

TALLINN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

School of Business and Governance

Department of Law

Svea Pries

**THE IRRATIONALITY OF COLLECTIVE MEMORIES AS A
FACTOR IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS:
A CASE STUDY OF THE JAPAN-SOUTH KOREA TRADE
DISPUTE 2019**

Master's thesis

International Relations and European-Asian Studies

Supervisor: Vlad Vernygora, LL.M, MA

Co-supervisor: Holger Mölder, PhD

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I hereby declare that I have compiled the thesis independently and all works, important standpoints and data by other authors have been properly referenced and the same paper has not been previously presented for grading.

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Svea Pries11.05.2021.....

(signature, date)

Student code: 186159TASM

Student e-mail address: svea.pries@googlemail.com

Supervisor: Lecturer Vlad Vernygora, LL.M, MA:

The paper conforms to requirements in force

.....

(signature, date)

Co-supervisor: Dr. Holger Mölder, Associate Professor

The paper conforms to requirements in force

.....

(signature, date)

Chairman of the Defence Committee:

Permitted to the defence

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(name, signature, date)

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ABSTRACT

Having been academically grounded in the field of international relations, this thesis aims at discovering irrationality in the context of collective memory. For this purpose, the notions of, firstly, irrationality, and, secondly, collective memory are defined and factorized to be claimable in a scholarly way. To further research the topic, a case study of the 2019 trade dispute between the Republic of Korea and Japan is conducted, framing the discussion through the prism of rational choice theory and strategic narratives detected in media.

The theoretical groundwork of irrationality and collective memory, as well as strategic narratives are to be explored, using the main postulates of contemporary international scholarship. As for the data-gathering, it is to be arranged via collecting findings from online articles published by a range of reputable Japanese, South Korean and Western media outlets. The data is to be further categorized using parameters of strategic narrative theory, in order to detect narratives. These are to be discussed later on and applied for finding factors of irrationality and collective memory, in which indicators for both were found. Proving that collective memories, as well as irrationality is consistent in strategic narratives, this paper contributes to the discourse on collective memory, its implications in the field of international relations, as well as the bilateral relations of Japan and the Republic of Korea.

Keywords: collective memory, rational choice, irrationality, Japan, South Korea, trade conflict

INTRODUCTION

East Asia is one of those regions, which can be exemplified by multiple zones of perpetual conflicts, relentlessly providing the international canon with valuable empirical data on yet another severe dispute. Arguably, the area is essential from both security and politico-economic perspectives, and, therefore, it is of particular interest in the field of international relations. The region is where the Republic of Korea (ROK; hereafter also ‘South Korea’), the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), the People’s Republic of China (PRC; hereafter also ‘China’), and Japan compete with their own agendas, indirectly providing for a classic recipe to set up a conflictual situation in the vast majority of cases. More specifically, Japan’s colonial rule over the Korean peninsula is one of the core reasons for disputes, and, as their citizens are victims of war crimes during World War II (WWII), South Korea keeps a firm hold of their memory and legacy, even influencing today’s political climate (Langenbacher & Shain 2010, 15).

To further deepen the discourse of conflictual situations in the area, one must mention territorial disputes, like the Dokdo/Takeshima issue between Japan and the ROK and the actions in the South China Sea (SCS) (Scott 2012, 1019). Since the SCS bears large amounts of natural resources and significance in terms of providing routes for international trade, it is a much fought after region, gradually turning into a real battleground for advantages over commodities and geo-strategic leverages. As a complexity enhancing issue, the SCS is a part of multiple exclusive economic zones (EEZ), which opens up the possibility for numerous countries to use the area and its vast resources for their own devices (Scott 2012, 1024). Nevertheless, the PRC claims it in every possible manner, be it historically, philosophically, militaristic or politico-economically, all while being met with strong opposition to their agenda by different states, one of them being Japan. As all these conflicts involve major economic powers and vital allies of the United States in the region, most notably the ROK and Japan, their significance for the globalized world is an indisputable fact (Park, C. 2019, 1). This suggests that any ongoing conflict concerning these states, with necessity, impacts the international system-associated processes, including the current multi-polar global redesign, making it relevant for expanding academic research on the region further on.

Indeed, as argued by Sakaki (2019), the disputes between South Korea and Japan are nothing new and rare. Nevertheless, despite these stark disagreements described by many scholars over various topics, they remain the two biggest democracies in the East Asian region. Besides, they are trusted allies to the USA – and while not members of NATO – they have separate agreements like the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) with the US to ensure the security of the area, which makes the two Asian countries a particular case in the area (Oh & Pavel 2019; Chaban et al. 2018). Hence, issues and open disputes not only influence the region but reach global levels. As a result, minor conflicts give rise to major outcomes in the context of the current international system's development.

The disputes between South Korea and Japan have been escalating as of 2020, and the unstable relationship maintained by those two states is disintegrating slowly and, therefore, pose a relevant subject to research in the field of international relations. Their economic trade war of 2019 majorly influenced the production of electronic goods and their exports. As South Korea and Japan are among the mightiest exporters of electronics, the consequences of a “downward-spiral” in their relationship would also concern the global community (Sakaki 2019). As mentioned, tension has always been high between them. However, according to Hein (2020, 48, 57), the dispute over the 2018 court rulings concerning Korean forced labor victims during Japan's colonial rule over the Korean peninsula from 1910 to 1945 significantly worsened the already semi-frozen relationships between the two countries.

This reasoning seems to be credible since close proximity of time frames and historical issues are brought up by both sides, even with the Japanese side resolutely denying that being the cause. Further adding to Hein's (2020, 48) thought, considering bilateral ties escalate exponentially over court decisions, the current status quo can lead to an argument on irrational behavior of political elites on both sides, with providing for no immediate comprehensible policies regarding this matter of the trade conflict. To completely understand the situation and decisions made by Japan and South Korea, this research offers a more in-depth insight into past events later on.

While the relationship between Japan and South Korea is, by far, not a new topic in the field, there are still many questions unanswered, which require different scientific methods to be found. Many scholars explore plausible reasons for the worsening bilateral ties and how and whether or not it will continue in that manner. In addition, studies include the hope and possibility of mending relations. While this work is in agreement with those who argue that this is undoubtedly a

significant aspect of the necessary research, a major segment of scholarship leaves legitimate questions about the past relationship of Japan and South Korea in dim light and focus on the present and future (Tamaki 2020, 2-3). Therefore, even though research concerning this theme, in general, has been conducted in abundance, the topic's versatility is yet to be exhausted, and this particular contribution argues that the academic debate still lacks different approaches especially, in terms of discussional framework-building process.

Japan's colonial past is mentioned every so often in research discussing the bilateral ties of Japan and South Korea. However, like Langenbacher and Shain (2010, 198) notice, more often than not, the past is not the central aspect of the research, but merely an explanation and a means to an end of why these two states are at odds with each other. The argument is credible since it seems to be a natural thought to describe past happenings as a source of animosity and focus on recent events. While such argumentation seems legit at first, this dissertation supports an approach of the past as something recent and implemented in the present and therefore not as something finished, but instead something striving even in today's society. Similar discourses already exist for other conflicts, for example, the collective memory of Serbs (Cimesa 2012) and the identity building in Spain after the Republican Era (Ryan 2009). Thus, it can be argued that for a constructive research regarding South Korean and Japanese bilateral issues, there needs to be a base in memory studies and a society's perceived past and how it shapes the idea of its own identity, assuming that these issues of past and identity influence policies and decision making today (Langenbacher & Shain 2010, 194-195). The approach of collective memory is undoubtedly the most fitting for such research. While Choi, E. (2010, 76) strongly supports the approach through collective memory, Hashimoto (2015, 4) on the other hand, claims that "there is no 'collective' memory in Japan" and rather argues that, instead, there are "multiple memories of war and defeat". This paper strongly disagrees with this suggestion and alternatively argues that this precisely can be the reason for collective memory to exist and come into effect.

Considering the above, this research aims to determine a degree of irrationality of collective memories using the example of the 2019-2020 trade dispute of South Korea and Japan. This dispute is of noticeable importance for the field of international relations, taking for one, the fact of a threat of international discrepancies in trade due to this trade war, especially involving electronics (Ezell 2020). Second, the security issues, which are concomitant with this trade spat, are not only a specific area-bound, but usually involve the international canon as well, seeing as East Asia is far from stable and South Korea and Japan are the biggest allies of the USA in the region (Oh & Pavel

2019). Further, memory studies in international relations are extremely important. The German case of the Holocaust and, in reverse, the Ukrainian case of the Holodomor are the most ‘present’ in the political collective memory discourse. Such examples clearly show an influence of historical events on today’s policies (Langenbacher 2014). However, the author of this dissertation is of the opinion that the German case is, while most prominent in research, an unusual one. In this particular historical event, there is undeniably a clear “victim” and “perpetrator”, and the German government is mostly agreeing and admitting fault and guilt (Hein 2020). Without assessing the range and adequacy of the measures by Germany, one can still argue that there is certain intent to discuss and learn from the past (Hein 2020). This is the most common example in memory studies, however, there is a noticeable lack of class academic research concerning parties at fault and not admitting to it, like, for example, the Kremlin on the Holodomor. Colonialism is another example in which consequences are still of importance in today’s politics and bilateral ties (Rothermund 2014), and conflicts of Russia with Moldova, Georgia, and Ukraine, especially when it comes to the hybrid war between Russia and Ukraine, are rooted in issues of identity and past (Zhurzhenko 2014).

Yet another one out of these examples of denying or, to an extent, ignoring their past is Japan (Hashimoto 2014, 4-6). Contextualizing this dissertation-initiated discussion with the distinct interlinkage of strategic narrative theory and focusing on strategic narratives being projected by both South Korea and Japan, the data shall be collected through a range of qualitative methods discussed at length. The general argument here is that the irrationality of collective memories plays a major role in the field of international relations through policy making and bilateral agreements. The following set of research questions shall be answered in this dissertation: 1) in the context of the field, what can be defined as the irrationality of collective memory, and how can such a phenomenon be detected and measured? 2) what are the trade dispute-bound two sides’ strategic narratives, which are projected through the countries’ reputable media and contributed to the irrationality of collective memory? Apart from the instrumentarium provided by an increasingly popular scholarly debate on strategic narratives, this dissertation benefits from the usage of major postulates of the rational choice theory to define irrationality in a scientific context, while factorizing the findings into five vital points. Further, this research will factorize collective memory in similar fashion to conclude the paper’s theoretical framework.

The state-of-the-art-focused idea of this research is to establish a multi-disciplinary perspective in order to model a new theoretical framework to discuss the issue in the field of International

Relations. While the rational choice theory is already a prevalent theory in many schools of political thought, collective memory is not yet as established. Instead, collective memory is usually represented in sociology, cultural studies, and, to an extent, social anthropology, with one of their biggest representatives being Jan Assmann (1992), George Lipsitz (1990) and Marshall Sahlins (2004) respectively. However, the theory of collective memory does have potential in the field of IR and will be useful in this research, as historical issues are still relevant in contemporary policy making (Langenbacher & Shain 2010, 194). Further, the theory of strategic narratives will be introduced and used as an instrument to measure and detect indices to answer the research questions. Out of these three independent theories a combined model shall be presented and later on used on the collected data.

As for the process of data collection and research-generated discussion on the argument, qualitative methodology is to be employed since this is the most fitting for this research. It is of utmost importance to mention once again, that the theory of collective memory has its origin in sociology and cultural studies. Qualitative methods, give this research the chance to analyze and research the topic utilizing a real example. Meanwhile, quantitative approaches do not give the same in-depth information. Therefore, as already implied through the use of the strategic narrative theory, a media analysis will be conducted. Also, as media determines and maintains plenty of elements in collective memory, a media analysis is the most appropriate and justified approach (Halbwachs 1985, 21). To further specify the methods used, discourse analysis and narrative inquiry shall be presented. Discourse analysis allows to concentrate on the overall topics instead of small details of just content or linguistics (Harris 1952, 1-2). It is therefore possible to give a larger spectrum of information. This is mainly used to collect the information regarding the three theories of rational choice, collective memory and strategic narratives. The discourse opens up the possibilities to maintain the outline of this research to create a model, without repetitive and too detailed analysis (Keller 2006, 225). Further, the method of narrative inquiry is used on the collected data of the media. Narrative inquiry focuses on “storied experience of one person or a number of individuals”, and especially the plotlines the media supports in its publications are used as data and put it into frame (Clandinin 2005, 218). The data is framed and organized according to the rules of the strategic narrative theory, focusing on actor, setting, conflict and resolution.

To further legitimize the use of narrative inquiry as principal method, the focus should once again be put on narratives and their use in IR. Narratives are most often used to influence society and have very strategic use. Using the definition of the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence (2019), narrative is defined as “[m]orals drawn from stories” (NATO 2019, 30). To deepen the

meaning of the term, one should add that “from a governmental communications perspective narratives are tied to identity politics and questions of legitimacy” and “does not need to be a written statement. Narratives exist and are shared in society; they are developed and promoted by adversaries, and in neither of these cases is ‘written statement’ a prerequisite to be called or recognized as a narrative” (NATO 2019, 8). In a significant addition, “[n]arratives, as communicated through stories, tend to reduce complexity and offer a path towards a desired conclusion which can be applied to a range of different situations” (NATO 2019, 10). Using this importance of narratives in the political setting, it makes sense to focus on them for this particular research.

The narratives are found through the media analysis and the sampling method is as follows: Predominantly, the data is collected from a range of region-bound media sources, with a short outlook on Western outlets, with a sample size of twenty articles from different newspapers. The analysis follows through in-depth research on narratives found in the media. As a whole, the number of articles for data collection and analysis is a hundred articles and only articles freely available to the public were chosen. Further, they shall be divided by the following distribution. Fifty articles are originating from South Korean sources, of which ten are in the Korean language and forty published in English. Another fifty articles from Japanese sources, once again ten in Japanese and forty in English.

The samples were chosen according to following rules: First, for this academic contribution, as not to confound the research and results, the author opted for using newspaper articles written only by Japanese or Korean writers. Second, the time frame of the empirical study consists of narratives collected between 1 June 2019 and 30 September 2019. The reason for choosing this time frame is the following: as the theory of collective memory and its irrationality is the core of this thesis, it is most important to examine policies and decision making. This started with the decision of the Japanese Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry (METI) and its licensing policies for imports and exports at the beginning of July. Therefore, as the conflict began to take more and more space in the medial landscape, informing citizens and shaping collective memory, June is a very good month in which indicators for the brooding conflict can be found (METI 2019, 1 July; MOTIE 2019, 1 October). As most policies and decisions were made in July and August, one can look at it as a pattern of immediate responses. These will be the backbone of the data collection and, with it, the testing of the claim. As a third rule, only articles free to public access were chosen. This includes articles available through signing up for free, however, any articles which fall under paid

content are not chosen. The reason for this, similar to the first rule, is as to not confound the research and results, as this paper is looking at the collective memory, and it is important for everyone to have access, regardless of affordability. The fourth rule was to choose articles of the major Japanese or Korean news outlets with high circulation, as such news articles reach a higher number of readers. Further, as fifth rule, only articles directly corresponding to the topic were chosen, with only a few exceptions made, which are specifically addressed later on in the data collection. With the application of these five rules, the sampling process was conducted. When contextualizing the trade dispute, for each media outlet, a separate analysis of narratives will be conducted, however the Korean and Japanese language outlets will be put in one, since their sampling size allows it. The results are presented and discussed afterwards according to the model combining the three theoretical frameworks of this thesis. This happens through categorizing the result of the data collection into system, identity and policy narratives and expecting to find indicators of irrationality and collective memory.

The structure of this paper can be described as follows: the first chapter of this thesis lays the necessary groundwork in the theoretical approach as well as the data collection. Its first half concentrates on building the theoretical framework where both rationality and irrationality are conceptually defined. Based on the findings, rationality will be factorized with the indication that everything not rational will be counted as irrational. The chapter continues with a discourse in collective memory theory, all while the author will define the term collective memory. To finish that section, collective memory will also be factorized. The third section introduces strategic narrative theory (Miskimmon et al. 2013; Roselle et al. 2014) and the theoretical model of this research. The second chapter of this paper focuses on explaining the actual example of the trade conflict in a scholarly way. The first section of the second chapter has its main focus on data collection and narratives. In this section, the newspaper articles will be analyzed and searched for strategic narratives. To find the main theme-associated narratives, this research employs the core postulates of strategic narrative theory (Miskimmon et al. 2013; Roselle et al. 2014). With this platform, media articles can be analyzed regarding identity and policy in medial narratives. To finish the chapter, similarities, and differences in data and narratives between Japan and South Korea will be discussed. The findings outlined in the second chapter, such as data and narratives, are to be picked up and put into the theoretical framework developed in the first chapter. Narratives will be analyzed according to the aforementioned factors of rationality and irrationality so that the claim can be tested. Following that, the findings of the research will be discussed and concluded.

1. NARRATING IRRATIONALITY IN COLLECTIVE MEMORIES

Memory studies are as mentioned above not yet very common, but surely add value in the field of international relations. It is in no way a completely new approach in IR, and existing research includes most often Germany and their politics regarding their war crimes during WWII. Jeffrey K. Olick (1998) is one of the most prominent scholars researching the German case. However, as collective memory is strongly linked to identity, it came into focus with the picture of Europe and the European Union. Maria Mälksoo (2009, 653) points out very correctly that the current research is “reflective of the traditionally West-centric writing of European history”. She claims that with the focus on the Western European countries and the collective memory on Germany as “villain” and the Allied Forces as “heroes”, the Eastern experience of the communist regime is not conformable and a European identity difficult (Mälksoo 2009, 635-636). With Mälksoo (2009) focusing on the newer extensions of the European Union, this paper takes an even further look East.

Seeing as memory and past is still an issue in the recent political field, pairing an approach to memory studies with rational choice theory contributes to the current research, which is still lacking in topical diversity. Rational choice theory intends to explain about certain behavior of individuals and collectives (Zangl & Zürn 1994, 82-83) and combining these two theoretical frameworks might not only lead to an enlightenment about the specific case of South Korea and Japan’s trade dispute of 2019 but might also be useful in further research regarding other cases. For this, the following sub-chapters aim to explain the rational choice theory and factorizing the findings into five vital points which indicate rational actions. For the following media analysis, any narrative or described actions by various actors, which do not follow the five factors, shall be treated as irrational. As this paper aims at framing a model out of the three theoretical frameworks of rational choice theory, collective memory and strategic narratives, irrationality is, like a model in general, a rather abstract concept. As a model describes a simplified version of reality, this research underlines the point that irrationality shall not be understood in the sense of the linguistic definition, but rather as not acting according to the designed five rational factors of the model. To finish off the process of framing this model, strategic narratives are introduced as an analytical instrument of detection and measurability of irrationality of collective memory.

1.1. Factorizing irrationality as discussional framework

To acquire such factors, it is essential to take a look at the rational theory in the field of international relations. The rational choice theory is both prevalent, but also an utmost discussed theory, which later derives other related content and evolved theoretical approaches (Sturgeon 2020, 209-210). Nevertheless, it is most fitting for purposes of analysis in the context of this specific paper. For this reason, a common ground for defining rationality and correspondingly irrationality shall be found, without taking an in-depth discourse regarding different theoretical approaches of the rational theory, since, first of all, the rational theory does not pose just one theory. It is more specifically an umbrella term for multiple theories related to actors' rationality or specific actions. This particular part of the dissertation aims not to give an exhaustive overview of the rational theory but, instead, to obtain a range of certain fundamental aspects of it, to draw up the aforementioned five factors of rationality.

The rational theory uses the simplified idea of the *homo oeconomicus*. This so-called rational being will always choose what has the highest profit for themselves. Zangl and Zürn (1994, 82) claim, while a social actor cannot act according to the picture of the *homo oeconomicus*, actors in the field of international relations can come close to that. They mention that “international relations are marked with a limited amount of actors”, who operate in a system “absent of a monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force” (Zangl & Zürn 1994, 82)¹. Therefore, these state actors are interdependent, leading to the conclusion that rational theory in international relations is somewhat legitimate (Zangl & Zürn 1994, 82-83). However, that suggests that individuals might not act based on rationality, but their political leader does so only in an international setting. This could lead to the conclusion of irrationality only being possible in a national surrounding. Therefore, this is a broad statement excluding the likelihood of irrationality in international decision making. In addition, following the argumentation, it would mean that once there is a strong interdependence between states, irrationality diminishes accordingly.

To measure rationality, the decision-making of the *homo oeconomicus* is the main focus, with a high emphasis on the prior knowledge of the individuals, for example, the prisoner's dilemma (Allingham 1999, 4-5). It also assumes that in a political setting like elections, a party would

¹ This work is written in the German language and was translated by the author. This is the case for every following citation taken from an originally German source.

always make policies to catch the votes of the masses, although it has been proven that the voters themselves do not act rationally, but instead are influenced through loyalty and habits (Thurner 1998, 104-106). Nevertheless, the striving for power is considered a rational choice for state leaders, as this would be their own best interest. Opp (1989, 7) sums up the propositions:

The preference hypothesis: Individual preferences are determinants of actions which are – in the perception of the individual – instrumental in satisfying the respective preferences. The constraint hypothesis: Constraints (opportunities) imposed on (open to) individuals are determinants of their actions. The utility maximization hypothesis: Individuals choose those actions which realize their preferences to the highest extent, taking into account the constraints (opportunities) imposed on (or open to) them.

These propositions explain the political leaders' will to get reelected, their decision making according to their goal, and their altruistic choices for the economy and citizens. Characteristically for the context, Glaser (2010, 2-3) views the rational theory in international politics as a high security-related subject, discussing strategy and logic of competition and cooperation between states. Overall, in his research, he assumes that cooperation in the international canon is more benefitting if the diplomatic counterpart seems more safety-centered and defense poses less of a challenge than offense (Glaser 2010, 270-272). Vice versa, if the counterpart takes a less security-centered stance, offense and therefore competition is the rational choice. Addressing the limitations of his research, Glaser (2010, 270) makes a point in stressing that the choice of cooperation or competition is unsteady, as his theory "should explain state behavior when states act rationally, but not when they act sub[-]optimally". However, this assertion does not take off the importance of Glaser's scholarly input. On the contrary, this outlines a perfect prerequisite for this paper's factorization of rationality, implying that in this specific case, irrationality overpowers rationality once a state's decision on competition and cooperation jeopardizes security instead of ensuring it.

Esbach (2000, 1-3) poses a rather intriguing take on the theory, arguing that there seems to be a correlation between nationalism and rationality. While he also mentions that the assumption of irrationality shrouds conflicts concerning nationalistic topics, he nevertheless continues to analyze the possibility of a rational component. He primarily draws out the phenomena of nationalistic actions based on cultural identity, referring to dissolved countries, citing the Soviet Union as an example (Esbach 2000, 3). As Korea became independent from the Japanese colonial rule, similarities can be drawn to this specific identity phenomenon. In contrast, Esbach (2000) dives deep into the definition of nation and rationality and the theoretical framework. However, for this

paper's discourse, the idea is to present the results of this research only. These results will be used to acquire the last factor of rationality. Since there is a need to explain nation in accordance with nationalism, the topic will be addressed shortly to lay the proper groundwork for rationality in this specific setting.

The notions of 'nation' and 'state' are tightly linked in today's society, with the former, according to Esbach (2000, 217-218), being just the political frame, which ethnic groups were designated with. Nevertheless, not every nation has a state, and vice versa, a state might have more than one nation. Therefore, particular importance is put onto the state to keep peace and unify the nations, while the different nations are the source of unrest and disturbances. Even though Esbach (2000, 218-219) was not able to find a proper explanation for the rise of nationalism, he connects in his findings a "dissatisfaction" and "hope for the future" as correlating feelings to the choice of the individual to be nationalistic. Although he connected feelings and nationalism, there was no conclusion that nationalism is a solely rational choice. Instead, it became clear that aspects of rational choice exist in the decision-making process of individuals. As this is a take on rationality, which benefits the paper with its relevance, the author chose to include this research by keeping the stark limitations.

Based on the disquisition above, the author has decided on five factors to represent rational choices in the upcoming discourse. First, it is rational to strive for the highest amount of power possible. This is the case for individuals, including citizens and especially state leaders, who might need voters for the next election and therefore catering in their policies to the masses' wishes. Second, based on Glaser's (2010) research, security shall be of utmost importance to the rational actor. This implicates that a state should always strive for maximum security. Third, since the economy thrives through the global market, the state aims to maximize trade profits in hindsight of the citizens' financial security. Fourth, keeping a stable position in the area and the international canon is another rational factor. In accordance with the assumption of Zangl and Zürn (1994), states are highly interdependent. Consequently, one can argue that to keep a firm and steady stance in an international setting is the rational thing to do, as, without this, the aforementioned factors are impossible to execute. A state will not maximize power, security, and trade profits if their position is not clear. The fifth is the emerge of nationalist groups and mind-sets of the citizens. Rooted in the "hope for a better future" the citizens will act rationally in their own sphere of power (Esbach 2000, 218). Simplifying these five factors, the author concludes the five last elements depicted in

the following figure (see *Figure 1*).

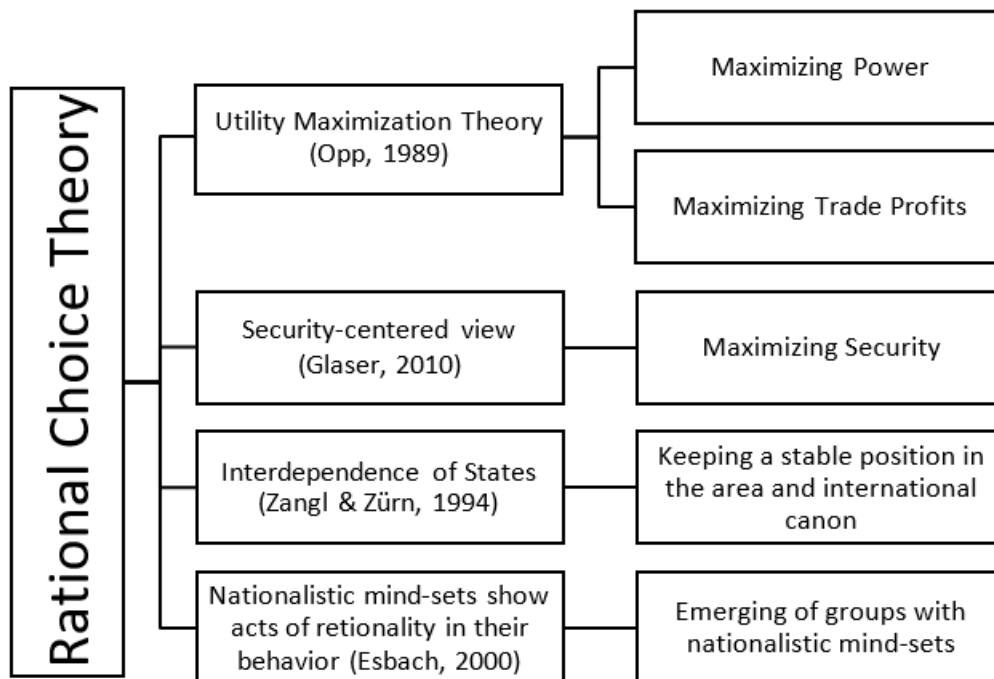


Figure 1. Overview of factorizing the rational choice theory
 Source: author's collected data in chapter 1.1

1.2. The driving power of collective memory

Collective memory as a theoretical approach is still very uncommon in the field of international relations. It is slowly gaining more popularity, but the proper framework and methodology are still lacking (Langenbacher & Shain 2010, 2). Nevertheless, this research recognizes it as a fundamental theory and deserving of being used more extensively in academia. One issue of the collective memory theory is that scholars agree that there does not seem to be a proper definition. Instead, the term is used in however it seems appropriate for the specific topic. Therefore, it does not surprise that the definitions are widely spread, and since this theory still lacks a framework, a certain level of disapproval is to be expected. While taking a look at different approaches towards collective memory in international relations, this paper shall further define it. Additionally, based on notable scholars' insights and previous works, five factors of collective memory shall be acquired and used in the following media analysis.

The idea of collective memory was first shaped in the 1920s by Maurice Halbwachs' theory of the *mémoire collective* (Choi, E. 2010, 67). The central aspect of his research was the social factor of memory. He takes a stand against the common idea of memory as a solely individual phenomenon

and describes the idea that memory is constructed by society (Halbwachs 1985, 21; Cimesa 2012, 72). He supports the thought of the existence of a memory built by generations and their teachings (Choi 2020, 67). Memory is, therefore, not something strictly individual but constructed by written and oral records, which lead to tradition and as Halbwachs (1985, 23) himself puts it, “the individual remembers by taking the viewpoint of the group, and the memory of the group will materialize and manifest in the individual memories”, leading to the interdependence of individual and collective memory. Halbwachs manages to lay the basic constructs for the theoretical approach in sociologic sciences, outlining the following two basic rules of collective memory: 1) the collective memory of every individual is constructed by society, and 2) society as a constructor of collective memory does so, through the means of communication, media, and tradition based on past experiences of that group (Halbwachs 1985, 21; 1991, 55).

Halbwachs (1991, 66) further clearly differentiates between memory and history, explaining that “history, in general, begins at the point, where tradition ends – in a moment, in which the social memory extinguishes and dissolves”. This indicates that history in an objective manner is not compatible with memory. Instead, memory is a reconstruction of the past, rooted in the current situation and circumstances (Halbwachs 1991, 55). Based on Halbwachs’ approach to collective memory, there is a need to distinguish between past and history. ‘Past’ shall be defined – almost true to its linguistic intentions – as a subjective memory of happenings through time. Meanwhile, ‘history’ is the collection of objective and factual happenings through time. This thought was once again picked up in the collective memory discourse, where history and its relation to memory were discussed amongst others by Jaques LeGroff, who claims that history needs to pursue objectivity, and Peter Burke, who claims the opposite of memory mirroring actual events of history (Burke 1989, 97-98; LeGroff 1992, 11-12).

The works of Pierre Nora in the 1980s continue to spin Halbwachs’ idea of collective memory. In his scriptures called ‘Les lieux de mémoire’, he agrees with the idea of a strict distinction between history and memory (Cimesa 2012, 72). Against Halbwachs’ theory, Nora argues that the collective memory itself does not exist in how Halbwachs defined it. Instead, he thinks that there is no such thing as memory itself (Nora 1998, 11). Instead, that is the very reason collective memory is constructed. It is done by having memorial sites which are “material, functional and symbolic” and uphold this constructed memory (Cimesa 2012, 72). Nora (1998, 32) points out that in addition to that, the importance is planted on the wish and willingness to remember. Therefore, collective memory is not naturally constructed by society but more of an intended construction. These so-

called memorial sites do not necessarily need to be certain places. Instead, they can have multiple dimensions (Nora 1998, 32). There are three dimensions Nora (1998, 32) presents: the aforementioned material, functional and symbolic dimensions (Cimesa 2012, 72; Nora 1998, 32).

While it is not essential as to how much each dimension is weighted, it is of utmost significance that every single dimension exists for each memorial site (Cimesa 2012, 72). The material dimension includes cultural objects, most commonly art. Therefore, the material dimension of literature or artworks like statues is easily identified. Nevertheless, Nora (1998, 32) does not only define this dimension through the literal meaning of material. Even past occurrences are counted in this dimension, for example, events that are intended for remembrance. This material dimension is followed by a functional dimension, which shows that there has been a function or intention when it was made, or it occurred. Nora (1998, 45) gives the example of the *Histoire de France* by Ernest Lavisse, which was intended and used as a schoolbook and shaped history lessons in school. At last, the memorial site needs a symbolic dimension. That is the case when certain events become a ritual or tradition. Otherwise, a symbolic dimension can be added through the people's willingness to remember and give it a symbolic nature (Nora 1998, 32).

Aleida and Jan Assmann are also worth mentioning when discussing collective memory. They divide the term collective memory into two, namely, communicative and cultural memory (Cimesa 2012, 72). The communicative memory has a generational component, including everyday interaction with contemporary witnesses (Assmann 1992, 56; Cimesa 2012, 72). Based on the implication, one can conclude that there is only a specific period which the communicative memory can cover. As long as there are witnesses alive, the memory of the past can be communicated, hence communicative memory.

The Assmanns' research's main focus was cultural memory, which has similarities with Nora's dimensions. As argued, it has a particular ceremonial character and must be organized (Cimesa 2012, 72). This means there is a certain amount of reusable material and repeated actions (Assmann 1988, 15). That material could be texts, but also images or even rites. A specific group would shape their identity through the material and actions as they now have a collectively shared base of knowledge about the past (Assmann 1988, 15; Cimesa 2012, 72). It does not necessarily need to be a historical event. Even events from the Bible can be considered cultural memories, as Christianity is part of many cultures, especially in Europe (Assmann 1992, 37). This memory certainly shapes the group and their own identity but is far from historic correctness (Gillis 1994,

5). Nevertheless, Assmann (1988, 13-15) claims that groups with the same collective and cultural memory would construct their identity according to it and use it deeply rooted in the present and daily life. Jan Assmann would further link not only the personal identity of a group but even a political identity to collective memory (Assmann 1992, 18). This seems to be the most structured and analytical approach to the theoretical framework of collective memory up to date and is a significant element of any modern study regarding collective memory.

Aside from historical events, elites also play a major role in the discourse of collective memory. According to Langenbacher and Shain (2010, 31), “[...] representatives belong overwhelmingly to a society’s elites and are responsible for the majority of visible action and wider influence”. They further specify that “the socializing agents and privileged interpreters of memory regimes are politicians, journalists, religious and social leaders, artists, teachers, intellectuals, and so on” who as “elite actors hammer out and validate the politically acceptable memory regime, the public transcript of memory” (Langenbacher & Shain 2010, 31). This, on the other hand, influences the society or, in a more specific political manner, the citizens. They will shape their collective memory according to the dictation of their elites.

With the overall groundwork of the theoretical part of collective memory laid, the author of this paper will continue to acquire five main features of the theory used as factors, which are used later on to categorize narratives. First, based on Halbwachs and LeGross, the past and the historical facts are different or perceived as different in the collective memory. That means that the collective memory shows differences to the known historical facts, concerning, for example, overly emotional narratives or narratives that induce forgetting or understate them. Second, the media positively influences the shape of collective memory, meaning that media is the primary tool to shape it. The third is a strong will to remember. According to Nora, that is the essential part of collective memory and should therefore not be forgotten in these five factors. Actions indicating historic events or a shared past and using this in a contemporary meaning and setting are examples of this third factor. Fourth, collective memory follows the trickle-down principle. This means actors shaping the collective memory of the whole group are the elites of society. The ordinary people of this society take that memory onto themselves, as they want to or intend to be part of the elites’ predominant identity (Thomson 1994, 9). Identity is the immediate context for the fifth and last factor. For collective memory, it is essential to be tied to identity. Therefore, the collective memory shapes identity and concludes that without a specific past, one is not part of a specific group and, therefore, cannot add it to their own identity. Hence, to sum up the five factors, as they

gain more importance in the latter context, the following figure presents an overview of the factors (see *Figure 2*).

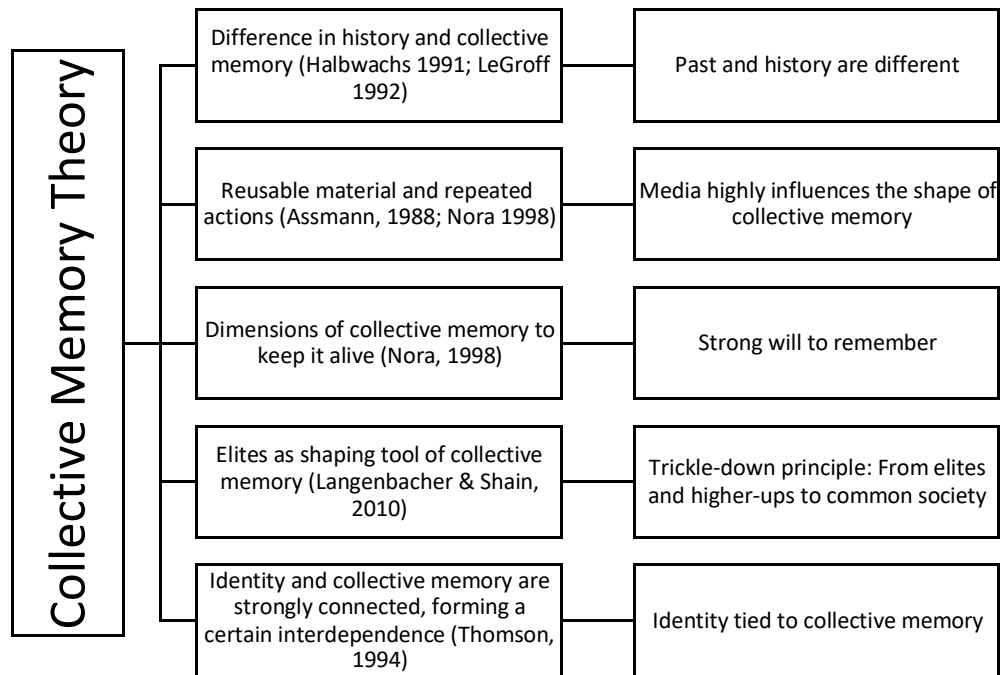


Figure 2. Overview of factorizing the collective memory theory

Source: author’s collected data in chapter 1.2.

1.3. Strategic Narrative as soft power in disputes

The strategic narrative shall be addressed, as it is an elementary theoretical frame of utmost importance to this research. This theoretical approach uses the frame of Miskimmon et al. (2013) and Roselle et al. (2014, 75-77): narratives shall later be described according to actor, setting, conflict, and resolution, as “strategic narrative, then, directly addresses the formation, projection and diffusion, and reception of ideas in the international system” (Roselle et al. 2014, 74). Further, the following three dimensions of narratives are introduced:

First are International System Narratives that describe how the world is structured, who the players are, and how it works. [...] At a second level are National Narratives that set out what the story of the state or nation is, what values and goal it has. [...] Finally there are Issue Narratives that set out why policy is needed and (normatively) desirable, and how it will be successfully implemented or accomplished” (Roselle et al. 2014, 76).

These levels of narratives, namely identity, system and policy narratives, are discussed in regard

to the collected data later on and serve as a measurement in a sense of detecting irrationality in collective memories. However, to grasp these levels on a deeper basis, further explanation is deemed necessary. Therefore, each level will be described in slightly more detail, starting with system narratives. System narratives describe, as mentioned above, the structure of the world and the international system (Roselle et al. 2014, 76). This means especially the actors in regard to countries, institutions or in some cases high ranking politicians are in focus. System narratives describe the “outside”, which the actors have to navigate. Identity narratives, however, describe the “inside”. How the narratives portray themselves is the main focus. It is focused on goals and values and therefore usually rooted in a national layer instead of an international one (Roselle et al. 2014, 76). Lastly, the most important level in hindsight of this thesis are the issue or policy narratives. These explain the course of action and reasoning in policy making and the narratives presenting these, which is already brought to the point above and needs no further introduction.

To further elaborate on the importance of strategic narratives, a small discourse on soft power is necessary. Soft power is cooperation and manipulation due to shaping one’s attractiveness as a political actor (Miskimmon et al. 2013, 12). One main instrument of spreading soft power is the media, which is used to show a good impression of oneself or the state, and through the power of the internet and its vast network reaching anywhere, a narrative in media very much equals soft power (Miskimmon et al. 2013, 12-13; Roselle et al. 2014, 71). This makes media narratives even more critical in international relations, showing that narratives significantly influence today’s struggle for power. This way, the power of communication can be considered a soft power. One can deduce that political leaders use this as a tool for their benefit and influence and maneuver citizens and society into thinking according to their wishes. Humans have narratives as a form of thinking, so they are easily affected by narratives presented to them (Miskimmon et al. 2013, 248). Therefore, strategic narrative theory does help to understand why “norms and ideas spread” and at the same time is a tool for measurement (Miskimmon et al. 2013, 254). As these are credible claims, the following research is conducted with this theory as a framework for analysis. Importance in narratives is put on shaping each other’s interests and “to exploit each other’s anxieties and narrative weaknesses to alter their behaviour” (Miskimmon et al. 2013, 195). For such a goal, the aspects of formation mentioned above, projection and reception, are essential, as communication has an interdependent sender and receiver, who might have the same piece of information but perceive it differently. At the point of formation and projection, it is likely to notice the strong influence of collective memory, as media is supposed to shape the past according to the elite’s wishes (Assmann 1988; Halbwachs 1991; Langenbacher & Shain 2010). Contrary to collective

memory, irrationality can be noticed at the point of reception, as the receiver is put in front of a decision to interpret and act according to the information they got (Allingham 1999).

Nevertheless, strategic narrative as soft power does have its limitations. Miskimmon et al. (2013) portray these through case studies of Israel and its neighbors and the disapproval of whaling in contemporary opinions and Iran's nuclear program. To sum up the results, the difficulty for political leaders is to successfully establish a working narrative and control the media's stream and direction (Miskimmon et al. 2013, 249). Cheema and Shamil (2017) implement the strategic narrative theory on national narratives of stabilizing Pakistan, mentioning the need for narratives constructing identities to create a stable society. Byrne (2020) focuses on the order in the Indo-Pacific, using strategic narrative to portray the 'rule-based order' explaining contesting narratives and hinting that the winner of strategic narratives will be the overall winner in the area. Strategic narratives are thriving in Asia and portray a significant facet of the research of the region. However, the strategic narrative is an utterly exhaustive theory, and Miskimmon et al. (2013) provide an in-depth research of strategic narratives, which includes many facets, which are not as relevant for this particular paper. Therefore, the basic construct of the theory, which was introduced above, will be used for framing the collected data.

To put the data into frame later on for discussion, the Japanese and South Korean narratives are summed up and classified according to construction, projection, and reception and later on discussed in hindsight to the three levels of system, identity and policy narratives (Roselle et al. 2014, 74; Roselle et al. 2014, 76). This is a necessary step to discuss irrationality in the reception and collective memory in forming narratives. Further, it shall be divided if a narrative is used strategically or not. The narrative is considered strategic if the actor has a clear goal to influence the political atmosphere, which accounts for the world and how people act in it and achieve their narrative aims. Applying these ramifications of 'strategic,' the results of the data collection are the following narratives of Japanese media and South Korean media.

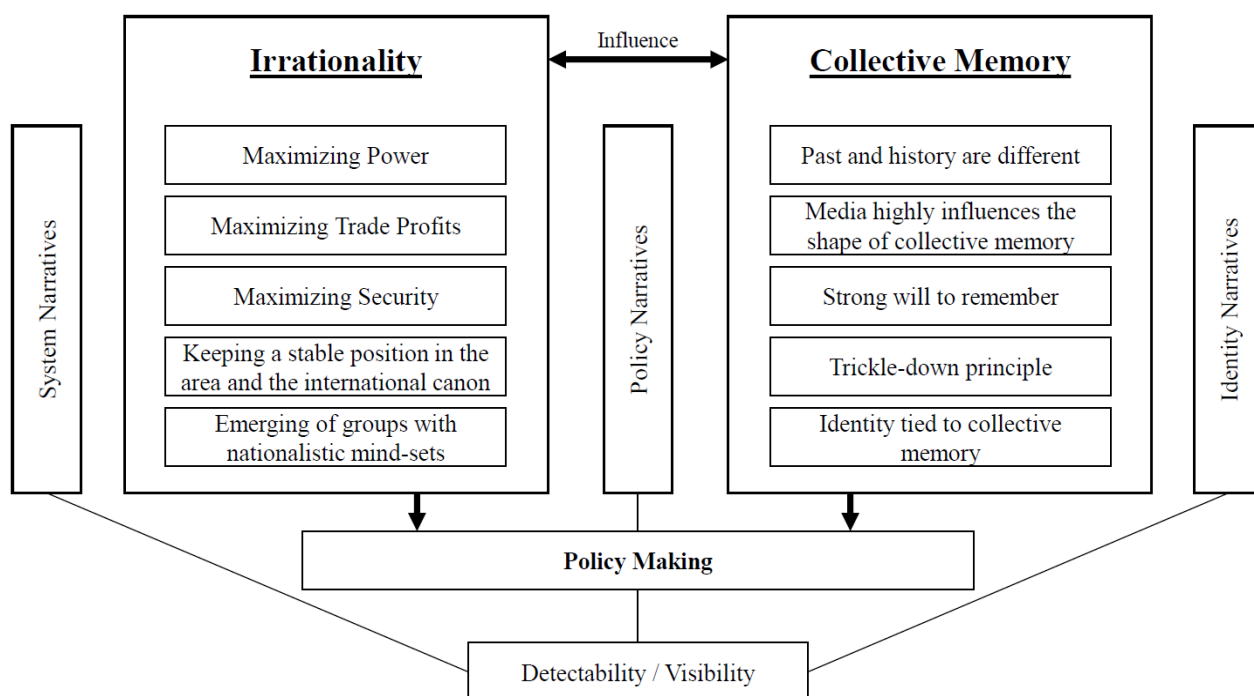


Figure 3. Irrationality of Collective Memory in Strategic Narratives: A Model

Source: author's collected data in chapter 1

To complete the theoretical discourse, the model of the theoretical framework shall be introduced and explained (see *Figure 3*). Irrationality and collective memories influence each other and impact policy making. The model combines the five factors of rational choice and the five factors of collective memory, and their influence on policy making. To detect such influences, one must look at the strategic narratives of each involved party separately, in this paper's specific case study Japan and the ROK. System narratives mostly deal as explained above with the structure of the international system. Factors of rationality and hence irrationality are most likely to be detected in the policy and decision-making process in this specific level of narratives due to the fact that the five factors of rationality involve systemic structures. Respectively, identity narratives involve most likely more indicators of collective memory since both identity and collective memory are closely related. However, based on the argument of this paper, the author assumes that policy narratives contain both, factors of irrationality and collective memory.

2. CONTEXTUALIZING THE 2019 JAPAN – SOUTH KOREAN TRADE DISPUTE

To analyze the content of the Japan-South Korea trade dispute, the author first intends to give an overview of the events that led to the spat and give more details of the happenings during the time frame from 1 June 2019 to 30 September 2019 of the media analysis. As the dispute is still ongoing, the author will not address the events after that period, nor is it the author's intention to make assumptions about this conflict's future. Second, to fully understand the upcoming media analysis, the strategic narrative theory shall be used. This theory will also be an instrument to put the narratives of the analyzed newspaper articles into the frame during the discussion.

First, the overall context of the conflict shall be described. The ROK and Japan have been at odds in their bilateral relationship for a long time, mostly always concerning historical and past issues which are based on the Japanese colonial rule of Korea, as well as WWII, which Hein (2020, 48) describes as “political struggle over competing interpretations of history”. Background to these statements is Japan's annexation of the Korean peninsula in 1910, which led to Koreans suffering through the Japanese colonial rule. Especially as preparations for WWII begun, the situation for Koreans worsened. Korean forced laborers, both in Japan and Korea, were used by Japanese authorities to work among other places in mines and shipyards under inhumane circumstances (Hein 2020, 47-48; Langenbacher & Shain 2010, 192). With WWII raging on, the forced laborers had to work even harder to secure the materials needed for war. Further, the services of the so-called “comfort women” were provided (Choi, E. 2010, 69-70). These were women who were forced into prostitution to provide imperial troops with sexual services. While the comfort women issue is of utmost importance, the issue of the forced laborers was the content of rulings of the Supreme Court of Korea in October 2018, which stated that certain forced labor victims and their families were allowed to claim compensation (Hein 2020, 57). These specifically concerned victims were forcefully and involuntarily constrained to provide work without pay (Ezell 2020). The companies affected by the court decisions include Nippon Steel and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, significant companies in the industry (Choi, K. et al. 2019). As there consists a treaty of 1965, which is called the Treaty of Normalization of Diplomatic Relations, between the ROK and Japan, the Japanese government was dissatisfied with the court rulings in 2018. According to

the 1965 treaty, economic settlements have been agreed to (Langenbacher & Shain 2010. 189-190). Therefore, the Japanese government sees the court rulings as a deviation from the treaty (Hein 2020, 59). After South Korean Courts rejected multiple appeals from the Japanese side, the ROK offered Japan in June 2019 to open a joined fund to compensate the forced labor victims, which was rejected by the Japanese side, who then proceeded to call for an arbitration trial in light of the 1965 Treaty of Normalization of Diplomatic Relationships (Sakaki 2019).

From June 2019, the relations began to worsen rapidly. In the last quarter of June, Japan called for the arbitration, and soon after, on 1 July 2019, the METI modified their licensing policies, which majorly influenced exports to South Korea. Exporters needed to have 90 days prior approval to ship, which would heavily slow down exports (METI 2019, 1 July). Primarily, technologies and chemicals concerning semiconductor materials for technologies like smartphones are essential for the South Korean economy since most of their exports are based on those (Ezell 2020). Japan's government cited the reason as security concerns, but their reasons – whether true or not – are up to speculation (Ezell 2020). This sparked a widespread boycott of Japanese products in South Korea under the slogan 'NO Japan' and other retaliations by the South Korean government through the Ministry of Trade, Industry, and Energy (MOTIE) (MOTIE 2019, 1 October). The South Korean government, on the other hand, planned for Japan to take back the restrictions in the WTO meeting in Geneva on the 8 to 9 July (Government of the Republic of Korea 2019, August). Mid-July, representatives from both Japan and South Korea held talks in Tokyo to discuss their bilateral relations' downward spiral but came to no conclusion to the dispute (Jin & Yamazaki 2019). In late July, both countries once again brought the issue to the WTO (Suzuki & Funakoshi 2019). In August, Japan removed South Korea from their so-called white-list at the end of the month, which is a list of preferred trade partners, which leads to further restrictions on even more products (METI 2019, 2 August). As a reaction, South Korea once again turned to the WTO in September 2019 to complain about unfair export controls but fail to improve bilateral ties by the end of the month (Suzuki & Funakoshi 2019). As a short outlook for afterward, it needs to be mentioned that the conflict is still ongoing, but ties are not as strained at the beginning of 2020 as they were in 2019 (Ezell 2020).

For the following analysis, the strategic narrative theory will be used. In the first part of recognizing narratives and data collection of newspaper articles, the theory's descriptive part will be focused on. The focus will be on the actor, setting, conflict, and resolution to determine the narratives in this part. As this is a media analysis of newspaper articles, it is a study of the

“projection” of strategic narratives (Roselle et al. 2014, 78). Later in the discussion part of this paper, the different dimensions of the narratives shall be debated.

A number of international media ‘heavyweights’, namely CNN, The Diplomat, The New York Times, and The Guardian, usually describe the conflict as not just a regional but a global issue. Nevertheless, in all cases, Japan and South Korea are both equal acting parties in a bilateral spat with global consequences. Meanwhile, the focus is on the USA as an influencer and partner (Park, D. 2019; Lee, J. 2019; McCurry 2019a; Choe et al. 2019). The setting is either bilateral or global, with the majority explaining the trade dispute's impact globally, concentrating on the security threat through Russia, North Korea, and China (Yamaguchi 2019; McCurry 2019a). Instead of entirely relying on the hard facts of politics, mundane topics are used to introduce the conflicts (McCurry 2019b; Blair 2019; Seo et al. 2019). The reader gets the impression it is like an informative overview for non-Koreans and non-Japanese. The apparent goal is for the reader to better understand the reasoning behind the issues and why it escalated into a trade dispute. This peek into narratives indicates a view outside the East Asian region. However, this contribution deals with specific ramifications of narratives, which need to be processed and analyzed through area-specific sources, leading to Japanese and South Korean media outlets as a significant source for narratives. To shortly highlight the most important findings, one can say that the issue of who is at fault, as well as retaliations and reasoning are in focus of both parties. South Korea focuses strongly on the past, in which they see the reason for this conflict, while Japan explains this conflict with the opposite, even going as far as claiming the past has nothing to do with this.

2.1. Japanese media and its narratives

The Japanese newspaper articles are divided as follows: 13 English articles of *The Japan Times*, the largest English-language newspaper of Japan and had an image of being anti-Japanese based on the use of “forced labor”, instead of “wartime labor” (Saito & Miyazaki 2019). A scandal, which is closely related to the topic of this paper. 14 English articles of *Nikkei Asia*, and 13 English articles of *The Mainichi*. As for the analyzed articles in the Japanese language, the division is five of the *Yomiuri Shimbun* and five of the *Asahi Shimbun*. The last four news outlets, they are chosen because of their standing as the biggest four national newspapers (Nihon Shinbun Kyokai 2020). As for necessary citations, the author translated it into English for better understanding. A separate short analysis of narratives shall be conducted for every English language newspaper before the results are summarized. The Japanese language articles, since their sample size is smaller than the English, shall be discussed together.

Starting with articles from *The Japan Times*, what immediately stands out is that mostly only one Japanese writer discusses the overall topic of the trade dispute between South Korea and Japan. While it is not the only writer addressing the topic, they are among the very few of Japanese heritage. Therefore, the author of this paper needs to mention that concerning the analysis of *The Japan Times*, it is very one-sided and lacks various writers' opinions, with only one article written by another author (Murakami 2019). Nevertheless, it gives an insight for narratives, even if not as good as the other sources. The actors in these articles are either the Japanese or the South Korean government, respectively, even though the Japanese side has a more active part, being the actor ten times, instead of South Korea with three times. Most of the time, the setting only concerns the bilateral relations between Japan and the ROK, but in 4 articles, the issue is taken onto the global level. This happens mostly through the South Korean side, who wished to address the topic at the WTO in Geneva (Sugiyama 2019d, 2019k, 2019l). The conflicts range over a few specific actions during the trade dispute. The articles mostly address the limitations on exports by Japan (Sugiyama 2019a, 2019f, 2019i, 2019j), justifying their actions through explanations on why individual decisions were made – calling a meeting between officials just an “administrative briefing” (Sugiyama 2019d) – and further states lack of understanding towards the South Korean side and their reactions. Phrases like “[t]he government was taken aback by the strong reaction from South Korea” (Sugiyama 2019b) and a citation of trade minister Seto Hiroshige mentioning that “if South Korea keeps raising the issue ... at meetings that have nothing to do with export controls, I worry that South Korea will lose international credibility” (Sugiyama 2019e), show an absolute disinterest on how South Korea is dealing with the issue. Instead, once South Korea is mentioned, it mostly happens to quote officials addressing the topic with strong words or to show a retaliating side of the ROK (Sugiyama 2019b, 2019g). Japan argues that their only reason for any export controls has just security matters as background (Sugiyama 2019h) and “such changes are not extraordinary steps specifically targeting South Korea” (Sugiyama 2019b), but instead “that trust with [sic] South Korea has diminished, citing unsatisfactory handling of export controls and historical issues” (Sugiyama 2019c). As for resolutions, both countries agree on the very thought that an ongoing spat will influence the area's security and the global community. Nevertheless, it seems to be the South Korean responsibility to put a halt to it.

Nikkei Asia takes, in contrast to *The Japan Times*, a rather global view. The actors are usually the South Korean or Japanese government. Nevertheless, *Nikkei Asia* also includes the WTO and South Korean tourists at respectively one article each. This shows a transcendence of just a bilateral issue and more of a global approach, which concerns not only government officials but also

citizens and institutions as active partakers in the dispute. Still, four times South Korea and its government is the actor, three times the Japanese government, and four times South Korea and Japan are both actors on equal terms. Compared to *The Japan Times* items, it seems like *Nikkei* writers intend to illustrate both sides as much as possible, without predominately informing about just one party of the conflict. The setting is also more concentrated on global impacts. Out of 14 analyzed articles, six discuss matters globally, for example, how the bilateral conflict will influence other countries on different economic and political levels ('Japan says export' 2019; Sugihara 2019a, 2019b; Suzuki, S. 2019). This shows that *Nikkei Asia* intends to address a broader audience in explaining global impacts and not just regional. As for the conflicts, there are four main topics the *Nikkei Asia* concentrates on: the restrictions on exports and removal of South Korea from the Japanese white-list, economic and security issues, the planned cancellation of the GSOMIA by the South Korean government and bilateral talks and meetings for a possible, but not so near solution. Interestingly, security issues are not dominantly cited as reasons for limitations on chemical exports, instead hinting that "the breakdown in relations was sparked by last year's decision by the South Korean Supreme Court to award reparations to the country's wartime laborers at Japanese companies during Japanese occupation" (Obe & Kim 2019) and in accordance, that "the plaintiffs are in process of selling assets seized from the Japanese companies as part of the compensation" (Sugihara & Yamada 2019). It is further stated that it "appear[s] to be a reaction to Seoul's stance on a dispute over wartime labour" and that as a result "could leave Japan vulnerable to accusations that it is abusing international trade rules" (Sugihara & Yamada 2019). This indicates that the writers are rather linking historical issues than security issues to the reasoning of export limitations.

Economic issues are closely related to the limitations of export and the white-list issue, which puts both sides' businesses in challenging positions. A sector which is rapidly declining economically is tourism, as "the rift is making a dent in tourism" (Ogawa and Jibiki 2019), most likely to be a result of a boycott of Japanese products and shunning the country in general by South Korean visitors (Suzuki et al. 2019). The security issues, on the other hand, are related to the planned cancellation of the GSOMIA agreement by the ROK. Articles dealing with this specific conflict mostly mention that the move to cancel the agreement is retaliation on the Korean side, citing the South Korean President Moon Jae-in saying "we will never lose to Japan again. We can beat Japan" and also having "options to counteract" against Japan (Obe & Kim 2019). Nevertheless, this is "dropping a gift in the laps of North Korea, China and Russia" (Akita 2019). Solutions should be found by having bilateral talks over the issue, with both sides having "agreed to maintain dialogue to resolve the issue" (Jibiki & Shibata 2019). However, the talks did not seem to go too well since

the beginning of August, when “Tokyo claims the issue was settled long ago”, addressing the South Korean courts' forced labor rulings (Yuda 2019). Having their concerns, U.S. officials started to have meetings with both countries as well, stating that “U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo is urging the two countries to mend their relationship”, since “further worsening of relations risk derailing peacemaking efforts” in the region (Yuda 2019). The resolution is similar for every article, urging for an improvement of ties on both sides, adding that “to repair the relationship, the partners will need to more closely align their views on China, North Korea and Russia”, assuring the stability and security in the region (Akita 2019).

When collecting data from *The Mainichi*, one immediately notices that the writer's names are not published. Nevertheless, once they are translated from Japanese by an unknown translator, they credit the original Japanese authors. As it is of utmost importance for this research to analyze articles exclusively written by people of Japanese heritage, the author of this paper decided to concentrate on the articles, which original author is Japanese for certain. Further, most materials concerning the trade dispute between Japan and South Korea are not initially Japanese. This could indicate that the newspaper decided to be better written anonymously instead when presented to English speakers, who are not involved in this dispute by nationality. Over the researched time frame, the trade dispute was only mentioned directly five times, in which it was topic for the whole article. The other eight articles chosen for this research show issues concerning Japan's colonial past but not mentioning the ongoing spat. Interestingly, none of these articles mention the ongoing dispute between the two countries at all, even though the time frame overlaps. These articles involve the comfort woman issue and Korean hibakusha, survivors of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombings (Koyama 2019a). While these articles are not directly about the political spat, they underline Japan's position towards their colonial past. To make a proper differentiation between those two cases, first, the five materials directly reporting about the trade conflict shall be analyzed in detail. The other eight articles will follow with a depiction of their narrative and explain why this narrative matters in the context of the trade dispute.

First, as for the actors, South Korea is the acting power three times, once the Japanese government acts, and once both are involved equally. The setting is, in any case, bilateral, not even mentioning global consequences. The only time other countries are mentioned is when security matters are discussed, the allied US has a say in the GSOMIA agreement, the threat of Russia is recalled, or more often North Korea is of importance (Horiyama et al. 2019), citing that “North Korea has launched short-range ballistic and other missiles eight times since this May” adding that both

Japanese and South Korean information “[...] is therefore indispensable to confirm the complete course of missiles launched by Pyongyang” (Tanabe et al. 2019). As for the conflicts, the articles address limitations on exports, removing the white-list and unsuccessful talks and critical mind-sets towards their partners. Interestingly, *The Mainichi* included a poll of their own, which was conducted to ask whether Japan should remove South Korea from their white-list, which was supported by 64% of the respondents (Hirabayashi 2019). This is one of the few times opinions of the citizens are depicted in the articles. Only 21% were against the idea of removal. Nevertheless, 57% of respondents “replied that Japan should continue dialogue over export controls, as well as the issue of compensation for South Koreans who were forced to work in Japan during World War II, which Tokyo claims has been settled under a bilateral pact” (Hirabayashi 2019). As for the resolutions depicted in the articles, dialogue seems to be the possible solution to improving bilateral ties. However, both countries refuse to give in to their stance, as “Japan has not shown any willingness to hold dialogue over its strengthening of export controls on South Korea because the move is based on Tokyo's concerns about national security” and “South Korea will 'gladly join hands' with Japan if Tokyo chooses to talk and cooperate with Seoul” (Hirabayashi 2019).

Continuing to the articles not directly related to the trade dispute, the start shall be made with the content concerning the hibakusha. The actor is either the victim or the Japanese government in a request and reaction situation. Hibakusha are the survivors of the atomic bombings, but nationality is not differentiated, as Korea was annexed by Japan at the time of the bombings, even going as far as give Koreans Japanese names (Koyama 2019a). However, Korean survivors have started asking for an apology and rectifications from the Japanese government, which were not granted (Higuchi 2019). Counting the 74 Anniversary of the atomic bombings, Koreans, who mostly were forced laborers, are still not accepted as Koreans, but as Japanese victims (Koyama 2019b). Another narrative can be seen in articles related to the comfort women and an arts festival in Nagoya. At the arts festival, South Korean artists handed in a piece of a young girl representing the comfort woman, resulting in the Mayor of Nagoya complaining about the artwork and asking to remove it (Takeda, N. 2019). As the piece was taken out of the exhibition about free speech, artists worldwide took their artwork out of protest. The Mayor has ironically stated that “it's unrelated to a lack of freedom of expression”, and therefore not fit to be part of the exhibition (Takeda, N. 2019). This clearly shows Japan's stance towards their colonial past, showing that the annexation of the Korean peninsula was lawful from their viewpoint, and issues regarding the colonial past are settled and not further discussed.

The articles from the *Yomiuri Shimbun* and the *Asahi Shimbun*, with five materials from each newspaper, show very similar narratives. Before presenting the results of the data collection, this research includes one article outside the set time frame. The reason for including the *Yomiuri Shimbun* article of 27 May 2019 is the importance to this research concerning strategic narratives, as it includes unambiguous statements concerning the bilateral relations. While usually, the actors are both the South Korean and Japanese governments, the articles tend to concentrate on the actions of the South Korean side. The setting is, in any case, bilateral, with the only mentions of other countries or institutions being North Korea, the EU, and the WTO (Wake 2019; ‘Tai Kan yushutsu genkaku-ka Mun seiken no Nihon’ 2019; ‘Kankoku daitōryō’ 2019). The conflicts are also presented one-sidedly, as they portray reciprocal actions, but in most cases, a South Korean reaction to a Japanese action (Nishiyama 2019; Takeda, H. 2019; ‘Nikkan gaishō kaidan’ 2019). Japanese actions depict mostly the effort to address the fault of the worsening ties as South Korea's responsibility, mentioning that “[...] destruction has expanded in South Korea” (Takeda, H. 2019) and the “South Korean government has not taken any effective steps over the proceedings of former Korean recruitment workers” (‘Kankoku daitōryō’ 2019), even taking it as far as to claim that “the attitude of forcing responsibility onto Japan is not acceptable” (‘Nikkan gaishō kaidan’ 2019). The “recruitment workers,” as the original translation would be, concerns the forced labor victims. A resolution is commonly addressed as continued talks for stability and security, which once again need to be initiated by the ROK (‘Tai Kan yushutsu genkaku-ka Mun seiken wa shinrai’ 2019; ‘Kankoku daitōryō’ 2019; ‘Nikkan kankei’ shibaraku’ 2019; ‘Nikkan jichitai kōryū’ 2019).

Overall, one notices that the articles' focus lies on the South Korean and Japanese governments as main actors of the conflict in a bilateral setting. Economic and security issues are discussed, but the center of the discourse lies in searching for responsibility on the Korean side and explaining the stance and reasoning behind the Japanese actions. Something every newspaper source had in common was the future resolution, which concentrated on bilateral talks to solve the issue. Disparity is only displayed once the initiator of the talks is the subject. While the English language materials are talking about both sides' efforts, the Japanese language articles put the liability onto the ROK. To put the results of this data collection into the proper framework of strategic narrative, it is categorized according to construction, projection and reception (see *Appendix 1*).

2.2. Narratives in South Korean media

The fifty South Korean newspaper sources are divided as follows: 14 articles of the *Joongang Daily*, 13 of *The Korea Times*, and 13 of *Yonhap News* for the English language data collection. The Korean data sources are three materials of the *Joongang Ilbo*, four of *Yonhap News*, and three articles of the *Chosun Ilbo*. The selection is based on the facts that: *Joongang Daily* and its Korean counterpart *Joongang Ilbo* is one of the three biggest news outlets in South Korea, *The Korea Times* is the oldest English-language newspaper. *Yonhap News* is deeply affiliated with the South Korean government through financial aid and *Chosun Ilbo* is the oldest newspaper of the ROK (Frank et al 2009, 207-208).

First, the English version of the *Joongang Daily* will be analyzed. The main actors are the South Korean government, acting seven times, and the Japanese government, acting five times, except South Korean citizens being the actor once. The setting is bilateral 12 times and only two times a global setting was discussed, usually involving security threats of North Korea, the WTO, GSOMIA issues and meetings of global consequence, noting “that Japan has ‘violated’ World Trade Organization (WTO) regulations and is carrying out economic retaliations that go against its own statement touting free and fair trade G-20 summit, which was chaired by Japan” (Kim, S. 2019a). Most of the time, the writers concentrate fully on the bilateral issues that Japan and the ROK face, without any involvement from other sources (Lee, H. 2019b; Ser 2019; Ko, J. 2019). The conflict or actions are depicted as retaliation and reaction towards former Japanese actions, calling their motives and actions “emotionally motivated responses” (Shim, K. 2019). An overbearing conflict for the South Korean writers are the limitations on Japanese exports and later on the removal of the ROK of Japan’s white-list (Kim, S. 2019b; Lee, H. 2019b; Chae & Jin 2019; Seo & Kim 2019). According to the writers at *Joongang Daily*, another conflict that needs attention is the lack of dialogue due to Japan’s inconsistency in agreeing to meetings (Lee & Moon 2019b). Even though “South Korean President Moon Jae-in said he is ‘ready to embrace and cooperate’ with Japan if it returns to the table for dialogue, stressing that historical issues should be ‘dealt separately’ from economic cooperation” (Lee, S. 2019a), it is a fact that Japan had no intention to return to that table soon. Instead, Moon’s speech hinted that for the South Korean government, the case is an apparent retaliation against the 2018 court rulings, and not as claimed by Japan because of security concerns. To further add tensions to the relationship, “the Korean government has raised restrictions on imports of Japanese trash for recycling”, while “clearly targeting Japan”, explaining

their actions as “a response to growing public concerns about radiation and pollution” (Lee, H. 2019b). As South Korea has already been banning seafood from Fukushima, Japan due to radiation, it is unclear if this action is sparked explicitly by the ongoing trade dispute or if it was an already planned measure. The last action of matter is the boycott of Japanese companies and products by South Korean citizens, and likewise, the call of their government for the public to show support against Japan (Ser 2019; Jin 2019; Shim, K. 2019). There is a clear pattern of the South Korean side criticizing Japan’s decisions and retaliating in their actions. Further, South Korea calls out Japan multiple times for “making baseless accusations” of lack of security (Shim, K. 2019). Both sides are accusing each other of having the intent to “rewrite history” (Kim, S. 2019c). The resolutions depicted in the articles differ significantly, of asking for meetings and talks to solve the issue diplomatically or to stay strong against Japan, not giving in to diplomatic demands (Chae 2019).

The Korea Times has a very Korean-centered approach to the issue. Eight times the South Korean government or officials are the actors, three articles designate South Korean nationals as the actors, and only twice was the Japanese government the acting power. Also, what surprises, is that every single article has a bilateral setting without deepening the issues’ discourse onto the global level. This shows that *The Korea Times* concentrates on the close area without informing the readers of global threats or influences. The factor of actions and conflict is also very one-sided. South Korea, both government officials, as well as citizens, are mainly criticizing Japan’s actions, writing that “young people are particularly critical of Japan’s move” (Lee, H. 2019a) and that “Moon also slammed Tokyo for flip-flopping on the reasons for the Japanese decision and denounced Japan for applying export restrictions in retaliation to historical disputes [...]”, which were “due to the Supreme Court decision on forced labor and then they [the Japanese] switched their stance to the lack of proper management of exports of strategic goods” (Do 2019a). Further, the South Korean side criticizes Japan’s attitude during the conflict, calling it “dishonest” (Do 2019c). As the ROK mainly criticizes Japanese activities, one can argue that the main action in *The Korea Times* articles is South Korea addressing the Japanese actions and condemning it. Again, the limitations and white-list removal make up most of the other articles (Kim, B. 2019b; Nam 2019). Another focus is the historical component of past issues and the different views on the 1965 treaty and its interpretation (Do 2019b; Kim, J. 2019). This treaty is a major trigger point in the South Korean relationship with Japan, even influencing today’s bilateral atmosphere. “Many experts have noted that Japan’s dissatisfaction toward South Korea has been building up particularly since the 2018 Supreme Court ruling, which ordered Japanese firms to compensate the Korean plaintiffs who had

been forced to work in their factories during war”, and which is not acknowledged as legal by the Japanese government and have, therefore “refused to abide by the ruling, mentioning the 1965 treaty” (Do 2019b). Most materials base the conflict in this context and deny Japan’s explanation of security threats, calling it an excuse. Resolutions seem to be talks and diplomatic efforts, but as the articles of the *Joongang Daily*, appeals for an apology for the colonial crimes, as well as a hard stance towards Japan are also part of their narrative, demanding “for Japan to be more honest” (Do 2019c). Therefore, the first step should come from the Japanese side, in admitting mistakes and showing remorse (Oh 2019; Park, J. 2019; Lee, M. 2019a; Kim, Y. 2019). Another aspect, which has not been addressed yet, is the chance for an independent South Korea (‘Japan ‘crossed the line’” 2019; Lee, M. 2019b). While the beginning of a declining economy might be harsh, it could also lead to an inner-Korean innovation surge, which would lead to less dependence on Japanese products.

Yonhap News has a similar approach to the trade dispute as *The Korea Times*. It is centered around South Korea as the main actor, with the government being the actor seven times, citizens and civil groups twice, and four times it is the South Korean government in joint with the Japanese government. Compared to the other newspaper sources, *Yonhap News* concentrates on South Korea almost as a sole actor, which is not the case in any other newspaper analyzed until this point. Meanwhile, the setting is predominantly bilateral, with only one global case citing “Washington has expressed concern and disappointment” at the cancellation of GSOMIA, further addressing “North Korea’s nuclear threats and China’s military rise” (Lee, H. 2019c). Interestingly, *Yonhap News* has a unilateral component in its narrative, concentrating solely on the national consequences due to the economic retaliation, stating that “South Korea’s financial stability worsened slightly in August due to a rise in household and corporate debt in the face of an economic slowdown” (Byun 2019a) and that “the steady decline in outbound shipments is casting woes over the export-dependent economy” (Byun 2019b). In addition to that, the “foreign ministry seeks 11.5 pct hike in 2020 budget with focus on diplomacy with Japan” (Kim, S. 2019f) and local labor groups lashing out “at the Japanese government’s protest against the Korean top court’s 2018 order for Japanese firms to compensate Korean victims of wartime forced labor” (Kim, S. 2019i). Not only actions of protests by Korean labor groups, but also worsened financial stability and increased spending on diplomacy are discussed, and funds for businesses were founded (Kim, S. 2019d; 2019e) as “local businesses may also pose a threat to the county’s financial stability, with the number of marginal firms, or those with an interest coverage ratio of less than 1, on the rise” (Byun 2019, 2019b; Kim, S. 2019f). Other actions and conflicts include the cancellation of the GSOMIA

agreement (Lee, H. 2019c), the agenda of South Korea to remove Japan from their very own white-list (Kang 2019), the boycott of Japanese products (Song 2019), criticism of Japan (Kim, S. 2019g, 2019h), and a yet not addressed cultural component, in which “with unusual pleasantries, S. Korea, Japan ministers reaffirm cooperation at least on culture” (Park, B. 2019). As for the GSOMIA, the slightly worsening US-relations are considered the most regrettable part of the decision, which still does not keep the South Korean officials from canceling (Kim, B. 2019b), as “S. Korea-U.S. alliance [is] to remain firm despite GSOMIA withdrawal” (Lee, H. 2019c). For the resolution, once again, talks are seen as the most popular possibility to end the trade conflict, as “South Korea urged Japan [...] to sit down for ‘unconditional and serious’ dialogue [...] stressing the need especially for talks between trade authorities of the two sides” (Kim, S. 2019g) and “Moon made clear that he hopes to resolve the problem through dialogue” on his speech on Liberation Day and “observers agreed that Moon has left the possibility of diplomacy open for a resolution to the stand-offs”, but it depends on “Japan’s response to Moon’s olive branch” as peace offer (Lee, C. 2019). Nevertheless, the writers demand an apology from the Japanese side, citing the chairman of the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU) that “Japan’s Abe government is focusing on whitewashing (past wartime crimes) and economic invasion rather than apologizing for them”, which would be the key to resolve the issue (Song 2019).

The chosen articles from the Korean language sources show once again more direct speech and address the topic in a very emotional matter, similar to the changes between the Japanese and English articles, citing that “the Korean government is strongly protesting this and demanding the withdrawal of regulations” regarding the limitations of exports Japan imposed on the ROK (Lee, D. 2019). Opposite to the materials published on South Korean news sources in the English language, the Korean articles’ actors are mostly Japanese officials or the government, counting five of the ten sources. The actor of another four is South Korean, with the government as actor three times and once a South Korean labor union (Ko, H. 2019). Only once the actor is not on either side, as North Korea is depicted as an actor once in which the “North Korean propaganda media [...] criticized Japan [...] saying that Japan’s economic retaliation against South Korea followed the pattern of the U.S. trade war” (Choi, S. 2019). The materials include different settings, of which none has a global setting. Instead, unilateral, bilateral, and trilateral settings are conveyed. Once again, the news sources concentrate on the close area and their own national interests. Interestingly, once Japan is the actor, Japanese newspapers and their information are quoted, including polls conducted by *The Mainichi* or exclusive information of the *Yomiuri Shimbun* (Lee, S. 2019b; Kim, B. 2019a). This indicates that the same information is used for different narratives.

The actions and conflicts are the same as above. Another view is given by Lee and Moon (2019a), who report on warnings the South Korean government received but ignored. An insider “warned, that “only one of a hundred hidden cards of retaliation prepared by the Japanese government was used now”, implying that there are other plans or cards Japan has up its sleeve (Lee & Moon 2019a). In contrast, the South Korean side is worried about damage to South Korean companies and are contemplating counter measures (Hong 2019). To counter Japan’s restrictions, financial support for “[...] small, deputy and general industries [...] from technology development to demand creation” is provided by the South Korean government in an attempt to ease the citizens’ economic predicaments (Shim, S. 2019). To add further conflicts, in this case, North Korean involvement needs to be mentioned. While North Korea is considered a security threat in multiple other articles, in this case, North Korea is commenting on the behavior of the Japanese government, condemning their reactions, explaining that “Japan, rather than apologizing and reflecting on past crimes, is a victim of its own crimes” (Choi, S. 2019). Once again, the focus is on any article on the historical issues and 2018 court rulings. The resolutions are a mirror of their Japanese equivalent. The only solution for this to end is an apology, as well as talks and diplomacy, but contrary to before, this time Japan is at fault “emphasizing full responsibility of Japan” (Lim 2019). Therefore, the argument is that while the South Korean side is open for talks, Japan needs to take responsibility for the complete trade conflict and apologize for its retaliating behavior due to issues of the past. As of now, the South Korean government puts its hope onto the WTO to solve the case in their favor, as “there are also concerns that Japan’s trade retaliation against the court ruling is contrary to the spirit of free trade and is violating the rules of the WTO” (Jeon 2019).

Overall, it is essential to mention the straightforward journalism in Korean newspaper articles. While many issues during data collection needed to be addressed on the Japanese side, for example, the one-sided writing of just one author on the topic, as well as the lack of accountability concerning the anonymity of their writers, the South Korean side has a transparent system of publishing their articles’ authors. As for the narratives, the articles’ actors are usually from the South Korean side, with active actors in citizens and government. Meanwhile, their setting is overall very bilateral, seeing the conflict as an issue between Japan and themselves instead of a global problem. In addition, the ROK bases any conflict or action back on historical issues, implying that Japan is only acting in retaliation to the 2018 court rulings. As for the resolution, one notices a division in opinions. While the option of talks and diplomacy is favored, some voices call for a strong front of South Korea to counter Japan. To put the results of this data collection into the proper framework of strategic narrative, it is categorized according to construction, projection, and reception (see

Appendix 2).

To shortly summarize and compare the findings, one can say that both South Korea and Japan use similar narratives against each other. While South Korea insists on the fault of Japan, Japan does so vice versa. Japan is mostly worried about the incoming security concerns regarding a GSOMIA cancellation and the incorrect and suspicious use and export of chemicals which are usable in weaponry. Further, Japan takes a very strict stance in denying any involvement of past matters in this trade dispute. The white-list removal was a decision made solely out of security concerns and not out of retaliation due to the court rulings regarding the forced labor issue. South Korea takes a completely different stance and sees in the historical issues as the root of this trade dispute. As protest, many South Koreans boycott Japanese products, which is fueled by the narrative to never lose to Japan again like in the past. Due to Japan's retaliation based on the court rulings trust is lost and this allows thought of cancelling the GSOMIA, in which trust is a prerequisite. However, there is one point Japan and South Korea agree on. This is the fact that there is a necessity to solve the conflict through talks. Nevertheless, they disagree on who needs to make the first step, as no party sees itself at fault.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following chapters refer in their majority to the results of strategic narratives as depicted in *Appendix 1* and *Appendix 2*. The initial claim was that irrationality of collective memories plays a major role in international relations through policy making and bilateral agreements, posing the question of what irrationality of collective memory is, and how it is detected. This is followed by the question of determining the significant role of irrationality and collective memory, based on the case study of Japan and South Korea. The earlier collected data will be put into perspective of the theories of collective memory and the rational choice theory, with the use of the strategic narratives to measure the existence of influences in policy making based on the aforementioned theories. For detection of influences of irrationality and collective memory, the three levels of strategic narratives, which are system, identity, and policy narratives, are closer looked upon, as each level shows instances of both variables up for detection.

3.1. Irrationality of Collective Memories in System Narratives

To discuss the findings in this and the following subchapters, the five factors of irrationality, as well as the five factors of collective memory should be brought upon attention once again. This discussion will be split into a summary of which narratives are considered system narratives of both Japan's and South Korea's analyzed media. Afterwards, the data will be discussed according to each five factors.

As this is a mostly bilateral conflict, the system narratives are not as pronounced as the other two levels. However, there are still a few instances to discuss. On the Japanese side, the narratives concerning the removal of South Korea from its white-list due to loss of trust, are clearly on the level of system narratives, as the white-list shapes trade in a legal manner based on import and export systems of each party. However, this is the only action reported in regard to system narratives on Japanese side. Japan's security concerns due to South Korea's decision to involve the WTO, as well as plans to cancel the GSOMIA agreement are still detected on this level. These narratives focus on Japan's stance of condemning the decision of South Korea to bring this bilateral dispute up onto an international stage.

The data of the South Korean media brings similar results in topic; however, their presentation completely differs from Japan. The white-list removal is mostly touched upon as an unfair action by the Japanese government towards South Korea. It is bringing an internal issue of court rulings by South Korean courts into the spectrum of bilateral agreements and infringement of international agreements concerning free trade. Hence, reactions were also on the international spectrum and with it, its narratives and argumentation about how this issue is clearly relevant and system related. South Korea complaining and bringing the issue up to the WTO, which is disregarded by Japan, is the first indicator of the ROK working on the system narratives to pose accountability of its actions. Further, the decision to pull back from the GSOMIA had a major impact of the system the two countries established on an international level. Once again, narratives are used to prove the necessity of those steps to the citizens, using the reasoning of lack of trust, just as Japan has done in its narrative of the white-list issue.

Both countries have similar system narratives in place, however it is more a question of fault and accountability of decisions than sole explanations of what is happening. Their system narratives focus less on what kind of system they act in, but instead focus on the coherent changes in the system and their decisions and reasons to push for that change. In the next step, the five factors of irrationality are used to discuss the results and see if irrationality played a part in their respective system narratives (see *Figure 1*).

Table 1. Irrationality in System Narratives of South Korean and Japanese Media sources

Factors	South Korea	Japan
Maximizing Power	Detected both	Irrational
Maximizing Security	Irrational	Rational
Maximizing Trade Profits	Rational	Irrational
Keeping a stable position in the area and international canon	Irrational	Rational
Emerging of groups with nationalistic mind-sets	Unclear	Unclear

Source: author's findings of sub-chapter 3.1

Table 1 describes the detection and findings of irrationality in system narratives. As of maximizing power, Japan's narrative and decision to remove South Korea from its white-list does not necessarily prove a rational mind-set. Japan however did so as retaliation to South Korean court

rulings concerning the forced labor issue. While Japan did not maximize its power with this decision, it is clear that a stance was taken to show the ROK that it would not be easily undermined in political power. This factor is therefore quite ambiguous. Japan does not maximize its power but did a “power move”. In light of this research however, Japan does not follow the rational factor and therefore acted irrational. Moving to the second factor of maximizing security, Japan did act in a rational manner. The reasoning in their narrative of lost trust in South Korea with chemicals usable in weaponry can be considered as reasoning for a maximum in security. The narrative depicts this reasoning in Japanese media and argues for accountability in security, leading to a rational decision. To further this narrative, they point out that through the decision of the ROK to step back from the GSOMIA, a major security issue arises, which needs immediate attention, once again proving a need for maximum security in their narratives. The factor of maximizing trade profits is once again on the irrational side of the spectrum. Japan had to be aware, that removing South Korea from its white-list would affect their trade profits in a negative way. As this decision is an overall economic one, it is easy to rule out rationality based on this one factor. In regard to keeping a stable position in the international canon, we can see that Japan is trying to keep the issues on a bilateral level, not including international institutions like the WTO. While it does seem as Japan was risking its stance in the international canon, one has to remember that Japanese–South Korean relations were always strained and still both parties managed to come together on an international level, for example agreeing to the GSOMIA pact. This leads to the impression that while Japan was indeed risking a worsening relationship with South Korea, it did not anticipate any issues on an international level. This can be observed in their narrative concerning that the WTO and GSOMIA do not have any relation to the bilateral issue at hand and should therefore be kept out of it, making their decision a rational one. The last factor does concern the emerge of groups with nationalistic mind-sets, which can however not be detected in the system narratives and are therefore unclear.

The South Korean side did not maximize power with its decision to step back from the GSOMIA, however it could be discussed as a power move to retaliate and show Japan the limits of its actions. It is a similar case to the Japanese narratives above, meaning there are quite a lot of ambiguous instances. It seems as South Korea did attempt to regain power in involving the WTO, however the decision concerning the GSOMIA is depicting the opposite. South Korea showed a rational mind-set concerning the involvement of the WTO but did not do so in their decision of cancelling their intelligence sharing agreement. Hence, this factor stays undefined, as both irrationality and rationality could be detected. As for their stance on maximizing security however, South Korea

clearly acts irrational in cancelling military agreements. Their trade profits are attempted to be maximized, in complaining to the WTO, making this once again a rational decision. This, however, is only true for the system narratives, as discussed later. Based on the GSOMIA cancellation and its decision to bring the bilateral issue onto the international stage, it is clear without further discussion that South Korea is acting irrational concerning this factor of a stable international position. Also, once again, the emerge of nationalistic groups cannot be detected in system narratives, as it is a national factor.

Now the factors of collective memory shall be discussed, which can be considered a very short part. System narratives focus more on the international setting, whereas collective memory is more focused on the later discussed identity narratives. Instead of once again naming and discussing the five factors of collective memory, the focus will be on if collective memory factors are detectable. Overall, none of the factors are apparent in system narratives. However, we can see a slight appearance of the factor “strong will to remember”, which is not enough to be considered a detected factor, but more of an indication, which needs to be mentioned in the discourse. South Korean narratives strongly point out that Japan is acting in retaliation to the forced labor court rulings. The core reason is therefore based on collective memory, yet it does not have an influence on the international system depicted in the narratives.

3.2. Irrationality of Collective Memories in Identity Narratives

Once again, it shall be discussed which narratives apply as identity narratives. Japan’s narratives focus on the stance that identity narratives from the South Korean side do not belong to this conflict. Main narratives concerning the identity are mainly the lost trust in South Korea, due to mishandling chemicals and further, but only implied, the court rulings concerning forced labor during WWII. Further, their narratives underlining any historical issues which are brought up by South Korea do not belong in this dialogue and are therefore invalid. This is also enhanced by their narrative of Japan not being at fault. This question of fault is dealing with the trade war, as well as the forced labor, as Japan sees the case closed with the 1965 treaty. Therefore, Japan’s identity narratives are concluded in a stance of innocence, which needs to be followed with talks and apologies by the guilty party South Korea. Contrary to Japan, the ROK has similar identity narratives, concerning a lost trust in Japan due to their actions and retaliations. Their goal is to have Japan apologize and initiate talks instead, as they are the guilty party in South Korean narratives. Their argument is that Japan is trying to rewrite history and thus damages and

undermines their South Korean identity. This is further enhanced by their strong narrative of never losing to Japan again. Narratives supporting the boycott of Japanese products are also identity narratives, as they portray the value of identity and retribution based on their past.

Table 2. Irrationality in Identity Narratives of South Korean and Japanese Media sources

Factors	South Korea	Japan
Maximizing Power	Rational	Rational
Maximizing Security	Irrational	Rational
Maximizing Trade Profits	Irrational	Irrational
Keeping a stable position in the area and international canon	Irrational	Irrational
Emerging of groups with nationalistic mind-sets	Rational	Unclear

Source: author`s findings of sub-chapter 3.2

Irrationality in identity narratives is not as clear as in strategy narratives. However, there are still factors detected (see *Table 2*). As for maximizing power, it is noticeable that Japan is trying to turn historical problems into non-issues, thus trying to maintain their power quoting the 1965 treaty as a turning point, after which relations were normalized and historical issues were deemed solved. As for the factor of maximizing security, one can assume Japan as acting rational. In their own narratives, trust with chemicals for arms is important to them as a country. According to this narrative, Japan is taking security as serious and intends to maximize it by restricting these aforementioned chemicals, so there will be no abuse of them. However, it did so at the expense of trade profits, keeping the image of security as a higher priority than their own trade. This also left a dent in the stability of the international canon and area. With South Korea as the most significant producer of electronics, the economy worldwide would be affected. However, this is not as clear in identity the identity narratives, more so in the system narratives. The reasoning of historical issues or lost trust however, do take their influence from the national level and can therefore be considered as irrationality in identity narratives. As for the emerging of nationalist groups, none of the narratives were reporting on such. While the support of Japanese citizens towards sanctions against South Korea is mentioned, no clear report was made on nationalist groups in their identity narratives.

South Korea`s identity narratives amount to more substance than the Japanese counterpart. The

maximizing of power is clear in Korean narratives, as they try to show a hard stance against Japan, not giving them more leverage in their power games. However, a more national component can be detected in the South Korean data. Namely, the voter support for President Moon Jae-in for taking this hard stance has increased, hence leading the President and his party to act according to the voters' wishes and maintaining their position of power in the spectrum of domestic policies. As for the security maximization, South Korea acts irrational according to the data. The narrative of never losing against Japan again underlines the implication of going up against Japan regardless of consequences, which is also proved in their narrative of the GSOMIA cancellation. The rational choice of maximizing trade profits is contrasted by the support of the boycott of Japanese products, leading to losses in trade and especially small-scale stores selling such, leading to the factor indicating irrationality. The stable position in the area and international canon is ambiguous considering the data. While South Korea intends to keep the position stable internationally, involving other institutions in their cause, as it was discussed in the system narratives, it does not necessarily intend to keep a stable position in the area with specific narratives. Instead, it does the opposite, in claiming Japan needs to take the initiative to mend their relations, as the ROK is innocent. This directly contrasts with the Japanese identity narrative claiming the contrary. Also, the fact that South Korea claims that Japan intends to rewrite history, it does not intend to forego discussions about history, and therefore keeps the area unstable. This leads to the conclusion that this was an irrational choice. However, we can see a rise in groups with nationalistic mind-sets, especially the "No Japan" movement inducing the boycott of Japanese products. These groups are backed by the government in the narratives, as these are their voters.

Table 3. Collective Memory in Identity Narratives of Japanese and South Korean media sources

Factors	South Korea	Japan
Past and History are different	Detected	Detected
Media highly influences the shape of collective memory	Detected	Detected
Strong will to remember	Detected	Not detected
Trickle-down principle	Detected	Detected
Identity tied to collective memory	Detected	Detected

Source: author`s findings of chapter 3.2

Identity narratives mostly deal with collective memory in this case study and the results are presented in *Table 3* and discussed hereafter. The past and history are not the same for Japan.

Historically, they are at fault for war crimes during WWII. They argue however that the 1965 treaty solved the issue. Also, historical issues do not belong into today's political climate. They try hard to forget, going as far as not recognizing the forced labor rulings as legit. There is a certain discrepancy in their understanding of past and historical facts. While this is said, the third factor of a strong will to remember cannot be detected in this specific case, as Japan intends to do the opposite and forget. The second factor of media as great influence to the shape of collective memory is detected in identity narratives. The media in Japan mostly reports on South Korea's retaliating actions, while including a narrative of Japan as an innocent party, which is underlined by the narrative of South Korea having to apologize and initiate talks for amending relations. The same can be considered for the trickle-down principle. 64% of Japanese citizens support South Korea's removal from the white-list (Hirabayashi 2019). This poll was conducted after the decision was made. Narratives concerning the necessity of this step, trickled down from governmental figures to Japanese citizens and gained support. The data, however, did not show whether these 64% agreed to the removal in accordance with retaliation to the court rulings or the Japanese narrative of lost trust and security issues. With that in mind, we can still assume a trickle-down effect in the narrative and consider this factor as detected. The most important factor in identity narratives is the last one, linking collective memory and identity to each other. The lost trust due to South Korea's court decisions and the mishandling of chemicals according to their own narrative shows that Japan does not see historical issues influencing the present, or rather it does not want to see it. Japan has a strong will to forget, and their present identity is strongly linked to past and history as not relevant. While it does not align with the argument of the past as a strong influence of the present, it does show that a strict forgetting and deflecting of these historical issues is just as much of collective memory and therefore this last factor can be considered as detected.

The South Korean side has all five factors of collective memory detected in their identity narratives. Past and history are closely aligned, however there are still discrepancies. Especially the 1965 treaty is an issue in their narratives. Legally, it might be fought on, however, there were agreements made. The South Korean narratives portray a very clear take on this and following treaties as not valid, meaning there is a difference between history and past. The main identity narrative to look at for the second, third, fourth and fifth factor is the one concerning never losing to Japan again. Media is highly influencing the collective memory, marking Japan and its action as something similar which happened in their past. To not be overpowered by Japan is implied as a goal, and the government lets this aim trickle down through the strategic use of narratives in their media, leading to the boycotts and "No Japan" movement. Their will to remember is used in nearly

every single narrative, starting from the white-list removal as retaliation from Japan to court rulings concerning historical issues, and keeping this narrative and reason for the feud instead of Japan's narrative of lost trust and security concerns. Lastly the "we" used in the narratives gives the collective memory a component of identity. It is meant as "we", the Koreans, regardless of politician or citizen. The Koreans have suffered through Japanese war crimes, and Japan undermines their identity by intending to rewrite history.

3.3. Irrationality of Collective Memories in Policy Narratives

As the main question of this thesis is the impact of irrationality and collective memories on policy making, this part of the discussion will be more extensive than the others. However, the system and identity narratives are still of major importance, as these narratives are closely linked in this specific case study. It was therefore necessary to discuss the other two levels first, before discussing the policy narratives in depth. For discussing the data in context of the policy narratives, it is important to remember their definition of being narratives that "set out why policy is needed and (normatively) desirable, and how it will be successfully implemented or accomplished" (Roselle *et al.* 2014, 76). Therefore, it is important to first look at which policies were implemented during the time frame the data was collected. Afterwards the policy narratives describing the reason or need for the specific policies are brought up. It continues like in the subchapters above with a detection of irrationality or rationality and collective memory. As this part discusses the main research question, the whole analysis is set into context and the question of a direct relation of irrationality and collective memory shall be put into frame with the data of the case study.

Starting with the policies put into place by Japan in chronological order, the white-list removal by the METI is the first one to mention. This happens due to the South Korean court rulings concerning forced labor or according to their own narratives out of security concerns and lost trust. Their policy of no talks except initiated by South Korea follows soon. Lastly, their strong approach of leaving out historical matters is the last of their major principles on the matter. Japan does not make many policies in the time frame which was analyzed for data. It is concluded by the white-list removal, a clean cut from historical issues and a hard stance with a plan of making South Korea curb in to ask for talks and apologize.

For the South Korean policies, once again the chronological order shall be followed. The first policy was the decision to accept the rulings by their own courts and looking to implement the laws. The second would be the removal of Japan from their own white-list as reaction to the other

party's own measures. The reaction includes the claim of Japan using security concerns as an excuse for retaliation and a complaint to the WTO for unfair treatment which was politically motivated. Shortly after, the intention of cancelling GSOMIA follows. The "No Japan" movement meanwhile gained momentum with their boycott and received support from the government. Further, the government takes the stance of Japan acting as retaliation to historical issues and intends to have talks over this, which Japan disagrees on. The last policy South Korea keeps following is similar to Japan's in retrospective. Japan should apologize for its actions, thus the ROK has no intention of apologizing.

While the policies are not high in number during this initial time frame, policy narratives however are. Interesting to see is, that in this case study the policy narratives overlap with identity narratives. On the Japanese side, we see the white-list removal explained with lost trust and security issues, a narrative which is strongly ample in identity narratives. South Korea argues the reason are historical issues, which is also found in their identity narrative. They respectively removed Japan from their white-list, as a reaction to the unfair treatment. According to South Korean narratives, Japan is at fault for their unreasonable retaliation, and therefore a removal from their very own list and complaints to the WTO are legitimized. The hard stance of Japan concerning no initiation of talks, as well as waiting for an apology from the ROK strongly indicates their power-play and narratives of innocence. Hence, as Japan is not guilty it does not need to act, but rather wait for the other side. Another reason to continue a hard stance is to ignore any relation to historical issues. Interestingly, Japanese narratives are not always of one opinion in this case, most of them staying with the official security reason, while other narratives depict it as a reaction to the past not being put to rest by South Korea.

South Korean narratives, however, start out with the reason for accepting the court rulings, as they are independent and judiciary decisions are not to be dismissed and politics are to be held separate. Therefore, the government does not have any other choice than to accept the rulings despite the fact that it would worsen relations with Japan. It is therefore not a political matter, but Japan made it one in retaliating, which led to the need for their own reaction in policies, removing Japan from the South Korean white-list. Also, because the motivation for Japan was due to historical reasons, it breaches the laws of free trade, allowing for a proper complaint at the WTO in Geneva. It is reasoned, that the ROK did not have much of another chance than to complain, as the unfair treatment started from the Japanese side. As for the planned GSOMIA cancellation, South Korean narratives depict a matter of mistrust, as intelligence sharing is rooted in trust which Japan has lost.

However, South Korean narratives make no secret of the involvement of the past in their policies and therefore also in their policy narratives. This is mostly visible in the clear support of the boycott of Japanese products and Japan as a tourist destination by the government. They will not lose to Japan again, pressuring them with economic attacks made by the plain big number of supporters of the boycott and “No Japan” movement. By the connotation of “never losing again” South Korea narratives bring their past and historical issues closely into the narratives explaining one further policy: Japan needs to apologize, as the past is brought into this trade spat by Japan’s retaliation, not by South Korean court rulings.

As identity narratives are closely linked with collective memory, since identity shapes collective memory according to the fifth factor, a correlation between collective memory and policy making can be claimed. As there are no new policy narratives aside from the already discussed identity narratives, a further in-depth analysis of irrationality and collective memory is not necessary, since the results have already been presented in the chapter above (see *Table 2* and *Table 3*). Instead, this last focus will be on the connection of irrationality and collective memory in policy making. The policies concerned were discussed above, however it is once again brought to attention, which of these narratives explain the policy making as irrational and linked to collective memories (see *Table 4* and *Table 5*). Looking at the results, one can see no direct correlation between irrationality and collective memory. However, that does not mean there is no interconnection. As we can see from the collected data, there is a strong indication of collective memory playing a major part in the policy-making process as seen in the policy and identity narratives. It can be assumed that once collective memory is majorly involved, decisions in policy making will tend to be irrational. This is visible due to the fact of South Korea having an overwhelming influence of the past in both their identity and policy narratives. Japan however acts in a different way of collective memory, as they try to forget and proactively make their past and history different. Since the goal is to not be involved in history issues in the present, Japanese narratives will find a way to make the policies seem rationally motivated. However, narratives do not necessarily depict the actual fact. Japan wants their decisions to be seen as rational and not motivated by collective memory, which is not fully working since even their own narratives do involve the court rulings as incentive for the white-list removal. This shows that collective memory is still playing a major part in their policy-making process. Therefore, we can assume that in Japan’s case both times collective memory was clearly involved, the policy was considered irrational. The only time Japan’s policy was considered rational, the factor of a strong will to remember was not given, making the part of collective memory ambiguous (see *Table 4*).

Table 4. Rationality and Collective Memory in Japanese Policies

Japanese policies	Rationality	Collective Memory
White-list removal of ROK	Irrational	Detected
Hard stance of no apologies	Irrational	Detected
No historical issues discussed	Rational	Ambiguous (goes against factor of strong will to remember, yet agrees with the other four factors)

Source: author's findings of sub-chapter 3.3

The South Korean case gives more data on policies. All of their policy narratives have instances of collective memory; however, their rationality does change depending on the policy (see *Table 5*). Overall, one notices that their decisions are mostly irrational. The only pure rational choices they made, was the WTO complaint. South Korea was not able to deal with the sudden losses and have strong narratives of this being an unfair retaliation by Japan. The acceptance of the court rulings has both irrational and rational elements. Reason for that is most likely the fact that they did not have any other choice than accepting the Korean court decisions, as it is not a political decision. Narratives underline this assumption. The South Korean government made sure to constantly remind Japan that these rulings do not belong in the bilateral talks. Nevertheless, it is still highly infused by collective memory since it is a matter of past and identity and is strengthened by the strong will to remember. Further, the clear support the South Korean government gives the courts, shows that the ruling party intends to stay in power on a national level, which is proven with their rise in voter support, however it did so at the price of stability in the area. One can see both rational and irrational factors as fulfilled in this case. Another unclear case is the support of the boycott. The same reasoning as for the support for the court rulings applies in this case. As for the other policies, one can once again see that irrationality and collective memory are interlinked.

Table 5. Rationality and Collective Memory in South Korean Policies

South Korean policies	Rationality	Collective Memory
Acceptance of court rulings	Both	Detected
White-list removal of Japan	Irrational	Detected
WTO complaint	Rational	Detected
Cancelling GSOMIA	Irrational	Detected
Support of boycott	Both	Detected
Historical issues prevail	Irrational	Detected
No apologies from ROK-side	Irrational	Detected

Source: author`s findings of chapter 3.3

Both cases of Japan and South Korea do show a relation between irrational decisions and collective memory. This case study, however, cannot show a causation, but rather proves an interconnection between collective memory and irrational choices in policy making.

CONCLUSION

This thesis was based on the educated guess of irrationality of collective memory affecting policy making and bilateral ties. The 2019 South Korea-Japan trade spat was a perfect case study to research this guess. By developing a model consisting of rational choice theory, collective memory and strategic narrative theory, of which the former two were introduced and factorized and the latter one elaborated as method of detection, this thesis introduces a new theoretical framework in this field. The medial sources were analyzed through the method of narrative inquiry and Japanese, as well as South Korean narratives were revealed. The discussion gives a further insight to this topic, by making the connection between the introduced model and the collected data on narratives.

The initial claim of the thesis was irrationality of collective memory as major role in the field of international relations through policy making and bilateral agreements. The findings of this paper underline a strong influence of irrationality and collective memory through the instrumentalisation of strategic narratives in newspaper articles, supported through the case study of the 2019 South Korea-Japan trade dispute. While the approach of collective memory and rational choice theory are nothing new in this field, it is rarely combined. The strategic narrative-driven indicators were correctly singled out to provide for detectability within the paper's methodological framework, however the factual findings ended up being limited by sample size and because of language barrier. Nevertheless, the initial claim has been proven, as there are influences of irrationality and collective memory in the decision-making process regarding policies and bilateral agreements. Further, there is an indication of a strong collective memory interlinking with irrational behavior, when considering the results for the ROK, all while Japan hides its past and thus needs to show more rationality to legitimize its actions.

While this paper contributes to the theory of collective memory in the ROK-Japan context, it is constricted by strong limitations, one being the already mentioned sample size, as well as the nature of this research. It barely scratches on top of all theoretical frameworks, using the basic assumptions of the theories to factorize them. At the same time, there is a novelty in research, since this paper has a unique combination of proven empirical data, multi-dimensional theorizing, educated guesses, evidence-based conclusions and theoretical modeling. Nevertheless, to properly analyze and categorize the results of data collection, a more in-depth approach to the theories is a

necessity. While this paper gives an overall idea towards an interesting new approach, further research is needed to fully grasp the indications of this topic. Problems of past and history are no particular characteristics of just Japan or South Korea. Memory politics and the past as an influence on policy making is in no way exclusive and can be seen in multiple other countries. The aftermaths of, for example, colonialism or the fall of the USSR are still a relevant and a recent issue in the field of international relations. This research contributes to further the research in memory studies in the field, however, to make a more generalized assumption in this field, further research is still necessary.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Strategic Narrative in Japanese Media

Narratives (Japan)	Construction	Projection	Reception
Limitations on exports and removal from white-list	Aim is to agitate South Korea and to divert attention from 2018 court rulings to lost trust to legitimize decision	Through talks and speeches of political elites portrayed in online newspaper articles	Limitation and white-list removal supported by Japanese citizens, but ROK citizens boycott and in disbelief of the actual reason
Security concerns due to South Korea canceling GSOMIA	Aim is to expose South Korea as retaliating partner, calling their action unfair	Security threats are explained, and U.S. side is involved in online newspaper articles	Security concerns a great worry, as South Korea gets closer to China and North Korea
South Korea brings up historical issues in unrelated matters	Aim to expose South Korea as unreasonable partner not acting according to treaty and bringing it up in unrelated context	Always relates to 1965 treaty and court decisions of 2018, depicting it as a already concluded topic and therefore not eligible for present politics	The reception is ambiguous, with the ROK starkly disagreeing with this narrative, and even Japanese citizens disagreeing to this narrative

Narratives (Japan)	Construction	Projection	Reception
Japanese government lost trust in ROK due to security concerns regarding semiconductor chemicals	South Korea did not keep proper watch over the semiconductor chemicals, which can be used for making weaponry	Quotations of government officials in online newspapers	Perceived as lie to cover up actual reason, which is retaliation against 2018 court rulings
North Korea, China and Russia now bigger threat than ever	Because South Korea plans to cancel GSOMIA as retaliation, Japan is pointing out the fault of the ROK in not differentiating between fields of economy and security	Reporting possibilities of threats in the region in online newspapers	Perceived as true threats to the area, with South Korea as initiator of additional instability in the region
Talks as necessity to solve the conflict, but ROK needs to initiate	Talks are essential, but as Japan is at no fault, the ROK should take the initiative	Speeches and demands by government officials are cited in articles	South Korea has fault for escalating the dispute

Appendix 2. Strategic Narrative in South Korean Media

Narratives (ROK)	Construction	Projection	Reception
Complaining about Japan's limitations on trade at WTO	Aim to revoke Japan's decision to limit the export of necessary	Government officials' speeches and citations in online newspaper sources	Japan has unfairly and against WTO trade rules imposed restrictions on exports, which Japan denies
"We will never lose to Japan again" (Lim 2019)	Aim to keep and gain voters and asking for support in holding strong stance against Japan	Speech of Moon Jae-in cited in online newspapers	Japan has waged an unfair trade war on the ROK and South Korea sees itself as victim
Talks as necessity to solve the conflict, but Japan needs to initiate	Talks are essential, but as the ROK is at no fault, Japan should take the initiative	Speeches and demands by government officials are cited in articles	Japan is at fault for starting the dispute, as South Korea reacts
Japan intends to rewrite history and ignores historical issues, as it sees it as a concluded topic	Aim is that Japan admits and cares for historical issues, instead of claiming it a closed case	Described actions and quotes of both sides indicate their positions on this topic	Japan denies its colonial past and retaliates against any

Narratives (ROK)	Construction	Projection	Reception
Historical issues need to be separated from trade dispute and security and solved separately	Different approaches for different topics necessary, but Japan does not differentiate, so South Korea had to counter with similar measures	Explanation of historical disputes and how it relates to the present	Japan does not conform to proper international law and retaliates out of spite, therefore the ROK needs to act too
Boycott of Japanese products as strong front and protest	Aim is to damage Japan's exports and Japanese companies' revenue as tit-to-tat measure	Citizens boycott Japanese products to support their country in sanctioning Japan	Boycott is positively influencing the situation and backing Japan into a corner

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