is not enough to simply analyze which constraints exist—researchers must also understand the preferences of the elite audience with the power to enforce those constraints (Weeks 2012, 343). Secondly, Weeks concludes that this level of empiricism has its limitations—suggesting that further sociological or constructivist research is necessary to understand those preferences and the impact of domestic audience beyond its size (Weeks 2012 343). Her research suggests that other structural factors and background experience impact the elites' beliefs on use of force as a tool to achieve policy goals—highlighting the need for a new method, one capable of “blending measurable features of institutions with more sociological or constructivist insights about the sources of foreign policy preferences” (Weeks 2012, 343)

Based on the literature, it is clear that regime type is a potent determinant of military conflict. It is also clear that regime type is a reflection of relationships between elites—namely, between political elites and military elites. A natural next question is whether regime type also impacts military spending? According to Vincenzo Bove and Jennifer Brauner's research, which bases its analysis out of the Geddes typology, it does. According to their research studying 64 different regimes, the authors find that military regimes spend more than single party states, and personalist regimes spend the least of the three different authoritarian regime types (Bove and Brauner 2016, 622). This is due to the importance of the military in the infrastructure of the institution—a military regime wants to assure its own funding and its

continued support, a party state seeks to intermingle itself and create elite unity between party and military to assure survival, and a personalist wants to have power but recognizes the danger that strong military elite poses for their survival (Bove and Brauner 2016, 612). What is particularly interesting in their analysis is how they portray the relationship to the military in each regime. Personalists keep the military under their thumb and non-autonomous—purging it to prevent accumulation of power amongst high ranking members. Personalists also rely heavily on paramilitary forces which are fiercely loyal to them—similar to Saddam Hussein’s guard (Bove and Brauner 2016, 612). On the contrary, party states integrate the military into the party—tying the destiny of both organizations in order to force loyalty. According to Bove the military is “the instrument of the party and is completely subordinated to it” (Bove and Brauner 2016, 613). The authors also articulate that party propaganda and party identification are built into the military training in these regimes—exemplified by the People’s Liberation Army in China (Bove and Brauner 2016, 613-614). Bove and Brauner never delve further into this topic—avoiding analysis of how this indoctrination changes elite relations, regime transition, or a regime’s ability to mobilize support and engage in military conflict. However, based on the information gathered, it suggests that while regime type, spending, and organization have a strong role to play in war—propaganda, collective memory, and public mobilization may also play into authoritarian military decisions and determine a regimes’ leverage in exacting their policy decisions.

2.4 Alternative Determinants - Domestic Ethnic and Political Tension

Another academic perturbed by China’s potential as a revisionist military power is that of M. Taylor Fravel. Fravel, in his analysis of the conflict behavior of China, has taken a different route than previous researchers. Rather than attributing conflict behavior to regime type he attempts to better understand the various pressures that restrain elites and prevent conflict. In his analysis of China’s various conflicts and their outcomes, Fravel finds that rather than pursue armed conflicts to a conclusion China has historically resorted to diplomacy to resolve them in the majority of cases and has, as often, received less than 50% of the disputed territory implicated in the conflict (Fravel 2005, 46). Fravel theorizes that, rather than engaging in ‘diversionary war’ in order to hide internal economic or ethnic issues, authoritarian leaders engage in ‘diversionary peace’—negotiating with other nations in order to reduce internal pressures within the regime (Fravel 2005, 49). He expands on this by

arguing that in the case of China, its history of regime insecurity has forced its leaders to the negotiating table in order to quell rebellion and secure its borders where minority ethnic groups live and pose a threat to Han Chinese hegemony (Fravel 2005, 50, 56).

Fravel argues that by making concessions and abandoning territorial disputes, regimes are able to focus those resources inwards and invest in economic relations with involved countries instead of militarizing and disputing territory (Fravel 2005, 53). In his piece, Fravel critiques constructivist notions that would suggest these territorial disputes intractable to China due to historical conflicts and identity—placing internal pressures as the more impactful determinant of conflict between China and its neighbors. However, having written this piece in 2005, Fravel is unable to explain the unabating territorial claims to Taiwan, the entirety of the Nine-Dash Line, and of course the islands contested by China and many nations in the South China Sea both in 2005 and today—a fact which suggests that constructivist notions of history and culture may play a larger role in determining authoritarian military conflict than Fravel would give them credit for.

2.5 Constructivist Perspectives - Sociological and Collective Memory Analysis

While many academics have focused on the structural elements of regimes and the relationships of elites therein, others have instead opted to analyze the ways in which collective memory serves as a potent determinant of policy within governments of all kinds. Historical memory—whether as a tool of regimes and authoritarian political organizations to mobilize society towards their policy objectives or, used by the people themselves to serve as a restrictive track to curtail authoritarian aspirations—serves as a unique determinant of policy and political organization in all nations, but particularly those impacted by historical traumas.

One such academic, Fabio Bolzonar, describes the impact historical memory can have on bolstering or binding authoritarian political organizations in an article discussing the parallel history of the Lega Nord in Italy and the Front National in France. These two stories, parallel but exact opposites, demonstrate that collective memory is not a fixed belief but rather a system of beliefs that can be engaged with and changed by “public opinion, the mass media, intellectuals, and political elites” (Bolzonar 2023, 365). Bolzonar makes the argument that collective memory of the nations’ former authoritarian governments during World War II forces strategy changes within the modern fascist-descended authoritarian parties and forces

them to adapt their political behaviors to changing historical memory (Bolzonar 2023, 364). In order to ground his study, he bases his analysis off from public opinion polls, newspaper documents, statements made by leaders of the parties, and official text documents from the parties themselves (Bolzonar 2023, 365).

Bolzonar begins by describing the creation of both groups and the historical memory environments in which they were generated. For France, he cites the union of right wing organizations in the 1970s, singling out the neo-fascist movement L'Ordre Nouveau and its leader—a former Vichy Milice—specifically (Bolzonar 2023, 366). In this early period, much of the information about Vichy involvement in the holocaust had yet to be fully brought to light and the nation was far more sympathetic to revisionist language about the Vichy regime as an alternative but not mutually exclusive memory to the myth of the French Resistance (Bolzonar 2023, 366). With this historical memory of Vichy as a shield against fascism rather than an arm of fascism, the FN was able to flourish and unify—relying on Vichy's ambiguous historical memory to relay messages to key fascist supporters while winning over more general appeal with general conservatives. For Italy, the line is more skewed due to the long list of right wing political organizations and a changing political landscape at the time. The LN were founded from a collective of smaller right wing parties in Northern Italy which originally had an anti-fascist pro-regional government stance (Bolzonar 2023, 368). The leaders at the time argued that they were the antithesis of fascism in that they had only local aspirations and had only local issues as a priority (Bolzonar 2023, 368).

After the initial period, however, both groups evolved quickly to changing public perception and adopted opposite stances on historical revisionism. In the 1990's and early 2000s, the once locally focused parties of Northern Italy formed a national political party—Lega Nord. After the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States and the collapse of the Berlusconi government, Lega Nord realized that the Italian people were less interested in statements distancing themselves from fascism (Bolzonar 2023, 369). It was then that it pivoted to a national right wing party, once again rebranding to 'Lega'. Lega then began its focus on identity politics and protecting the Italian Catholic identity from immigration—this courting of right wing voters culminated in the 2010's when the party's new leader, Matteo Salvini, defended Mussolini's government in the period before the alliance with Hitler (Bolzonar 2023, 369-370). This only intensified over the years with Salvini making multiple references and allusions to Mussolini's speeches and often referencing anti-fascist partisan attacks on Italians in the wake of WWII (Bolzonar 2023, 370). This differentiation between

‘good’ and ‘bad’ fascism was possible because, until 1938, the Italian Fascist party’s ideology did not actively sponsor antisemitism (Bolzonar 2023, 370). According to Bolzonar’s data, along with this rehabilitation of fascism was a strong change in public memory of the Italian resistance. According to public polling from the time, 58% of Northern Italians surveyed believed that the values of the resistance were no longer relevant to modern Italy (Bolzonar 2023, 370). Using revision of historical memory as a tool, Lega seized the opportunity to rehabilitate fascist ideology—bolstering their position and allowing themselves to achieve more extreme-right policy objectives and to reduce critique of fascist policy and history.

Conversely, in France, the 1990’s dealt a strong blow to fascist historical revisionism and further hindered their ability to coopt national historical memory. Strong evidence came to light implicating the Vichy regime in the deportation of Jews and political dissidents to concentration camps and resulted in its inability to form a coalition and maintain government influence despite increased polling numbers (Bolzonar 2023, 366). Like in Italy, at this pivotal moment the party changed hands and fell under the control of the previous leader’s daughter, Marine LePen. It was she who revised the appearance of the party—going so far as to oust her father from the party when he doubled down on his previous comments about the holocaust and Petain, the leader of Vichy France (Bolzonar 2023, 366-367). While she has openly adopted the prevailing national memory of the Vichy regime, she has not strayed from the fascist values of her party—deploying the memory to attack Muslim immigrants by characterizing their existence as a new ‘occupation’ and a force for a rise in antisemitism in France (Bolzonar 2023, 367). Public opinion polling finds that in 1967, 51% of French people believed that Petain had saved France—a stark contrast to the 90’s when polling showed 30% of French still believed that while 38% believed he had betrayed the country entirely (Bolzonar 2023, 367).

By focusing on the various historical and ideological similarities between the two movements as a starting point—showing that the core values of both movements are tied to nationalism, xenophobia, anti-Marxism, antisemitism—Bolzonar seeks to isolate changing memory as a cause for policy change (Bolzonar 2023, 366). It would make sense that the movements followed a similar path given their origins, however due to slight variance in the history and memory of that history both have adopted completely different relationships to their historical roots as demonstrated. Bolzonar’s analysis of political strategy and its relationship to memory is an observational indication of a correlation, but not necessarily

enough to establish direct causation between national memory and political behavior. Absent a stronger research framework, it is more speculative and exploratory than elucidative of any phenomena.

Bolzonar is not the only academic to have attempted to stitch together national memory and political behavior, however. Atilla Agh explores historical memory as a factor contributing to the rise of what he refers to as “velvet dictatorships” in Eastern Europe such as Hungary. In doing so, Agh complicates previous regime typology and delineates a new type of emerging regime with unique characteristics. These regimes are different than others described in previous authoritarian regime typology in that they do not use hard power—violence, oppression, or coercion—to bring their people in line (Corvinus University of Budapest (Hungary) and Ágh 2016, 36). Instead, these velvet regimes bring their populations behind their national pivot from modernization to traditional narratives through strategic manipulation of their national collective memory (Corvinus University of Budapest (Hungary) and Ágh 2016, 32).

The other unique features of these velvet regimes are what allow them to use soft power as their primary tool: having economic development issues, late national independence, and only recently beginning to create their own self-legitimizing national historical narrative (Corvinus University of Budapest (Hungary) and Ágh 2016, 33). With confused national memory and instability, these unique attributes have precipitated countries with defensive and largely negative collective identities and a feeling that their fight for freedom is not yet complete.

In order to substantiate their argument, Agh relies on political discourse from the dominant political actors, public opinion polling, and economic trends such as global market competitiveness. That being said, these statements are made without figures or analysis—discourse is never analyzed or scrutinized with any structure in the article. The piece seems to be exploratory and descriptive rather than analytical but draws several conclusions.

Firstly, it suggests that the traditionalist historical revisionism has landed these countries between narratives—as once strong protectors of Europe with a strong European identity, but simultaneously betrayed and left behind by European powers after WWII and again today (Corvinus University of Budapest (Hungary) and Ágh 2016, 39). Secondly, these regimes do not rely on a wide base of support—rather focusing on mobilizing radical and active minority forces while silencing and subduing the majority into viewing the

contradictory and changing policy and memory as tolerable (Corvinus University of Budapest (Hungary) and Ágh 2016, 39). This complacency allows the regime to advance their policy in whatever way they choose as the hardline minority will vocally support them while the majority remains disimpassioned and complacent. The final conclusion drawn by Agh is that these regimes have found a way to change the way their people view the world and themselves through this manipulation of the collective memory—allowing those regimes to achieve their policy goals and provoking the democratic backsliding that we see in these nations (Corvinus University of Budapest (Hungary) and Ágh 2016, 39).

Agh does not provide a breakdown of how this traditionalist narrative achieves this effect, who it targets, or how it is deployed. While providing some evidence to suggest a correlation between these factors and the outcome, this piece draws conclusions which lie well beyond the evidence and analysis presented. Without a framework, it provides a loosely defined new regime type with nebulous characteristics and hints at possible new power arrangements between regime and domestic audience without providing concrete depictions or evidences of them.

In a more targeted analysis of political discourse and policy, *Populism and Memory: Legislation of the Past in Poland, Ukraine, and Russia*, Nikolay Koposov looks at the ways in which nationally grounded collective memory serves as a foundation for law both in Western democratic states, but also authoritarian and pseudo-authoritarian states (Koposov 2022, 273). While Western states often create legislation to make rehabilitation of WWII ideologies difficult or illegal—attempting to prevent their resurgence as plausible national historical memories. However, in authoritarian states Koposov finds that this national memory becomes a tool for nationalist, populist leaders to “promote their national narratives rather than the ‘cosmopolitan’ EU-sponsored memory...” (Koposov 2022, 273). In his analysis, he discusses the ways in which memory laws were created to exonerate the people of many ex-communist nations for crimes against humanity during the second World War—a product of complex politics after the fall of the Soviet Union and a way for those countries to deal with their collective trauma and collective shame (Koposov 2022, 278).

In his analysis of Russian memory law, Koposov focuses in on the 2009 law designed to criminalize questioning Soviet war crimes in World War II that was ratified only following the invasion of Crimea in 2014 (Koposov 2022, 284). He cites this law as direct evidence of collective memory as a tool of war—arguing that “...the war myth was an essential

component of the propaganda campaign aimed at justifying Putin's aggression against Ukraine" and constitutes a justification of previous and future acts of violence (Koposov 2022, 284-285). While Koposov focuses on European states and the memory of the Holocaust and World War II, it is by no means an exclusively European phenomenon. He concludes that even within Europe, there exists a regional divide between East and West which has created regionalized collective memory of one event—a fact which hints that other regions effected by similar historical traumas may indeed also suffer from a fractured collective memory and leave room for authoritarian manipulation of that memory (Koposov 2022, 278). This memory, often conflicting and a mix of ideologies, serves as a tool to rehabilitate perpetrators of past state-sponsored crimes and by extension justify current and future crimes (Koposov 2022, 289). Again, however, aside from observing a correlation between historical revisionism and policy, Koposov does not attempt to apply any framework or empirical analysis to substantiate wider claims about a relationship.

While studies like this often focus broadly on the institutionalization of collective memory as a means to control and influence identity, there are many studies documenting the function of culturalized collective memory as a means to justify oppression of out-groups within society and influence policy from below. One particularly salient example being the occupied territories known as Israel and the indigenous people their colonial project is designed to eliminate: the Palestinians. In a study analyzing the relationship between Israeli's perception of immigrant groups—of which Palestinians are considered part—and their collective memory, Yuval Feinstein and Bart Bonikowski focused on two narratives inherent to Israeli collective memory: the exceptionalism narrative and the victimhood narrative (Feinstein and Bonikowski 2019, 742). This study examined survey data from Israel gauging traditional ideas of chauvinism alongside both narratives and found that strong belief in either, or both narratives correlated with ethno-nationalist beliefs and a biblical understanding of the borders of the nation—resulting in “greater antipathy toward non-Jewish immigrants” (Feinstein and Bonikowski 2019, 742). This study found that in this case, chauvinism existed but coded lower than the two narratives explored.

As part of their analysis, the authors break down their understanding of collective memory and its impact on policy and attitudes towards immigrants—highlighting that individuals schema, or worldview and general understanding, also works to enforce nationalist narratives by framing the understanding of contemporary society based on historical conceptions of nation (Feinstein and Bonikowski 2019, 742-743).

Before continuing it is worth pointing out the authors' pointed lack of analysis and scrutiny of the degree to which non-white Jewish immigrants are treated—a strong hole in the study given the white settler colony's history of sterilization of non-white, Ethiopian Jewish immigrants (Dawber 2013). It seems that differentiation on the part of the authors was intended precisely to avoid the issue of the colonial project's racial dimension, particularly given Netanyahu's explicit depiction of African immigrants as a threat to "our existence as a Jewish and democratic state" (Dawber 2013). While there is no explicit government policy of sterilization, the use of the drug in question from 2008-2013 was only deployed in marginalized communities, prescribed with questionable frequency and, once news of its misuse broke, was swiftly ended by the government with the Association of Civil Rights in Israel making a statement worrying for the implication that other racist policies could exist (Dawber 2013). This is particularly worth noting given other inconsistencies in the analyses of the authors—particularly that Palestinians are considered non-Jewish 'immigrants' regardless of their indigeneity, the residence of Palestinians in Israel, and Israel's control of the Palestinian territories of the West Bank and Gaza. The authors' definitions of what an immigrant is seem loose and arbitrarily defined to avoid particular political debates without providing reasonable selection criteria which likely impacts the conclusions the data is able to provide. This is, in the closing notes, mentioned by the authors who suggest that future studies could include different categories of immigrants and include current political, economic, and security pressures (Feinstein and Bonikowski 2019, 758).

In order to evidence their claims, the authors rely upon polling data regarding the collective memory of Israel—focusing on variables such as beliefs about the true borders of the colony, attitudes towards non-Jews, attitudes towards immigrants, and their beliefs regarding the impact of immigration on the country (Feinstein and Bonikowski 2019, 748). The authors go on to use these datapoints to highlight their argument of the impact of the collective victimization narrative, and the core collective memory of Jews as a special 'chosen' people with supreme culture and mission in the world" (Feinstein and Bonikowski 2019, 744). The two authors describe that both of these beliefs structure the core worldview and values of Zionists, and many Jews generally—a fact which drives them to interpret their world in ways which reinforce xenophobic sentiments (Feinstein and Bonikowski 2019, 744). The authors go on to evidence this through the description of the theocratic immigration and labor policy designed to prevent non-Jewish immigration and to use Palestinians and other non-Jewish peoples as laborers in "the least desirable jobs and are afforded fewer protections

by labour unions and welfare state institutions compared to Israeli citizens” (Feinstein and Bonikowski 2019, 745). The authors associate these beliefs with the general perception that non-Jews represent an existential threat to the perceived character of the state—a perception that is self-reinforcing based on individuals’ perceptions and negative stereotyping of foreigners (Feinstein and Bonikowski 2019, 745). These collective memories of victimization have led to anti-immigrant narratives while the exceptionalism narrative has led Zionists, through their belief in their racial superiority, to reinforce their right to expel native peoples based on their own ‘right’ similarly to the Americans’ ‘Manifest Destiny’ or the European ‘white man’s burden’ (Feinstein and Bonikowski 2019, 746). The authors finish by arguing that, upon comparing polling data to immigration levels and media coverage, xenophobic beliefs are not influenced by the number of immigrants in the country or their visibility therein, but rather “from the interpretive framework that assigns meaning to the presence of immigrants in the country” (Feinstein and Bonikowski 2019, 754). In this way, collective memory of traumas and glory have formed the schema of people within the society, informing their beliefs externally to any instrumentalism and impacting their interpretation of reality and interaction with policy. Because of this schema, to the Zionists of Israel, there is no good or safe immigrant.

While some of the previous authors attempted to draw more sweeping conclusions, Dawid Fusiek limited the scope of his analysis to one case and one specific instance—deploying political discourse analysis and applying it to securitization theory in order to demonstrate how Putin justified the invasion of Ukraine to the people and successfully coerced them into believing the West was an existential threat to their existence (Fusiek 2022, 105-106). Interestingly, unlike previous authors, Fusiek focuses primarily on the authoritarian application of collective glory, rather than collective trauma, to mobilize the population.

While many instances of speeches demonizing the West and relying on historical memory exist, Fusiek focuses on one such important instance—a speech made during the May 9th, 2022 speech at the celebration of the anniversary of Nazi Germany’s defeat—and deeply analyzes the language and symbolism used. (Fusiek 2022, 109). This one speech, according to Fusiek, represents a trend in Putin’s rhetoric which is consistent across many years and speeches. The specific speech acts highlighted in the article focus on military glory and the Soviet Unions’ mythologized role as protector of diversity and as a military which has always sought to prevent humanitarian catastrophe caused by international evils (Fusiek

2022, 110). Fusiek argues that by relying on post-Cold War humiliation narratives and using collective memory of World War II to paint Ukraine and the West as a continuation of the Great Patriotic war, Putin effectively transforms his policy objective of invasion into a matter of security for, and an absolute right of the entire nation—thus justifying violence and securing popular support (Fusiek 2022, 107). This use of speech acts to evoke such feelings and memory creates what Fusiek refers to as a ‘state of exception’ where policies out of the ordinary scope of power are available due to a perceived existential threat to the domestic audience—in this case, mass mobilization, martial law, and war (Fusiek 2022 106-107). These policies are made easily possible due to the unique history of the Cold War—a war which he argues structurally never ended. This inconclusive end leads to a feeling of humiliation without true loss and a victory without consolidation for the West (Fusiek 2022, 108). Similarly to previous constructivist authorship, Fusiek sees this historical ambiguity as a soft spot ripe for authoritarian manipulation—a spot which Putin has successfully exploited by reconsolidating the national memory around national glory in the face of Western hypocrisy (Fusiek 2022, 109). To do this, Putin relies on speech acts referencing past military glory and the Soviet Unions’ mythologized role as protector of diversity and as a military which has always sought to prevent humanitarian catastrophe caused by international evils—whether those evils be Nazi Germany or the US led international order (Fusiek 2022, 110). In this way, the attractive remedy to collective trauma and the solution to mobilization issues is reliance upon the nostalgia of collective glory—a restructuring of memory which can galvanize a people for generations to come.

Fusiek closes his article by displaying just how effective collective memory is as a tool of mobilization and securitization—“As the latest data suggests... more than 80% of Russians support Putin’s actions... Such high support shows not only that Putin’s securitization of the West and Ukraine has been successful but also the difficulty to both de-securitize the issues and return to the pre-existing status quo” (Fusiek 2022, 112). Although Fusiek hopes to highlight the trending use of memory as a tool of authoritarian securitization, he does not seek to display it as a determinant of conflict itself—rather as one means for authoritarians to better their position and maximize the likelihood of achieving policy objectives. Because of this limited scope and specific framework of analysis Fusiek is able to draw more well supported conclusions than other authors in this category.

The constructivist arguments of these scholars suggest that would-be authoritarians and authoritarian leaders themselves are influenced by, and influence others with collective

memory. While these authors depict scenarios in which this memory is used to securitize issues and bolster authoritarian efforts to go to war, they do not preclude collective memory as a tool of de-securitization or a roadblock to authoritarian policy decisions. Thus, studies like these open the door for securitization as a determinant of military conflict—one that could impact and overcome other determinants such as regime type. Unfortunately, one area of weakness in these studies and studies like these is the lack of a true causal link between memory, securitization, and direct military conflict. While these studies serve to highlight trends and suggest their use to influence public mobilization, the lack of a concrete research framework to depict them as direct determinants of that behavior prevents them from providing the types of conclusions that empirical studies of authoritarian behavior have.

2.6 A New Research Framework of Historical Memory

The problem inherent to the previous texts exists because, while there are myriad studies with various strategies of analysis on a myriad of subjects such as speech text analyses, memorialization of history, popular movements, and historical grievances between countries, there exists an epistemological gap between disciplines such as history, sociology, and political science and a seemingly impossible jump from the plausibility of their influence on policy and a concrete causal link between these determinants and policy. Historical memory studies serves as an umbrella through which these determinants can coexist and bridge that gap. However, to accomplish this, historical memory must develop an epistemological core to guide its analyses and unify the sociological, historical perspectives it encompasses. While the field has existed in one way or another since the early 20th century, the discussion around effective means to study ideas and memory has been a heated debate for several decades. One of the more formative pieces on ideas as a determinant of political action is that of Judith Goldstein and Robert Keohane's 1993 book, *Ideas and Foreign Policy: Beliefs, Institutions, and Political Change*. This book sets out the intellectual dispute between rationalist and reflectivist camps. Rationalists, on one hand, adhering to the belief that “self-interested actors maximize their utility, subject to constraints” (Goldstein and Keohane 2019, 4). Rationalists of the most extreme view, believe in primacy of rational interest and the irrelevance of ideas as more than a rhetorical strategy to legitimize and achieve their goals (Goldstein and Keohane 2019, 4). Reflectivists, described by Goldstein and Keohane as an anti-empiricist camp, focused on the ways in which history, culture, and

language act as a set of constraints on individuals abilities to define and act on interests (Goldstein and Keohane 2019, 7). Goldstein and Keohane seek to position themselves between the two camps and rectify the issues between them—arguing that they reject the notion that ideas have no causal weight, but also reject their ability to act alone as a determinant of policy (Goldstein and Keohane 2019, 6). In one salient example, Goldstein and Keohane reference the de-colonial period and argue that the core interests of colonial powers did not change and that cost-benefit analyses are not enough to explain the rapid pace of decolonialization. They argue that this change cannot be accurately explained without the causal weight of the changing ideas within their societies that forced them to abandon their colonial projects (Goldstein and Keohane 2019, 15). While articulating that there is a lamentable lack of study of ideas in social sciences, they reject reflectivism’s anti-empiricism and instead seek to create a study of ideas which is based in empirical data—justifying this by saying “the key issue, however, is not whether identities matter but how they matter, and how their effects can be systematically studied by social scientists...” (Goldstein and Keohane 2019, 6). They go on to directly challenge both the rationalist and reflectivist camps directly—offering a better method of research which can resolve the inherent issues of strict adherence to either research methodology.

The research framework they set forth is grounded in empirical social science research—rather than focusing on the origin of ideas, Goldstein and Keohane define and focus on three core types of ideas: world views, principled beliefs, and causal beliefs (Goldstein and Keohane 2019, 8).

1. World Views

They define world views as the most broadly impactful type of idea—ideas that govern what is possible (Goldstein and Keohane 2019, 8). These ideas are often governed by religion, political system, and intellectual movements. However, Goldstein and Keohane admit that they can draw few conclusions from broad worldviews when compared to the following types of ideas and continue that their assumptions of these ideas rely on the idea that all peoples have been exposed to Western individualism (Goldstein and Keohane 2019, 9).

2. Principled Beliefs

Principled beliefs, by their definition, refer to beliefs that determine right and wrong, just and unjust (Goldstein and Keohane 2019, 9). This includes ideas about human rights such

as abortion rights, voting rights, freedom of speech, and more. They argue that while many of these beliefs can be justified using world views, those world views often encompass the opposite side of the argument as well as in the case of Christian acceptance of slavery (Goldstein and Keohane 2019, 9). In their view, principled beliefs are a form of mediator or translator between world view and policy action—Goldstein and Keohane positing the example of protest movements during the fall of Eastern European communism, “The revolutions of 1989 in Eastern Europe attest to the continuing vibrancy of principled beliefs in politics: people risked their lives in mass demonstrations, although material self-interest alone would have led them to be “free riders” (Goldstein and Keohane 2019, 9).

3. Causal Beliefs

The most concrete and measurable of the three beliefs articulated is that of causal beliefs. These beliefs represent learned understandings of cause and effect or processes to reach desired goals—all informed by the context and world views of a person in a given situation (Goldstein and Keohane 2019, 10). Again, Goldstein and Keohane point to protest and revolution in Eastern Europe—this time arguing that these revolutions taught the people a formula: “unarmed mass protests could bring down long-standing repressive governments” and as that is predicated on group mobilization, it reflected a shared beliefs system within those people groups which was informed by larger principled beliefs and world views (Goldstein and Keohane 2019, 10).

In order to establish causality between these beliefs and policy, Goldstein and Keohane articulate that one must begin with identification of particular ideas and then evidence the conditions in which connections between those specific ideas and specific policies exist (Goldstein and Keohane 2019, 11). This allows academics to better understand the ways those ideas can restrict the possible outcomes an actor considers when in a given scenario. In order to codify and understand these blinders and these choices, Goldstein and Keohane outline three core causal routes:

1. Ideas As Roadmaps

This causal route impacts the personal preferences of an actor and their understanding of how certain strategies will aid them in achieving their preferences. Here, ideas serve as bumpers which keep an actor along a certain strategy path defined by their existing world views and principled beliefs (Goldstein and Keohane 2019, 13). Goldstein and Keohane, arguing along rationalist lines, suggest that achieving preference is undoubtedly the

end goal, they reiterate that it is the beliefs which impact the avenue, or political policy, to achieve that ultimate goal.

2. Ideas As Focal points

This second causal route has particular salience during negotiations where an actor must work with other actors to achieve outcomes that are beneficial, or “at least as good as the status quo” for all those negotiating (Goldstein and Keohane 2019, 12). These shared ideas serve as a means to rally negotiating parties around shared ground and reduce the stakes, or on a larger scale, separate certain political actors into camps based on shared ideas and world views (Goldstein and Keohane 2019, 12). Additionally, when making policy choices without a full understanding of the possible outcomes, ideas can bring actors to a solution that is mutually acceptable considering their shared cultural, religious, or normative world views (Goldstein and Keohane 2019, 18).

3. Institutionalization of Ideas

The last way in which ideas can impact policy is through political organizations themselves—whether they be administrative agencies, laws, norms, or operating procedures. It is argued that through institutionalization—the process by which new ideas are integrated into the structure of policy creation—ideas can then shape what possible policy outcomes there are within a given state (Goldstein and Keohane 2019, 20). This institutionalization can be enforced by various organizations where the idea has taken root and adherence to those ideas can be incentivized both socially and as a policy. Keohane and Goldstein suggest that this idea can take root both from social pressures and from the force of powerful political actors (Goldstein and Keohane 2019, 21). This leads into another potential impact of ideas: the reality that their crystallization within institutions may override contemporary ideas in favor of those which defined the system (Goldstein and Keohane 2019, 21).

With definitions squared away, Goldstein and Keohane articulate a research strategy to more empirically evaluate the impact of these predefined ideas along their predefined causal pathways. To do so, they rely upon evidentiary inference whereby it is assumed that all information is potentially biased either by its survival, perspective, or by its interpretation (Goldstein and Keohane 2019, 27). They then describe the process of descriptive inference whereby researchers can assess behaviors and beliefs for causal validity. This method precludes two steps, “first, the distinction between random and systematic aspects of behavior; and second, assessment of the extent to which self-reported and observed behavior

reflect beliefs” (Goldstein and Keohane 2019, 28). This process involves understanding the context of the information obtained—interviews, written documents—and the way in which the context that precipitated that information might have colored it. Additionally, it precludes a comparison to other data to understand its generalizability—while this does not suggest the necessity of large-N studies, it does require evidence that this is indicative of larger patterns of belief (Goldstein and Keohane 2019, 28).

The authors end their description and discussion of their proposed methodology by admitting its weakness and murkiness. However, armed with the knowledge that additional and largely unstudied causal factors exist, they posit that they are sufficiently impactful to warrant further study—however imperfect the methodology behind their consideration (Goldstein and Keohane 2019, 29). This is because, ultimately, the study of social science is the process of reflection, creation, and codification of ideas to impact political processes and society overall. As they write in their conclusion, “As scholars, we devote our lives to the creation, refinement, and application of ideas. If we really thought ideas were irrelevant, our lives as social scientists would be meaningless. Our exploration of the impact of ideas on foreign policy is also a search for personal meaning and relevance in our own lives” (Goldstein and Keohane 2019, 30).

This epistemological discussion around ideas as a causal force has continued into the modern day—represented by one author in particular—Zheng Wang. Wang, like Goldstein and Keohane before him, sought to bridge the gap and create a concrete and unified method to include other perspectives in political analyses and provide nuance to more static understandings of power. To do this, Wang expanded upon the frameworks laid out by Goldstein and Keohane—adding several more to determine the existence and impact of collective memory and identity more generally.

Before understanding Wang’s blueprint to address tensions between the disciplines, it is important to articulate what those tensions are. One major tension behind the epistemological gap is that political science remains primarily dominated by realist assumptions of power—a fact which has relegated ideas, particularly those of small actors, to the dustbin (Wang 2012, 18). While Occam’s Razor is a powerful tool to focus in on particularly impactful determinants, it is undeniable that without an understanding of history and memory’s impact on politics those answers are never fully illustrative—particularly of the ‘why’ behind conflict. Referencing this reality, Wang quotes several historians from Asia

to Eastern Europe—arguing that history and memory both shaped, and were shaped by the conflicts and national struggles of the 20th century from Irish national liberation to the Greek-Bulgarian-Macedonian dispute of the 1990s (Wang 2012, 17-18). Additionally, like previous authors, Wang argues that focus on concepts such as ‘scientific objectivity’ and American positivist and empirical tradition has eroded attempts to incorporate determinants such as ideas and identity—a tradition which has become the basis of understanding for the dominant schools within political science (Wang 2012, 18). The reason that determinants such as ideas and identity are not compatible with the existing approach is because, in Wang’s words, “realism and liberal institutionalism... Both of these approaches take rationalist models as their starting points and focus on how structures affect the instrumental rationality of actors. In such models, the preferences and causal beliefs of actors are a given.” (Wang 2012, 18). While this mode of conducting analyses is ignorant to the role of these determinants, it is not without reason. Concepts like ‘identity’ and ‘ideas’ can be seen to influence behavior, but to show that they directly cause or are one-to-one correlated to behavior is far more difficult (Wang 2012, 19). The last and perhaps most salient reason behind the exclusion of these potential determinants is that of the lack of large-N surveys and ethnographic field work—something readily available in Democracies but far harder to come by in authoritarian, or semi-authoritarian states (Wang 2012, 19).

Undeterred by these issues, Wang set out two frameworks based on Keohane and Goldstein’s for academics to follow to safely incorporate historical memory directly as a determinant into political science analyses without being overly descriptive, devoid of causality, or without empiricism. To do this, Wang separates each into a series of research questions that must first be satisfied to prove causality between said historical memory and policy (Wang 2012, 19)

The first of his frameworks is completely unique and covers historical memory as a collective identity—breaking the framework into four research questions to assess whether and how collective memory functions in each (Wang 2012, 19):

1. Constitutive norms (norms or rules that define group membership)
2. Relational content (references and comparisons to other identities or groups)
3. Cognitive models (content that affects the way group members interpret and understand the world)

4. Social purpose (content that provides the group socially appropriate roles to perform)

The second framework is a set of three research questions previously described by Goldstein and Keohane. These questions were designed to establish the impact of historical memory on people's perceptions, interpretations, and decision-making processes(Wang 2012, 19):

1. As road maps that increase actors' clarity about goals or ends-means relationships
2. As focal points, by facilitating the cohesion of particular groups or by causing conflict and constituting difficulties to the settlement of the conflict
3. As institutionalized ideas and beliefs that constrain policy when embedded in political institutions and in patterns of political discourse

These frameworks provided by Wang establish more measurable criteria for the application of historical memory in understanding policy choices by regimes of all types—even in closed regimes where the aforementioned data difficulties exist and damaging the reliability or possibility of ethnographic or survey data. Wang, taking the first step, goes on through his book using these very frameworks to elucidate the determinants behind various policy decisions of the People's Republic of China (Wang 2012, 20).

Before breaking into his analysis, Wang defines several key terms and concepts related to historical memory in order to aid future researchers in providing succinct working definitions and to easily satisfy the requirements of his framework. First and most importantly, collective memory: "the prime raw material for constructing identity" (Wang 2012, 20). Wang describes group collective memory—whether ethnic, national, or religious—as the historical myths that define a group, what it means to be a part of that group, and who the enemies of that group are (Wang 2012, 20). While Wang believes these identities to be centered around truths, he argues that they are often exaggerated and manipulated histories that serve that identity—a fact that is of particular importance given that identity is often galvanized by what Wang refers to as "chosen traumas" and "chosen glories" (Wang 2012, 21). These historical moments of trauma or glory serve as particularly useful loci of collective memory that can be used to the satisfaction of the aforementioned research questions and overall research framework. This is because these events become mythologized by the group and relayed generationally—these events provide a shared hardship or heroism that is perpetuated into the future by a group, giving them a shared

struggle to maintain or overcome that event as a group (Wang 2012, 21-22). This phenomenon exists because of a concept called ‘framing’—a process through which people process information by comparison with older experienced events or historical events (Wang 2012, 24)

Wang continues by breaking down the different existing understandings of identity formation in historical memory: primordialist, constructivist, and instrumentalist (Wang 2012, 21). Primordialism assumes that collective memory and identity formation are centered around kinship, language, and common history—best described as the transfer of history and memory generationally. As such, Wang argues, the primordialist perspective attaches particular emphasis to collective traumas and accumulated historical enmity for other groups in developing identity (Wang 2012, 21). The constructionist perspective differs in that it primarily focuses on the notion that both ethnicity and a groups’ differences to others are created by the group rather than events (Wang 2012, 21). To better define the constructivist perspective, Wang references the father of historical memory, Maurice Halbwachs, who argued that even historical events and memory are continually reconstructed and realigned to meet the changing needs of a group over time (Wang 2012, 22). Lastly, the instrumentalist perspective, holds that history and identity can be institutionalized by those with the power to pass it on—namely, political or economic leaders (Wang 2012, 22). This can take many forms from monuments, to textbooks, to mass media and is used to create a group identity amicable to the needs of the leader. This is the perspective that many conflicts do not entail groups acquiring hundreds of years of enmity, but rather one leader to change group identity to fit their goal of mobilization towards hostility for policy gain (Wang 2012, 22). To summarize, Wang depicts the importance of historical memory studies as that of a powerful tool to better understand the determinants of conflict—it is a tool which all three camps recognize provides the lens to see how states and peoples justify and glorify conflict while dehumanizing and villainizing other groups in order to achieve policy goals (Wang 2012, 27).

In concluding the description of his new framework Wang argues for its deployment in studying the historical memory of concrete events and time periods as they provides the most stable and established datasets for empirical analysis (Wang 2012, 36). He continues to articulate that, his frameworks may be deployed as integral ways of analysis or, as he has done in his book, deployed piecemeal to focus on certain aspects of historical memory—this is particularly important for researchers because, he argues that not all forms of memory and identity creation may exist in a given case (Wang 2012, 37).

2.7 Key Definitions

The core ideas necessary for understanding the forthcoming analysis are largely based around authoritarian regime typology and the authors who conducted research on the subject. Thus, it is necessary to understand the different types of authoritarian regimes present which cannot be defined more succinctly than as written by Barbara Geddes in *Autocratic Breakdown and Regime Transitions: A New Data Set and What Do We Know About Democratization After Twenty Years?* In these pieces, Geddes defines authoritarian regimes as being either military juntas, single party states, or personalist regimes—regimes formed by absolute military rule, a single party of elites, or a personalist leader with full political power. However, it is worthwhile to note that authoritarian typology has further focused to delineate various types of personalist leaders as in Jessica Weeks’ *Strongman and Strongmen: Authoritarian Regimes and the Initiation of International Conflict*. Weeks further divides personalists into Strongmen and Bosses—those with, and without military backgrounds. This nuance serves to illustrate that the larger categories are rigid in general formation, but within those categories there is still diversity of elite background that can indeed influence elite preference.

Weeks’ analysis leads us to the second and equally important definition: international conflict. In order to understand whether a regime has resorted to international conflict, or war, we must define what that means. In Weeks’ analysis she refers to established literature defining international conflict as the threat, display or use of military force short of war by one member state is explicitly directed towards the government, official representatives, official forces, property or territory of another state” (Jones, Bremer, and Singer, 168). As such, all conflicts the regimes engage in during the period of study will be judged by these metrics—establishing a rather broad understanding of conflict beyond those involving direct military-to-military confrontation.

The final term necessary for understanding this analysis is collective memory. Sometimes referred to as historical memory—this term refers to the identity of a people formed around their collective understanding of themselves in history. Collective memory is, according to Maurice Halbwachs, a selective process of the collective whereby history is selectively reinterpreted to suit the evolving needs of the group over time (Wang 2012, 22). Wang, on the other hand, adds that historical memory is another avenue through which people frame, or contextualize, the events that occur around them and the way that they

understand their place in those events. He sees collective historical as a nationally and culturally linked set of shared mythologies which impact identity and behavior (Wang 2012, 23-24). Though, there exist several other camps which understand how collective memory is formed, the important defining characteristic of historical memory is that it serves to form identity and beliefs around a shared narrative, whether real or mythologized, and then influences group behavior impacting the available acceptable behaviors and the preferences of actors within that group (Goldstein and Keohane 2019, 12).

3. ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Case Selection Logic

The cases I have chosen to focus on for this study represent most similar cases for East Asian authoritarian regimes. Given the relative dearth of available information on many contemporary authoritarian regimes in Asia, I have opted to focus on one contemporary case—China—and compare its historical trajectory and contemporary behavior to the historical regime in Imperial Japan. Additionally, studying historical regimes allows for the most concrete data for empirical analysis. By limiting the number of contemporary regimes studied, issues with data production are also limited. In regards to logic behind the selection of the specific cases, they were chosen because in both cases we find or have found authoritarian systems and longstanding unresolved border tensions with neighboring countries where conflict, diplomatic or military, is assumed. Representing different regime types, contexts, and collective historical memories, these two cases present an opportunity to gain insight into whether collective memory plays a role in determining the conflict preferences of authoritarian regimes and shed light on the interaction between collective memory and other complicating determinants.

3.2 Hypotheses and Contributing Factors

This piece will explore the conflict preferences of both China under the leadership of Xi Jinping, and of Imperial Japan during the Showa era in an effort to address the question: **does collective memory serve as a determinant of authoritarian regimes' preferences for**

direct military conflict? This question is the result of the continued development of two methodological camps, both focused on answering fundamental questions regarding the formation of preference in governments. Regime typology theorists have laid the ground work for understanding patterns of behavior for each type of regime, but have also advocated for studies into the formation of preference within individual cases in order to provide nuance and fill knowledge gaps with additional determinants. Academics interested in the causal impact of ideas, memory, and identity have responded to this need over time—creating a rigorous framework of analysis capable of establishing determinants, or causal impact, of ideas, identity, and collective memory.

3.3 Analysis and Data Generation

In order to provide a base scaffolding for the analysis, it is important to draw on previous, proven determinants in order to better understand when regimes deviate from expected behavior and other determinants such as collective memory could be impacting regime decision making. To qualify that a behavior is deviant I will rely upon established literature regarding behavioral predispositions of each. This literature has situated regime type as a primary determinant of conflict engagement regime type. The two will be analyzed across their period of authoritarian government and categorized according to their respective regime type and domestic audience relationship using information presented in accordance with Jessica Weeks' typology work. The periods of authoritarian government will be broken down further into time periods based on contemporary conflicts in order to provide a timeline of behavior and chart moments of interest for the following collective memory analysis.

In order to provide a definitive assessment of the system I will attempt to categorize the government using the framework created by Jessica Weeks. Weeks categorizes personalist regimes using eight core questions regarding consolidation of power and political organization to establish degree of personalization (Weeks 2012, 336).

Regime Typology Framework	
1.	Whether access to high government office depends on the personal favor of the leader
2.	Whether country specialists viewed the politburo or equivalent as a rubber stamp for the leader's decisions
3.	Whether the leader personally controlled the security forces
4.	If there is a supporting party, does the leader choose most of the members of the politburo equivalent?
5.	Was the successor to the first leader, or is the heir apparent, a member of the same family, clan, tribe, or minority ethnic group as the first leader?
6.	Has normal military hierarchy been seriously disorganized or overturned, or has the leader created new military forces loyal to him personally?
7.	Have dissenting officers or officers from different regions, tribes, religions, or ethnic groups been murdered, imprisoned, or forced into exile?
8.	If the leader is from the military, has the officer corps been marginalized from most decision making?

(Weeks 2012, 336)

Aside from these stringent criteria for determining personalization, there are several less stringent factors to consider. To be deemed personalist a regime must exhibit a struggle for power where one leader gains power and continued support from the system while simultaneously limiting the political power of his supporting elite demonstrably (Geddes 1999, 123). This demonstrable limiting of other political forces is necessary for, often times, personalists develop a party around themselves for support. However, these parties' political power is kept in check and their membership is often of hard line loyalists such as in North Korea (Geddes 1999, 124). For the other two pure regime types, things become more easily defined once personalism is ruled out as often both select a leader for the party or junta. In this typology, single party regimes are considered established after "holding regular elections in which there is some competition, either from opposition parties or within the dominant party" (Geddes 1999, 124). This, combined with party influence over a chosen leader's policy choices, is sufficient to evidence a single party regime. Military juntas, similarly, are evidenced by a group of military leaders selecting and appointing a military leader of the state and consistently exhibiting some influence over them. In order to provide greater detail regarding the regimes' functions I will also attempt to provide primary and secondary source documentation of relationships between political elites, domestic audience, and the military. To support my categorization I will rely on existing data provided by Jessica Weeks in her analysis. However, in regards to time periods or states which were not covered in their analyses, I will rely on the questions they provided to generate accurate categorization for those regimes in order to provide a base line understanding of their behavior.

Along with regime type, I will plot moments of military conflict involving each of the regimes. This timeline of events will serve to establish periods of interest around conflicts where collective memory could have played a role in determining whether a conflict was initiated. It is in centered around these key moments that I will focus my collective memory analysis. In this way, the analysis will show the historical trajectory of beliefs as being influenced and influencing such events from the past and into the future while affording specific insight into whether those beliefs plausibly played, or did not play a role in determining particular behavior in conflicts.

In order to assess whether collective memory is a determinant at all, a generalizable national collective memory must first be established. In order to do so, I will rely on the concrete methodologies laid out by Goldstein and Wang—focusing a core set of questions to establish what the collective memory is at a given time and how that collective memory

impacts the identity and beliefs of people in the country. Firstly, as described by Goldstein, I will attempt to describe and evidence the three different types of ideas present within the regime and the society at large: the worldviews, principled beliefs, and causal beliefs. Where applicable, I will investigate Wang’s additional forms of collective identity—proving collective memory existence through the existence of rules which define group membership or constitutive norms, relational content or group references to other groups, and or social purpose or content defining which roles are acceptable for people to perform.

Framework to Establish Presence of Collective memory		
Type of Collective Memory	Form of Expression	Form of Measurement
Worldviews	Represents the broadest forms of collective understanding and framing such as individualism or collectivism, intellectual movements, or religion.	Measurement of all criteria will be formed based around primary and secondary source documents of civilian interviews, memorialization and monuments, educational materials, government documents and speeches, and polling data. This data, when collected, will be interpreted to understand whether behaviors are random or represent wider trends of behavior and beliefs within society. Additionally, all data collected will be scrutinized for its source and the ways in which its collection could skew its interpretation.
Principled Beliefs	Socially grounded beliefs of right or wrong existing independent of worldviews which function as a guide for action. Example: beliefs about human rights.	
Causal Beliefs	Understanding of cause and effect relationships, particularly regarding interactions with recognized elite groups. Example: the way that scientific development or collective protest can impact policy.	

Constitutive Norms	Norms or rules that define group membership, whether by exclusion or inclusion.	
Relational Content	The ways in which a group views their relations to other groups or identities and cultural references to those groups and identities.	
Social Purpose Content	The rules that define what roles and behaviors are appropriate to perform within a given community.	

It is important to note that of these six frameworks, none is more important than another in fulfilling the requirement for the existence of a collective memory or identity. Wang encourages researchers to probe each framework given that most collective memory is used, to a degree, as all of them. However, Wang highlights the usefulness of focusing on one to narrow focus and provide greater detail—but also because certain forms of collective memory or identity will not exist in every case (Wang 2012, 37). With this in consideration, if one form of identity formation is more pronounced in a regime it will be given more attention and impact the forthcoming analysis.

By establishing these core beliefs existence, the group identity is also established. With a concrete understanding of group existence and the rules that define group membership and govern group understanding, the analysis can then proceed to focus on how those beliefs can influence interactions within the group and with other groups. This analysis of the avenues of influence will also be structured using the shared framework of Keohane, Goldstein, and Wang. Here I will analyze whether an established collective memory serves as a behavioral roadmap, as a focal point, or whether or how it is institutionalized and reinforced politically. To answer these key questions and satisfy the requirements of this framework I will gather primary and secondary sources related to public opinion and social movements, government references to historical memory used in public speeches or in political communication and documents, and collective understanding of history through memorialization and education. This data, like the data collected to form the other two

timelines, will be related to a fixed point in time and history. This is because, as Wang highlights, he and many other researchers agree that collective memory as a variable for political action is best studied empirically in its “concrete historical settings” where the data is most stable for empirical analysis (Wang 2012, 36).

Framework to Establish Causal Pathway of Collective Memory		
Causal Route	Impact	Measurement
Ideas as Roadmaps	Influences the personal preferences of an actor and shapes their understanding of strategies available to them.	Measurement of all criteria will be formed based around primary and secondary source documents of civilian interviews, memorialization and monuments, educational materials, government documents and speeches, and polling data. This data, when collected, will be interpreted to understand whether behaviors are random or represent wider trends of behavior and beliefs within society.
Ideas as Focal Points	Serves as a common goal for elites to maintain the status quo at minimum. Provides a field for negotiation where certain values are always upheld amongst elites. This impact is predicated on mutual cultural, religious, or normative worldviews.	
Institutionalization of Ideas	This causal path is indicated by laws, agencies, norms, or operating procedures formed by the government in order to uphold or change certain aspects of collective memory. Can be formed by leaders themselves or by strong social pressure from non-elites.	Additionally, all data collected will be scrutinized for its source and the ways in which its collection could skew its interpretation.

Once data is collected and interpreted, it will be easier to understand how, or if the collective memory of a regime impacted the decision of the regime to go to war or not. If there is enough evidence indicative of trends of behavior within a regime beyond circumstantial evidence or anecdotal, it will be considered conclusive enough for this study. As previously mentioned, large-N studies are difficult or impossible to conduct in closed and semi-closed regimes. However, considering all aspects above, this research framework presents a stringent enough analysis to indicate causality and warrant further research should evidence present itself.

While this analysis seeks only to prove the existence and influence of collective memory on decisions to engage in conflict, it will also necessarily depict the plausible causal routes of its influence simply through depiction of collective memory's causal routes. After ascertaining the existence of various ideas and the potential avenues of their impact, the analysis will extrapolate upon the data—assessing whether collective memory plausibly served to reenforce, complicate, or was irrelevant to the regimes' efforts to engage in conflict. This process will be repeated for all moments of interest highlighted in the timelines generated in the first half of the analysis. It is my hope that by applying this experimental framework of collective memory analysis to regime behavior over time and differing scenarios, the analysis will derive new relationships between them—elucidating if, and how they all relate to a regime's desire to engage in direct conflict. As highlighted by Weeks and Wang, previous frameworks have taught us much about authoritarian regimes and their preferences—however, delving into the preferences of those actors and the society that influences them can only bring us closer to true understanding of those phenomena. I hope this explorative research design can bridge the epistemological gap and cover for the blind spots of both methodologies. Ideally, this study will open up larger discussions and further hypothesis generation regarding the relationship between collective memory, authoritarian regimes, and war—but also support collective memory as a determinant worth analyzing more generally in future political science research.

4. ANALYSIS 1 - IMPERIAL JAPAN

4.1 Regime Type Defined

Imperial Japan is an interesting case from a typological standpoint. In previous typology studies it was left unexplored as an authoritarian regime likely because, at face value, it represents a hereditary monarchical system with the emperor as the sole ruler and executor by divine right. Additionally, most typology studies focus on the modern era from the Cold War onward. Other scholars within the pluralist history tradition however, have incorrectly labeled Imperial Japan a militarist country, or junta. In actuality, Imperial Japan's military was never fully able to seize control of the reins of power and instead found themselves balancing with other elite groups in order to achieve their goals (Bix 1982, 8). According to historian Herbert Bix, there is often the mistaken belief that fascist movements displaced and replaced previous systems of control when in reality, fascist movements coopted the existing sources of authority and elites and necessarily were cooperative with other elite groups and even, in Japan's case, monarchies (Bix 1982, 4).

Japan's government leading up to and during the second World War was a fledgling constitutional monarchy heavily dependent on the military for legitimacy. While the emperor had many personalistic traits such as the right to create or veto any policy, the Showa emperor was ultimately used as a ceremonial signal of authority by elite groups with the power to create policy in a system somewhere between party, personalist, and junta—a true hybrid regime according to Jessica Weeks's typology theory.

4.1.1 Did access to high government office depend on the personal favor of the leader?

In Imperial Japan, the emperor was seen as the source of legitimacy for all branches of government and—in theory—the final executor of all decisions made by those branches (Bix 1982, 3). This placed himself, and his servants and advisors above all other members of society and allowed them the absolute right to create policy (Bix 1982, 3). Because of this, being a member of high government office or the military was dependent on acceptance and respect for the imperial cult. However, as a constitutional monarchy there existed a political elite spread across several parties operating within the Diet which created and determined law within the empire. These elite were elected semi-democratically, however, due to lower and lower voter turnout over time, were often entrenched due to corruption or connections to large business conglomerates—the Zaibatsu (Bix 1982, 10).

Yet, these political positions were mediated not by the emperor's approval, but by his removal of approval or granting of explicit approval to certain elites. Often throughout the interwar period and the war itself, the emperor used his authority to prevent consolidation of power within the ministries or within the military by creating appointments to key political offices such as cabinet positions (Bix 1982, 5). These cabinets, often headed by military leaders, were able to balance the key interests of the elites within each group by creating imperialist foreign policy to the benefit of all groups while criminalizing and arresting opposition parties and dissidents (Bix 1982, 6).

4.1.2 Did country specialists view the politburo or equivalent as a rubber stamp for the leader's decisions?

Due to the cabinets' mixed composition, it would seem that the emperor had an ever-present hand in the decisions made but his representatives in the cabinet were there to balance the interests of the differing elite groups which had their own representatives in the cabinet. This suggests that rather than functioning as a rubber stamp, the cabinet was a forum for the elite groups to create mutually beneficial policy rather than to explicitly create policy on the emperor's behalf.

4.1.3 Did the leader personally control the security forces?

The Meiji constitution dictates in articles three and four that the emperor was the sacred and absolute leader of the empire—endowing him with absolute powers without compromise (Bix 1982, 9). In furtherance of this, in article eleven of the Meiji constitution it is further articulated that the emperor was the “supreme commander” of the armed forces—both army and navy—necessitating his say in all major military decisions and policies (Bix 1982, 9). However, practically the emperor served mostly as a tie-breaker in times of policy contention or political turmoil such after the assassination of Prime Minister Inukai in 1932 when he appointed a retired admiral to the head of his cabinet on “national unity” (Bix 1982, 9). In most cases, the emperor was seen as the source of authority rather than an actual decisionmaker—giving bureaucrats and elites in his employ the authority to make policy on his behalf and making his actual input on policy wholly unnecessary (Bix 1982, 9).

In this way, while the emperor was the official leader and commander of all armed forces, his existence served more as a rubber stamp to the military elites directly in control of the military. While, in theory, the emperor was able to veto policy and his word would have been considered absolute, in practice he was beholden to the elite audience and only inserted himself in times of absolute necessity and gave tacit consent to the policies and initiatives

they had created. As such, Imperial Japan does not truly show this trait of personalist authoritarianism and demonstrates a degree of autonomy within the military command structure.

4.1.4 Has normal military hierarchy been seriously disorganized or overturned, or has the leader created new military forces loyal to him personally?

Due to the system of emperor worship, the military was necessarily loyal from its command to the soldiers within it as with all other elite groups. Thus, there were no units created explicitly to serve as a loyal guard. General organization within the military was, rather than disrupted, made more and more advanced over the existence of the regime through the incorporation of civilian defense groups which helped the military to both indoctrinate the public and increase policy support, but to bring more members of society and local authority structures under the direct control of the military (Bix 1982, 6). This resulted in increasing support to the military through the context of imperial service, manifesting in peasant and small land-owning classes espousing pro-military ideology—understanding themselves as the base on which the authoritarian regime was founded (Bix 1982, 17). With this increasing grass roots and political pressure, the military freed itself from many restraints and gained considerable influence over the political system in Japan through imperial appointment to the cabinets—placing itself as co-equal to the other elite groups in the regime (Bix 1982, 9).

4.1.5 Have dissenting officers or officers from different regions, tribes, religions, or ethnic groups been murdered, imprisoned, or forced into exile?

Political repression and restrictions on expression were commonplace in Imperial Japan. The Home and Justice Ministry and the police had worked throughout the 20's to exacerbate fears of internal enemies such as communists and other radicals (Bix 1982, 7). This pressure is what pushed the Diet to create the Peace Preservation Law of 1925 and its 1928 revision which made any association with a group or ideology with the objective of changing the form of government or “disavowing the system of private ownership” a criminal behavior carrying a penalty of ten years of hard labor in prison, and in 1928 made it a crime punishable by death (Bix 1982, 7). This law criminalized any criticism of the capitalist system or of the system of emperor worship and led to the creation of new police forces aimed at policing thought—leading to mass arrests (Bix 1982, 7). This law, in theory targeted against communists and those who would deny private property rights, was applied liberally to national socialist groups as well as communists (Tansman 2009, 44). Rather than specifically

targeting any ideology or group, the Peace Preservation Law targeted all groups and ideologies deemed to threaten the Meiji constitution and political organization of the hybrid regime—this included fascist groups such as the “reform bureaucrats” who sought to overturn the Meiji constitution (Tansman 2009, 44). By 1935, this law had led to the destruction of all opposition parties within the Diet with the arrest of the central committee of the Japan Community party in March of that year (Bix 1982, 8). These laws are what concretized the authoritarian system and represented a union of the interests of the pseudo-fascist ministries, the military elite, and the political-economic elite (Bix 1982, 8).

4.1.6 If there was a supporting party, did the leader choose most of the members of the politburo equivalent?

While there was no explicit single party affiliated with the authoritarian system in Japan, the Home and Justice ministries both functioned as such within the context of the system (Bix 1982, 5). These ministries, the military, and the Zaibatsu effectively formed several “parties” influencing and determining policy within Japan through a marriage of interests where the various parties exercised absolute power within their sphere of influence while working together to draft and implement policy which supported their continued pursuit of imperial policy objectives (Bix 1982, 8). This system divided control into the police and military who controlled the colonies as well as enforcing political repression in mainland Japan, the Zaibatsu and the Diet they controlled were in complete control of the economic life within Japan (Bix 1982, 8). These spheres of influence while subservient to the will of the emperor, formed spheres of tacit consent where the emperor as an executive only vetoed behavior in times of absolute necessity (Bix 1982, 9). In order to mediate the interests of the three groups, party cabinets were formed. These cabinets, chosen by the political party in power, were filled with members of the party. According to historian Herbert Bix, these cabinets served several purposes over their existence:

“(a) they coopted, middle class strata that could not be recruited effectively by repressive means;

(b) they helped to suppress and demobilize peasant and working class struggles against the system of discrimination in the countryside, as well as struggles for a fairer distribution of wealth and a measure of democracy, both of which challenged the system's stability;

(c) they worked to turn class resentments and social crises outward by whipping up support for war and for imperialist expansion; and

(d) they tried to conciliate and contain disputes between dominant groups of the ruling bloc.” (Bix 1982, 16).

As previously highlighted, the emperor inevitably appointed members of the military to these cabinets in order to mediate between the interests of the groups represented and maintain an equilibrium to avoid political instability such as after the assassination of Prime Minister Inukai in 1932 (Bix 1982, 9). In this way, the cabinets represented a union of imperial will, the economic interests of the Zaibatsu and landlord class, and the military—creating a de-facto politburo (Bix 1982, 16).

4.1.7 Was the successor to the first leader, or is the heir apparent, a member of the same family, clan, tribe, or minority ethnic group as the first leader?

As a hereditary monarchy, the emperor of Japan was a member of the same imperial family which continues to exist to this day. In regards to leaders of the other respective spheres of influence such as the political-economic elite and military, because of the pre-existing cast system hierarchy within Japan these leaders also tended to be from the same families and social classes (Bix 1982, 10). This impacted both the House of Peers and the Imperial Household where previous ruling elite, the Daimyo, transitioned rapidly into financial and industrial elite groups—the Zaibatsu (Bix 1982, 10). While in theory the class system was made illegal during the Meiji Restoration in the 1800’s, the accumulated wealth and the continued social aspects of the system remained present well into the Showa period (Bix 1982, 3).

4.1.8 If the leader is from the military, has the officer corps been marginalized from most decision making?

While the emperor himself was not an ex-member of the military, he was under the Meiji constitution granted the title of supreme commander of the armed forces. While the emperor was able to advocate for policy or to veto it, the military structure underneath him was given a great degree of autonomy—particularly in the overseas colonies in mainland East Asia and Southeast Asia (Bix 1982, 10).

4.1.9 Regime Type Conclusion

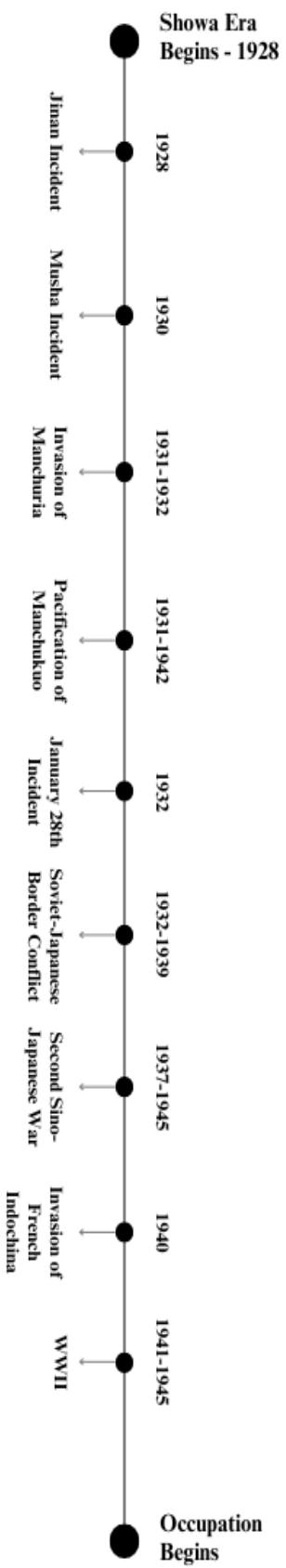
Even after analysis through the Weeks’ typology it is exceedingly clear that Imperial Japanese fascism represented a complex system that struggles to fit into our modern understanding of authoritarianism. We see a leader able to make any policy or appointment he pleased, a military able to control overseas colonies as well as influence the domestic power structure and legislation, and a group of powerful political-economic elite able to

create legislation and eliminate political rivals with draconian thought policing. Along the lines of our framework, it would appear that Japan, under this authoritarian structure, represented a non-consolidated hybrid regime. Like a mast functions as the most key structural part of a great ship, the emperor stood as the common support for all other elite groups within Imperial Japan. The military and economic elite, like attached sails, propelled Japan towards policy in furtherance of their own mutual goals of imperialism and resource acquisition for industry. While, without the emperor these forces could not hope to catch the wind and the ship could not hold together, the emperor stood as a largely unmoving piece of the architecture of the regime. Thus, Imperial Japan represents a very particular hybrid regime exhibiting elements of personalism, junta, and party—both gaining political legitimacy for their choices from the legalized imperial cult which extended absolute authority to them. These groups at the time competed for power and their dynamics began to change more throughout the war, but ultimately shared interests enough to prevent power from being entirely consolidated by one group or another for the duration of Imperial Japan's existence. Nevertheless, based on the growing authoritarian nature of the regime over time, it is clear that there was a high likelihood of military conflict based on established understandings of authoritarian regime behavior.

4.2 Military Conflict Timeline

This timeline of military conflict for Imperial Japan begins with 1928 with the beginning of the Showa era. While the empire had existed since the 1800s, the constitutional monarchy began to devolve into authoritarianism during this period as evidenced in the previous section. Additionally, this timeline ends with the Second World War as, although the emperor maintained his place, the role of the emperor was diminished and the authoritarian system abolished during the American occupation (Bix 1982, 2). As evidenced by the timeline, we can see a slowly escalating series of conflicts which mirrors the slow dissolution of democratic institutions as authoritarian elite groups competed for control over Japanese politics—suggesting that established understandings of the relationship between authoritarianism and violence do hold true.

Military Conflict in Imperial Japan



4.3 Establishing Collective Memory in Imperial Japan

In order to understand how Imperial Japan functioned and why it functioned as it did, we need to gain insight into the way the Japanese understood their place in history and how this helped to shape their identity on a human, and political level. Before establishing causality, however, the presence of a collective memory must first be established through at least one of its six forms. This process of collective memory formation took place during and following the Meiji era when the country was reformed around unified national standards in efforts to modernize and compete with its European counterparts and secure the stability of the new, imperial system.

This competition was spurred on by the humiliation of forced trade with the United States and other Western powers—a history which greatly impacted one of Japan's future military leaders and political architects during the Meiji era, Admiral Yamagata. This experience of collective trauma and humiliation formed the core of the future Japanese identity—particularly amongst the elite of the Meiji period who witnessed the shelling of their fortresses by Western forces, and then the civil war and political turmoil generated by it (Smethurst 2020, 4). This foundational struggle precipitated the need for a unified country capable of defending itself against the imperialist forces intent on dominating Japan—a need which leaders like Admiral Yamagata would seek to answer with concrete policy to create a national identity. This idea was not unique to the elite, however, scholarship centered around the inequality of colonial distribution and international economic and legal frameworks permeated Japan by the 1920s, turning that shame and trauma of conquest into a drive to conquer (Young 2017, 275). This phenomenon in Japanese collective identity, Asianism, was centered around this feeling of humiliation and drove Japanese imperialist ideology—justifying imperialism in mainland Asia as an effort to rid the region of European imperialism and ideological influence while creating a multi-racial state under the stewardship of the beneficent Japanese (Young 2017, 275). This movement by the Japanese was both an organic response from trauma as with many other East Asian nations impacted by Western imperialism, but was also a calculated and institutionalized change in worldviews and relational content cultivated by the elite to remodel and rehabilitate the concept of empire to a previously imperialized nation (Young 2017, 281). This newly unifying collective identity was centered around ideas of Japanese virtue and compassion—an attempt to make distinct Japanese attempts to imperialize from the racist dominance of the Western dominated world order (Young 2017, 281).

This national political identity would be shaped by more than tragedy, however—the defeat of Russia in 1905 was a lasting boon to the Japanese and formed a collective triumph after a vicious and draining war which cost them thousands of lives and forced the government to take on foreign loans to support themselves (Kowner 2022, 2). This collective triumph was centered around the defeat of the Russian Baltic Fleet at the battle of Tsushima—resulting in the destruction of the entire fleet with the exception of three vessels (Kowner 2022, 2). This victory allowed Japan to display a compassionate, but strong country—capable of eliminating its foes but respecting the soldiers they fought. The naval admiral’s visit to the wounded Russian Vice Admiral along with the release of a Russian hospital ship filled with wounded was heavily documented and disseminated (Kowner 2022, 4–5). This collective triumph, however, also left the Japanese public feeling short-changed by the diplomatic process as—much to their surprise—the Japanese government capitulated to some Russian demands in the peace process due to the large economic toll the conflict had taken (Kowner 2022, 5). This public outrage resulted in protests and, ultimately, a month of riots that would end the current cabinet—serving to reinforce ideas about the unfairness of the Western dominated system (Kowner 2022, 5). This event became a foundational moment for the new empire and was subject to years of memorialization by the government—from a display of the ships immediately after the war, decades of features in books and textbooks, coastal monuments marking the victory and virtuous character of the Japanese people, and most impressively, the total preservation of the warship Mikasa as a war memorial which attracted more than 500,000 visitors a year in the period leading up to the second world war (Kowner 2022, 5–9). This battle served as a strong locus of relational content between the Japanese and the West, but also constitutive content—highlighted in textbooks and literature of the era as a moment that displayed the virtue and strength of the Japanese in the face of those who had once sought to imperialize and humiliate them (Kowner 2022, 10).

Another poignant evidence of Japanese collective identity is that of the emerging idea of national identity beyond the preexisting class system. Imperial Japan before the Showa era was characterized by the mixing and changing metrics of identity due to the fall of the feudal system and the government efforts to rapidly industrialize and modernize society. During the Meiji Restoration in late 1800s, the feudal class system was abolished legally but remained present in the minds of the Japanese people for generations to come. These class divisions and the tensions associated with them represented a threat to the established Meiji constitution—precipitating first communist, and later, national socialist movements within Japan (Tansman

2009, 41). It was in this context of class strife and a quest for national unity that elites slowly began to reform and reshape class relations and national identity behind the concept of *Minzoku*—the ethno-state—an idea of identity which superseded and subsumed preexisting identity concepts like race, clan, community, language, religion, and others (Tansman 2009, 39). This concept of *Minzoku*, though in its infancy in Meiji, proliferated throughout the period before the Showa era and began to create the Japanese collective identity outside of the traditional class and regional boundaries—redefining the identity, irrespective of class, around new shared constitutive norms, relational content, social purpose content, and cognitive models.

Before the creation and institutionalization of this ideology in the Meiji period, much of rural Japan did not have a strong national or even regional identity. Rather than these larger forms of identity, people had homogenized into smaller peasant class units known as *buraku*, or hamlets—simply clusters of houses where small groups of people lived off the common land in cooperative groups based on strong loyalty, conformity, and harmony (Smethurst 2020, 54). These units by their very nature precipitated an anti-individualist, conformist system which pervaded rural society's worldviews, constitutive norms, and social purpose content well into the modern era where, even after attempts throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, these hamlet subdivisions remained the center of activity in rural areas (Smethurst 2020, 55). It was in these largely isolated units that the military elite predominantly focused their national unity efforts and attempted to form a national collective identity by mimicking traditional rural leadership organization first in reservist groups then later youth groups and national defense women's associations (Smethurst 2020, 56). This initiative proved so effective that by the Showa period all rural public services and those in them were inseparable from these reservist groups to the point that the reservist branch comprised most men between the ages of twenty and forty (Smethurst 2020, 66). Figures from the census data between 1921 and 1939 show that in the rural town of Anjo, 32% of adult men between the ages of 20 and 39 were formally in the reservist association—a number which grew another 10% by 1939 (Smethurst 2020, 70).

Before the Showa era began, the elite who modernized the government and military in the Meiji and Taisho eras such as Field Marshal Yamagata and his proteges sought to reinforce warrior class beliefs and democratize them to all classes in order to create national unity (Smethurst 2020, 2). These beliefs, exemplified by the preexisting warrior class's beliefs about *bushido*, were characterized by a belief in the warlike spirit based in loyalty to the emperor and patriotism (Smethurst 2020, 3). While these beliefs served only the warrior class initially, it

was these beliefs that Yamagata and others sought to instill in all classes when they worked to create a universal military conscription program in 1873—breaking down class barriers to service and allowing the values of duty and obligation to permeate society at large as both a set of concrete worldviews about service, but particularly constitutive content regarding what roles must be fulfilled (Smethurst 2020, 5). It was in this initiative and the drafting of modern Japanese military ideology that elite such as Field Admiral Yamagata ensured the proliferation of quasi-religious values of duty, loyalty, and status being tied tightly to national service under the emperor (Smethurst 2020, 3).

Although class amongst the citizenry and ex-nobility of Japan was now only socially enforced, the one class unaffected by this change was the emperor himself. The Meiji Restoration also precipitated the legalized system of emperor worship to reinforce the preexisting warrior class beliefs and centralize collective national identity around him. Beginning with the 1891 Imperial Rescript on Education which instituted mandatory inclusion of state and emperor worship in classrooms, these originally samurai class specific beliefs were made common throughout the populace through education (Bix 1982, 4). By the Showa era, these traditional Confucian ideas had permeated society from the bureaucracy to the common people, instilling the belief that they must follow without question and respect and revere government officials and the emperor (Bix 1982, 9). This reform began to impact largely the educated elite groups and village leadership because, before the late 19th century, most of the non-elite rural Japanese were illiterate (Smethurst 2020, 96). This is particularly salient as even by the 1930s only 20% of Japanese had a middle school education or higher (Smethurst 2020, 96). While educational attainment was low in these communities, with the addition of youth group indoctrination, the ideological education was complete regardless of class status or age—a system only buttressed by the strong enforcement by existing landlord elite and their new military allegiance. Education was a powerful tool, but dedication and military success were also a powerful component as, just as previously in the politics of the buraku, success was paramount. Both military success and dedication from a young age through youth group participation directly correlated to leadership status and community respect—so evident was this that, in Anjo, reservist officials at all levels were three to four times more likely than others to have served as youth branch leaders than men not given leadership positions (Smethurst 2020, 117). This discrepancy in education and status allowed traditional landlord elite groups an advantage in the military and in local politics and ended up allowing them, by nature of their higher educational attainment, to gain higher rank in the military and local military-related

groups—thus integrating the landlord elite of the buraku with the military elite of the nation (Smethurst 2020, 97). This system was so successful that, by the period of 1940-1943 the top six leaders within Anjo held a total of 27 local community posts which ranged from dedicated reservist group leadership, to school district posts, fire chiefs, town treasurers, drill instructors, to hamlet chief (Smethurst 2020, 107). In this way, causal beliefs about elite groups within traditional society slowly began to incorporate the military into that beliefs structure—leading to a society where military success was inseparable from systems of leadership and control.

This integration between traditional community power structures and military were so effective that, by the 1960s, many of the same men still controlled many local positions (Smethurst 2020, 108). These positions, like those of drill instructors, were not necessarily rewarding in a monetary sense, however. These positions represent a true reflection of the collective memory and identity of the Japanese at the time as a form of causal belief, constitutive beliefs, and social purpose content as it displays the willingness of Japanese to accept harsh hours with little pay to serve their perceived community and nation (Smethurst 2020, 123). The drill instructors for reservist groups and youth groups were expected to teach between 90 and 120 hours per year with a total income of five to ten yen per year—however, based on interviews with former drill instructors, these positions were their obligation to invest in the spiritual and physical well-being of their hamlet, village, and national identity (Smethurst 2020, 123). However, these drill instructors represented only one job within one group of the various military affiliated groups. Women's groups served their community tirelessly by organizing deployment celebrations and funerals for soldiers and aiding their families, additionally they conducted agricultural repairs and aided in military drills (Smethurst 2020, 125). The members of all groups were responsible for many traditionally important tasks within small village life—repairing roads, developing fields, forming cooperatives, planting and harvesting lumber, medical work, disaster relief and public services, and even helped to build schools (Smethurst 2020, 149).

Yamagata, as the most politically powerful and influential man in the Meiji period, was able to set the stage for the socialization of the Japanese people into the 20th century—both the average person and the elite of the upcoming era were indoctrinated by his policy, or by his personality directly (Smethurst 2020, 14). By the end of the Taisho period, this emperor worship and ideological dispersion had resulted in a feeling amongst the Japanese that they collectively had the honor to serve the emperor—particularly through military service. This feeling so pervasive that it was observed that rural youth joined local reservist groups almost

without exception, making up 80% of reservist forces and 40% of those eligible for mobilization in the 1920s (Smethurst 2020, 17). These groups remained voluntary until 1937 largely because of the military's unshaken confidence in rural support—a confidence buttressed by the intelligent integration of local reservist power structures and traditional village leadership systems where positions of power were granted by slowly gaining unanimous support rather than voting (Smethurst 2020, 17). While the reservist groups were semi-independent in their hamlets, they were not prone to straying from official doctrine. The buraku were largely conformist and unless a hamlet as a whole revolted against a landlord, they self-policed through reservist branches to the point that they had little to no police presence (Smethurst 2020, 65). Parallel to the work done in rural communities and faced with distinct challenges in urban centers, the military began to apply similar strategies and ally with industrial elites rather than landlords—sponsoring factory branches of its reservist groups which coopted the dedicated and rigorous factory workers by promoting factory paternalism and snuffing out labor ideologies before they could threaten ideas of national unity (Smethurst 2020, 19).

This sense of military service as a source of honor, duty, loyalty, and community respect was continued on beyond the Meiji and Taisho eras into the Showa. While this manifested through the integration of pre-Showa community values and nationalism, it was demonstrable in numbers. Beyond numbers of landlord officers, reservist group participation, or military-community leadership overlap—budget allocation alone is enough to evidence the salience of the new collective identity and memory. By the Showa era the services offered by women's branch, youth groups, and reservist groups were so culturally and bureaucratically integrated into local organization and identity that local government, not the state, financed their continued service (Smethurst 2020, 132).

Military reservist groups, from the city to the hamlet, were institutionalized by the military in this time period in a policy which appreciated the collective causal understandings and social purpose content of Japanese people and understood that by unifying collective identity regarding duty with the concept of national service and military duty, they were sure to forge a new collective Japanese identity related to success for the community, for the military, and for the nation (Smethurst 2020, 93-94). These groups, rural and urban reservists, represent a clear depiction of the existing collective identity of the Japanese at this time: worldviews shaped around religious dedication to their emperor and those endowed with his favor, constitutive norms that preclude intense 'warlike spirit' and dedication to nation and the

exclusion of individualism, and a core of social purpose content based in community leadership structures that determined which behaviors and roles were allowed and incentivized and which were not valuable to the community and to the nation at large. Through tireless integration into existing identity systems in the buraku, at the end of the Taisho era, these formerly hamlet specific values and long-held traditions had been transformed into nationalist practices emphasizing the values of conformity and cooperation in service of the nation under the emperor (Smethurst 2020, 142).

Forms Collective Memory Present	
Type of Collective Memory	Form of Expression
Worldviews and Principled Beliefs	Emperor Worship: One of the foundational worldviews within Imperial Japanese society was that of the quasi-religion surrounding the emperor. The cult of the emperor coopted traditional views of collectivism and non-democratic, hierarchical authority and integrated the emperor as the head of that system both politically and religiously. Thus, emperor worship also served as a principled belief in that it informed members of society on which actions were right and wrong or politically beneficial based on their perceived impact on the emperor.
Causal Beliefs	Emperor Worship: Through the diffusion of divine imperial authority through any and all imperial representatives, hierarchy was strictly enforced and those with any claim to authority were largely considered infallible. Minzoku: Closely related to emperor worship, this ethno-nationalist concept served as a replacement for traditional class and elite

	relations and seemingly democratized entry into that hierarchy. Having distinguished military service became a recognized tool to gain repute within the local community but also gaining political influence and elite status.
Constitutive Norms and Social Purpose Content	Minzoku: This concept of identity centered around honor, duty, harmony, and imperial military service. This concept served both as a constitutive norm and social purpose content—a union between traditional village hierarchy and the new imperial cult, seamlessly nationalizing identity. This concept also tied Japanese identity and societal status to military achievement and certain ‘Japanese’ behaviors such as loyalty, self-sacrifice, ideological orthodoxy, and military excellence while creating a uniform social purpose of service to the emperor whether through direct military service, reservist service, or through indirect material and social support to the military and reservist branches.
Relational Content	Asianism: After victimization by Western gunboat diplomacy, forced trade, and the internal strife which followed, Japanese of all societal strata began to develop negative views towards the West, and paternalistic views towards the other less-fortunate countries of East Asia. Asianism, the ideology that followed, had the Japanese see themselves as being the rightful leaders of East Asia and, through beneficent imperialism, the only ones capable of liberating Asia from the clutches of unfair Western imperialism.

	Minzoku: With the defeat of the Russian Navy in the Russo-Japanese War and the lackluster concessions which followed, Japanese public opinion began to further embrace ideas of Japanese ethno-national superiority—particularly vis-a-vis Western nations. The lack of territorial concessions also served to reinforce perception of the unfairness of the Western-led world order and contributed to Asianist beliefs which propelled Japan into East Asian colonialism and conflict with the West.
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4.4 Causal Routes of Collective Memory

As displayed in the timeline and regime typology sections, the nature of conflict in Imperial Japan was more of an escalating continuum rather than a series of wars with differing political objectives—this is consistent with the increasing consolidation of the authoritarian system throughout the Showa era which saw any semblance of democracy or free political expression curtailed by the end of the war. As such, having established the existence of a collective memory and identity of the Japanese in this time, we will explore the causal routes of its influence on the consolidation of this authoritarian system and the escalation of the continued conflict over the duration of the regime. To do so, we will rely on our second framework analyzing the function of previous forms of identity as being used as focal points, as roadmaps, or as being institutionalized by the government or the people. This analysis will center around each moment of conflict to track plausible causal impact before, during, and after when possible. This analysis tracks all major conflicts between 1928 at the ascension of the Showa emperor to the end of the authoritarian system beginning with the American occupation at the end of the second world war.

4.4.1 The Jinan Incident – 1928

The Jinan Incident, the first in a series of escalations by the Japanese in China, was representative of a confluence of several of the collective memory focal points—namely Minzoku, Asianism, and the emerging pro-military and anti-zaibatsu sentiment amongst the

Japanese. This incident involved the Japanese army intervening in the Chinese civil struggle between Chiang Kai-shek and the warlord backed Beijing government—the Japanese army, acting to ‘defend Japanese civilians’ in the city of Jinan, battled Chiang’s forces and seized control of the city by establishing a puppet government (Wei 2017, 46). This was done without consulting politicians back in Tokyo who, due to years of infiltration of the Zaibatsu, were seen by the military as elite competition rather than a source of authority for the military command (Wei 2017, 46). This represented a moment of divergence between elite groups at the very onset of the Showa era and while this incident ended with the Japanese military disbanding their puppet government within the city and returning the city to the Guomindang Chinese government in 1929, it was to be the first in a series of pseudo-invasions culminating in the full conquest of China under the full control of the military (Wei 2017, 47).

Recorded contemporarily by the Japanese Military media based in China—the move and the Japanese military itself was praised as having defending against the Chinese forces—painting them as violent, unruly looters threatening the local population (Wei 2017, 47–48). This depiction of the Chinese and by comparison, the Japanese, was representative of commonly held beliefs about ‘Japaneseness’ or *Minzoku*—that the Japanese had a unique warrior spirit that, as in the past, was guided by virtue, and compassion. This battle was painted by contemporary media as being not for conquest of the city, but rather to defend the Japanese civilians in Jinan from abuse at the hands of the Chinese. At the time, fresh in the memory of both the Japanese and Western nations, was an incident the prior year in which a battle between the Guomandang and warlords’ troops had led to mass looting and slaughter of foreigners of all backgrounds located near the battle (Wei 2017, 51). Japanese military media seemed to reference this incident and attempted to paint the Chinese looters as communists—echoing the explanation offered in 1927 by the Chinese government (Wei 2017, 52). In doing so, the Japanese military media not only depicted the Chinese as culturally inferior, but also depicted their political ideologies as inferior and destructive along now commonly accepted beliefs about communists within Japan. Similarly, this event fed into the Japanese conception of the ‘otherness’ of the Chinese and the unique beliefs about themselves through *Minzoku* and by extension, Asianism—likely reinforcing Japanese beliefs that they alone could reform Asia under the tutelage and guidance of their superior nation, culture, and race. In this way, the military’s actions in Jinan were representative of the influence of institutionalized ideas established in the Meiji era, but also represented the continuation of the policy of institutionalization through the military’s continued propaganda campaign through colony-

based media. This battle can also be seen as being influenced by the military's worldviews through Asianist ideology—having been indoctrinated into this collective memory, the military from the leadership to the common soldier viewed their actions as serving a greater concept of Japanese conquest and reform of Asia. Additionally, though undiscussed in the newspapers, these soldiers likely understood their options as being restricted to those that would bring them military prestige and, upon their return home, respect and leadership positions in their villages or cities. Thus, the Jinan incident represents a confluence of institutionalized collective memory and memory as a roadmap—justifying the actions of the Japanese in Jinan both ideologically through Asianism and *Minzoku* but also justifying it on an individual level through understanding of power within the Japanese military and society generally.

While this collective memory causally influenced those within the military, it competed with the attempts by other elite groups to control the situation. The Japanese military's media was generating many articles condemning the Chinese, however, domestic newspapers tended to question why Japan was in the area in the first place (Wei 2017, 52). Within days of the battles' commencement, Tokyo newspaper *Nichiichi Shimbun* had blamed the Japanese military for the conflict citing their hostile policy (Wei 2017, 53). Their argument was that, by positioning troops in China the Japanese military had not only failed to protect Japanese interests and civilians but had rather harmed the nation by jeopardizing trade with China and through that the \$440,000,000 worth of Japanese commercial interests there (Wei 2017, 53). This focus on economics is representative of a core reality of the elite system of Imperial Japan at this time. The *zaibatsu* still exercised a great deal of control over the Japanese government and were, along with Western pressure, still able to exert enough control over the situation to lead to the inevitable return of Jinan to the Chinese. The *zaibatsu*, reliant on the remaining decentralization within the power structure, managed to evade total war for the moment while the military seized the initiative—using the event to further institutionalize ideas beneficial to their continued goal of conquest. While both groups attempted to maximize their interests, however, they were both ultimately beholden to their allegiance to the emperor and the system built around him. As such, the function of memory as a focal point centered around the legitimacy of the emperor led also played a role in both the military capitulating and the acceptance of this event by the *zaibatsu* and the Japanese population—all groups content to continue negotiating for their interests later down the line but unified in their support of and by the imperial system.

Routes of Plausible Causal Influence	
Causal Route	Plausible Influence
Ideas as Roadmaps	Asianism: This event served as the first in a series of Japanese landgrabs and ‘incidents’ designed to legitimize further invasion. Militarist elements, emboldened by the lack of strong response, were inspired to continue to bring about the Asianist under Japanese leadership
Ideas as Focal Points	Asianism and Minzoku: The concept of Japanese Asianist imperialism served as a status quo of mutual benefit between the capitalist forces, the Zaibatsu, and the military. both groups were guided by established beliefs of Japanese superiority, exemplified by the attempted depiction of Chinese Nationalist forces as lawless, violent, and unable to self-govern. Emperor Worship: The Zaibatsu were content with economic benefit and were not interested in protracted conflict. The military, however, believed they represented imperial will unrestrained. Here the mutual focal point of the Emperor likely led to the de-escalation and eventual military withdrawal, as the military still somewhat respected the existing semi-democratic institutions as being endorsed by the emperor.
Institutionalization of Ideas	Minzoku: Institutionalization of this incident was twofold—both the military and Zaibatsu publishing very different accounts in order to sway public memory of the event. The military, better able to control the flow of information, used this moment to reinforce notions of Japanese exceptionalism and the need for Japanese paternalism over the ‘backwards’ countries of East Asia. The Zaibatsu attempted to control the balance of power and the narrative of the situation by publishing competing articles attempting to paint the military’s actions as

	threatening the safety of Japanese civilians and economic interests in the area. It is likely that due to increasing anti-Zaibatsu and pro-military sentiment among Japanese people that the military was taken as a more credible source of information and pro-Asianist, Minzoku sentiment was only further institutionalized.
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4.4.2 The Musha Incident – 1930

The Musha Incident, like the Jinan incident before it, was a continuation of previous hostilities carried into the Showa era from Taisho, and Meiji era imperialism. Conquest of Taiwan by the Japanese began much earlier in 1875 with troop deployment against the Qing government, however, the Japanese only gained full control of the territory in 1895—it is then that intense campaigns to ‘civilize’ the native Taiwanese and extract resources began (Berry 2022, 18-19). The zaibatsu and military were primarily interested in developing the land for camphor production and had, early on, adopted a policy of violent reprisal to subjugate the natives—and even the Han Chinese—they saw as “savage” or “brigands” (Berry 2022, 18). Even in the early phases of the conquest of Taiwan, it was clear that the concept of Minzoku and Asianism were spearheading the incursion into the new domain of the Japanese empire. By designating indigenous communities and the Han Chinese as unruly rebels and uncivilized savages, the Japanese simultaneously saw them as in need of Japanese leadership and culturally inferior to the Japanese—justifying “defensive conquest” to cordon off and repress these groups until their submission to Japan (Berry 2022, 19). This policy resulted in a pattern where the Japanese military would criminalize aspects of traditional culture and, when locals failed to abide by these rules, would engage in collective punishment (Berry 2022, 22). This resulted in the Japanese shelling Taiwanese villages and relocating survivors to government-supervised ghettos where they would be reeducated and stripped of their culture—when this proved difficult, the Japanese government would place trade embargoes designed to induce starvation until indigenous groups had no will to continue to fight for liberation (Berry 2022, 19).

This policy was the result of the hypocrisy of Asianism as a form of collective memory roadmap. Asianism presupposes that imperialism and victimization had created resentment and oppression—Qing imperialism being no different. However, Japan as a unique and superior culture had the ability to conduct imperialism, often violently, justified through its efforts not

to exploit, but to civilize. This is only evidenced by the early writings of Taiwan's first governor general, Kabayama Sukenori who remarked that it was his job to force them into submission through what he saw as the only language they understood: violent reprisal (Berry 2022, 20). This depiction of the natives is somewhat contradictory due to the competing notion of Asian liberation under Japan and the idea of *Minzoku* which supported the racial and cultural supremacy of the Japanese. This hypocrisy is further evident in the writings of the leader responsible for drafting Japan's policy towards the indigenous people, Mizuno Jun. In 1896, he articulated the design of his policy as follows,

"The future of Taiwan and its enterprises is in reality to be found within the savage territories. The promotion of these enterprises involves making the savages submit to our government, having them acquire proper living conditions, and have them emerge from their barbaric state. In order to conquer the savages force as well as benevolent care must be practiced at the same time . . . Like the previous government, we must establish offices of pacification and reclamation, assemble the savage chiefs to give them wine, cloth, and other products all while striving to educate them, we will then secure their good intentions. The felling of camphor trees, manufacture of camphor, management of forests, development of land, etc. should then proceed harmoniously." (Berry 2022, 21)

Mizuno describes a vision whereby the native population could be inculcated into the Japanese way of life—made part of *Minzoku*—and serve the imperial system through their work in the camphor industry. This Asianist image clearly lends itself to the Japanese vision of themselves as a beneficent civilizing leader of their neighbors more than a violent authoritarian state. Yet, when paired with *Minzoku*, the final proposal drafted by Mizuno was laced with racialized vitriol touting the Japanese as the superior race and leaving no place for others as equals within the empire, "Savages have no understanding of reason; there is no need to mention their lack of worldly knowledge. Sometimes they engage in agriculture, but mainly they roam the mountains and hunt for a living, killing and slaughter is a custom of theirs" (Berry 2022, 21). It is here that the impact of collective memory as a roadmap is evident in the creation of policy leading up to the Musha Incident, a policy which only served to drive indigenous groups like the Seediq further into a corner—resulting in mounting guerrilla attacks on Japanese camphor workers with death tolls rising throughout the 1890's and reprisals on indigenous communities growing in tandem (Berry 2022, 23). This culminated in the alliance of the camphor capitalist *zaibatsu* and military—both groups seeking to further their individual goals and rallying around the collective memory focal point of the imperial system and

Asianism to protect their interests. In 1899 the island was effectively split in two with an electrified border wall reinforced with barbed wire and landmines (Berry 2022, 24). This confluence served to protect camphor production, but also to establish full Japanese military control allowing for troop numbers to surge from 774 in 1899 to 3,335 in 1904 (Berry 2022, 23–24). This advancing of the policy led to an estimated indigenous death toll of over 10,000 by 1914 after successive advances of the border wall and decades of reprisal attacks along with the annexation of most indigenous territory, including the area of Musha (Berry 2022, 31–32). It was in this time that Musha was transformed into a Japanese administrative center and bustling tourist site and was marketed by the Japanese as proof of the success of their benevolent efforts to civilize the native peoples there—however, it was less pacified than the Japanese believed and was more akin to a Japanese enclave surrounded by ‘enemy territory’ (Berry 2022, 52). For the Taiwanese natives it was the seat of the enemy, the symbol of Japanese hubris, exposed and filled with easy targets for reprisal in the next uprising (Berry 2022, 70–71). It was this collective blindness created by collective memory which left many Japanese ignorant to growing resentment and completely shocked at news of such a violent uprising in Musha (Berry 2022, 71). The duality of Japanese identity formed through Asianism and Minzoku created a false sense of security and established relational content beliefs about where the Taiwanese natives existed in relation to the Japanese themselves—a false relationship where, in the Japanese imagination, the natives were being civilized and would inevitably become thankful for Japanese intervention. This relational content, part of Japanese collective memory roadmaps, led the Japanese to their style of governance in Musha.

Nowhere is this chronicled more accurately than in the writings of Sato Haruo who, while staying in Taiwan during the 1920s, wrote several works discussing the various conflicts between the natives and the Japanese, but also reflecting the mythologized and pseudo orientalist views of Japanese towards the native peoples (Berry 2022, 140). His writings discuss simultaneously the violent attacks of natives, but also the progress of refinement and elevation of the natives through the Japanese education systems and infrastructure in Musha (Berry 2022, 140). Particularly in Sato’s earlier writings, he was openly critical of native people—calling them cheap and crude—criticizing their rituals and violent attacks (Berry 2022, 142). Yet, soon after, Sato began to take an anti-colonial stance in regards to Taiwan—writing openly about the ways in which native violence was directly tied to the atrocities committed by the Japanese and that, as the Japanese ignored the impact of that violence, they too ignored the signs of their discontent and their attempts to bridge cultural gaps (Berry 2022, 142). Sato, as a non-military

writer under military funding, represents the duality of influence of Japanese collective identity through Asianism and *Minzoku*—simultaneously fetishizing certain characteristics of native peoples such as their generosity and respect for life while branding them neo-barbarians for their killings (Berry 2022, 143). Still, the innate incompatibility of Japanese Asianism and concept of *Minzoku* forces Sato to question imperial aspirations of complete Asian domination—caught between his ideas of Japanese racial superiority and native fetishization, Japanese beneficence and Japanese imperial barbarism. His writings, quite famous in Japan during the period, demonstrate that while Japanese ideology had permeated all strata of society, the innate hypocrisy of such institutionalized beliefs was not always accepted by cosmopolitan elite groups, even if those groups were powerless to resist the military and were forced to choose their words carefully under increasingly restrictive speech and thought laws. Still, his writings indicate a strong support of the native people—critiquing colonial government for its indifference to the practices, beliefs, and rules of the natives along with warning signs of their growing anger—a critique which would prove more meaningful a mere five years after his book on *Musha* was published (Berry 2022, 144)

The *Musha* incident itself was both influenced and influenced Japanese collective memory conclusively. The *Musha* incident was not the most violent revolt under Japanese rule, however it proved to be the last and most traumatizing for all sides—beginning when 300 *Seediq* fighters attacked *Musha*—killing 134 Japanese at a school (Berry 2022, 138-140). This attack led to a combined force of around 2,300 Han Chinese and Japanese troops descending on the region—engaging in an aerial bombing campaign, using chemical weapons, and a ground based manhunt for the leaders of the rebellion (Berry 2022, 136-137). This campaign would see 87 members of the leader’s tribe executed by decapitation, 85 more shot, 171 more killed by bombing, and another 296 by suicide (Berry 2022, 137). These figures are not reflective of the true death toll as the Japanese records do not document indigenous losses in general combat (Berry 2022, 138) This moment was, as with all other struggles, rooted in the relational content and causal understandings of Japanese society where, failing to subdue rioting peoples could result in a loss of respect or not attaining significant rank in the military—this is particularly poignant given Japanese understanding of national duty to the emperor and its integration into village power structures (Berry 2022, 138). This incident precipitated a wave of literature romanticizing, and even fetishizing native struggles against the colonial government—displaying the natives with tropes similar to the Western ‘noble savage’ from 1930 on until the 1960s (Berry 2022, 101). These writings were heavily influenced by Japanese

perceptions of Minzoku and racial predestination, similarly to Sato however, these writers also expressed a great deal of conflict dealing with these racial notions, sometimes placing the locus of inferiority in the culture and traditions of the native peoples—struggling to balance concepts of benevolent empire and Minzoku racial superiority (Berry 2022, 102).

Many descriptions after the Musha Incident depicted natives as human-like animals governed by strong desires and instincts rather than rational thought or intelligence—thus depicting them as inherently biologically incompatible with Minzoku or empire, but simultaneously a simple, virtuous group that should be pitied rather than destroyed by the empire (Berry 2022, 103). Contemporary authors tied these natives back to conceptions of Japanese identity through Minzoku to justify their criticism through the approved language of the regime—referring to pre-Meiji Japanese imagined gender and class roles in depictions of natives. These depictions painted the native as inhabiting a preexisting phase of evolution, but one that was not alien—native women subordinate and supportive of the man’s masculinity, while the native men were depicted through the lens of warrior culture and martial strength of the Japanese man (Berry 2022, 103). One such depiction, the short story *Women of the Savage Frontier* by Nakamura Chihei, depicts the journey of a physically and mentally ill Japanese artist to Taiwan where he finds himself falling for a native woman who Chihei describes as the opposite—existing with animalistic vitality and beauty (Berry 2022, 104). This story, like many others, places Japaneseness and civilization as the natural antithesis of native cultures and primitiveness, however seems to suggest a mediation of the two as a beneficial thing for both groups. This theme continues in other works by Chihei who, in their 1939 collection of short stories *The Mist-Enshrouded Barbarian Village*, sought to add human faces and motives to the natives who confronted Japan—thus rehabilitating them in the eyes of the Japanese people—while sticking close to official narratives regarding colonialization in order to justify and reinforce Japanese understanding of empire (Berry 2022, 105–6).

Through these often fetishized depictions of natives in literature, the Japanese intellectuals sought to frame for future generations, the struggle in Taiwan through Japanese collective worldviews. This trauma served to reinforce collective understandings of Japaneseness through references to relational content but also constitutive norms. This liberal interpretation, in line with imperial values, was representative of Japanese society grappling with the values of Asianism as a worldview. Thus, memory as a roadmap but also as a focal point, was at the very center of violent reprisal policy leading up to, and during the Musha incident.

Routes of Plausible Causal Influence	
Causal Route	Plausible Influence
Ideas as Roadmaps	Asianism and Minzoku: Japanese paternalism and dehumanization of native Taiwanese leading up to the Musha Incident narrowed options available to settlers leading to violent, genocidal reactions to resistance, with many believing it was their duty to "civilize" the natives through force in line with Asianist ideology and concepts of Japanese military prowess. Emperor Worship: The pressure to prove loyalty and military prowess in service to the emperor in order to attain status at home likely incentivized violent reprisals against native groups in order to maximize prestige gained—thus devaluing diplomatic solutions.
Ideas as Focal Points	Asianism: Although both groups were vying for control over Japanese politics, the military elite and Zaibatsu collaborated to drive Japanese imperialism for their mutual benefit. The Zaibatsu were focused on economic expansion—particularly in the camphor industry—while the military worked to provide protection and expand territorial control. Thus, Asianism served as a status quo of mutual benefit which forestalled conflict between the groups and allowed further militarism.
Institutionalization of Ideas	Minzoku and Asianism: During Taiwan's colonization both government officials and civilian writers portrayed natives and Han Chinese as uncivilized and in need of Japanese beneficent imperialism. While some leaders considered native integration into the ethno-nation, the perception of native irrationality and racial inferiority prevented proliferation of this view. After the Musha incident, literature depicting Taiwanese natives split into two camps: one which saw natives as racially incompatible with

	Minzoku, and the other which sought to integrate them—viewing them as having a Japanese-like warrior spirit and representing a primitive, but reformable group. While having differing perspectives, neither branch of the literary movement critiqued colonialism, instead providing further legitimization of Asianist and Minzoku ideology and likely providing more public approval for imperialism.
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4.4.3 The Mukden Incident, The Invasion of Manchuria, and Manchukuo

As with all conflicts in Japan's empire, the invasion of Manchuria and subsequent creation of the semi-independent colony of Manchukuo was precipitated by the historical interactions between the Japanese and its peers—Russia and China. This invasion was the direct result of the intense grass-roots fascist ideology spawned by decades of Japanese institutionalization of history—the generation of world views conducive to empire. These world views, so powerful by 1931, proved so powerful that neither the elite of the military nor the emperor himself had full control of the trajectory of the nation.

The historical roots of the Manchurian invasion were directly tied to the Japanese national myths generated during the war with Russia in the early 1900's. This war was fundamental in cementing the Japanese concepts of Minzoku and Asianism, but also fundamental in establishing Japanese military presence in continental Asia. Having defeated Russia, Japan was not given the control that it felt it deserved, thus fanning the intense flames of nationalism and reinforcing beliefs about the inequality created by Western hegemony (Fan 2016, 167-168). This 'unfairness' led the Japanese to ignore the results of the Treaty of Portsmouth and establish complete control of Korea and a permanent presence of the Kwantung army in Manchuria to protect Japanese assets, such as the South Manchurian Railway running through Mukden (Fan 2016, 168-169).

With the presence of the Japanese army in Manchuria, the fragile politics of the region began to erode. The warlord Zhang Zuolin, initially on good terms with the Japanese, grew in strength considerably and threatened the interests of the Kwantung army in Manchuria—as a result, the Japanese successfully assassinated him by blowing up his train on June 3rd, 1928 setting in motion the inevitability of a full Japanese invasion of Manchuria (Fan 2016, 169). Once the nationalist government of China was established and Zhang Xueliang—the son of the

Zhang Zuolin—seized power of his father’s territories and committed to support the Nationalist Government of China in December of 1928—a move which quickly raised the ire of the Kwantung army (Fan 2016, 170). Without a direct excuse for invasion, the Kwantung army resorted to a similar strategy to that used in the Jinan Incident—instead of relying on the threat of Chinese forces in the area, they manufactured a Chinese terrorist attack. On September 18th 1931, the Kwantung army planted a small explosive close to a railway owned by Japan, detonated it, and blamed the Chinese for railway sabotage (Fan 2016, 171). This bombing, known as the Mukden Incident served as the impetus for the complete seizure of Manchuria by the Japanese—an invasion which faced little to no Chinese resistance. The choice not to fight back, according to Chiang Kai-shek, was made in order to prevent total war between the countries—a war China was sure to lose along with any support from the international community (Fan 2016, 171).

While it can be said that this event was planned, orchestrated, and concluded by the semi-autonomous Kwantung army and lower ranking military personnel with extremist views, it was far from being unsupported by the military elite. Two months after the bombing, in an address given to military attaches before their departure to Manchuria, the Chief of Staff of the Imperial Japanese Army supported the false flag operation and continued to justify Japanese intervention. From the speech it is evident that the Chief of Staff had invited the military attaches to Manchuria to make their own investigation of the incident—indicating that the Chief of Staff himself had intervened and aided in the coverup (“Mukden Incident” 1931, 1). He continues to highlight and institutionalize a certain image of the Japanese in Manchuria, suggesting that the Japanese army’s presence was to protect the “rights and interests” of the Japanese against the intolerant “attitude of the Chinese police and officials”, but also to showcase how the multi-ethnic Japanese empire improved the lives of those living there (“Mukden Incident” 1931, 1). The Chief of Staff concluded by reinforcing the care with which the Japanese were handling the incident, but ending with a concrete statement of imperialist intent, “I think you will also agree that it is worthless to discuss the question of withdrawing Japanese troops from Manchuria as a means of settling the dispute, as is so eagerly demanded by the Nanking Government, before peace and order have been secured, and before the Chinese have proved themselves able to protect the lives and property of Japanese nationals” (“Mukden Incident” 1931, 1). This speech, from beginning to end, serves as an institutionalized and officiated version of traditional Asianist rhetoric and conceptions of Japanese racial superiority. The Chief of Staff sought to reinforce images of Chinese ineptitude, lawlessness, and violence

while painting a picture of a cautious and respectful Japan seeking to provide order and protect its citizens from Chinese aggression. This speech, along with the grass-roots fascist elements within the lower ranking military, serves to paint a picture of a Japanese military which has been influenced by and continues to perpetuate a collective identity centered around relational content and constitutive norms. This, however, is not all that the Mukden incident reflects—it is also evident that the institutionalized ideologies instituted during Meiji had, by 1931, begun to change the collective memory and had begun to impact Japanese understanding of causal beliefs. By justifying and supporting the rebellious acts of unruly low ranking officers, the upper echelons of the military elite sanctioned their behavior and began to reshape the Japanese's collective causal beliefs—which actions the elite will allow—and also their principled beliefs about their relation to other races and their status vis-à-vis the Japanese.

This change in principled beliefs and causal beliefs was made clear in the new state of Manchukuo where the semi-autonomous colony committed terrible crimes against the Chinese civilian population—namely, the chemical and germ warfare facility, Unit 731 (Keiko 2021, 1). This medical research facility conducted human experimentation on over 3,000 prisoners of war using various biological weapons and was another manifestation of the complicated intersection of Asianism and Minzoku conceptions of Japanese constitutive norms and world views (Keiko 2021, 1-2). Ultimately, the impetus for the creation of this unit was to civilize the local populations—a violence cloaked in the language ‘concern’ for public health in the region (Keiko 2021, 2). The creation of a Mukden-based Japanese medical college in 1911 served as the start point of the policy, however, the real changes in the severity of the abuses began with the Mukden incident (Keiko 2021, 2). The policy before Mukden was defined by the medical use of corpses obtained without the consent of the families or the dead, a practice illegal under mainland Japanese law but allowed in Manchuria, justified by ideas of racial superiority over the Chinese (Keiko 2021, 5). For live patients, this policy included free treatment at a clinic after giving the hospital the right to use the body for academic experimentation—however, this precipitated cases where children of poor families were given into academic use in order to get medical treatment when monetary compensation was not available (Keiko 2021, 6). According to *The Patients for Academic Use Handling Manual* “patients for college use shall not be allowed to refuse experiments on them by medical students” meaning that by entering into the program, Japanese students were allowed to force any Chinese into unwilling medical experiments at will (Keiko 2021, 6).

This system, based in Japanese collective belief in their racial superiority and colonial beneficence, was only further exacerbated by the Mukden incident and the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931. This brutal escalation of colonial violence allowed for an escalation in the exploitation of the Chinese in the area and further research into the local diseases in Manchuria in service to the new Manchukuo government (Keiko 2021, 7). Bolstered by Asianist notions of bringing order to Manchuria and aided by strong beliefs in racial superiority, those resisting the Manchukuo regime were also given up for dissection and experimentation following their execution—research that would otherwise have been illegal under mainland Japanese law at the time (Keiko 2021, 8). The results of this research were published brazenly in both Manchukuo and mainland medical journals—one such article *Dissecting 12 Bodies in Two Hours: The Fate of Bandits* described the unethical sourcing of cadavers without contention—showcasing the growing acceptance of more extreme understandings of Minzoku and Asianism in both mainland and colonial Japanese identity (Keiko 2021, 9). This is only further evidenced by the reality of this Asianist ‘justice’ in Manchukuo where the Provisional Disciplinary Theft Law and Provisional Disciplinary Rebellion law allowed the punishment and execution suspected rebels or thieves without a trial (Keiko 2021, 10). Throughout the Manchukuo government’s existence, medical policy allowed for the vivisection—live dissection—of “criminals” and bacterial tests on live subjects in preparation for biological warfare against the Soviet Union, (Keiko 2021, 14-15). The logic, related to Japanese collective identity, was not inexplicit. At the war crimes trial in Khabarovsk, Major General of Military Medicine, Kawashima Kiyoshi suggested that one of the chief reasons for the placement of the unit in Manchuria was specifically to allow experimentation on “large numbers of non-Japanese subjects” (Keiko 2021, 15). It is in these explicit admissions and public statements that the impact of Japanese collective memory is made visible—Asianism and Minzoku propelled the Japanese regime towards violence through grass-roots and top-down institutionalized ideology predicated on racial superiority and the belief in the duty of the Japanese to conquer Asia and bring it under the banner of their empire.

While medical experimentation depicted the growing causal influence of collective memory on Japanese worldviews and constitutive beliefs, it was likely largely unknown to those outside the medical community and Manchukuo. In order to institutionalize collective memory of Manchukuo, the newly formed government relied on other avenues such as literature and political gestures—beginning early with the first envoy’s sent to Japan, the Manchukuo Young Girl Envoys in 1932 (Yuan 2023, 477). The Young Girl Envoys were a

group of six primary and middle school age girls, representing several dominant ethnic groups of Manchukuo: Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans—they were chosen with the hopes that their diversity and image would represent ethnic pluralism under Japanese control while legitimizing Manchukuo in the eyes of the Japanese and securing full Japanese support for the military occupation (Yuan 2023, 481). The choice of these girls reflected the growing influence of magazines, newspapers, and film in Japanese society and referenced previous attempts to use children in diplomatic efforts—for example the doll exchange ceremony between the US and Japan only five years prior (Yuan 2023, 481). In order to win over the Japanese public and influence domestic Manchukuo politics, these girls completed a rigorous 20-day media circuit throughout Japan—meeting with newspapers and influential politicians, attending ceremonies, and attending prayer events at imperial shrines—leading to a poor experience for the girls which was broadcast throughout Manchukuo by Chinese media sources like the *Manchurian Daily Newspaper* (Yuan 2023, 489). While the tour was not well received in Manchukuo due to the racial tensions and lack of local elite coordination, it found more success in Japan—having the effect of reinforcing Japanese paternalistic views of Asianism by portraying Manchukuo as a weak country in need of Japanese protection and civilization efforts (Yuan 2023, 487). Newspapers like *Asahi News* only contributed to this in the language used in their reports. Highlighting that the envoys were there to secure Japanese support, on June 30th *Asahi* reported that the girls were “wonderfully finishing the mission of promoting friendship” between the two countries—reinforcing to the reader the importance of the Japanese to the development of their less-civilized peers (Yuan 2023, 487). While the intended impact was the reinforcement of Japanese beliefs in ethnic harmony and the autonomy of Manchukuo, this event was able to play into the established collective memory of the Japanese and harden their stances regarding Asianism and their ethnic superiority—justifying future direct intervention in Asia.

While there were many diplomatic efforts to legitimize Manchukuo in Japanese collective memory, as with Taiwan, there also existed a unique literature regarding Manchukuo. Due to the criminalization of any ideology or rhetoric which would suggest the change of the Meiji government structure, many leftist writers were harshly punished and some were coopted by the increasingly fascistic government and used in propaganda campaigns using their pre-established reputation as a springboard for military ambitions (Culver 2013, 35–35). These authors worked to reinforce the idea of Manchukuo as a Japanese civilization project—assimilating and homogenizing the populations under the banner of the Japanese

empire—a project that intellectuals like Yamada Seizaburo saw as a blueprint for future conquest and assimilation (Culver 2013, 35). Yamada was a member of a left wing intellectual movement who strongly believed in proletarian literature as a tool for creating grass roots, social change—this belief carried on into his tenure as a writer on behalf of the regime (Culver 2013, 36). This new type of proletarian literature was established in 1934 after the Japan Proletarian Writers' League was disbanded under the Peace Preservation Act—Tenko literature, as it was called, was generated by the turnover of most leftist intellectuals under fear of arrest and execution, but also civilian fascist attacks (Culver 2013, 38). These writers, often exiled as in the case of Yamada, found safe haven in Manchukuo where military autonomy protected them from political repression (Culver 2013, 38). While this new movement found footing in the less restrictive soil of Manchukuo, organizations like the Concordia Association, Manchurian Film Association, and SMRC Research Department published their works in mainland Japan as well where they were consumed by the domestic population—helping to cement beliefs in the cultural influence of Japan in Manchuria (Culver 2013, 39). This Tenko movement—active from the mid-1930s until the end of the war—encompassed writers, photographers, and other artists and continued to follow the preexisting socialist realism and surrealist styles to portray the Chinese population of Manchukuo—depicting them as willing supporters of Japan's imperial project and portraying Manchukuo as the model solution to the populace's concerns regarding modernization and capitalism (Culver 2013, 39–40). This movement depicted the link between Manchukuo and Japan as important to the preservation and export of Japanese culture and ideology—showing that upon the successful conquest of a region by the regime, the Japanese cultural, political, and economic influence modernized and liberated the peoples living there (Culver 2013, 42). Much of this literature, similar to literature produced during the conquest of Taiwan, highlighted the civilizing of the Chinese through Japanese influence. In the collection of photographs published by *Asahi Shimbun* in 1934, a prostitute was depicted as “an attractive young Manchu employed as a professional entertainer like the geisha in Japan”—while an outright lie, these types of depictions served to reinforce Japanese collective consciousness of the issue and justify their continued influence over the region (Culver 2013, 43). Tenko writers, inspired by their experiences in Manchukuo and engrossed in the fascist imperial moment, depicted Manchuria as fertile ground for a new utopian experiment—through = depictions of Manchukuo as a society free of class struggle, social issues, or degradation of Japanese culture, the Japanese public were made to see the paternalistic empire positively. (Culver 2013, pp. 43–45). Yamada, along with the other Tenko intellectuals and the Japanese public, saw the unification of Asia under neo-Confucian

principles under Japan as the solution to both Japanese domestic issues and the issues plaguing the other nations of Asia. As Yamada described, “the individual is depicted as merging with, or is called on to merge imaginatively with, a greater whole” (Culver 2013, 46). It is through this collective reinforcement of Asianist ideology and the idea of the cultural superiority of the Japanese that Yamada and the Japanese public pushed for the export of this vision beyond the borders of Manchukuo into China, and later Southeast Asia (Culver 2013, 49). This elation for Japanese cultural export continued until the end of the war—serving as a boon to Japanese imperialist goals both amongst intellectuals and the public. Highlighting the ever-present strength of this cultural memory, Yamada wrote in a 1944 travel essay that, “the New China is filled with the light of hope, the New China has become Manchukuo’s and Japan’s two wings, and is rising up in the construction of Greater East Asia,” showing that even at the end of the war, Manchukuo’s promise still carried import within the collective identity of the Japanese and pushed for ever greater conquest (Culver 2013, 49).

This grassroots pressure for conquest manifested itself strongly in Manchukuo where secret fascist organizations within the military such as the Sakura-kai, or Cherry Blossom Society, pushed for transition to total war along the lines of traditional fascist ideology by Zaibatsu politicians or by acting without orders from their superior officers (Orbach 2017, 194). This group, directly inspired by strong sentiments against the Zaibatsu and belief in Japanese cultural superiority, saw the reluctance to engage in total war with China and Russia or upset Western powers as a combination of cowardice and capitalist influence (Orbach 2017, 195). Reflecting the constitutive norms established during Meiji through decades of institutionalization, the Sakura-kai associated the current government with Zaibatsu corruption and culture-threatening ideologies such as liberalism, socialism, and individualism (Orbach 2017, 195). Inspired by a causal beliefs associated with revolutionary groups during the fall of the shogunate and the Meiji restoration, these disillusioned servicemembers sought to bring about a new, Showa Restoration predicated on the creation of a fascist system centered around the emperor which refocused Japanese society on the total conquest of China and the Russian Far East (Orbach 2017, 196). These groups were inspired by mythologized accounts of the Shishi rebels of the Meiji Restoration—a group of drunken patriots guided by passion, violence, and a seemingly innate understanding of justice—warriors who exemplified the Japanese warrior spirit and normalized violence against any perceived threat to the nation or its identity (Orbach 2017, 199). Justified by decades of institutionalization of worldviews establishing a deep connection between imperial service and military, the leaders of the Sakura-

kai saw themselves as having a duty to interfere in politics in order to prevent the destruction of their collective identity, Minzoku and imperial cult (Orbach 2017, 197). This ideology—the sum of Minzoku, Asianism, anti-capitalist beliefs, and emperor worship—was called supreme prerogative ideology and came to define the actions of the Kwantung Army in Manchuria (Orbach 2017, 213). The leader of the Sakura-kai, Hashimoto Kingoro, summed this feeling up in his writings—“The dark clouds of the already ossified political world have to be cleared without a trace, such would surely be a trivial thing to do” (Orbach 2017, 199).

In order to bring about this vision, the right wing societies within the Japanese military pushed propaganda from Manchuria—highlighting the death of Japanese civilians and reinforcing the need for Japanese paternalism and conquest of Manchuria (Orbach 2017, 200). After years of plotting, in defiance of their superior officers, Hashimoto and the Sakura-kai carried out the bombing that would later be known as the Mukden incident—creating just enough pressure to provoke a Japanese government response regardless of the plain reality of the false flag operation (Orbach 2017, 212). According to Harada Kumao, secretary to Prince Saionji, the new state of Manchukuo was designed to be the seat from which the political reform of Japan would take place via coup-d’état, a place where the military could prepare for the ideological purification of Japan through the elimination of the Zaibatsu and the flames of total war (Orbach 2017, 209). While the Sakura-kai was unable to orchestrate this coup, failing in 1932, punishment for their insubordination was eschewed by their superiors in Manchukuo such as Tojo Hideki who—feeling sympathetic to the cause—allowed for their return to previous duty in the new, sovereign state (Orbach 2017, 220). It was clear that the formation of Manchukuo only strengthened both the collective causal understanding of the Japanese, but also shifted their worldviews farther away from democracy and closer towards an understanding of themselves and their world that aligned with the goals of the burgeoning hybrid regime.

This was only further exemplified by copycat coup d’états which escalated in severity throughout the 1930’s, culminating in the February 26th incident in 1936 when 1,400 troops left their barracks baring insignias referencing the Shihi ideals of self-sacrifice and attempted to assassinate the prime minister—successfully assassinating the finance minister, inspector general of military education and laying siege to the imperial palace (Orbach 2017, 240–43). The February 26th coup attempt was led by yet another right wing faction within the military, the Kodo-ha or Imperial Way Faction (Goto-Jones 2009, 79). This, the most bold coup attempt, was only ended after two days by a statement from the emperor himself (Orbach 2017, 249).

Military leaders had delayed and obfuscated the emperor's out of sympathy to the cause of the rebels, however, having failed to assassinate the elite opposition the coup failed and ended in the arrest and disgrace of its leaders (Orbach 2017, 250). What was most important and most damaging to the collective understanding of the military members and Japan at large, however, was the punishment of these officers who were branded rebels and executed without ceremony—aligning militarist goals with anti-imperial behavior in an attempt to reign in the spiraling support for aggressive total war in Asia and the purge of Zaibatsu (Orbach 2017, 251–52).

While the emperor and the Zaibatsu elite tried to contain the sources of legitimacy of these acts of insubordination with reliance on other aspects of Japanese collective memory such as emperor worship, the emperor was not able to fill the power vacuum created by this event due to his limited political power and the failing elite opposition which had either been killed, terrified into submission, or in the case of military leaders had simply resigned in shame (Orbach 2017, 255). This moment served not as the dissolution of military control over the government, but rather allowed another right wing faction headed by Tojo Hideki—the Toseiha or Control Faction—to consolidate power (Goto-Jones 2009, 79). While the last of the government elite sought to constrain the military in the wake of the coup, the new prime minister, Prince Konoe Fumimaro was an advocate for Japanese imperialism and gave the military carte blanche in China—leading directly to the second Sino-Japanese War (Goto-Jones 2009, 79–80).

Routes of Plausible Causal Influence	
Causal Route	Plausible Influence
Ideas as Roadmaps	Emperor Worship and Asianism: The Kwantung army, acting independent of the Tokyo government, was guided by expansionist ideology and the belief that conquest was the true will of the emperor. The Mukden incident and subsequent creation of Manchukuo were conducted without approval under the assumption that the Zaibatsu sought to restrain imperial will. Thus, both the concept of Asianism and emperor worship served as a guiding principle which made continued subservience to the Zaibatsu policy of

	economic imperialism unacceptable and made acts of disobedience and direct military conflict such as the Mukden Incident preferable to the status quo—precipitating the unified ideology of the ‘Showa Restoration’ which spawned and inspired many nationalist militarist groups.
Ideas as Focal Points	Emperor Worship: While Japanese of all strata were unified in their support for Japanese exceptionalism through Minzoku and their goal of imperialism in East Asia, their ultimate allegiance was to the Emperor himself. Although the militarist societies staged purges of Zaibatsu elite and anti-war politicians, they ultimately gave way to the Emperor’s will when it was effectively communicated to them. However, with the failing democratic institutions and the obfuscation of imperial will, the concept of imperial legitimation seemed to lose precedence compared to the strengthening military elite guided by Japanese exceptionalist ideology and imperial goals. In this way, while the emperor maintained his role as the unifier of the country, he came to represent the values of the militarist societies.
Institutionalization of Ideas	Asianism and Minzoku: Manchukuo served as a powerful locus of institutionalization of Asianist and Minzoku ideology—from statements made by military elite justifying the invasion and blaming the ‘uncivilized’ Chinese, to the government sending Young Girl Envoys to mainland Japan to instill a public trust and appreciation of Asianist civilization attempts, to the establishment of Manchukuo as a base for Tenko literature which painted a rose-tinted image of the Japanese Empire—both displaying the perceived benefits of the Asianist project and lauding the virtues of the Japanese race. Even with the failed coup-d’etat, attempts to

	coopt public support for war and expansion were omnipresent and effective.
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4.4.4 The Russian-Japanese Border Struggle and the Second Sino-Japanese War

Before, and during the conquest of Manchuria by the Kwantung army, the Japanese government had been carefully negotiating with the newly formed Soviet Union to reaffirm and renegotiate treaties created during the Russo-Japanese war of 1905 (Elleman 2015, 101). This included the Portsmouth Peace Treaty and several other secret agreements which reestablished the competing spheres of influence within China as in the pre-WWI era (Elleman 2015, 101). This set of secret negotiations—predicated on respect for the interests, assets, and civilians of the other parties—forestalled conflict between the countries by allowing all treaties to be renegotiated and revised to meet the needs of the current moment (Elleman 2015, 108). This set of agreements effectively delineated two zones of influence in the 1920's—Japan was granted control of Korea, Southern Manchuria, and Eastern Inner Mongolia; Russia given uncontested control of Outer Mongolia, Northern Manchuria, and the Chinese Eastern Railway (Elleman 2015, 109). These treaties, at the behest of the Zaibatsu elite interests, allowed Japanese economic interests in China to be protected without engaging in hot war with China or Russia—thus attempting to prevent the economic issues of the 1920s from continuing to impact the stability of the elite system in mainland Japan.

While these treaties were enough to prevent conflict during the 1920s, with the creation of the autonomous military state—Manchukuo—tensions quickly began to mount with increased domestic pressure and pressure from within the military which pushed Japan towards war with Russia. The mainland Japanese government was, in the wake of the power vacuum created by the February 26th Incident, rendered largely unable to restrain the grass roots militarism brought on by the rapidly concretizing collective memory of its people. This lack of control and changing elite relations forced the government and General Staff to create war with China in order to prevent the very real possibility of unauthorized assault on the Soviet Union by the Kwantung army in Manchukuo (Orbach 2017, 260). The mainland Japanese government itself was not in favor of war with China or Russia—understanding that it had no hope to overcome either due to the vast provisions and enemy forces (Kuromiya 2023, 301). This was bolstered by the increasing economic toll of the military which, by 1937, totaled 70% of the national budget (Kuromiya 2023, 283). The Marco Polo incident was not a complete surprise to the mainland government, however, as General Ishiwara of the General Staff had

been made aware of a planned incident in the area and had dispatched an investigator (Whitehurst 2020, 123–24). The investigator, Colonel Kiyotami Okamoto, curiously omitted information from his report which suggested that relations were intensifying and that a conflict was likely—a face which may suggest that Okamoto was sympathetic to the grass roots militarist movement and was also influenced by a collective identity centered around militarism, paternalism, and immutable Japanese supremacy (Whitehurst 2020, 124). However, in order to prevent further coup attempts and contain the total war caused by the supreme prerogative ideology, the Japanese government was forced to indulge the military in its ventures (Orbach 2017, 261). The full scale invasion of China took place in 1937 in a parallel to the Russian invasion of Xinjiang—rather than engaging Russia directly, seeking to engage in a race to conquer China (Elleman 2015, 130). This move, reinforced directly by the mainland government of Japan through an intense propaganda campaign, relying on constitutive norms and worldviews which saw communism and Western influence as being against the Japanese character—*Minzoku*—and as requiring a counter to protect Japan, and Asia generally, from Western imperialism (Elleman 2015, 130).

The war with China began as the confluence of various elite interests inspired by different conceptions of Japanese identity. On one hand, the regular army garrisoned in Tianjin—loyal to the emperor and the system—on the other, the Kwantung army, largely autonomous and angered by the mainland government’s unwillingness to engage in direct war to expand Manchukuo (Kuromiya 2023, 330). The mainland government, in an effort to dissuade actions by the Kwantung army, raised the troop presence in Tianjin from 1,771 soldiers to 5,774—a move which precipitated a rise in anti-Japanese sentiment amongst the Chinese and created the impetus for the incident (Kuromiya 2023, 330).

The invasion of China began without direct approval from the government. Like with the Mukden Incident which preceded it, much of this event is shrouded in mystery—it is equally likely that Japanese militarists instigated the conflict as it is likely that Soviet and Chinese forces sought to goad Japan into a war it could not win (Whitehurst 2020, 124; Kuromiya 2023, 300). Still, this did not stop the loyalist Japanese military and political elite from believing this incident to have been predicted by the militarist societies—the War Minister himself worrying that “the young officers overseas might start something before the August promotions and transfers” directly referencing the intense desire for young soldiers to prove themselves through rank, achieving something instrumental to their success in their communities back home and reinforced through decades of collective memory formation

centered around imperial service and militarism (Whitehurst 2020, 124). The fighting began on July 7th, 1937 with the search for a missing, presumed kidnapped, of Japanese soldier—resulting in trucks of Japanese soldiers being dispatched to seek retribution (Whitehurst 2020, 126). This resulted in the Japanese siege of a Chinese garrison and resulted in sporadic fighting which quickly devolved into a full scale assault and capture of the city of Wanping by combined Japanese Imperial and Kwantung forces by July 9th (Whitehurst 2020, 126).

This incident resulted in infighting within the weakened and scattered elite of General Staff and Army Ministry where hardliners influenced by militarist societies secured the mobilization of more troops to the garrison after relaying false reports of Chinese troop movements towards Northern China and highlighting the threat to the Japanese forces and the 12,000 Japanese civilians in the area (Whitehurst 2020, 128). While this was inevitably proven false, breakdowns in the negotiations between Japanese and Chinese leadership resulted in the Japanese sending more troops to the region and the Chinese taking a hard line—refusing to allow another Mukden Incident to result in the dispossession of more Chinese territory (Whitehurst 2020, 130–31). As the Japanese elite struggled to contain the hardline elite and the civilian support for escalation without being persecuted for political dissidence, the war naturally expanded (Whitehurst 2020, 133). Here, as the reins slipped from the hands of the old elite into those fully indoctrinated into the collective memory cult of *Minzoku* and Militarism, the military slowly penetrated deeper into Chinese territory—conquering Peking by August 7th (Whitehurst 2020, 140). The war machine drummed to life, fired not by the elite but by the collective memory they had fostered—newspapers at the time publishing propaganda highlighting the threat of Chinese forces being brought to the front and the necessity of Japanese escalation to protect Japanese interests (Whitehurst 2020, 145). While the emperor and his ministers sought to create a demilitarized zone and inevitably withdraw the Japanese forces to Manchukuo, the fighting on the ground grew worse as the Kwantung army took more territory and issued punitive ultimatums suggesting the total dissolution of the Nationalist Government in Nanking (Whitehurst 2020, 146–47). The mounting pressure and conflicting interests within the Japanese military and its government brought on by the proliferation of new notions of Japanese identity and worldviews associated with it led to a complete breakdown of diplomacy by the end of August—the arrival of the three reinforcement divisions leading directly to the onset of total war between China and Japan (Whitehurst 2020, 147). At home, this pressure manifested through the reservist associations farewell ceremonies for soldiers, parades, and celebrations of large victories such as Shanghai or Nanking

(Whitehurst 2020, 182). This was bolstered by contemporary memorialization of the conflict which highlighted self-sacrifice—one salient example being the memorial to the Kurume Engineering Corps who, during the battle of Shanghai, had carried bombs into Chinese positions and taking their own lives to allow for the Japanese force to advance (Whitehurst 2020, 185). This fervor was so great that, during the conflict, the major of Kobe received a letter written in blood from a young woman which read,

“Every day I hear all sorts of stories of the bravery of the Japanese soldiers and sailors at the front, either through the radio or the newspapers, and I cannot bear to remain idle at home any longer. Propelled by the irresistible “Yamato Damashi” [Japanese spirit], I am determined to go to the front in order that I may act as a nurse for the wounded heroes of the Empire” (Whitehurst 2020, 185).

Men, women, and children were galvanized by this conflict and excited by their collective identity—seeing this conflict as a spiritual successor to the Japanese victory over the Russians in 1905 (Whitehurst 2020, 182). This led to countless suicides and violence—Japanese media such as the *Japan Weekly Chronicle* reporting on both valiant wartime deaths and sacrificial suicides in support of family members at war throughout the conflict (Whitehurst 2020, 185–86). These stories of self-sacrifice were mirrored by parents and youth who glorified service to the emperor—demonstrating unquestionable willingness to sacrifice themselves, their families, and their economic security for the success of the war (Whitehurst 2020, 186). Aside from institutionalization of certain worldviews and relational content about the outside world, the empire continued to rely on emperor worship as a source of legitimacy and memory creation. Both in schools and in the military memorization and celebration of Imperial Rescripts was obligatory—failing to recite these rescripts correctly could result in harsh punishment, or worse, enough shame to drive some to suicide (Whitehurst 2020, 196). This willingness to throw away life was continually provoked and reinforced through institutionalization of constitutive norms and worldviews by the military who, using propaganda pamphlets playing into Japanese exceptionalism and the necessity for paternalistic conquest, painted the war as a necessity both for the continued survival of the Japanese identity and the imperial system against Western imperialism (Whitehurst 2020, 186). For those not in direct service to the empire through the military, this conflict precipitated another response: rapidly self-organized war relief campaigns through fundraising events such as food drives and charity sales (Lucken 2017, 8). While this was not wholly helpful to the war effort—oftentimes

sending resources to the wrong places—it demonstrates the un-provoked grass roots support for the empire after decades of institutionalization (Lucken 2017, 9).

This absolute support from the hardliners within the government and the grass roots support of civil society allowed for Japanese racial superiority to manifest on the battlefield in ways that were not unprecedented in Japanese relations with other Asian ethnic groups. As Japanese media celebrated the massive death toll amongst Chinese troops and compared it to meager Japanese losses, the public accepted and justified this violence as a means to fulfil the empire's promise of the co-prosperity sphere (Lucken 2017, 64). Within the Japanese military, there was little control placed on the troops or their unbridled belief in their right to reprisal against the Chinese who resisted their invasion—journals from various soldiers documenting mass war crimes, torture, and desire to commit massacres against the Chinese civilian and prisoner of war populations (Lucken 2017, 63). These atrocities were often considered by the soldiers and the civilians who heard of them as justified as part of the military campaign, as carrying out orders, and as acts ultimately in service to the emperor (Lucken 2017, 64).

These sentiments in the Japanese population were not grown solely out of the institutionalization of the war period, however, but were the result of calculated collective memory reinforcement since the Meiji era and continual reinforcement and institutionalization by various elite forces over the following half century from the original Imperial Rescript on Education to the Asianist textbooks of the early 1930's (Whitehurst 2020, 195). Japanese collective identity had been recentered around conquest justified by their racial and cultural superiority and further sanctified by the divine will of the emperor in a gradual process which had begun with top-down restructuring of society and culminated in a unified collectively reinforced institutionalization (Whitehurst 2020, 195). This institutionalization was indispensable to the war effort and the newly unified single party regime which had finally declared national mobilization in 1938, bringing Japan into a state of total war and allowing government control of all aspects of economic life to support its military strategy (Lucken 2017, 10).

While war with China temporarily held militarism at the Russian-Mongolian border, it did not prevent scuffles from occurring later on between Manchukuo and the Soviet Union. By 1938 the tensions between the spheres of influence came to a head, resulting in a short war between the Soviet Union and Imperial Japan on the border of Outer Mongolia and Manchukuo (Elleman 2015, 130). This series of battles resulted in a Japanese defeat and the Molotov-

Ribbentrop Pact of 1939 which forced the mainland Japanese government to, once again, re-negotiate the spheres of influence in China (Elleman 2015, 130). While Japan was temporarily slowed by this renegotiation, it and was followed soon thereafter by negotiations in 1940 to divide the entirety of China between the two countries predicated on the mutual respect for Soviet ambitions in Afghanistan and Japanese ambitions in French Indochina (Elleman 2015, 131).

Routes of Plausible Causal Influence	
Causal Route	Plausible Influence
Ideas as Roadmaps	By this point, all key ideologies inherent to Japanese militarism had so permeated the military and militarist societies that the mainland Japanese government no longer had control over their actions. Whether out of desire for power after their service, ideas of racial superiority, genuine belief in Japanese paternalism, or out of duty to the emperor—direct military conflict was the only legitimate choice to those in the colonial armies.
Ideas as Focal Points	Emperor Worship: The cornerstone of the Japanese government, the emperor, and the preservation of his rule were the status quo behind all decisions. Remaining Zaibatsu and democratic leaders worked with militarists in order to prevent war with Russia through war with the weaker target, China. Thus, while having differing political goals, the option which jeopardized the imperial system the least was chosen. However, this focal point seemed to become secondary as border clashes between Soviet and Japanese forces occurred and forced Japan to concede. Genuine consideration of the imperial system was becoming secondary to the growing militarist ideology which served as a focal point for military forces and drove them towards conflict with reckless abandon.
Institutionalization of Ideas	Minzoku and Asianism: During the war with China, the military engaged in an intense propaganda campaign to

	amass support for the invasion. This propaganda along with civilian memorialization of war dead and heroism lead to mass support for continued conflict. Much of the propaganda focused on existing beliefs in Japanese exceptionalism and Japan's right, and obligation to assume control of East Asia—likely influencing the growing number atrocities committed against civilians and POWs in China.
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4.4.5 The Invasion of French Indo-China and WWII

Having any hope of opening a conflict with Russia dashed, the Japanese were faced with a Chinese resistance funded by Russia and the Dutch (Gompert, Binnendijk, and Lin 2014, 95). Seeking to cut off part of the supply to the Chinese Nationalist forces and secure access to rice, rubber, and other resources in order to support the dwindling Japanese economy and war effort—Japan made its move on French Indochina (Gompert, Binnendijk, and Lin 2014, 95). By 1940, the United States had greatly reinforced its navy, focusing particularly on the Pacific fleet in order to deter Japanese expansion into the region (Gompert, Binnendijk, and Lin 2014, 95). In addition, in order to slow Japan's advance in Asia and hamper their economy, in 1940 the US halted the export of materials such as iron, steel, fuel, weapons, ammunition, machine tools, and aircraft parts to Japan—resources integral to the Japanese imperial machine (Gompert, Binnendijk, and Lin 2014, 95). This was only further reinforced in 1941 when the US further restricted the trade of key materials like copper, brass, and zinc which directly impacted Japanese war, and domestic industry (Gompert, Binnendijk, and Lin 2014, 95). Japan, unable to provide for materials for its empire domestically, was increasingly reliant on foreign supply—80% of its oil supply coming from the United States (Gompert, Binnendijk, and Lin 2014, 97).

As a prelude to the war, the Japanese held an Imperial Conference in July 1941—highlighting their commitment to the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere and calling up a million reserve troops to assert their dominance over the colonies (Gompert, Binnendijk, and Lin 2014, 96). The remaining political elite of Japan were not oblivious to the probability of US reprisal—the ambassador to the US remarking to the foreign minister Yosuke Matsuoka that the embargoes in place would only be expanded to match further aggression (Gompert, Binnendijk, and Lin 2014, 96). The home minister Kiichiro Hiranuma went further—arguing that war with the United States must be avoided at all costs (Gompert, Binnendijk, and Lin

2014, 97). However, as the military had, under the new neutered cabinet, been given free reign over its actions in the colonies—these pleas fell on deaf ears, culminating in the invasion of Southern Indochina and the US embargoing all oil exports to Japan (Gompert, Binnendijk, and Lin 2014, 105). With only two years of reserve oil and limited time, military elite began to plan their assault on Pearl Harbor and the Philippines—seeking to knock the US out of the war quickly and secure access to the resources the empire required (Gompert, Binnendijk, and Lin 2014, 97–99). War against the US, England, and France was proposed on September 7th, on November 2nd the emperor sanctioned the war, and on November 5th he personally approved the plan for the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor (Gompert, Binnendijk, and Lin 2014, 99).

The war in Indochina and the entry into the Pacific war progressed in stages as these pressures mounted, however. Firstly, the Japanese gained the right to station troops in the North of Indochina after negotiating with Vichy France—officially to protect French interests—but quickly turned those troops on the French which resulted in a decisive victory by the Japanese who quickly occupied the country in September of 1940 (Gompert, Binnendijk, and Lin 2014, 95). Shortly after the invasion, the last vestiges of democracy were wiped from mainland Japan—the last political parties consolidating into the Taisei Yokusankai, or Imperial Rule Assistance Association, headed by the new prime minister and army minister General Tojo Hideki (Goto-Jones 2009, 81). This represented the beginning of a single party state with extremely close ties to the military, yet not a full consolidation of that power as the party still defaulted to the accepted collective memory focal point of the emperor—the source of all legitimacy and power within the authoritarian structure (Lucken 2017, 35).

Emboldened by the new hardline control of Japanese government, the military worked in line with the Asianist concept of Japanese imperialism, coopting nationalist groups across Southeast Asia by promising national liberation from their Western colonial oppressors (Romein 1962, 302). These right wing groups were a minority however, Japanese rule was strongly contested and local communist militias worked with Allied powers to support guerrilla movements against the Japanese occupation, increasing their pressure as the Pacific War intensified (Romein 1962, 303). Active resistance was only bolstered by Japanese actions such as the five-year-plan of 1942 where the Japanese forced prisoners of war and the local populations of Indochina to build a road from Korea to Singapore—a project which was never completed and resulted in the death of many of the laborers (Romein 1962, 307). However, other projects such as the Burma-Siam Railway which allowed the Japanese to quickly and securely extract resources, transfer troops, and munitions (Totani 2015, 77). This railway,

stretching 258 miles of jungles, was also built at the expense of prisoner of war laborers whose death toll stood at about 26%—only bolstered by the massive death toll amongst the estimated 75,000-250,000 local civilian laborers which, although unknown, is estimated to be at a higher rate than even prisoners of war (Totani 2015, 78). By the numbers and by policy, the invasion and occupation of these regions proceeded much like Manchuria, China, and Taiwan—although the Japanese believed strongly in their own beneficence and justification, their behavior was ultimately exploitative and prejudiced based on their equally powerful belief in their superiority to other peoples.

Throughout the Pacific War, the Japanese used Indochina and island nations as outposts from which to launch their invasions of countries like Singapore, Malaysia, Philippines, and Indonesia—rather than expelling Western imperialists, simply taking control of the valuable resources it needed and taking tens of thousands of prisoners of war to use as forced labor for the empire (Romein 1962, 310). These forced laborers were subjugated peoples from across Asia—some workers being captured in China and forced to work for the Japanese during the Indochina and Pacific wars (Totani 2015, 106). Some of the prisoners of war, the Indian colonial troops for example, were so poorly treated and subjected to terrible conditions such that their survival rate in New Guinea was scarcely 0.5% (Totani 2015, 113). By March of 1942, the Japanese had conquered virtually all territory between China and Guadalcanal, subjugating the 500,000,000 inhabitants (Romein 1962, 333). As the Japanese marched across the Pacific, the war was celebrated and broadcast across domestic Japan in media and in educational materials—commemorated with billboards, maps, globes, newspapers, and film—displayed as a seemingly natural assumption of Japan’s role as the rightful leader of Asia (Lucken 2017, 25). This place as rightful leader precipitated waves of tourism to the newly conquered lands as it had with Taiwan during the Taisho era—tourism at the expense of the indigenous people who were subjected to humiliation and exploitation by the Japanese who, as a whole, saw themselves as racially superior to those they conquered (Lucken 2017, 28). The treatment of local populations during the war was representative of the irreconcilable collective memories of racial superiority and paternalistic empire—a fact which was not lost on many leaders of the Japanese military and political elite. One example, General Ishiwara Kanji, wrote in 1940 that it was “undeniable that since the Meiji Restoration the desire to create a racially homogenous nation has exacerbated the tendency to look down on foreign countries. This is the main reason why we have sadly not been able to win the hearts of the local populations, whether in Taiwan, Korea, Manchuria, or China” (Lucken 2017, 28). While the ideological

flaws of their regime were not alien to elite, this collective memory would continue to be reinforced by the increasingly consolidated authoritarian government to further their wartime goals through mass public support (Lucken 2017, 28).

As the war progressed and the Allies gained ground in Europe and the Pacific, the Japanese became more and more isolated in Indochina precipitating progressively harsher behaviors. In 1943, Japan's advance had been stopped—all momentum being crushed by the battle of Guadalcanal—precipitating a change in strategy in the colonies of Southeast Asia which focused on creating routes to independent statehood in exchange for material and military support in the war (Romein 1962, 313–14). However, even with this pivot, by 1945 Japan had sustained massive losses to its shipping industry and had been largely cut off from Southeast Asia by Allied forces—facing Vichy French passivity, the Japanese began to intern all French soldiers in Indochina in order to prevent further resistance (Romein 1962, 308). In one final attempt to pacify the nations of Indochina in the face of overwhelming resistance and a losses in the Pacific, the Japanese proclaimed the independence of Vietnam—however, by this point, the communist forces based out of China had already begun to make headway capturing territory in Northern Indochina (Romein 1962, 308). These concessions, meant to reinforce Asianist ideas of equality in their colonies, ultimately failed. A few short months after the declaration of Vietnamese independence, Japan surrendered—the few remaining Japanese forces still stationed in Indochina offered little resistance to the Chinese and British occupation or the formation of the new independent government (Romein 1962, 308).

World War II ended in the destruction of the Japanese authoritarian system and was the result of a confluence of political and economic factors directly caused by the authoritarian system and the rapidly expanding empire (Goto-Jones 2009, 85). For some political and military leaders, however, the signs were not clear from the outset—many, such as Admiral Yamamoto Isoroku, the commander of the Japanese Combined Fleet and architect of the Pearl Harbor attack, likely saw this as a continuation of the legacy of the Russo-Japanese war (Kowner 2022, 11). Yamamoto himself had participated and was injured in the famous Battle of Tsushima—notably a surprise attack—which brought about Japanese victory (Kowner 2022, 11). While one can only guess at how this event influenced Yamamoto's interpretation of the Pacific War, it is true that he and other navy leadership viewed battleship combat as the main form of assault—additionally, it must be highlighted that the Pearl Harbor attack was called Operation Z during planning, a potential reference to the Z flag used on the venerated Mikasa battleship during the Battle of Tsushima some 35 years prior (Kowner 2022, 11). This is

particularly likely given the presence of the exact flag which flew on the Mikasa on the ship Akagi which took part in the assault (Kowner 2022, 11). Throughout the Pacific War, many ceremonial references to Tsushima and Japanese collective memories of glory were made—the most salient being related to the turning point of the war, the Battle of Midway, when Admiral Nagumo’s fleet left port for the island on the 37th anniversary of the Battle of Tsushima (Kowner 2022, 11)

While the leadership of Japan at the time was hyper focused on military expansion and collective triumphs of the past, the risks associated with empire were far from unbeknownst to the public or the elite. By the early 1940s, debates about the future of the empire and how best to organize the various peoples under the Japanese banner were commonplace amongst elite— anxieties about the war leading to events like the Greater East Asia Conference where colonial delegates were invited to discuss Asianism and the development of the co-prosperity sphere (Goto-Jones 2009, 83). While this anxiety peaked during the Pacific War, it had begun earlier in the period directly after the creation of Manchukuo. In 1933, prime minister Konoe had established a ‘brain trust’ of various nationalist intellectuals with the purpose of creating an ideological vision for the future empire and its colonies (Goto-Jones 2009, 83–84). This movement was punctuated by discussions about the difficulties inherent to a ‘non-imperial empire’ under Japanese rule—whether it was possible, or right to attempt—showcasing the ideological conflict within the Japanese elite in response to the innate hypocrisy of Asianism and the irreconcilable gulf between Asianism and notions of Japanese racial superiority (Goto-Jones 2009, 84). Thanks to right wing literary groups such as the Showa Research Association however, this dialogue was dominated by intense racialized nationalism which remained the prevailing thought amongst Japanese intellectuals in charge of creating the policy of the post-coup Japanese government (Fletcher 1979, 50). In Miki Kiyoshi’s 1939 book, *Principles of Thought for a New Japan*, he argues for a more centralized fascist state arguing that, “race is a whole that transcends economic classes, and the state is one moral whole which is established on the base of race... the state must stand, above all, on its position as a moral whole, solve the problems of economic classes with its authority, and realize a national cooperative body” (Fletcher 1979, 51). In this text, Miki is not only highlighting the concepts of Minzoku—or Japanese racial superiority—but also highlighting the Zaibatsu as a scapegoat for militaristic overspending and economic issues and the need for a strong, centralized authoritarian government to protect the Japanese from capitalist greed. Through this, Miki and other contemporary authors reinforced the consolidation of the authoritarian system centered around

cooperative philosophy and sought to export that ideology to the conquered lands of mainland Asia and Southeast Asia (Fletcher 1979, 50). Miki, setting the philosophical justification for the continuation of Japanese Asianist policies, argued for respecting the individual ways of colonized peoples but accepting the role of Japan as a mover of history set on reforming those peoples and cultures (Fletcher 1979, 51).

State literature, however, was only one vehicle of Japanese collective memory institutionalization throughout the Pacific War—radio addresses, theater pieces, newspaper articles, poetry, songs, and educational materials all played a role in reinforcing Japanese collective memory both from the bottom up and top down (Tansman 2009, 409). These two forces of collective memory production resulted in what authors like James Dorsey refer to as rhetorical looping where narratives are created by a source and redigested by another only to be reprocessed once again by the original source of that narrative—in the case of Japan, one salient example related to the attack on Pearl Harbor is that of the novel *Kaigun*, or ‘The Navy’ by Iwata Toyoo (Tansman 2009, 409). While there were seemingly innumerable stories, essays, and poems related to the attack on Pearl Harbor and the midget submarine attacks, this one was particularly impactful—being picked back up by the navy itself (Tansman 2009, 418). This novel, inspired by the Naval Information Bureau’s radio address on the attack, was created independent of government influence—however, shortly after its publish and popularity, in 1943 the novel was made into a film with the full support of the Imperial Navy (Tansman 2009, 409–10). The film itself focused on rehabilitating the failed submarine mission into Pearl Harbor which resulted in the deaths of all submariners with the notable exception of one who was taken as the first Japanese prisoner of war (Tansman 2009, 413). The original address, the novel, and the film stress the self-sacrifice and duty of the submariners while focusing on their innate drive to rid Japan of ideological imperialism through American and British “egocentrism and materialism” as reported by the Navy spokesman, Captain Hiraide in 1942 (Tansman 2009, 414). In the original press release, Hiraide continued by justifying the attack further by highlighting the concept of Asianism—discussing the “great spirit of a Japan dedicated to world peace” (Tansman 2009, 415). The novel based on this report was a massive success—being serialized in *Asahi Shimbun* from July to December of 1942 and receiving the Asahi Cultural Prize, then published as a single volume whose first 50,000 copy run sold out (Tansman 2009, 419). The film that followed attained similar popularity—appealing to the Japanese through visual representations of the innocent, dutiful, and pure lifestyles of Japan and the beauty of national symbols and their reflection in the selflessness, dedication, and

beneficent nature of the submariner depicted in the film (Tansman 2009, 420–24). In a contrast to the unilateral top-down institutionalization of collective memory during the Meiji era and early Taisho, this film represents an interesting convergence between institutionalized collective memory from above and below—serving as a demonstration of the collective effort of elite and non-elite in reinforcing the empire and preserving its collective glories for the future as a way to tie the state and the people to one shared vision for Japanese identity and society (Tansman 2009, 410, 426).

By the end of the war, institutionalized memory in the form of Japanese emperor worship and *Minzoku* continued to impact the way that Japanese soldiers and civilians behaved—even in the most dire of circumstances. During the invasion of Okinawa by American forces, thousands of Japanese civilians and reservists fought against the American military with whatever weapons were available, oftentimes sharpened sticks as spears or even their bare hands (Goto-Jones 2009, 85). The fighting on Okinawa alone cost the lives of 150,000 Japanese civilians, many of whom chose to fight against the American forces out of a perceived obligation to the emperor and a belief in the innate warrior spirit of their people (Goto-Jones 2009, 85). Amongst the enlisted servicemen, this warrior spirit was even more intensely adhered to—during the recapture of Tarawa in the Gilbert islands, the Japanese soldiers—isolated from their command structure—fought to the last man with all 3,500 killed in fighting or suicide (Romein 1962, 336). This pattern repeated itself across the Pacific from Okinawa to the island of Attu in the Bering Sea where numbers of prisoners amounted to only 2-3% the number of those killed by fighting and suicide—highlighting the salience of Japanese collective identity and adherence to their beliefs in emperor, empire, and superiority (Romein 1962, 336-337). These numbers highlight the importance of collective memory and identity in Showa Japan—the decades long institutionalization through literature, monuments, education, social structures, and military service had transformed Japanese understanding of self into being one with the will of the authoritarian system. With death being a condition of servitude, the most honorable act of service to the emperor, and the condition for finding one's place in shrines such as Yasukuni, it is no wonder why in spite of all economic hardships the Japanese people largely continued to support the military without question (Tansman 2009, 236). Yasukuni, the central imperial shrine to those who died in service to the emperor, elevated those honored there to the status of national deities where their very identity was subsumed to the collective and honoring individuals by name was forbidden by the priests themselves (Tansman 2009, 297). However, not all the war dead were offered this honor, many were honored locally in the

villages and cities from which they came. The men who died during the Pacific War were honored contemporarily through stele called Chureito, towers to the loyal spirits, often placed in the corners of schoolyards and filled with ashes of the war dead (Tansman 2009, 237). These sites of veneration, situated in the corners of schools, served as a tool to institutionalize this narrative of imperial service and Japanese racial character amongst local populations and particularly the youth of the country (Tansman 2009, 238). While it is easy to see memorialization of the war dead as a form of institutionalization, it is also a result of grass roots reinforcement of these constitutive norms. One core example from the beginning of the Pacific War is the 1939 design competition for Chureito which was broadcast across ten major newspapers and set specific guidelines for the ways in which Chureito were to be constructed (Tansman 2009, 240). This competition was open to public submissions and entries were reviewed and selected by established architects, military members, and the president of the Tokyo School of art—showing the wide breadth of support and participation in the enforcement of this vision of Japanese identity (Tansman 2009, 240). This competition was supported by countless newspaper articles discussing monuments across the Japanese colonies and donation drives where everyone down to children and prison inmates contributed money to the monuments' construction (Tansman 2009, 241). Not all memorialization was post-mortem, however. Up until the end of the war, kamikaze pilots bombarded shipping lanes and threatened allied advances towards mainland Japan and Japanese colonial possessions—crashing into targets with those pilots came care dolls, or mascot dolls, companions for fighters meant to commit the ultimate sacrifice to the nation (Tansman 2009, 302). These dolls were meant to serve as protective talismans, or in the case of unmarried kamikaze pilots who received them—wives to take with them into the afterlife (Tansman 2009, 303). These dolls, handmade by schoolgirls and families of soldiers, were thought by Japanese to transmit some of the pain from the pilot's death to the creator of the doll—physically and metaphorically spreading the sacrifice and suffering throughout the collective (Tansman 2009, 303).

However strong these beliefs were, the war and the military overspending had taken its toll by the time of the Japanese loss of Saipan on July 18th 1944. It was then that the Zaibatsu and Navy elite rallied, and with the resignation of prime minister Hideki Tojo began the withdrawal of Japanese forces from far reaching islands along with the American bombing campaign of mainland Japan (Romein 1962, 338; Lucken 2017, 44). The Japanese population, through rigorous media coverage of the Allied bombing of Berlin in October of that year had been systematically prepared for a fight to the last man, woman, and child (Lucken 2017, 110).

From this time until the end of the war, kamikaze missions were repeatedly the subject of newspapers, radio reports, and newsreels—reinforcing the concept of ultimate sacrifice in preparation for the possible invasion of mainland Japan by the American military (Lucken 2017, 112). Up until the emperor’s surrender speech all sources of media were steadying the public to fight—this public willingness to sacrifice itself only served to embolden the Japanese government who held on, even in spite of massive bombing campaigns which resulted in the wholesale destruction of Tokyo and the loss of over 83,000 civilian lives (Lucken 2017, 127–28). While the bombing the bombing that followed is now remembered in infamy, at the time the Japanese newspapers gave it no special import—simply highlighting the inhuman nature of the allies and carefully avoided discussing the extent of the bombs’ impact in order to preserve public morale (Lucken 2017, 135). It was only when the emperor announced the surrender where he highlighted the true level of devastation of the bomb, “Should we continue to fight, it would not only result in an ultimate collapse and disappearance of the Japanese nation, but it would also lead to the total extinction of human civilization” (Lucken 2017, 135). It was after the collapse of the regime and the surrender that the media began to openly discuss the events—the emperor and his affiliated media such as *Japan News* attempting to separate imperial will from the actions of the military during the war and the destruction of the bombs (Lucken 2017, 136–37). The end of the war, the bombs, and the emperor’s post war media campaign served as the beginning of a change in Japanese perceptions of themselves and the world around them, fracturing and fundamentally altering their collective identity and memory for the future.

Routes of Plausible Causal Influence	
Causal Route	Plausible Influence
Ideas as Roadmaps	Asianism: During this period, Japan was under immense pressure from the US and other nations. This, feeding into Asianist notions of Western diplomatic unfairness and interference into Asia, likely influenced Japanese into viewing conflict escalation as the only effective strategy.
Ideas as Focal Points	Emperor Worship: Protecting the emperor, and thus the imperial system, was the core status quo for the Japanese—even if militarism did not always serve that goal. With mounting pressure from the US, China, and the Dutch, Japanese elites likely felt their bottom line being threatened.

	This can be extended to the civilian populations of Japan who were trained to fight to the last person to protect the nation ahead of allied invasion.
Institutionalization of Ideas	Asianism: Through the Imperial Conference, commitment to the East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere was affirmed and reinforced amongst elites. With the transition to a pseudo-junta government led by Tojo Hideki, the government was effectively guided by the unbridled imperialist ideology which likely contributed to Japan's rapid acquisition of territory in Southeast Asia and the Pacific. Minzoku: While elites at this time recognized the incompatibility of Minzoku with the so-called 'Co-Prosperity Sphere', this ideology was reinforced throughout the period both from government officials and local populations through monuments, intellectual movements, media and art. The emphasis on self-sacrifice and martial prowess precipitated mass violence to conquered peoples, violent resistance to allied advances, and the increase in Kamikaze attacks as a tool of war. This also prepared civilians on the mainland to fight to the last person to defend against the allies.

4.5 Imperial Japan – Conclusion

Imperial Japan, by the end of its existence, had fully consolidated around the military as an elite group. While there were enough remaining elites from other groups to take over at the end of the war, the government until the resignation of Tojo Hideki was comparable to a military junta. Based on previous studies assessments of junta's conflict behavior, we would expect the initiation of conflict to increase along with the consolidation of this form of regime—a result supported by the data gathered in this analysis. In previous literature, while preferences are not explicitly explored, Junta's are known to initiate conflict, rather than for personal gain, because they view conflict as standard procedure through their socialization in the military (Weeks 2012, 344). Additionally, they are more likely to view other powers

skeptically and view preemptive military escalation as a preferable option to inaction which could prove costly (Weeks 2012, 343). By analyzing the existing forms of collective memory and then tracing their routes of causal impact, it would appear that of these presumptions hold true in the case of Imperial Japan. Collective memory in the form of Asianist ideology, the ethno-national concept of *Minzoku*, and the ever-present desire to maintain and support the Emperor and his system likely contributed to the rise of the fascist junta that Japan would become. Additionally, we find that these core concepts underpin and are reinforced by every major conflict during the Showa era—reinforcing themselves through institutionalization, informing the options available to the Japanese, and providing central ideas around which even competing groups could work. Thus, based on the evidence gathered in this analysis, collective memory likely serves as an additional determinant in determining Imperial Japan’s conflict preferences—often pushing Japan into seemingly irrational conflicts that elites were not able to win.

5. ANALYSIS 2 - CHINA UNDER THE CCP

5.1 Overview

In the case of China under the CCP, the regime type has gone through several iterations over time—beginning with a period of personalism under Mao Zedong, after his death going through a single party authoritarian period, and most recently becoming increasingly personalist under Xi Jinping. The previous periods of personalism and party rule have been researched extensively by political scientists and historians alike and, rather than being derivative, will be referenced with as much certainty as previous literature provides and used as a context for the collective memory analysis of the contemporary regime.

5.2 Regime Type Defined

Mao Zedong:

Scholars—regime typologists included—have often studied China and the CCP both during and after the Mao period in attempts to better understand the origins of the regimes’ enduring stability and changing conflict preferences. Jessica Weeks, through her set of eight

metrics, categorized China during the Mao period as being a consolidated personalist authoritarian state, and categorized Mao as a ‘Boss’ or non-military personalist (Weeks 2012, 337).

Reform Period:

During the post-Mao reform period up until the publication of her piece in 2012, Weeks categorized China as a machine, or single party authoritarian system (Weeks 2012, 337). Her appraisal is backed up by the new realities of the CCP regime where, even with a leadership crisis and a crisis of legitimacy in the new era, the CCP had a successive change of leaders elected by the party itself. Each leader in this time was afforded a good deal of leverage over policy creation however, while this leader shares the same position as Mao once did, the reality of policy formation was that of consensus during this period—each document going through a lengthy process of revision by other influential members before its delivery to the national congress (Wang 2012, 122). All of these leaders were in some way related to, or were themselves part of the revolutionary communist party—their ethnic group less important than their relationships with other important elite within the party (Rosen and Lynch 2024, 161). In this time, access to government was determined by party membership rather than the will of one leader—to the contrary, leadership access was determined by the party elite and was directly influenced by the domestic audience which determined the length of a leader’s tenure based on the leaders ability to gain and maintain allies within the given structure (Rosen and Lynch 2024, 161). In the post-Mao period military-leader relationships were also fairly stable--the military of the CCP served as another wing of the party with its command structure independent of the leader and devoid of any particular loyalist forces, being yet another elite group which aided to determine the length of a leader’s tenure through their support within the party (Rosen and Lynch 2024, 161).

Xi Jinping:

In the ten years since the publication of Weeks’ work, China’s government has undergone several key changes which warrant the reassessment of their system. In the following section, I will apply Jessica Weeks’ framework of regime typology analysis to the modern iteration of the CCP in order to determine whether it remains a single party regime, whether it is a hybrid regime, or whether Xi Jinping has consolidated enough power for the regime to be considered personalist.

5.2.1 Did access to high government office depend on the personal favor of the leader? If there was a supporting party, did the leader choose most of the members of the politburo equivalent? Did country specialists view the politburo or equivalent as a rubber stamp for the leader's decisions?

Given Xi's corruption campaigns' elimination of most competition, the remaining elite were incentivized to stay loyal or face similar consequences. When Xi's second term was at an end, there was very little resistance to his third term—most elites either having been selected by him or having been coaxed into loyalty under threat of prosecution (Rosen and Lynch 2024, 165). This can only be further exemplified by the assumption of his third term at the NPC meeting of 2018 where he was elected unanimously (Rosen and Lynch 2024, 172). At the party congress of 2022, Xi further solidified his control of the political system with the ascension of a new Central Committee and the selection of a new Politburo Standing Committee where all seven members were key political allies of Xi himself (Rosen and Lynch 2024, 167). While it is not abnormal for leaders to have many key allies within the politburo, it is unheard of that the politburo be completely comprised of key allies—past leaders were obliged to appoint several representatives of other elite factions in order to maintain balance and elite unity during their tenure (Rosen and Lynch 2024, 168). Aside from political elite loyal to Xi, technocrats were also allowed into the politburo with the understanding that their lack of connections within the party would allow Xi to control them more easily (Rosen and Lynch 2024, 169). Of Xi's various appointments to top positions, such as ministers and councilors, the majority of them have some connection to Xi and have served with him as close allies—often working closely together since the 1990s (Rosen and Lynch 2024, 173).

5.2.2 Has normal military hierarchy been seriously disorganized or overturned, or has the leader created new military forces loyal to him personally? Did the leader personally control the security forces?

Through Xi's anti-corruption campaigns he sought to bring the military under direct control of the party, but more directly under his control. After prosecuting former heads of the PLA, Xi staged a symbolic meeting at Gutian—drawing a direct line between himself and Mao who had held a conference there in 1929 in order to establish complete control of the military (Rosen and Lynch 2024, 163). The previous leaders eliminated by Xi had been in charge of the promotion of many major officers within the military command structure, promoting military independence from the high leadership of the CCP in the era before Xi's ascension—as the senior vice chairman of the CMC reported in 2019, the two leaders had

isolated military command from party loyalty in a dedicated effort to “pursue their private interests” which jeopardized the party’s control of the military (Rosen and Lynch 2024, 163).

In 2013, Xi announced the creation of the National Security Commission saying, “the aim of the establishment of the Council is to... build a national security system which is centralized, integrated, highly efficient, and authoritative, so as to improve leadership over the work of national security” (Rosen and Lynch 2024, 166). Xi designed this system with the belief that national security and national rejuvenation were deeply connected and that this could only be achieved through the military’s complete loyalty to the party, but moreover to him personally (Rosen and Lynch 2024, 166). His work report in 2022 highlights the importance of this fact, promising to “strengthen party building across the board” so that the military “will always obey the party’s command. We will improve the institutions and mechanism, for implementing the system of ultimate responsibility resting with the chairman of the Central Military Commission” (Rosen and Lynch 2024, 166). Xi has since kept his word, visibly diminishing the role of the older elite of the PLA in the Central Committee through appointing 34 new members out of the 44 total PLA representatives—showcasing a massive turnover and the passive purge of previous autonomous PLA influence (Rosen and Lynch 2024, 172). While Xi has certainly purged a great number of military elite, this process has not been at the cost of military funding as might be expected, rather, Xi has gone to great lengths to consolidate control in order to use the military for his own foreign policy objectives—thus, investing heavily in military improvement rather than weakening the military in order to maintain control (Rosen and Lynch 2024, 187-190). The commanders appointed by Xi to replace previous elite are experienced specialists—rather than political picks, these new appointees are highly seasoned and able to modernize the Chinese military while adhering enough to Xi’s will that he does not feel entirely threatened by their power (Rosen and Lynch 2024, 190).

5.2.3 Have dissenting officers or officers from different regions, tribes, religions, or ethnic groups been murdered, imprisoned, or forced into exile?

Xi’s tenure has been characterized by mass anti-corruption campaigns targeting various high ranking party members who behaved poorly and adhered to backward traditions, xi referred to as “pointless formalities, bureaucratism, hedonism, and extravagance” (Rosen and Lynch 2024, 162). This campaign saw a complete rework of The Central Commission of Discipline Inspection—the party’s anti-corruption organ—in order to facilitate the investigation of millions of officials (Rosen and Lynch 2024, 24). In this purge, the CCDI

was accused of torture as its various commissions conducted investigations and kangaroo trials used whatever evidence they could gather, including evidence obtained outside of legal means (Rosen and Lynch 2024, 24). In order to prevent further degradation of party legitimacy, Xi prosecuted retired heads of the Political and Legal Affairs Commission, the People's Liberation Army vice Chairman—signaling his willingness to go after elites in, and out of direct control (Rosen and Lynch 2024, 163). This corruption campaign resulted in the arrests of 155 officials of various levels within Xi's first term alone (Rosen and Lynch 2024, 163). Perhaps the most poignant example of political purge under Xi is that of Hu Jintao, former general secretary of the CCP (Rosen and Lynch 2024, 167). His dramatic removal during the 2022 party congress has been painted as a medical issue, however the lack of concern from other party members present has led to mass speculation that this could have been another strike at the old guard political elite who represented a challenge to Xi's consolidation of power (Rosen and Lynch 2024, 167). Under this current system, we see that the legal system, rather than being a source of legitimacy for rules is rather unified with the party's will—the constitution of China, enshrining the supremacy of the party, is not the source of that power but a product of the undisputed power of those who authored it (Rosen and Lynch 2024, 34). With Xi at the head of this rule by law system, all laws on book and all legal decisions ultimately reflect his unquestionable will.

In addition to Xi's efforts to consolidate power he also restricted the rights of the media through a list of seven key topics which the media was forbidden from discussing—foremost on that list being Western constitutional government (Rosen and Lynch 2024, 164). In this period, hundreds of lawyers were arrested in an attempt to curb rule of law in favor of rule by law under Xi's leadership—these lawyers, “rights lawyers” represented an increasingly independent legal system which challenged Xi's authority (Wang 2012, 164). Without any political, military, or legal resistance—Xi effectively dominated all elite groups able to resist him—resulting in the National People's Congress of 2018 revising the constitution to remove the two-term limit on the presidency (Rosen and Lynch 2024, 164).

5.2.4 Was the successor to the first leader, or is the heir apparent, a member of the same family, clan, tribe, or minority ethnic group as the first leader?

Xi Jinping's father, Xi Zhongxun, was one of the first great leaders of the communist party—beginning his story as a fighter during the Sino-Japanese war, later becoming deputy prime minister under Mao, being purged from the party in the 1960s, and eventually being rehabilitated in 1978 after Mao's death (“Like Father, like Son? Revolutionary History”

2014). After his death, Xi Zhongxun was honored with a statue befitting his achievements, however, this statue only gained importance in the context of his son's ascension ("Like Father, like Son? Revolutionary History" 2014). Although Xi's father was a member of the old guard of the CCP and this certainly impacted his placement at the head of the system by reinforcing his image and expectations of his behavior, it was far from a choice based out of any hereditary power transfer—rather, it represented the standard reproduction of elite power generationally and his ability to consolidate power after gaining power was a product of other elite interactions. By comparison, Xi and his father are hardly similar in their policy—Xi Zhongxun was a reformer and humanist who attempted to assuage disputes between the Chinese and Tibetans and befriended the Dalai Lama, helped to set up the Special Economic Zones, and was eventually purged by Mao (Schulte Nordholt 2018, 91). While Xi Zhongxun was reformist in some aspects, it is undeniable that he was also a fervent ideologically motivated communist who supported purges and even advocated for their intensification (Schulte Nordholt 2018, 91). Xi, in spite of his ideological posturing, seems to be far more concerned by his pursuit of power than loyalty to communist ideology (Schulte Nordholt 2018, 92). It is undeniable that his father's legacy lent him strength in his ascent through the ranks of the CCP, however, his ability to rapidly consolidate power and eliminate opposition was of his own making.

5.2.5 Regime Type Conclusion

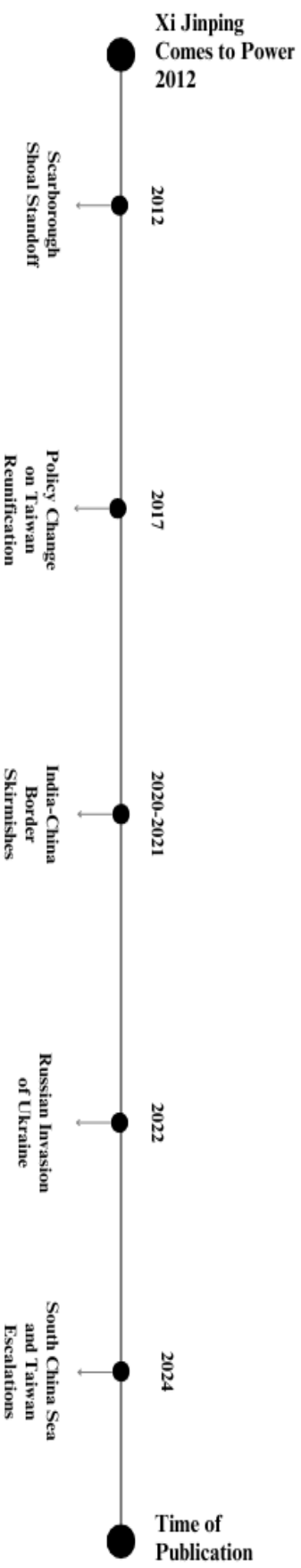
The attainment of this level of consolidated power has not been seen in China since Deng Xiaoping—however, unlike his predecessor, Xi has not invested in liberalization but has instead invested in the consolidation and reproduction of his own power (Schulte Nordholt 2018, 93). In calculated efforts since his election, Xi has slowly purged elite forces which could offer checks to his power, bringing the legal system, propaganda system, political system, and military under his control. By 2015, Xi had outlawed speech that would criticize his policy directives—passing a resolution which would punish 'groundless comments' and any attempt to 'defame the nation, the party and state leaders' (Schulte Nordholt 2018, 92). Since that time he has gained positions and titles which previous leaders never gained, done away with term limits and secured a third term, and begun to unify party loyalty and loyalty to himself (Schulte Nordholt 2018, 92). While all evidence points to Xi's near total consolidation of power, party mouthpiece Xinhua put it best in a statement from January 2016 when they said that Xi alone was the leader of the party and that all other members must "be aligned with the central leadership of the party led by Xi in actions and

thoughts” (Fewsmith and Nathan 2018, 92). Xi has, in the last twelve years of his rule, brought China out of its party period and securely into a new period of personalist authoritarianism.

5.3 Conflict Timeline

Although tensions with its neighbors has been a feature of Chinese politics since before the establishment of the CCP, the conflicts have escalated over the course of the CCPs existence as China’s power to enforce its territorial ambitions expanded. This has been particularly visible in the late party period and the Xi Jinping personalist period where China has increased its military pressure on its land border with India, in its disputes in the South China Sea, in its ambitions to reclaim Taiwan, and its interference in the Russo-Ukrainian War. As time continues forward, the territorial claims and military conflict preferences of the regime continue to escalate—short direct military engagement with traditional weapons but not without the use of military forces against civilians and militaries of its neighbor states. According to previous literature, Xi’s emerging authoritarian system should have a marked increase in conflict as a tool of policy and, during his tenure we do see an escalation in several key areas. While many of Xi’s conflicts have fallen short of traditional military conflict, our definition of military conflict allows us to regard them the same as outright tradition war.

Military Conflict in Xi's China



5.4 Presence of Collective Memory

Similarly to regime organization in China, modern Chinese collective memory has also been the subject of large scale analyses. One such work, Zheng Wang's *Never Forget National Humiliation: Historical Memory in Chinese Politics and Foreign Relations*, serves to illustrate the formation the salience of Chinese collective memory in the Mao and Party periods respectively and, additionally, serves as the blueprint for the analysis that will be applied to the modern personalist regime under Xi Jinping. This analysis looked at the formation of Chinese collective memory dating back from antiquity and analyses the ways in which the Century of Humiliation changed Chinese collective memory and the relations between regime and people and between the Chinese and other nations. In order to understand the collective memory underpinning the current system, it is necessary to understand the roots of that modern memory and the process of its formation in pre-Xi China—a process which begins, undoubtedly, with the Century of Humiliation.

The Chinese emperor and the elite of the nation were in no way prepared for the confrontation that was the Opium War—self-assured until the lopsided conflict showcased the Chinese's antiquated military technology and the ignorance of the Chinese elite to the rapidly evolving politics and economics of the outside world (Wang 2012, 39–40). This humiliation and feeling of 'backwardness' manifested itself as a collective trauma which served as a pivotal locus of memory for the future (Wang 2012, 41). This humiliation was felt by leaders 100 years after the conflict, being referenced by Sun Yat-sen and Mao Zedong respectively as a period where China had been placed at its lowest, "semicolonial" state (Wang 2012, 50). By the end of the conflict, the elite of China realized the depth of their misunderstanding and resigned themselves to their fate, accepting that it was government failure, not the failure of the people, that had precipitated the loss of their sovereignty (Wang 2012, 40). One of China's imperial advisors wrote in 1842 that China was "a medieval government, our people, including the scholar-elite class, were people of medieval times" (Wang 2012, 40). It was from this devastating realization that a deep feeling of political "backwardness" began to take root in Chinese political discourse, one which along with strong pressures to rejuvenate China, grew into both the nationalist, and communist movements of the 20th century (Wang 2012, 40). This collective trauma is the basis for the relational content, worldviews, and principled beliefs in the modern era, but is heavily reliant on the fracture of previous notions of Chinese collective memory established in antiquity.

While this modern trauma impacted modern Chinese identity, it was all the more impactful for the thousands of years of preexisting notions of Chinese identity linked deeply to their existing history and traditions. The name for China in Mandarin Chinese, Zhongguo (中国), directly translates to central kingdom—a term and concept that has existed for hundreds of years and has impacted Chinese understanding of their relationships to the rest of the world up until the modern era (Wang 2012, 42). This idea of centrality is reflected in other common names for the country—one being tianchao or “celestial empire” which has been in use from antiquity to the contemporary era (Wang 2012, 42). This sense of centrality and connection to divinity, both institutionalized by government and people, reinforced relational content which led to outsiders being viewed and referred to as ‘Yi’, or barbarians—seen as uncivilized peoples based on their lack of adherence to Chinese imperial traditions as far back as the Eastern Zhou period between 770 and 256 B.C.E. (Wang 2012, 42). Viewing outsiders as barbarians and as culturally inferior precipitated a Chinese elite incapable of understanding the weakness of their position at the time of the Opium War in 1840—leading to elite who saw outside elite such as the queen of England as below them, certainly below their emperor, and incapable of making demands of their Celestial Empire (Wang 2012, 39). Similar to many other countries’ and religions origins, Chinese belief was centered around the idea that their people were the chosen people and that cultural outsiders were inferior (Wang 2012, 43). What is important to note is that barbarism was related to a lack of adherence to imperial traditions—meaning that while this relational content could be, and often was weaponized, it did not prevent the absorption of other cultures into China so long as those cultures submitted and adopted Chinese culture and customs such as Japan, Korea, and Vietnam who adopted various aspects of Chinese culture (Wang 2012, 42-43). For the Chinese, the system of tianxia governance had classically subjugated foreign cultures mostly through soft power and the proliferation of Chinese culture rather than direct conquest (Wang 2012, 73). To the Chinese, Western traders were seen as particularly barbarous—unwilling, unable, or unworthy to accept Chinese culture, were offered restricted trade and were not permitted to learn Mandarin in order to hamper their ability to negotiate or expand their enterprise into China (Wang 2012, 49). This complex of superiority only added to the absolute shock of the Opium Wars which precipitated near total foreign control of China.

Though it may seem excessive to begin Chinese collective identity formation several thousand years ago, however these events continue to be mythologized and reproduced generationally today through textbooks, art, and government institutionalization. One salient

example being the meticulously scripted Beijing Olympic Games in 2008 when, during the opening ceremony, China showcased over 4,000 years of its history and achievements from art, inventions, to the Chinese explorer Zheng He's voyages of the 1400's which brought envoys and tribute to China from various countries across the world (Wang 2012, 45–46). The mythologized representation of these voyages reflects China's constitutive norms and worldviews, showing that their understanding of self is predicated on their culture of open-mindedness and virtue which, according to this depiction, has always relied on “winning respect through virtue” rather than by forcing tribute through violent means—especially towards weaker countries and peoples (Wang 2012, 46). This moral superiority that grounds Chinese identity is, however, not based in concrete fact but rather a selective memory or cultural mythology—often overlooked is the reality that such explorative voyages were punctuated by violent invasion of several countries and that the tribute was not voluntarily given (Wang 2012, 46). While this is not objectively true, it has been a theme institutionalized in Chinese political discourse and textbooks throughout history, but particularly throughout the reform era after the death of Mao.

These collective myths of Chinese glory form one half of the constitutive norms and worldviews of the Chinese, the other however is formed by the destruction of that self-esteem during the Opium Wars and subsequent hundred years of humiliation at the hands of various colonial forces from the Western powers to Japan (Wang 2012, 47). Before the collective humiliation, the Chinese allowed access to foreigners only through the port of Guangzhou at certain times of the year and forbid foreigners to learn Chinese out of a sense of cultural superiority (Wang 2012, 49). The century of humiliation or ‘the treaty century’ saw China carved up into spheres of influence and invaded six times—each time forcing China to pay indemnities, give up territories and rights, and grant other countries economic privileges in various unequal treaties which the weak Chinese government was unable to resist (Wang 2012, 48). It is no wonder then, that this century is memorialized and institutionalized so carefully by the Chinese government throughout the last 80 years following Chinese national liberation. While the glories of Chinese ingenuity have been symbolized, the traumas have been turned into concrete monuments, places of memory to reinforce the memory of this great humiliation and to highlight the relational content and causal beliefs necessary to prevent such trauma in the future. One such memorial is that of the Opium War museum which opened in 1985, built on the site where Lin Zexu seized the British Opium shipments and kicked off the war (Wang 2012, 50). The museum showcases a large sculpture of two

hands breaking an opium pipe in half—qualified by a plaque describing the intended meaning of the monument as follows,

“The big hands are symbolic of the power of Chinese people to resist the foreign invasions and the spirit that the Chinese people cannot be insulted. The broken opium pipe is symbolic of the ultimate failure of the imperialists’ invasion crimes. The sculpture is telling us not to forget this part of history and the Chinese nation cannot be insulted” (Wang 2012, 50).

The insults and crimes are further symbolized in another site of memory: Yuanming Yuan, the Garden of Perfect Brightness. This imperial palace was built during Qing dynasty during 1700’s by Emperor Kangxi and was filled with art, literature, jewels, and antiques (Wang 2012, 52). This palace was despoiled by the French and English forces, however, during the second Opium War in 1860—resulting in the total destruction of the palace and the destruction or looting of all the valuables therein (Wang 2012, 52). After the end of the century of humiliation, the palace was left unrestored by the government—left as a pile of broken buildings in 1949 to reinforce the memory of this “national ruin” well into the future (Wang 2012, 52). This park is still preserved today, being rebranded into a national patriotic education base in 1994 by the revisionist government during the party period and now hosts various activities, anniversaries, and ceremonies to highlight and institutionalize the national memory of humiliation, but also to reinforce relational content and constitutive content of Chinese civilization’s greatness compared to foreign barbarism (Wang 2012, 53). This site also features prominently in nationalist historical textbooks, one such book highlighted this moment by asking a class discussion question, “why did troops from countries who referred to themselves as civilized Westerners destroy the essences of the Eastern civilization?” an open ended question designed to allow educators to perpetuate certain beliefs about the collective Chinese character, but also about the collective character of those who are not Chinese (Wang 2012, 53). This exploitation and destruction of the Chinese agrarian economy damaged the government irreparably and allowed for warlordism to proliferate within the country—a fact which led to China’s inability to defend itself from further invasion and created areas of poverty which still impact various areas of the country today (Wang 2012, 66).

Discussion of the impact of the Century of Humiliation would not be complete, however, without discussion of the Japanese invasion of China beginning in the 1890's. As Japan was traditionally considered a nation which had learned from China and had offered it tribute, its victory in the first Sino-Japanese War of 1894 was particularly humiliating to the Chinese—particularly when the Japanese seized Korea, Taiwan, and parts of Manchuria in the 1895 Treaty of Shimonoseki (Wang 2012, 54). The first Sino-Japanese war served as a turning point in Chinese collective identity—forming a sense of Chinese nationalism that had not existed in the previous more culturally organized period (Wang 2012, 74). This initial conflict, much like the Opium Wars that preceded it, was characterized by Chinese military blunders and ill-preparedness which resulted in their entire navy being destroyed by the Japanese and the massacre of thousands of civilians at Port Arthur (Wang 2012, 54). It served as yet another wakeup call to the Chinese whose governance structures were ill equipped to deal with the problems of their contemporary world—according to Liang Qichao, an influential intellectual of the early 20th century, the war “awakened my country from the long dream of 4,000 years” kicking off a series of collective memory changes which would lead to the reformation of Chinese government and the beliefs of the Chinese people in the efficacy of certain forms of governance (Wang 2012, 74). This period, as the Chinese state waned in control, was a short but intense period of institutionalization of Chinese nationalism and military citizenship through the education system (Wang 2012, 74–75). This movement was a middle-out change in collective identity which manifested itself through the slogan “Never Forget National Humiliation” which was printed in newspaper articles, propaganda paintings, goods, and clothing (Wang 2012, 84). By the end of the Qing government's control, this nationalism had grown into a movement which encompassed all levels of society from the intellectuals to the common person, reinforced and institutionalized both from the bottom and the top (Wang 2012, 84). In the interwar period this nationalism was so all encompassing that the newly formed CCP and Nationalist governments both sought to take hold of Chinese nationalism and direct it towards imperialists, often combining forces to fight back against warlords and the Japanese—both groups citing the impact of the unfair treaties and the gifting of Chinese territory to Japan in the wake of WWI as the main forces driving China's problems (Wang 2012, 79).

In spite of Chinese nationalist developments, Japanese aggression only continued to strengthen as Chinese factionalism continued and warlords offered them more and more influence in exchange for weapons and favor—eventually leading to the conquest of all

Manchuria after the Mukden Incident in 1931 and the creation of a semi-independent colonial state, Manchukuo, by 1932 (Wang 2012, 56, 67). Mukden has become yet another site of memory for the Chinese, the party having erected a museum and a massive monument inscribed with the words “never forget national humiliation” to commemorate the tragedy in 1991 (Wang 2012, 56). This is just one in a series of Japanese landgrabs throughout the leadup to WWII, however—similar commemorative memorials and museums being built for the fall of Nanjing to the Japanese in 1937, perhaps the most impactful event of the conflict (Wang 2012, 57).

The invasion of Nanjing is infamous for the brutal murder, rape, and looting committed by Japanese forces—a fact which the modern museums and monuments built in the 1980’s do not fail to highlight (Wang 2012, 57). The death toll, depending on the expert, ranged between 100,000 and 300,000 people and has served as a key part of modern Chinese collective memory—showcasing the brutality and barbarism of the Japanese and the cost of governmental weakness (Wang 2012, 57–58). This death toll is inscribed on the wall alongside the word “victim” at the entrance of the Memorial Hall for Compatriots Killed in the Nanjing Massacre by Japanese Forces of Aggression—a memorial hall built near the infamous “pit of ten thousand corpses”, a mass grave from the conflict (Wang 2012, 58). Between the insistence on the highest death toll, the symbolic location, and the direct wording of the name of the museum, it is clear that the Chinese government sought to maximize the institutionalization impact of this place and emblazon this collective trauma onto future generations.

While the Century of Humiliation encompasses a myriad of abuses towards the Chinese, none is particularly as prescient in the collective consciousness as that of the second Sino-Japanese war. The Nanjing massacre was just one of a series of crimes committed against the Chinese by the Imperial Japanese army in a war fought for almost ten years between 1937 and 1945, being preceded by nearly 35 years of Japanese imperialism in Manchuria and Taiwan (Wang 2012, 58). This war is immortalized in Chinese textbooks for its brutality—citing that a casualty total of around 35 million people between civilians and the military (Wang 2012, 59).

While this memory is institutionalized by the modern CCP, the CCP of the 1930’s was, at the time, mostly focused on preparing for the eventual war to defeat the Nationalist Government—Mao being reported to have ordered the party to expend only 10% of its

resources into fighting Japan with the rest being dedicated to expand their control and prepare for war with the Kuomintang (Wang 2012, 82–83). The absence of communist forces at the sight of many major battles and tragedies was a fact which the CCP went to great lengths to conceal in their post war propaganda in order to bolster their legitimacy (Wang 2012, 88). Here is represented the key fracture in Chinese collective memory precipitated by the Century of Humiliation, the CCP and many Chinese felt that the previous government, typified by Confucian organization, was part of the reason China was unprepared to defend itself—seeking to replace that previous ideology with communism (Wang 2012, 83). The Nationalist Government, on the other hand, believed in a reinvigoration of that system in order to bring China back to its lost power (Wang 2012, 83). Along with that change in ideology came a top down change in institutionalized collective memory—a change which recentered Chinese identity around the national glory of the revolution and constitutive and relational content related to class rather than national identity (Wang 2012, 84). Thus, when Mao defeated the Kuomintang army and Chiang Kai-shek in the Chinese Civil War, the newly born People’s Republic of China quickly cast aside the narrative of national humiliation—the CCP exercising strict control of all publishing, resulting in not a single book regarding the “national humiliation” being published between 1947 and 1990 (Wang 2012, 86). The Century of Humiliation, including the most traumatic moments such as the Nanjing Massacre, were all but forgotten in academic and political discourse—attempts to publish on the subject were squashed (Wang 2012, 86–87). This period saw a total rejection of nationalism, favoring class over ethnicity as the deciding characteristic of Chinese identity—rather than a national party for all Chinese people, the CCP was a revolutionary communist party representing exclusively the proletariat (Wang 2012, 87). This new institutionalization was part of Mao’s image as an international communist leader—memories of humiliation tied to other countries would detract from communist internationalism and prevent a unified global proletarian movement. As such, Mao rationalized his intervention in global politics under the auspices of proletarian unity and liberation rather than imperial goals (Wang 2012, 87). When the Century of Humiliation was brought up, this period saw the majority of the blame being placed on the failures of the previous systems—the Qing Dynasty and the Nationalist Government—and saw this as feudal and capitalist incompetence and corruption inviting foreign intervention rather than blaming the external forces themselves (Wang 2012, 87). For Mao, rather than directing anger at former imperialists such as the Japanese, he found instead gratitude for presenting the opportunity for his rise to power—telling the Japanese prime minister in 1972, “we must express our gratitude to Japan. If Japan didn’t

invade China... we could never have developed and eventually taken political power for ourselves” (Wang 2012, 89). It is through statements like these that we can see the complete reversal of Chinese collective memory between the Mao period and the party period which followed.

Mao’s period of personalist governance put checks on Chinese nationalism and collective memory—centering those constitutive norms and relational content around class identity and creating worldviews and causal beliefs which centered around his cult of personality. However, this system collapsed with the death of Mao in 1976—precipitating a crisis of legitimacy both in the government and in the collective identity of the Chinese people (Wang 2012, 89). The period that followed saw the party reorganize itself politically and pivot ideologically in order to prevent total collapse and regain popular support amongst the people. This began with a quick separation between the party and the actions and memory of Mao—a struggle which represented itself in the changing national anthem of China in the period. In the Mao period, the song “The East Is Red” was chosen—a song which glorified the cult of Mao and praised him and his party for a liberation from an anonymous source of oppression (Wang 2012, 85, 90). Two years after Mao’s death, the song “March of the Volunteers” was chosen, however, references to the Japanese invasion of the 1930’s were replaced by references praising Mao Zedong (Wang 2012, 92). Finally, after much debate in 1982, the original lyrics to the song were restored—lyrics which highlighted the struggle of the Chinese in the 1930’s against the Japanese—decrying foreign invaders and cajoling the Chinese to bring about a new period of glory (Wang 2012, 91). Thus beginning a gradual top-down campaign to change the understanding of history and Chinese their relational content to other groups through re-institutionalization of memory centered not around communism, but around nationalism, the elimination of the foreign, and the rejuvenation of China (Wang 2012, 91). Wang argues that this debate and change in national anthem highlights the inconsistencies and battles within the party at the time—a system divided and on the precipice of collapse without the legitimacy and coherency offered by the personalist system. As society in China lost faith in socialism, Marxism, and the party itself—it slowly became influenced by Western ideas and liberalism, culminating in a large prodemocracy movement and the Tiananmen Square Massacre in 1989 (Wang 2012, 92). This event, compounded by the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, led to increased international pressure on China to liberalize, democratize, and abandon aspirations to Taiwan (Wang 2012, 93). Meanwhile, the US had improved its relations with countries surrounding China—including Vietnam—

leading to the CCP viewing themselves as, once again, surrounded by foreign threats with strong division at home (Wang 2012, 94). It was on the heels of this wide sweeping dissent that Deng Xiaoping said of the CCP's policies in the 1980s, "... our biggest mistake was in the field of education, primarily in ideological and political education—not just of students but of the people in general. We didn't tell them enough about the need for struggle, about what China was like in the old days and what kind of country it was to become" (Wang 2012, 96). By this time, the party elite had realized that Chinese collective memory was no longer centered around Mao's cult of personality or the ideals of communism, but was being redefined by liberal ideology. Without a refocusing on nationalism and a unification between that nationalism and the party, the system would collapse.

In order to stem the hemorrhaging support for the regime, the CCP attempted several education campaigns to redirect Chinese collective memory away from liberal ideology and towards nationalism—the most noteworthy being the post-Tiananmen 1991 patriotic education campaign which dwarfed the other two in its impact (Wang 2012, 96). This campaign was sanctioned in two documents in 1991—the *Notice about Conducting Education of Patriotism and Revolutionary Tradition by Exploiting Extensively Cultural Relics* and the *General Outline on Strengthening Education on Chinese Modern and Contemporary History and National Conditions* (Wang 2012, 97). These documents were created in accordance with a statement made by the contemporary leader, Jiang Zemin, who articulated the need for a new system of history education for all age groups and disseminated this statement via the official mouthpiece of the CCP, the *People's Daily*—thus disseminating the new directive to all schools in China through their local CCP supervisory committees (Wang 2012, 97). This letter have explicit directions to the committees and instructed them to stress four particular points in the new system,

“1. Because of the corruption of feudal rulers, in more than 100 years after the opium War, Chinese people were subjected to bullying and humiliation under foreign powers. This can be further illustrated by listing some main historical facts.

2. During this period of time, many people, including those with high ideals, shed their blood and lay down their life. each one would step into the breach as another fell, to resist foreign aggression. They were resolved to defend the Chinese nation.

3. After the “May Fourth Movement,” the CCP was created. Under its leadership, Chinese people of different ethnic groups went through the Agrarian Revolution, the War of Resistance against the Japanese, the liberation War, and finally, the new China. Chinese people have stood up for themselves since the implementation of this movement. After the liberation, China also experienced several anti-aggression wars. These demonstrated that the Chinese people cannot be bullied.
4. Chinese citizens have, of course, always been opposed to foreign invasions. They wish to uphold justice, and have never feared brutal exogenous forces.” (Wang 2012, 98).

Through this text it is clear that the new education campaign was less focused on communist ideology and glory than the Mao era—in fact, it represented a total flip of previous collective memory institutionalization. No longer were the Chinese constitutive norms guided by adherence to communist ideology or class, but rather their support for the Chinese nationalist rejuvenation. Additionally, instead of focusing on class distinctions as relational content regarding outgroups, this new pivot recentered relational content regarding the ‘other’ towards foreigners of all description—particularly those who had humiliated China in the past. In regards to worldviews, the new worldview was centered back on the China of old and the destiny of China to rebuild and recreate that mythologized era of prosperity. This new system was focused on the creation and enforcement of Chinese nationalism with the CCP as the defender of the Chinese and that nationalism—leaving support and proliferation of CCP policy as the only vehicle for nationalist expression and for the realization of Chinese rejuvenation. It is worthwhile to note that these education reforms immediately precipitated the creation of new middle and high school history textbooks by the People’s Education Press—particularly because before 1992 Chinese history was only taught in middle school and was not part of high school education (Wang 2012, 101). In these new textbooks, the previous villains of Chinese history—the Kuomintang and the corrupt bourgeoisie—were replaced by the Japanese and the West (Wang 2012, 102). Along with these changes came the disappearance of the focus on Chinese communist glory and a new pivot to national victimization and trauma (Wang 2012, 103).

While this document only began the process of education reform, these reforms took full effect in 1994 when they received full sanction by the CCP Central Committee (Wang 2012, 99). It was in this statement that the CCP articulated their reasoning for the new

campaign for the people and the world to see—writing, “the objectives of conducting the patriotic education campaign are to boost the nation’s spirit, enhance cohesion, foster national self-esteem and pride, consolidate and develop a patriotic united front to the broadest extent possible, and direct and rally the masses’ patriotic passions to the great cause of building socialism with Chinese characteristics” (Wang 2012, 99).

Understanding the power of monuments as well as traditional education, this new campaign saw the rehabilitation and refocusing of Chinese education on sites of historical memory such as those relating to the Opium Wars and Sino-Japanese Wars—these sites were now turned into patriotic education bases (Wang 2012, 104). These sites took the shape of museums, monuments, memorials, historic relics, and scenic areas all calculated to elicit feelings of patriotism and a memory of foreign violation of Chinese sovereignty (Wang 2012, 105). By refocusing on new constitutive norms of Chinese resistance and sacrifice for sovereignty, the energy behind the pro-democracy movements could effectively be redirected away from reform at home and refocused outward on the countries promoting liberal reform. This new focus can be highlighted in numbers through the 100 national demonstration bases selected by the Ministry of Civil Affairs—of which 40 are sites focused on conflict with foreign nations (Wang 2012, 105). While there are 100 national demonstration bases, each province has thousands more—likely reaching over 10,000 across the country (Wang 2012, 107). These sites of memory are used as sources for nationalist media such as songs and art, nationalist history events such as war commemorations, and even general holidays such as New Years or National Day—an effort to associate all important occasions and aspects of society with the new ideas of Chinese identity and their relation to the foreign (Wang 2012, 110). In this way, the new education campaign was able to be a movement which mobilized all strata of society towards the common celebration of these new identity norms through voluntary mobilization of artists, the political and military elite, and the working class (Wang 2012, 111)

These new generations, the product of the nationalist education reforms, reacted differently to external critique than the previous more insulated generations. With China’s increasing integration with the outside world came increased scrutiny by the West. Nowhere is this more evident than during China’s bids for the Olympics. As previously mentioned, the eventual 2008 Olympics were a mark of pride for China and an opportunity to showcase their long history and their rejuvenation during the late 20th century (Wang 2012, 45). However, beginning with their first bid in 2000, China faced waves of Western criticism over human

rights, environmental issues, and other issues—a trend that continued during the torch’s trek across the world where it was repeatedly protested in Western countries (Wang 2012, 143). These criticisms intensified with time and precipitated a spontaneous surge of grass roots nationalism—large scale protests of overseas Chinese populations at major American universities and domestic protests aimed at businesses, such as Carrefour, associated with countries critical of China’s role in the Olympics (Wang 2012, 144). One sign from the protest echoed the Chinese humiliation narrative closely—highlighting France’s colonial history in China,

“Say no to Carrefour!!! Say no to French Imperialists!!!

Strongly protest the Anglo-French invasion of China in 1860;

Strongly protest the slander of Beijing Olympics in 2008;

Strongly protest France’s interference of China’s internal affairs;

Strongly protest the French media’s distortion of the facts; Strongly protest France’s connivance with criminals to grab our holy flame;

Strongly protest Carrefour’s financial support to Dalai lama.” (Wang 2012, 145).

Through these repeated slights to China’s government manifest through various media sources and civil society actors’ responses to the Olympic bids, Chinese relational content was rendered more solid. While individualist societies might view these protests as critiques of the government, not the Chinese themselves, for the collectivist society of China this was an attack on their identity (Wang 2012, 155). Additionally, this divide in mentality also reflects back at the West through Chinese nationalism. Through the misunderstanding that we have a similar mindset, the average Chinese person might see protests or newspaper articles as a sign that the entirety of a given nation harbored anti-Chinese beliefs (Wang 2012, 155). This strong collectivist understanding only leads to a stronger belief in this discriminatory relational content—the more they believe in that relational content, the more likely they are to have those negative beliefs reinforced by interactions with other groups (Wang 2012, 155). As such, these seemingly banal interactions by Western standards represent, to many Chinese, Western plots to destabilize and discredit China on a world stage (Wang 2012, 156).

However strong exterior trauma is in forming Chinese collective memory, internal trauma also plays a strong role in forming Chinese constitutive beliefs and causal beliefs.

Perhaps one of the strongest examples of this internal trauma is related to humanitarian catastrophes caused by environmental disasters—events which have historically served as a litmus test for governments’ legitimacy (Wang 2012, 157). This is because China is a region which has historically been ravaged by flooding along the Yellow River basin and is, additionally, the region of the world most impacted by earthquakes (Wang 2012, 157). The severity of these events cannot be overstated as their scale, combined with the population of the country, leads events like the 1931 flooding to result in death tolls in the millions (Wang 2012, 157). The 2008 Sichuan earthquake, just before the Olympics, resulted in over 90,000 deaths and 5 million without homes—but rather than showing the inefficacy of the CCP, showcased its ability to react quickly and decisively in a moment of crisis and thus secured its mandate to govern (Wang 2012, 158). Within hours the government mobilized the military to provide relief and the Premier Wen Jiabo arrived to the site, however this was only the beginning of a large scale campaign of volunteers and national solidarity in order to provide aid to those impacted (Wang 2012, 158–59). In Beichuan Middle School, Premiere Wen wrote the words “distress rejuvenates a nation” on a chalkboard—in a school which had lost 1,000 students, these words were preserved by the students and staff, but also reported by national media and preserved in the national memory (Wang 2012, 160). Rejuvenation after tragedy became a collective goal for the Chinese and reinforced constitutive beliefs in hardship and a collective work ethic to bring about a China which resumed its rightful place at the center of world politics (Wang 2012, 160). These moments of tragedy showcase the strong constitutive norms associated with Chinese collectivism, but also showcase Chinese causal beliefs about government and what governments must do in order to maintain their legitimacy in moments of crisis. This is particularly important when one considers the relationship between poor disaster response and external imperialism. The fall of the Qing Dynasty directly followed devastating flooding—opening the doors for internal instability which led to the eventual invasion of China by the Japanese in the 1930s (Wang 2012, 159). This belief is concretized in the collective memory of the Chinese who see strong response to disaster as a preventative measure against predatory foreign interests (Wang 2012, 159). In the Chinese collective memory, tragedy and difficulty are inevitable, but the Chinese national spirit of collective perseverance behind strong leaders will bring about rejuvenation in spite of those difficulties.

China’s understanding of itself in the modern era is shaped heavily by trauma—whether by environmental catastrophe or the great tragedy of the Century of Humiliation—

trauma has become a powerful source of Chinese constitutive norms and relational content. Hu Ping, a Chinese writer of some renown, describes this intense relationship between traumatic history and Chinese collective memory, “For Chinese people, history is our religion.. We don’t have a supernatural standard of right and wrong, good and bad, so we view history as the ultimate judge... Each Chinese is a born nationalist” (Wang 2012, 48). Through this quote is exemplified the relation between modern Chinese national identity and the trauma and humiliation inflicted upon them during the Century of Humiliation—if history is the only religion of China, then the past can never truly disappear. Through this mentality, relations to outside groups who perpetrated these historical injustices can never be forgiven without restitution and the resumption of China’s long-lost glory. It is into this new Chinese collective identity and memory that Xi Jinping rose to power—a reality where previous social movements typified by anti-corruption, anti-dictator, and internal political struggle were reshaped into externally focused, anti-Western nationalist movements which sought a strong hand to bring to China the rejuvenation it had been promised (Wang 2012, 118).

Forms Collective Memory Present	
Type of Collective Memory	Form of Expression
Worldviews and Principled Beliefs	National Rejuvenation: The concept of collectivism is a strong theme in Chinese collective memory. While it has multiple manifestations, one of the most poignant modern ones is the collective project of Chinese national rejuvenation after the century of humiliation. History of Excellence and Humiliation: As Hu Ping argued, history is the religion of China. Chinese history serves as the force which defines right and wrong—manifesting itself as schema of right and wrong sensitive to both China’s collective trauma and its former glory.
Causal Beliefs	Backwardness Invites Beatings: Chinese intellectuals argued that Chinese ‘backwardness’—through ideological disunity, corruption, and complacency—had precipitated

	the century of humiliation. This provides a grounding concept encouraging collectivist ideological unity and proactive development to prevent a return to humiliation Disaster Response: Due to China's long history of natural disasters, empires and more modern regimes have been measured by their ability to respond quickly, decisively, and effectively to disasters. This has resulted in a legitimacy based not on respect for rights, but rather on efficacy in crisis.
Relational Content	History of Excellence and Humiliation: Informed by the historical relationships to other developing countries and the West, China views smaller nations less skeptically and views them with a degree of mutual respect. However, with Western nations, China tends to emphasize historical injustices and is more willing to perceive actions as unjust or outright nefarious.
Social Purpose Content and Constitutive Norms	National Rejuvenation: Chinese social purpose content and constitutive norms are centered around a notion of sacrifice, enduring hardship for the nation, perfection for the sake of national prestige, and a fierce nationalistic resistance to any perceived critique of the nation. It serves as a tool to reinforce the collective struggle to bring China back to its former glory.

5.5 Causal Pathways of Collective Memory

In the following section, this study will explore the ways in which these existing forms of memory may function as determinants of military conflict preference through their presence as roadmaps, focal points, or as institutionalized memory. In order to better

understand the possible causal routes of Chinese collective memory under Xi's personalist regime, it is important to first understand how collective memory influenced Chinese foreign policy during the pre-personalist period. As established in the previous section, Chinese collective memory has centered around a set of constitutive norms related to patriotism, relational content to the West, and causal beliefs regarding elite groups and their ability to respond quickly to challenges such as external threats and environmental disasters.

In the party period that preceded Xi's rise to power, this collective memory placed pressure on the CCP to take certain strategies rather than others both for the CCP's own institutionalized perspective, but also due to massive grass-roots pressure to behave in more aggressive ways when memory is triggered by publicly visible political issues. In Zheng Wang's analysis of the pre-Xi Chinese collective memory and its influence on Chinese foreign policy, he refers to this triggering of collective memory response as "memory activation"—suggesting that various memories can lay dormant until provoked and increase the "emotional temperature" of the people regarding certain issues (Wang 2012, 163). This emotional temperature can be seen through the previous examples of the Olympics where political protests abroad provoked mass response by Chinese civil society resulting in mass protests and anti-Western sentiment. While this is one evidence of this memory's impact, throughout the post-Tiananmen Square incident party period this memory impacted several strenuous diplomatic conflicts between the United States and China. Wang focuses on three particular events in his analysis: The 1995 Taiwan Strait Crisis, the 1999 crisis after NATO bombed the Chinese Embassy in Yugoslavia, and the crisis in 2001 when a US spy plane collided with a Chinese military jet (Wang 2012, 165).

The first moment of near conflict was largely without public knowledge in China. The crisis, caused by a diplomatic visit of Taiwanese leader, Lee Tung-hui, in 1995 (Wang 2012, 166). This conflict was escalated by the CCP, precipitating diplomatic punishment such as the removal of the Chinese ambassador and the denial of the new US ambassador to China—afterwards, China orchestrated several military exercises and missile tests around the island in what constituted the largest escalation in years (Wang 2012, 166). The US response was proportional, the Clinton administration deploying two aircraft carriers in a show of force to deter further escalation, after which point the conflict slowly resolved itself with both parties inevitably resuming normal diplomatic relations without concessions on either side and even creating more methods of conflict resolution such as a hotline directly between Beijing and Washington in 1996 (Wang 2012, 166, 188).

With the following examples, the crises proceeded differently and escalated greatly due to several factors. Wang cites the public visibility of the events as one such factor as it threatened regime credibility and evoked the disaster response causal beliefs inherent to Chinese collective memory. Because Chinese nationals were killed in the following two events, the government was unable to repress the spread of information and was, instead, forced to contend with the public reaction and alter political course accordingly (Wang 2012, 190). This resulted in not only escalation, but a need to find some sort of publicly visible punishment to dole out to the United States in order to provide legitimacy to the regime (Wang 2012, 190). In the case of the embassy bombing, this took the form of the Chinese government refusing phone calls from Bill Clinton over the newly established hotline and with the repeated denial of the US governments' formal apologies over the course of the incident (Wang 2012, 177). The incident only concluded after 6 days of apologies when Jiang Zemin allowed a phone call with Bill Clinton which began the process of reconciliation including a compensation package to the Chinese government (Wang 2012, 177).

In the case of the spy plane incident, Bush's unwillingness to provide the requested apology precipitated particularly hard line responses from the Chinese government who escalated the conflict in order to find a way to legitimize themselves faced with increased public scrutiny (Wang 2012, 178). The Chinese government needed an apology in order to provide legitimacy to the party, however, the US government's desire to repatriate the plane's crew was also pressing (Wang 2012, 178). In order to exact a publicly visible and truly physical punishment of the US, the regime at the time logistically and physically organized and supported public protests at the US embassy and diplomatic residences in China, and while these properties were simultaneously protected by armed police a certain level of destruction was allowed to occur and staff members were effectively trapped within (Wang 2012, 187). This conflict lasted a total of 11 days and ended with an exchange of the 24 crewmembers for a loosely worded apology which allowed the CCP to claim success domestically through a clever mistranslation of the letter (Wang 2012, 178). This move allowed both parties to achieve their goals through compromise and deescalate in spite of hard line pressure at home (Wang 2012, 180).

Though these incidents were resolved peacefully, the pressure that led to their escalation in the first place can only be understood through analysis of the Chinese collective memory as it relates both to regime legitimacy through causal understandings and to the relational content regarding the West provoked by the activation of traumatic collective

memory. According to Wang's analysis, these two incidents particularly activated Chinese collective memory centered around the century of humiliation and the victimization narrative. In the case of the Chinese embassy bombing, the Chinese government used their media sources to publish articles designed to evoke the symbolic similarities with the Opium Wars and Boxer Rebellion—highlighting the power and precision of the weapons used and the lack of respect for Chinese sovereignty (Wang 2012, 184). This, combined with a historically derived suspicion and conspiratorial nature regarding Western interventions restricted the frame of reference of both the elite actors and the average citizen within China—resulting in a collective understanding that the bombing of the embassy and the collision of the spy planes were both purposeful, planned attacks to undermine Chinese national sovereignty (Wang 2012, 186). This view of the events as purposeful combined with few retributive options automatically restricted the policy reactions of the elite to punitive options rather than cool diplomacy used during the Taiwan Strait Crisis (Wang 2012, 187). The CCP's entire base of legitimacy from the Mao era onwards is as the political entity responsible for the rejuvenation of the country and the restoration of China's self-esteem and international reputation—as such, to allow for any humiliation to go unpunished would undermine the entire legitimacy of the party in the context of the newly hyper nationalist Chinese collective memory (Wang 2012, 190).

To provide context to the extremity of these reactions due to public scrutiny and memory activation, Wang posits several other disputes in the same time period and divides them into two subcategories: US involved disputes and non-US disputes. The US disputes referenced were similarly humiliating to the previous disputed but differed in their level of public scrutiny, level of emergency, and form of negotiation (Wang 2012, 193–95). The seizure of a Chinese container ship in search of chemical weapons, the negotiations to join the WTO, and the arms control negotiation resulting in China's agreement to the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty all involved a low level of public awareness because the Chinese government was able to restrict negative coverage of the incidents in the media—with these events taking place outside of China with no casualties and no need to report embarrassing details, there was no pressure on the government to escalate (Wang 2012, 194). This lack of coverage and low level of emergency allowed for these negotiations equally related to national sovereignty to proceed with experts from all sides instead of through collective memory colored understandings of options available to the negotiators and government.

In the second category we see that some high stakes events may receive a completely different treatment based off the country involved and their historical relationship to China. In the 1990s China engaged in several disputes related to territory in the South China Sea—the three referenced in Wang’s text all involving casualties—particularly the anti-Chinese riots in Indonesia which claimed the lives of 1,000 ethnic Chinese (Wang 2012, 197). These incidences with Vietnam, the Philippines, and Indonesia were perceived wildly differently in mainland China, however; this difference in thought is likely due to the relational content differences between the West and other developing countries (Wang 2012, 199). This was only bolstered by the media decision to obscure the severity of the incidences in their reporting—meaning that the Chinese public was aware of what had occurred but outside of those with internet access was largely unaware of the emergency level (Wang 2012, 199). Because of the difference in collective memory of interactions with these countries compared to Japan or the United States, Wang makes the argument that the shaping of collective memory into focal points which impacted escalation and plausible choice formation was one of the important determinants of China’s conflict behavior in these nine crises during the 1990s (Wang 2012, 200).

With this key understanding of the causal import of collective memory in the period before Xi’s rise, the following analysis will be centered around moments of crisis and near crisis—covering the ways that these crises activate historical memory or do not and in which ways they potentially alter the regime’s response and willingness to engage in escalation or even direct conflict. As has been demonstrated in the previous section, the patriotic education campaign and growth of intense nationalism has both allowed for the continued legitimacy of the CCP and pushed the CCP towards increasingly aggressive foreign policy in relation to Western powers with perceived historical grievances. But where Wang’s analysis ends, Xi’s regime begins, leading to an era of increased government control of the narrative, but also an increased level of nationalistic institutionalization increasingly centered around Xi Jinping.

China’s modern foreign policy position has been modified by Xi’s centralization and consolidation around himself. His efforts to create a Mao-esque cult of personality are exemplified by various political ordinances bearing his name—one such ordinance, *Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy*, serves as a set of guidelines for Chinese diplomacy and foreign policy (“Following the Guidance of Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy and Advancing in All Respects Major-Country Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics in the New Era” 2022). China centers its foreign policy strategy around ten key points, but

highlights one in particular, “upholding the authority of the CPC Central Committee as the overarching principle and strengthening the Party’s centralized, unified leadership” (“Following the Guidance of Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy and Advancing in All Respects Major-Country Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics in the New Era” 2022). The separation of this aspect from other principles within the document highlights the goals inherent to this change in policy: party, and by extension Xi’s legitimacy in the eyes of the Chinese people. What follows immediately behind this is national rejuvenation, world peace and common development, strategic confidence based in the foundation of socialism with Chinese characteristics, and the Belt and Road Initiative (“Following the Guidance of Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy and Advancing in All Respects Major-Country Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics in the New Era” 2022). This document sets out to define Xi and China’s foreign policy as defending Chinese face in the wake of COVID-19, economic integration with all parties, and a concrete resistance to the liberal international order (“Following the Guidance of Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy and Advancing in All Respects Major-Country Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics in the New Era” 2022). The document highlights other ‘Xi Jinping Thought’ documents in its final paragraph, stressing the need to “uphold General Secretary Xi Jinping’s core position on the Party Central Committee” and maintaining the party’s stability by keeping ranks behind Xi—demonstrating not just Xi’s personalization of the system but his return to Mao era language combining Chinese nationalism, his cult of personality, and the previous collective memory worldviews associated with Chinese socialism (“Following the Guidance of Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy and Advancing in All Respects Major-Country Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics in the New Era” 2022). It is in this collective memory convergence that China’s modern foreign policy takes place—between old institutionalization and attempts to institutionalize new norms—in a high pressure regime transition and a set of old conflicts with new, changing strategies of approach. Though these documents are oriented towards a standardization of thought amongst the political elite, they represent some documents in a personalist propaganda ecosystem which includes even a smart phone application open to the public which contained general political ideology included in the revised constitution—an app which, as of 2023 was the most downloaded item on Apple’s Chinese app store (Amonson and Egli 2023, 45).

5.5.1 South China Sea Conflict

The conflict in the South China sea has been a feature of Chinese foreign policy since the beginning of the CCP, but the Chinese claim to the entirety of the South China Sea has been rooted even further back in antiquity during the Xia and Han dynasties when Chinese explorers came to the various islands and land features—according to Chinese collective understanding, these islands, land features, and the sea itself were stolen by all other neighbors during China’s Century of Humiliation and are now to be returned by any means necessary (Pitzl 2001, 3; Johnson 2015). While the Xi period has yet to manifest a hot war, the party period which preceded it saw a series of violent seizures from Vietnam and the Philippines by the PLA Navy—in the 1970’s and 1980’s taking the Paracels and the Vietnamese Spratleys and ending the lives of around 140 Vietnamese troops, then later the Philippine’s Scarborough Shoal in 1995 (Pitzl 2001, 1; *Al Jazeera* 2024). In the Mao period, the concept of the 11, and later 9-dash-line existed along with the claim to the entirety of the South China Sea (Pitzl 2001, 3). The Chinese government at the time was more focused on internal authority consolidation and industrialization rather than territorial ambitions. However, as established, the party period quickly consolidated that power and established military-conductive nationalism as a unifying force for the Chinese collective memory—enabling expansionist military adventures in the islands.

The conflict in the South China Sea continues to intensify into the modern era—escalating greatly since the 2012 seizure of the Scarborough Shoal by the PLA Navy (Garcia 2019, 83). This incident began after years of escalations and saw Chinese vessels engaging in poaching of protected marine wildlife in the shoal—when the Philippine Navy intercepted these fishermen, the Chinese PLA Navy deployed two surveillance vessels to intercept—provoking a two month negotiating process which resulted in the Philippines removing their ships ahead of a typhoon (Garcia 2019, 83). Once the Philippine Navy had left the area, China assumed total control of the shoal, militarizing it and continuing to pressure other contested territories from the shoal (Garcia 2019, 83). This incident kicked off the current period of continual acceleration in Spratley Islands where, since 2013, Xi’s PLA Navy has constructed over 1,200 hectares of artificial islands, on which they have built military installations with anti-air and anti-ship missile systems along with military airfields and ports (*Al Jazeera* 2024). Since February 2023, Chinese aggression has increased dramatically—resulting in 12 incidences of ‘unsafe behavior’ within the Philippine EEZ (Ratcliffe 2024). These incidences include various uses of force by the military—from ramming ships, firing

water cannons, using knives to puncture rubber boats, and even the use of a military-grade laser—an unprecedented increase in physical violence to enforce Chinese claims to the islands (Ratcliffe 2024). As China has already seized the majority of the Spratley Islands, this represents an attempt to claim the last Philippine-held territory—the Second Thomas Shoal—by denying the supply of key resources to the Philippine military personnel currently stationed on the shoal (Ratcliffe 2024). The threat to fishermen, those seeking to resupply the Philippine military personnel, and the personnel themselves was only made more grave with the June 2024 regulation in which China reserved the right to detain any foreigners ‘trespassing’ on Chinese territory for 60 days without a trial (Ratcliffe 2024). However, detainment is not the only threat China maintains—in the same month Chinese coastguard vessels rammed several Philippine resupply ships while brandishing bladed weapons such as spears, axes, and knives—resulting in one Philippine sailor losing a finger and provoking international rebuke (*Al Jazeera* 2024).

In November of 2024, China once again laid claim to the Spratley Islands—particularly the island nearest to the Philippine mainland—claiming the waters around them as exclusive territorial waters in a statement offered by the foreign ministry, “Huangyan Dao has always been China’s territory. In accordance with international law, such as the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, and the Law of the People’s Republic of China on the Territorial Sea and the Contiguous Zone, the Chinese government delimited and announced the baselines of the territorial sea adjacent to Huangyan Dao. This is a natural step by the Chinese government to lawfully strengthen marine management and is consistent with international law and common practices.” (“Foreign Ministry Spokesperson’s Remarks on China’s Release of the Baselines and Base Points of the Territorial Sea Adjacent to Huangyan Dao” 2024)

In this statement, the foreign ministry establishes the right of China to defend these waters as their own sovereign territory—unlike an exclusive economic zone, or EEZ, according to international law only Chinese vessels would be authorized to enter and operate within these territorial waters. However, under previously established international court decisions, these islands belong to the Philippines and China has no right to occupy them (*The Associated Press* 2024). While China is a signatory of the agreement which guarantees the Philippines the right to the islands, it refuses to accept the legitimacy of the court—a fact only further exemplified by the foreign minister’s statement,

“The so-called “Philippine Maritime Zones Act” aims to further solidify the illegal arbitral award on the South China Sea in the form of domestic legislation and illegally include China’s Huangyan Dao and most of the islands and reefs of China’s Nansha Qundao, and their relevant waters into the Philippines’ maritime zones. This move severely violates China’s territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests in the South China Sea. China firmly opposes it and will continue to do everything necessary in accordance with law to firmly defend its territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests. (“Foreign Ministry Spokesperson’s Remarks on China’s Release of the Baselines and Base Points of the Territorial Sea Adjacent to Huangyan Dao” 2024).

Here we see further institutionalization of Chinese nationalism through several very key word choices. This statement is designed to activate various aspects of Chinese historical memory—reliant on memory of the century of humiliation when agreements on division of Chinese territory were made by outside forces, the description of these agreements to which China is party as ‘illegal’ and a threat to Chinese ‘sovereignty’ a striking move designed to paint resistance to Chinese expansionism as a continuation of the West’s desire to crush China and to control parts of its territory. Similarly, the description of Chinese willingness to remain within legal frameworks to confront these threats is equally bellicose when considering the Chinese interpretation of their rights over these islands. If China considers the islands and surrounding waters to be territorial waters, the Chinese navy has the right to patrol and defend those waters with force. With the knowledge that China is flouting international agreements to support this logic, it might seem hypocritical—however, understanding that the CCP has the ability to dictate what information the public has access to precipitates a situation where the average Chinese civilian is unaware of China’s obligations under these agreements—thus viewing this situation through the lens of conspiracy against their nation and as an existential threat. This is only reinforced by Xinhua reporting on the incident and statements made by spokespeople for the Chinese coastguard—all focusing on the concepts of sovereignty and referencing the ASEAN Declaration of the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (*Xinhua* 2012). This is particularly interesting as the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea implores signatories to exercise caution and not to inhabit contested land features—making China’s reference explicitly hypocritical (“Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea” 2012). This suggests that regime news sources do not highlight this agreement in their reporting

inside the regime, or that the average reader has not been made aware of the extent of Chinese PLA Navy actions in the South China Sea in recent years.

In the years between Xi Jinping's election and the arbitration case against China, Chinese media sources showed a trend of using positive evaluative language in regards to the dispute—highlighting concepts inherent to the Declaration of the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea such as 'cooperation' and 'development' and suggesting that certain actions by the Philippines were roadblocks to that rather than by outright critiquing the Philippines or discussing Chinese policy (Ballesteros-Lintao 2018, 75). In this way, Chinese media sources maintained a semblance of journalistic integrity, artfully avoiding the Chinese policy which precipitated the disputes and focusing on the possible beneficence of the Chinese through mutual development opportunities—predicated, naturally, on concessions by the Philippine government (Ballesteros-Lintao 2018, 75). This style of reporting lends itself to Chinese collective memory related to China's past glories—reinforcing institutionalized notions of cultural superiority and relational content to outgroups, showcasing Chinese impartiality and beneficence even in the face of other, more 'backwards' cultures', resistance.

This interpretation of the verbiage used in Chinese reporting is only confirmed by further discourse analysis conducted on the framing of news articles around the time of the decision against China when major news sources such as *People's Daily* and *Global Times* focused on two key frames more than others: conflict framing and peaceful resolution framing (Fong, Ponnann, and De Rycker 2020, 50–51). *People's Daily* articles were framed around conflict 50% of the time, focusing roughly 34% of the time on conflict to resolution framing—*Global Times*, however preferred to frame events around peace and resolution about 44% of the time and discuss conflict in 35% of articles (Fong, Ponnann, and De Rycker 2020, 50–51). In both publications, the point of view and narrative was consistent, however. In conflict focused articles, common relational content about the West was reinforced through depictions of the West and the other Southeast Asian nations as seeking conflict with China and having a lack of respect for China and Chinese sovereignty—evoking both feelings of Chinese cultural superiority and relational content which would portray outsiders as seeking to halt China's progress and pillage it for resources (Fong, Ponnann, and De Rycker 2020, 50). In articles framed around peaceful resolution, both news sources sought to highlight the high stakes for China and its commitment to peaceful resolution of conflict through negotiation, additionally, this reporting highlighted that other nations actions were the cause of negotiation breakdowns rather than Chinese policy decisions regarding these

contested land features (Fong, Ponnann, and De Rycker 2020, 51). This peaceful resolution is often buffered by the idea of consequences which make up about 15% of *Global Times* publications on the subject—these consequences for lack of adherence to Chinese foreign policy objectives are usually depicted as economic losses and lack of Chinese investment due to the insult (Fong, Ponnann, and De Rycker 2020, 51). While China is not necessarily offering a carrot or stick, it is highlighting to the readership of their national media the idea that China is offering something to other nations in exchange for accepting their conditions—this type of reporting serves to highlight various parts of the Chinese collective memory, from constitutive norms about Chinese character, relational content in regards to both the West and developing Southeast Asian nations. This reporting style, rather than a departure from trends during the party period, showcases a continuation and reinforcement of existing institutionalization of Chinese nationalism and collective memory. From focus on various glories and traumas inherent to that memory, these calculated strategies of memory manipulation serve to reinforce existing memory and perpetuate it into the future—simultaneously justifying more aggressive policy in the contemporary moment but also ensuring its widespread acceptance in the future.

China's perspective, expansionist as it is, is seemingly pushing the Philippines and other neighbors to their red line. In a statement made by the president, Ferdinand Marcos, in June 2024—the president articulated the red line as any willful act which killed a citizen or serviceperson—acts which, according to Marcos, were “very, very close to what we define as an act of war, and therefore, we would respond accordingly” (Ratcliffe 2024). With increasing Chinese pressure and reliance on direct military intervention, it seems that it is only a matter of time before the Chinese or Philippine red line is crossed and hot conflict over the remaining territory in the Spratley Islands begins. As Chinese institutionalization of humiliation narratives are increasingly connected to even the smallest land feature in the South China Sea, it is no wonder that diplomacy is falling to the wayside in favor of direct military escalation. This move, while calculated, has and will continue to restrain the options available to elites by forming roadmaps, or by forcing a roadmap on elites by bottom-up pressure in times of crisis. By investing in this narrative, diplomatic choices may be restricted due to pressure to save face and feed the national ego (Johnson 2015).

Routes of Plausible Causal Influence	
Causal Route	Plausible Influence
Ideas as Roadmaps	History of Excellence and Humiliation: China views the entirety of the Nine-Dash-Line as belonging to them based on maps and agreements made in antiquity between itself and the nations which sent it tribute. Losing this territory to the West, or not receiving continued tribute and respect from smaller nations, serves as a harsh reminder of this humiliation and thus restrains the options and preference formation of elites and civilians alike. Concession or recognition of international arbitration is acceptance of further national humiliation at the hands of the West and vacates their ‘historical right’ to these territories. National Rejuvenation: Ending this humiliation and resuming China’s ‘historical right’ to control these territories is a strong roadmap which encourages elites and civilians to support a more aggressive policy to reclaim China’s lost territory and control. To engage in a diplomatic process or back down on these issues would be to abandon the core idea of resuming China’s historical glory.
Ideas as Focal Points	National Rejuvenation: Pushing forward to a rejuvenated nation with control of its former territories serves as a common focal point for all Chinese—elite or otherwise. This provides a strong ground for elite unity, both military and political. As demonstrated in reporting, it is a widespread and accepted view within the elite that these territories are unquestionably Chinese—thus, providing a central concept for elite unity and cooperation.
Institutionalization of Ideas	History of Excellence and Humiliation: In response to attempts for international organizations to mediate the issue, Chinese government statements as well as state media reporting has inexplicitly referenced history by suggesting

	that decisions against China are imperialistic attempts to undermine their sovereignty—thus triggering Chinese collective memory. Additionally, reporting highlights the need for bilateral negotiation between China and the smaller nations for mutual benefit in a similar fashion to their traditional relationships during antiquity—highlighting and reinforcing collective memory of China as being both unfairly treated but being a beneficent partner of smaller nations. In this way, the response from China represents both a set of institutionalized ideas and the continued institutionalization of them which serves to impact other forms of memory.
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5.5.2 Sino-Indian Border Skirmishes

China and India have struggled over their border since their war in 1962, modern tensions going through on and off phases up until June of 2020 when the largest skirmish in recent history brought both countries to the brink of war in the Galwan Valley (Konwer 2021, 271). Before this major crisis, aside from two incidences in 1967 and 1975, the two countries have worked to create confidence building measures and agreements in order to prevent further escalation of conflict (Konwer 2021, 275). This includes an agreement not to use firearms, chemical agents, or explosives in contested territories—a choice which has prevented much escalation but has precipitated many clashes which simply did not use firearms (Konwer 2021, 275–76). The escalation only grew in the contemporary regime, between 2015 and 2019 skirmishes in all sectors of the Line of Actual Control (LAC) were on the rise by hundreds of incidences (Konwer 2021, 276). The 2020 crisis was heralded by several such scuffles between the armies resulting in fatalities and the taking of Indian hostages, precipitating disengagement talks by commanders of each side (Konwer 2021, 276). The 2020 crisis saw 20 Indian soldiers killed and at least 70 wounded, and four Chinese soldiers killed with true casualty numbers remaining undisclosed—additionally, live rounds were fired for the first time since the 1990s (Konwer 2021, 277–79; Lone 2023, 15). This conflict occurred after de-escalation failed, PLA soldiers reneging on the previous agreement and reoccupying various positions in the contested territory after both forces had agreed to leave the area—pushing the Indian government away from further attempts at peaceful

settlement and cooperation with the Chinese (Konwer 2021, 277-279). Aside from direct pressure on the border, China is mounting increasing pressure on India through encirclement, escalated with the success of the Belt and Road Initiative which runs through contested regions of Kashmir and the India-China border and the increasing relations with the Taliban in Afghanistan and the Pakistani government—India feels that its strategic interests in the region are jeopardized and its relations with neighboring states threatened (Kowner 2022, 279–81; Lone 2023, 29). This encirclement policy has pushed India into closer military alliance with the West through the Quad—bringing it not only into contention with China over contested territory in the Himalayas, but also in the South China Sea (Konwer 2021, 282) This realignment with the West represents a change from India as a fellow developing country to a Western influenced threat, but how was this seen in China and what role does collective memory play in the escalation of this issue?

A discourse analysis conducted on 30 different Chinese media articles from *Xinhuanet* around the time of the clash revealed that Chinese media focused particularly on two subjects: personalization and proximity (Chen and Liu 2024, 4). Firstly, personalization is represented by articles which focused primarily on the martyrdom of their four casualties, such as Chen Hongjun and Chen Xiangrong—using possessive pronouns and depicting the conflict through the personal experiences of soldiers present and their actions in service of the nation (Chen and Liu 2024, 5). The articles also emphasized the interpersonal relationships to family, friends, and other average citizens mourning his loss to reinforce the sacrifices of the soldiers—highlighting the constitutive norms of Chinese national service and martyrdom for the national rejuvenation (Chen and Liu 2024, 6). This personalization relied not only on words, but on a host of images which focused on the soldiers themselves, their tombs, and those mourning their loss (Chen and Liu 2024, 8). The second frame established in these articles was that of proximity—attempting to paint the event as close to home to the reader as possible by highlighting that the event took place on what they considered Chinese territory (Chen and Liu 2024, 8). This saw the event described as a ‘border clash’ in most instances rather than being referred to by name as the Galwan Valley is sparsely populated and would likely not elicit a strong proximity response from readers (Chen and Liu 2024, 7). The combined focuses of the Chinese media on this issue depict the institutionalized nature of Chinese collective memory’s impact on the conflict, but the way that these conflicts serve to reinforce that institutionalization both from above and below. This focus on the individual soldiers and their sacrifice, along with the community sacrifice of those men, is reminiscent

of the memorialization of communist revolutionaries and martyrs from the Sino-Japanese War and the Chinese Civil War. These young soldiers themselves represent the generation of the Patriotic Education Campaign and the severity of the conflict could in part be influenced by the institutionalization of certain ideas of Chinese constitutive norms centered around that self-sacrifice and relational content regarding Chinese sovereignty in the face of Western threats. Their sacrifice was depicted in a way meant to evoke a feeling of collective loss in the public, democratizing the feelings of martyrdom and bringing distant death home to the domestic constituent in a similar way to previous examples in the case study of Imperial Japan (Chen and Liu 2024, 10). In this way, institutionalized collective memory is both a tool of Chinese government policy, but also a driving force for the behavior of all echelons of Chinese society—pushing the elite that represent them to save face and fight against perceived threats and humiliation. This humiliation can only be better understood in the context of COVID-19 which provoked waves of anti-Chinese sentiment at the time—reinforcing a feeling of Chinese humiliation and anti-Western views (Lone 2023, 16). This nationalist fervor likely impacted decisions both at the bottom and the top of Chinese leadership during this crisis—all forces hardened by the loss of international face and the strong crisis response inherent to Chinese causal beliefs (Lone 2023, 16). This crisis, as of this publication, is in a period of relative calm following a new agreement in October of 2024 which organized military patrols with China in order to prevent further crises through closer communications both at a political and military level (McCarthy and Aishwarya 2024). This peace agreements, like many before it, is fragile—further escalation by either side could serve to activate Chinese collective memory and push the government to more aggressive foreign policy as it has in the past.

Routes of Plausible Causal Influence	
Causal Route	Plausible Influence
Ideas as Roadmaps	National Rejuvenation: Having been subject to institutionalized norms of self-sacrifice for national rejuvenation and territorial reclamation, Chinese soldiers and low ranking officers likely had a narrowed view of options available to them which may have led them to act in defiance of treaties and their superiors in order to satisfy these norms of identity.

	History of Excellence and Humiliation: Additionally, understanding certain options such as vacating the area and abiding by de-escalation agreements as giving in to perceived injustice or imperialism could have made those options less acceptable to Chinese soldiers involved in these incidences.
Institutionalization of Ideas	National Rejuvenation: State media coverage of the incidences tends to highlight the narrative of self-sacrifice on behalf of the nation, focusing also on the monuments and memorials created on behalf of these soldiers and the honor that their behavior brought to the community and nation—thus reinforcing that this constitutive and social purpose content is valuable. It is likely that these soldiers, having been raised during the National Patriotic Education Campaign, would have learned these values and been influenced to regard preserving Chinese territory as part of their duty—even at the cost of their lives. Thus, institutionalization of this core content likely contributed to, and will likely continue to influence this conflict and others.

5.5.3 The Russo-Ukrainian War and Taiwan

Since the outbreak of hot war between Russia and Ukraine in 2022, China has played a game of strategic pro-Russian neutrality calculated to minimize threats to the Chinese regime and maximize threats to the US-led world order (Madeiros et al. 2024). This support has manifested as economic, military, and diplomatic aid to Russia while maintaining rhetorical neutrality on the world stage in an effort to prolong the conflict and destabilize Western democracies and their interrelations such as NATO and the EU (Madeiros et al. 2024). While China has not sanctioned the conflict officially, they have engaged in a great deal of diplomacy with Russia—politically reaffirming their mutual goals of ending the liberal international order in a 20-page document in May of 2024 (Madeiros et al. 2024). Within China there is a very limited range of allowed opinion in regards to politics, however, amongst Chinese political intellectuals there exists some dissention as to the efficacy of Chinese Russia policy (Madeiros et al. 2024).

While these policy suggestions, sourced from various political science institutions, share the common goal of a declining US influence on global politics—scholars across Chinese political institutions debate the efficacy of current policies out of fear that the plan may destabilize the Russian regime and leave China isolated and alone (Madeiros et al. 2024). This feeling of anxiety was only exacerbated by the June 2023 Wagner Group rebellion---Professor Feng Yujun of Peking University expressed that he did not believe Putin would be deposed any time soon, but that there is no doubt that Russia’s regime is facing challenges to its legitimacy and that historically such instability coupled with military defeat has led to political transition (Madeiros et al. 2024). A seeming consensus amongst scholars is that, due to the Ukraine war, the world has become more factionalized and fractured--many see this as a route to possibly break up the US-Europe relationship and repair Chinese ties to Europe, but it is equally possible that this increasing divide could damage Chinese economic interests in Europe and across the world (Madeiros et al. 2024). These fears have seemingly come to life as a result of the invasion of Ukraine, Western opinion of China falling in the West and in developed countries in South America—with public support in countries across Southeast Asia, Africa, and the Middle East growing since the invasion (Lewsey, n.d.). This has resulted in precisely the groupings that Chinese scholars had worried about, with 75% of liberal Western democracies’ citizens having a negative view of China—seemingly galvanized by the Ukraine War and China’s thinly veiled ‘strategic neutrality’ (Lewsey, n.d.).

This crisis has only deepened as, in November of 2024, around 10,000 North Korean soldiers were deployed to aid in Russia’s offensive in Kursk—a fact which has brought East Asia into the European theater of war both through material support and physical support (Freeman and Kuo 2024). As of this publication, this new break in the conflict has left many questioning how Xi Jinping will react as North Korean presence seems to fly in the face of Beijing’s previous attempts at creating a peace plan (Freeman and Kuo 2024). Chinese academics have focused, however, on another potential area of impact for this escalation: the power balance on the Korean Peninsula. Many Chinese experts see this as China losing any semblance of control over North Korea and a potential avenue for Kim Jong Un to gain battle hardened troops to use against the South (Freeman and Kuo 2024). As discussed previously, border security and stability are key to China’s foreign policy and have historically limited Chinese foreign intervention. North Korea’s entry into the Ukraine War, the potential power balance changes on the Korean Peninsula, and the perception changes in the West threaten China’s foreign policy and economic goals through the failure of their ‘strategic neutrality’

and the formation of harder Cold-War-styled blocs (Freeman and Kuo 2024). Even with mounting economic difficulties due to the war, China has maintained, and will likely continue to maintain its ‘strategic neutrality’, hoping to use it to take advantage of fracturing EU-US relations or to distance itself from Russia in the event of Russian defeat—something looking less and less likely in accordance with Chinese academics’ appraisals due to the impending Trump Administration in the United States (Madeiros et al. 2024). While Ukraine War involvement threatens to erode Chinese relationships with the West, it does allow China to better understand Western commitment to these highly entrenched proxy wars, or “avatar wars” as Chinese scholars refer to them, and has bolstered both public opinion and academic beliefs in an invasion of Taiwan (Madeiros et al. 2024).

Considered by China to be an ‘avatar war’ which represents, more than a proxy war, an extension of the US—Ukraine response represents the unified resolve of the West to respond to authoritarian aggression everywhere, a fact which is not alien to Western politicians from the US to Japan (Aksoy, Enamorado, and Yang 2024, 341). As is evidenced by Chinese scholarship on the matter, the outcome of the war in Ukraine will likely heavily influence the likelihood of hot war in Taiwan. As it stands, the war in Ukraine has already changed many Chinese people’s perceptions of use of force and the use of diplomacy (Aksoy, Enamorado, and Yang 2024, 342). Through two online surveys taken in 2022 and 2023, each covering between 3,000 and 4,000 people, it was found that the Russian invasion had been tied to an increase in public support within China for general use of force as a foreign policy tool, but even more in relation to Taiwan (Aksoy, Enamorado, and Yang 2024, 342). In this way, the war in Ukraine has impacted Chinese worldviews regarding use of force in conflicts—particularly those regarding developing nations—even without direct Chinese participation in the conflict. While perceptions of war as a tool of policy have improved, Chinese perceptions of foreign threats have not grown in tandem—additionally, these surveys showed that Western economic and military resistance to Russia had reduced support for use of force when considered and had reduced support for outright invasion of Taiwan (Aksoy, Enamorado, and Yang 2024, 342). The authors of this survey highlight that even in nondemocracies like China, leaders must still worry about public opinion when drafting policy or face public backlash—this can only be made more poignant in a country like China where the Patriotic Education Campaign has made nationalism a core component of Chinese constitutive norms (Aksoy, Enamorado, and Yang 2024, 343). In this way, conflicts that China engages in and their reactions to such conflicts are inherently tied to China’s collective

memory and the various norms and worldviews associated with it—government failure to account for these feelings or to pad actions with propaganda could impact regime stability or force the regime towards more aggressive policy such as in the case of Nancy Pelosi’s Taiwan visit in 2022 or the various crises between the US and China in the 1990s (Aksoy, Enamorado, and Yang 2024, 343). As the CCP exercises total control over what information is allowed to be shared in the media, Chinese media reporting on Ukraine has been largely favorable and has strayed away from discussing Russian failures or vulnerabilities caused by the war—this aspect could be seen as a deliberate attempt to institutionalize certain ideas about use of force and the impact it might have on China should the CCP decide to incorporate it in its foreign policy (Aksoy, Enamorado, and Yang 2024, 344). As the results of the experiment show, the Chinese public’s perception of diplomatic solutions and peace agreements has been and will likely continue to be impacted by their exposure to the Ukraine War, particularly when institutionalized media coverage of these events frames them as low risk, high reward, and as a mode of realizing Chinese national reunification and rejuvenation (Aksoy, Enamorado, and Yang 2024, 355-356). Due to Donald Trump’s election and expected policy regarding Ukraine and NATO, outcomes in the war could precipitate more widespread acceptance of worldviews of violence and lead to hot conflict in the Taiwan Strait.

Taiwan, since Xi’s ascension, has seen mounting pressure from mainland Chinese aircraft entering their airspace—reaching near crisis levels on several occasions such as the 2022 visit of then Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, the 2023 meeting between President Tsai and then Speaker of the House Kevin McCarthy, or the 2023 Taiwanese presidential election (“Crisis Watch,” n.d.). In each of these scenarios, China’s normal level of pressure was escalated and various military drills were conducted around Taiwan—encircling the main island and smaller islands belonging to Taiwan (“Crisis Watch,” n.d.). The most recent crisis, however, was in May 2024 when the incoming Taiwanese president, Lai Ching-te, directly addressed mainland China in his inaugural address—calling on China “to cease their political and military intimidation against Taiwan” (“Crisis Watch,” n.d.). The mainland Chinese government responded violently, replying that “all Taiwan independence separatists will be nailed to the pillar of shame in history” and beginning large scale military drills around Taiwan and Taiwanese islands designed to “punish” the new president and train their troops ability to rapidly “seize power” and “occupy key areas” (“Crisis Watch,” n.d.). According to the International Crisis Group’s Crisis Watch database, this represented the

largest escalation of the conflict since former Speaker Kevin McCarthy's diplomatic visit. When compared to the 1990's crises provoked by the Taiwanese diplomatic visits to the US, this moment is strikingly similar in response, but with seemingly less provocation. While China has used military drills as its highest form of response for decades, they were usually reserved for larger perceived slights to the CCP. However, since 2018 there has been a marked rise in military drills in order to exert pressure on the Taiwanese government (Jash 2024). While targeted military drills have increased, so too have generalized breaches of Taiwanese airspace, seeing a rise from 972 aircraft breaches to 2,002 between January and September of 2024 (Shattuck and Lewis 2024). This sharp rise in activity finds its roots in Xi's new policy announced during the 2017 19th Party Congress where Xi articulated the 'China Dream' centered around national rejuvenation and resumption of China's historical glory—focusing on bringing China to the front of the global stage on all fronts by 2035 (Liao 2021, 25). This 'China Dream' was accompanied by Xi's 'Five Points' policy which explicitly changed the CCP's stance on Taiwan from seeking peaceful reunification, to seeking reunification by any means necessary (Liao 2021, 25). By 2019, in speeches regarding Taiwan, Xi had all but removed the word 'peaceful' from his verbiage when describing the reunification with Taiwan—showcasing his break from tradition and his desire to end cross-strait cooperation (Liao 2021, 28). However, due to the presence of US support and the costs associated with military efforts for reunification, it seems that this would disturb Xi's 'China Dream' policy and jeopardize his position in power without mass support (Liao 2021, 28). It is possible to interpret Xi's speeches and provocations as a method to publicize the issue to the Chinese people and generate mass support for hot conflict to reunify the nation, but it is equally possible to interpret Xi's increasing reliance on aggression towards Taiwan as a method to activate Chinese collective memory in order to support his legitimacy as party leader.

As established in the pre-Xi era, diplomatic issues such as US political visits have a low level of public knowledge in mainland China unless the regime actively pushes that information in Chinese national media—meaning that these events likely do not exert collective memory pressure on the Chinese political elite through bottom-up protest but can do so if energized through contemporary institutionalization as we see with Xi's speeches and aggressive policy. Rather, the intensification of China's Taiwan policy has more to do with prior institutionalization creating a particular focal point in Chinese collective memory, and Xi's active contemporary institutionalization in order to solidify control. This has been the

focus of many a public speech made by Xi, and other high ranking members of the CCP. During the 75th Chinese National Day celebrations, Xi highlighted the reunification of mainland China and Taiwan as a promise of his presidency—“it’s an irreversible trend, a cause of righteousness and the common aspiration of the people. No one can stop the march of history” (Gan 2024). Taiwan has become an institutionalized symbol of Chinese humiliation by the West since the separation between the two countries at the end of the Chinese Civil War in 1949—however important this issue was to previous leaders, with Xi’s level of personalization and his hyperfocus on the issue compared to previous leaders there is no doubt that he intends to continue escalating the issue—both to activate Chinese collective memory from below but to solidify power and restrain other elite through a refocusing on the fundamental focal points of national rejuvenation and national reunification inherent to repairing the national image of China post-Century of Humiliation. Taiwan, through the patriotic education campaign period until Xi, has been institutionalized in speeches and schools alike—Jiang Zemin saying in 2001, “The status of Taiwan as a part of China shall in no way be allowed to change. The Chinese Communists are rock firm in their resolve to safeguard State sovereignty and territorial integrity. . . . It is the bounden duty of the Chinese Communists to end the state of separation between Taiwan and China’s mainland and achieve the complete reunification of China.”(Wang 2012, 131). This has become, both for elite and for the average Chinese person, a focal point which restricts policy pathways—to allow Taiwanese independence would be more than an economic loss, it would be a loss of face and legitimacy to both the CCP and the nation itself. This is tied to deep trauma from the century of humiliation, summarized neatly in the political slogan “backwardness incurs beatings by others” (Wang 2012, 132). Former president Hu Jintao referenced this slogan while explaining the meaning of national rejuvenation,

“History and reality tell us that backwardness incurs beatings by others. only through development can rejuvenation be realized. China was bullied by foreign powers in modern times. A major reason for that was that China was chronically poor and weak during that period. Since then, the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation has become the unswerving goal that each Chinese generation has striven to realize.” (Wang 2012, 132).

If, according to even reformist CCP leaders, national rejuvenation is inherently tied to military modernization and expansionism—how can Xi’s modern hyperfocus on military growth and increased provocations be seen as anything other than the top down and bottom up impact of the focal point of China’s military strength? This focal point brings both

political elite and common Chinese around a similar banner which is always mutually preferred to an alternative—a fact which Xi hopes to use to stabilize his position at the helm by painting resistance to his reign as resistance to national rejuvenation and lack of adherence to Chinese constitutive norms of unity to bring about that rejuvenation. In recent reports made by the US Department of Defense, it is projected that Xi will attempt to achieve reunification by 2030—citing his ‘strategic window’ due to China’s aging population, Xi’s life expectancy, military development rate, and the level of Xi’s cult of personality (Amonson and Egli 2023, 39). This document highlights that military conflict will be costly and invoke strong sanctions from the international community, a fact which many academics view as enough to suggest that Xi would not take this course of action (Amonson and Egli 2023, 39; Liao 2021, 28). This would make sense when considering realist assumptions of power, or even when considering previous understanding of regime typology theory which would suggest that Xi’s preference would ultimately be governed by his domestic audience. However, understanding the careful use of modern institutionalization through political rhetoric would suggest that, given an eventual failure of US support to Ukraine under the Trump administration and a rise in Chinese perceptions on use of force, a Taiwan invasion is not out of the cards after the year 2027 when the PLA is expected to reach enough strength to conduct the operation and public opinion has become consolidated enough to allow Xi leverage over any remaining elite dissidents (Amonson and Egli 2023, 48). By blending

Routes of Plausible Causal Influence	
Causal Route	Plausible Influence
Ideas as Roadmaps	National Rejuvenation: Chinese people, influenced by the Patriotic Education Campaign, are likely more prone to view war as a tool of policy to achieve national rejuvenation and reunification—further influenced by Russia’s attempts to do the same, Chinese civilians and leaders alike may begin view conflict as a preferable option to diplomacy. Thus, whether this concept restrains elites or not, the pressure from below may force the CCP to consider conflict as a preferable option to maintain legitimacy with rising demands for reunification with Taiwan—even if doing so could jeopardize their other interests.

Ideas as Focal Points	History of Excellence and Humiliation: The nation's collective memory of their history relating to Taiwan relates the concept of their independence directly to national humiliation. Reunification, to Chinese of all strata, is a common non-negotiable goal which is mutually agreeable and presents a common focal point and policy objective. To allow independence would threaten the legitimacy of the CCP regime, but also the national collective identity.
Institutionalization of Ideas	National Rejuvenation: This event, having been institutionalized for generations by political elites, has seen an escalation in references and a focus on violence as a tool of reunification in the Xi regime. Marked by the "China Dream" policy, the government and media sources have begun to tie national rejuvenation directly to national reunification and have begun to shift focus away from "peaceful reunification" in speeches. Xi's efforts to institutionalize plausible direct conflict will likely lead to an increased readiness and acceptance of war as a means to achieve this goal.

5.6 Xi Jinping's China – Conclusion

From the early days of the CCP, collective memory has been a tool of the regime—molded and warped by educational institutionalization to reform ideas of Chineseness around first Mao and Communism, and later around nationalism, rejuvenation, and historical humiliation. Today in the new personalist regime forming around Xi Jinping, we see a resurgence of direct conflict in ways that are consistent with an emerging personalist leader. This new wave of violence however, has not passed the threshold to outright war as with other cases—being limited to small skirmishes and relatively minimal loss of life. Still, along this study's definition of conflict, Xi's regime has shown a willingness to use conflict more than during previous leadership. This is congruent with the waxing personalist institutionalization with a new, nationalist memory to accompany it. Through these modern conflicts analyzed we can see that both society and regime work together to institutionalize and perpetuate certain notions of Chinese identity such as self-sacrifice for rejuvenation,

skepticism of Western nations, and importantly a newfound acceptance of violence as a tool of politics—even against developing nations. These ideas serve as new focal points to rally around and provide a basis for common work to achieve policy goals, and these ideas also serve to limit acceptable options based on perceptions of those options as being detrimental to national rejuvenation or as accepting further humiliation at the hands of foreign powers. Based on the evidence related to modern conflicts under the new regime, collective memory undoubtedly plays a role in determining preference for direct conflict amongst the rank and file soldiers, society, and the regime elite.

6. DOES COLLECTIVE MEMORY SERVE AS A DETERMINANT OF EAST ASIAN AUTHORITARIAN REGIME’S MILITARY CONFLICT PREFERENCES?

6.1 Overview of Research Goals

The framework of analysis used in this study is experimental on several fronts, with pointed goals. Firstly, in the choice of cases it presents the chance to probe the framework’s ability to establish collective memory and causal routes both in well documented, historical regimes and contemporary regimes where information may not be as readily available. The goal of including regime type in the analysis was to elucidate the interconnectedness of collective memory, regime typology, and conflict behavior of regimes. This was in order to provide context when either regime type or collective memory seemed incompatible with observed behavior. This framework was designed to establish collective memory as a determinant of behavior co-equal to regime typology—able to explain both government policy, and individual action within regimes. Most importantly, however, this framework was designed to address the specific question: whether collective memory was an additional determinant of direct conflict in East Asian authoritarian regimes.

6.2 Regime Type and Conflict Trajectory

The two cases chosen in this study exhibit a great many similarities. Beginning with regime typology, both emerged as a hybrid regime and through conflict consolidated around more concrete authoritarian systems after some time. Japan, during the war, transitioned to more of a Junta styled government where the emperor, though theoretically the monarch, was

largely unable to affect change. Japan's fragile democratic organizations were slowly coopted by the military over time, eventually being fully under its control. In the case of Xi's China, the transition from party state to personalist state proceeded rapidly after Xi's ascent to power—after which point, opponents and elites were struck down and power centralized rapidly in his hands. As time rolls on, Xi has made ideological reforms and recentered the party ideology around himself, ensuring that his power is recognized not only by other elite but also by the people. Congruent with existing understanding of these two types of authoritarian systems, we have seen use of military conflict expand in both cases with a clear escalation in policy by both states over time. What is remarkable, however, is the difference in escalation—in the case of Imperial Japan, hot war and large scale conflict was the norm. However, in Xi's China the forms of direct conflict have been without large scale bloodshed and have manifested through assistance to Russia, small skirmishes along its borders and land features, the creation of militarized islands, and threatening displays of force through military drills. While this framework is based around a very low threshold of direct conflict, collective memory may also be able to provide a more nuanced understanding of the difference between the two regimes' behaviors.

6.3 Collective Memory in Imperial Japan and Xi's China

The most interesting results of this analysis were, however, in the comparison of Japan's memory to that of China's. In both cases, we find similarly formed memory with similar causal routes despite the difference of nearly 100 years, history, culture, and regime type. Beginning with the first framework of establishing collective memory, we find that the concepts of national rejuvenation and emperor worship form a similar ideological core with semi-religious adherence which underpins the basic understanding of the world, defining both societies around purposeful collectivism for the elevation of either their divine leader, or in China's case, the kingdom under heaven. In both cases, this served to form the very core of the authoritarian political system. In Japan, the seemingly powerless emperor was used to justify whatever acts the military sought fit to commit while his power was curtailed more and more. In the case of China, Xi's speeches are largely devoid of self-aggrandizement—favoring an attitude of subservience to the idea of a rejuvenated China and the history of its formation.

Causal beliefs manifest differently, but achieve similar effects within both Imperial Japan and China under the CCP. In Imperial Japan, hierarchy was adhered to by the common

people because of the diffusion of the emperor's divine authority to his representatives, but also because of a newly created concept of a classless ethno-nation defined by racial qualities and military service to the emperor which elevates individuals regardless of their origins. China, however, has achieved subservience to hierarchy through other means: history. The idea that ideological disunity leads to imperialism and national humiliation informs the very basis of Chinese causal beliefs, encouraging all to unify for the sake of an improved nation. One key difference in causal beliefs however, is China's disaster response understanding. While China has never had a democracy, natural disasters have served as a confidence test for rulers. Without an adequate response, leaders have been deposed again and again throughout Chinese history—a similar parallel does not exist, however, in Imperial Japan.

Relational content sees a similar connection—both nations centered around their relationship to both their neighboring East Asian countries and more importantly, the West. After Japan was imperialized, this relational content manifested through the concept of Asianism—the idea that Japan alone could bring the rest of East Asia out of barbarism or out of the clutches of imperialist Western nations. It was further bolstered by Japanese racial ideology centered around their victory over Russia in the Russo-Japanese war. Japan saw itself as being the most advanced Asian nation and the one capable of uniting Asia for a common cause. China, emerging from the ashes of the Japanese empire, has adopted similar ideologies based out of similar relationships. Based on its long history of interactions with other Asian nations, China sees itself as a beneficent leader which doles out aid in exchange for tribute. On the other hand, Chinese relational content is skeptical of Western machinations to infringe upon its sovereignty—informed by repeated attempts by Western nations, and Japan, to conquer it or exploit it.

Both nations, centered around the aforementioned concepts, have created social purpose and constitutive norms which support their systems and conceptions of the world. Both China's ideas of nationalism and national rejuvenation and Japan's concept of *Minzoku* are based on the notion of self-sacrifice in service of the nation. While Japan's ideology was explicitly tied to military service, it is also clear that China's nationalism is increasingly tied to military sacrifice as evidenced in the celebration of martyrdom during the border skirmish with India. These authoritarian regimes both have memories which extoll the values of fierce nationalistic pride, obeisance to hierarchy, ideological purity, and sacrifice for the nation.

6.4 Comparing Causal Pathways

The three routes of causal influence—as roadmaps, as focal points, and through institutionalization—manifest themselves in some small way in all conflicts analyzed in this piece. While their presence and salience may differ depending on the conflict, the ways in which they manifest are fairly similar within each regime environment, but also between the regimes. Both China under the CCP and Imperial Japan seem to have very similar roadmaps based around their very similar sets of worldviews and principled beliefs. In both cases we find incidences where, outside of diplomatic channels or direct orders, troops engage in conflict with another country out of a narrowed set of choices based on their collective memory informed views of the world. For the Japanese soldiers present at the Mukden Incident and similar moments, to sit idle was to abandon a chance at improving their station but was also to vacate their duty to expand the empire on behalf of their emperor. For the Chinese soldiers who reneged on their agreement to demilitarize the contested zone with India, they perceived this diplomatic maneuver as a further humiliation of China and a violation of its territorial sovereignty. We find this narrowing of options both from the common troops in both nations to the elite which directed them—whether through the purges of anti-war elite in Japan, or the insistence of Chinese elite on the reunification with Taiwan by any means necessary, these similar roadmaps limit the options of all within the collective memory to violent action or a loss.

Focal points within the regimes follow a similar pattern. Where elite disunity might have destabilized Japan during the many conflicts of the Showa Era, the elite rallied around the shared focal point of the emperor and his system, and the project of Asianism. Similarly, ideological opponents of the fascist system were forcibly converted, but many rapidly adopted a similar viewpoint and rallied to their common beliefs: the emperor and the Asianist project—spawning movements such as the Tenko literature movement which glorified life in colonial Manchukuo. In China, it is much the same—the idea of national rejuvenation serves as a focal point of understanding for all Chinese people. From reunification with Taiwan, to economic development through the Belt and Road Initiative, arguments about what policy to take are grounded by a shared set of goals which anyone would assent to given their collective understanding of the nation and their history.

Institutionalization is perhaps the most easily evidenced of the three causal routes. It can take the form of law, educational materials, official speeches and documents, media, and

literature. What is particularly interesting is that in both cases the attempts to reinforce and manipulate memory through institutionalization span every one of those mediums in both regimes, both from regime efforts and the communal efforts of the people themselves. In both China and Japan official speeches and documents have called on their readers and listeners to commit to ideological orthodoxy based on historically and culturally informed arguments. In both cases, political elite enforced these beliefs systems with coordinated and calculated educational materials and rules designed to create constitutive norms and beliefs which would create audiences receptive to the strategies they hoped to employ. After facing losses of soldiers, in both nations memorials were created which harnessed community anguish and tied it to the nation—celebrating martyrdom and encouraging others to take up the torch. Whether in the Yasukuni Shrine or at the Memorial Hall for Compatriots Killed in the Nanjing Massacre by Japanese Forces of Aggression, the institutionalized use of memory in service of the regime was perhaps the most convincing form of causal route. Each conflict in both cases was subject to reference to previous conflicts and was also memorialized for interpretation to inform behavior relating to future conflicts without exception, serving to reinforce norms and ideas which society, but particularly the regime, could use.

6.5 What Makes China Different

With the innumerable similarities between the collective memory and the role of that memory in Imperial Japan and Xi's China, there remains a difference in severity of conflict. China's modern conflicts, myriad as they are, do not cross the line into outright war and do not follow the same trajectory that Imperial Japan's did. In order to address this and present plausible explanations, there are several discrepancies worth noting. Firstly, while China's collective memory is centered around sacrifice for national rejuvenation, it does not specifically relate to military service. China's Patriotic Education Campaign stressed nationalism through education and formed very similar norms to Imperial Japan, however no equivalent to the reservist groups has formed. While China's ideology itself is a strong causal route which pushes it towards conflict, the public itself is not militarized or incentivized to participate in military service to the degree that Japan's was. This likely manifests two distinct differences which may place less pressure on the society and regime to engage in direct military conflict. Firstly, in the case of Japan we see grass roots fascist societies—galvanized by collective memory—which take their perception of imperial will into their own hands and commit acts of terror, coup d'états, and war all without approval from the government. China, on the other hand, has a memory which can be activated or left inert

depending on the context. As we see in the spy plane incident of the reform era, various factors such as public knowledge, loss of life, and regime preference determine whether topics are able to be interpreted by the Chinese collective memory. In the case of Japan, likely due to the elite disunity and collective focus on militarism, collective memory grew out of control of even the elite who had engineered it during the Meiji Restoration. The CCP, and later Xi, have tentatively contained memory enough to achieve policy goals without losing control and jeopardizing their objectives or their legitimacy as a regime.

6.6 Conclusion

In many instances, regimes Political preferences of authoritarians are dependent on myriad factors from their elite interrelations, political and economic pressures, to their personal preference and understanding of their place in a nation. While rational choice, underpinned by realist understandings of governance, has a place in decision-making—what makes something rational is a subjective understanding influenced by culture, identity, and collective memory within a nation. These analyses exist, not to demonstrate that collective memory or culture are the exclusive determinants of conflict preference—or of any political preference—but to demonstrate that they are a determinant and are an important key to better understand political trajectory within a nation and serve to add more nuance to static analyses of generalized regime types. As previous scholars have highlighted, increased empiricism has precipitated a dearth of understanding in this particular area—it is my hope that this research, and research like this can illuminate these underrepresented determinants and lead to further productive discussion of such alternative determinants. By studying historical, and contemporary regimes, my goal was to provide a trajectory with all the evidence that historical analysis provides and place it in comparison with a modern example where evidence is more sparse and speculative in order to better demonstrate the possible connections between collective memory's existence and its causal impact.

Relying on Zheng Wang's framework, this connection was made clear in both cases—Japanese militarism was pushed to its furthest extreme, well beyond the control of any political faction, by the persistent institutionalization of various collective memories and collective identity norms in Japan. In the case of modern China, we see a very similar trajectory where previous layers of institutionalized memory and identity production have precipitated an environment conducive both to increased personalization but an increasingly favorable view of violence and direct military conflict as a form of dispute mediation. This

takes shape through focal points, constitutive norms, and relational content which place China at the center of the world and place the aggravating barbarians around them as threats to Chinese assumption of their rightful place—a belief as old and complicated as the concept of the Chinese nation. **Whether by continued institutionalization, as focal points, or as roadmaps, collective memory undoubtedly plays a role in forming East Asian authoritarian regimes’ preferences with regards to external conflict.**

All forms of analysis are beholden to some limitations, however. This form of analysis, for all its benefits, is limited by the lack of information inherent to closed regimes and, most importantly, time to process that information. In the case of Japan, hindsight afforded this form of analysis a wealth of information and documentation of beliefs; in the case of China, because of the closed nature of the regime and contemporary reporting, evidence for more recent developments was limited and can only provide some credibility to the argument. Still, these pieces of data in conjunction with historical data from the period before Xi’s regime can paint a fuller picture and allow a better understanding of the full trajectory of the nation’s collective memory even where evidence is scarce. When conjoined with other forms of analysis such as regime typology, the structure can help to demonstrate where and when memory may have influence based on deviation in regime behavior or even a change in regime type. While this analysis proves fruitful with descriptive analysis, a natural next step to be considered by future analysts would be to find a more conclusive way to measure that impact whether by large scale discourse analysis, polling where possible, or perhaps an analysis of funds dedicated to initiatives such as the Patriotic Education Campaign or the reservist groups. Though, this does present issues when directed towards closed, or semi-closed authoritarian regimes, collective memory analysis of preferences within more open societies may lend itself more readily to larger empirical analysis to quantify its impact and provide additional support to the assertion of collective memory’s causal routes.

The results of this analysis demonstrate that collective memory analysis, using this framework, can be applied well to closed and semi-closed regimes where information is less available, and by the extremity of this example proves that collective memory analysis can be used to explain and assess the preferences of governments of any configuration through careful understanding of how identity and memory are shaped and where their roots come from. In the cases of Xi’s China and Imperial Japan, collective memory informed the public and the elite’s preferences on the use of armed conflict as a tool of policy and functioned as an additional determinant of conflict. Preference, as has been demonstrated, is a function of a

person's understanding of a situation—situations themselves do not exist in a vacuum, but rather a complicated, contextualized world colored by various ideas related to the decisionmaker's identity. Identity, being the cornerstone of decision-making, is a powerful determinant of political behavior and, as this analysis has demonstrated, merits consideration alongside other more established empirical determinants such as regime type.

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8. APPENDIX

Abstract:

This thesis seeks to answer the research question: does collective memory serve as a determinant of East Asian authoritarian regimes' preferences for direct military conflict?

In order to understand whether collective memory functions as a determinant in the cases of Imperial Japan and China under Xi Jinping, this thesis deploys a three-part framework which first determines the type of authoritarian regime, then establishes the existence of collective memory, and finally explores the plausible routes of that memory's causal impact.

In both the cases of Imperial Japan and China there was a volume of evidence to support that collective memory exists and that there also existed causal routes where that collective memory may have influenced the regimes and the people therein to engage in military conflict. When analyzed in consideration of regime typology data generated by the first framework, in both cases we find that the regimes also behaved within the behavior prescribed.

Based on the evidence present in the analysis it is clear that collective memory serves as an additional determinant of regimes' conflict preferences and serves to provide nuance to generalized ideas of regimes—allowing for researchers to better understand what sociological and historical aspects function as determinants of preference.

Abstract auf Deutsch:

Diese Master Arbeit zielt darauf ab, die Forschungsfrage zu beantworten: Dient kollektives Gedächtnis als Bestimmungsfaktor für die Präferenzen autoritärer Regime in Ostasien hinsichtlich direkter militärischer Konflikte?

Um zu verstehen, ob kollektives Gedächtnis in den Fällen des imperialen Japans und Chinas unter Xi Jinping als Bestimmungsfaktor fungiert, verwendet diese Master Arbeit ein dreiteiliges Rahmenmodell, das zunächst den Typ des autoritären Regimes bestimmt, dann das Vorhandensein von kollektivem Gedächtnis feststellt und schließlich die plausiblen Wege untersucht, auf denen dieses Gedächtnis eine kausale Wirkung entfalten könnte.

In beiden Fällen, dem imperialen Japan und China, gab es genügend Belege, die das Vorhandensein kollektiven Gedächtnisses stützen und auch kausale Wege aufzeigen, durch die dieses Gedächtnis die Regime und die Menschen in ihnen beeinflusst haben könnte, militärische Konflikte zu führen. Wenn man diese Fälle im Hinblick auf die Regimetypologie-Daten analysiert, die durch das erste Rahmenmodell erstellt wurden, zeigt sich, dass sich die Regime auch im Einklang mit den vorgeschriebenen Verhaltensweisen verhielten.

Auf Grundlage der vorliegenden Beweise in der Analyse ist klar, dass kollektives Gedächtnis als zusätzlicher Bestimmungsfaktor für die Konfliktpräferenzen der Regime dient und dazu beiträgt, verallgemeinerte Vorstellungen von Regimen nuanciert darzustellen—was es Forschern ermöglicht, besser zu verstehen, welche soziologischen und historischen Aspekte als Bestimmungsfaktoren der Präferenzen fungieren.