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Olive Oil and Basketball: Collective Memory and America's Troubled Alliances with the Philippines and Thailand

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United States' alliances in Southeast Asia are troubled. This paper argues that dominant frameworks for understanding alliance dynamics, which assume that rational calculation and bargaining are the primary sources of alliance dynamics, are inadequate for explaining the fragility of US alliances with Thailand and the Philippines. It proposes that a constructivist perspective, emphasising identity, emotion, and collective memory, offers a useful supplementary lens for explaining why some alliances experience turbulence. The paper sets out the theoretical case for examining collective memory in an alliance context, together with a methodology for practical application. The paper finds that in the US-Thai alliance, the domestic politics of collective memory has constrained commemoration of highpoints in the longstanding US-Thai military partnership, leaving the alliance with weaker public support and more vulnerable to strains than would otherwise have been the case. In the Philippines, state sanctioned narratives recognising shared sacrifice during the Second World War are counterbalanced by traumatic memories of the United States-Philippines colonial war, producing a deep ambivalence. These results point to the need for more systematic analysis of collective memory as an important variable in international politics.

That all is not well with America's treaty alliances in Southeast Asia in the twenty-first century has been clear for some time. When Filipino President Rodrigo Duterte declared he had broken with America in 2016 it made for powerful theatre (McCoy 2016). Thailand's disgruntlement has been less flamboyant but just as intense– our 2015-2017 surveys found that Thai military officers saw the United States as more likely to be a military threat than China (Raymond and Blaxland, 2021). Conventional

alliance theory struggles to explain these faltering alliances because they assume a unitary state employing a strategic calculus that is rational and material. Accordingly, they predict that Thailand and the Philippines should draw closer to the United States as China, a revisionist and increasingly assertive power, gains in military power. This article argues that a constructivist perspective emphasising, identity, collective memory, and emotion is better placed to explain the cracks in these alliances than methods which assume rational bargaining processes as the key modality.

That alliances are constrained by fundamental dynamics found in any bilateral international relationship, such as whether the actors perceive their identity and values to be compatible with those of their alliance partner, is not entirely novel. Where two states of fundamentally different governing ideologies put aside their differences temporarily because of a shared threat perception, the union is unlikely to be long-lasting. The brief alliance between the United States and Saddam Hussein's Iraq, for example, was an inherently weak 'alliance of convenience' (Resnick 2010). Sensitivity over hierarchy, status and identity can also erode trust, as the souring of China's Cold War alliance with the Soviet Union shows (Garthoff 1970). Surrounding the security bargain of any alliance is a deeper relationship between two states, that may engender genuine warmth and trust, or alternatively, perfunctory display. Alliances in the latter category have in the past, and will again in the future, dwindle away.

How do we calibrate these alliance identity dynamics? This article will argue the importance of collective memory as a variable capable of influencing the emotional content of the broader bilateral relationships within which any alliance exists. Using the US-Thai and US-Philippines alliances as cases, I will show that collective memory linked to domestic politics have been of significance in causing the recent fragility that has manifested in both relationships. The article proceeds in four parts. First, I present a brief overview of the origins and development of the US-Thai and US-Philippines alliances. Second, I consider conventional alliance theory, and argue that is less well suited to predicting alliance behaviour in the post-Cold War era than in the Cold War era in which it emerged. Third, I turn to explaining the role of identity, emotion, and memory in international relations, and set out a methodology for assessing collective memory. In the final section, I use this methodology to explain how collective memory has played a part in weakening the United States' two Southeast Asian alliances.

US alliances in Southeast Asia

Although Thailand and the United States fought together in the Korean War 1950-1953, it was the Manila Pact establishing the Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO) that marked the beginning of the formal US-Thai alliance. Seeking to deter further communist aggression following the communist Vietminh driving French forces from northern Vietnam, in particular through their 1954 victory at Dien Bien Phu, the United States signed the pact with the United Kingdom, France, Australia, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Philippines and Thailand in Manila on 8 September 1954. Thailand was one of the most eager proponents and the first to ratify the treaty, on 2 December 1954. Under Prime Minister Phibun Songkram, the Thai government had sought a bilateral security guarantee from the United States against the possibility of Chinese or Vietminh advances into Thai territory via Laos, and saw the Pact primarily in those terms. Whilst SEATO was defunct by 1977, the US-Thai alliance was buttressed by the 1962 Thanat-Rusk Communique, which stipulated that the US commitment to Thai security existed regardless of the status of the Manila Pact.

In the case of the Philippines, an imperial relationship predated the establishment of defence ties as sovereign equals. The United States gained the Philippines as a colonial possession after its victory in the 1898 Spanish American war. The US-Philippines alliance developed following the Second World War and after the United States granted the Philippines formal independence in 1946. First, President Manul Roxas signed a Military Basing Agreement (MBA) permitting the basing of US forces on 14 March 1947. The agreement gave the United States access to twenty-three military bases across the country, facilitating the projection of US military power and providing for US defence of the Philippines (Riddle, 1988 p. 11). Second, the United States and the Philippines established their formal alliance, the US-Philippines Mutual Defense Treaty in 1951. Driving the signing of the treaty were mutual concerns about rising communist aggression, especially after the victory of the Chinese communists in 1949 and the Huk insurgency in the Philippines.

Both allies supported the United States during its war in Vietnam 1955-1975. Clark airbase in the Philippines and Udon Thani and Utapao airbases in Thailand facilitated US air operations against North Vietnam. Both states hosted large numbers of American service personnel and contributed their own ground forces to the Vietnam War.

After the US defeat in Vietnam, however, both alliances experienced turbulence, in which issues of sovereignty and national pride loomed large. In the mid-

1970s, United States and Thai governments conducted acrimonious and unsuccessful negotiations regarding a post-war presence of US forces in Thailand. A decade and a half later, the US-Philippines alliance foundered when in 1991 the Philippines refused to renew the Military Basing Agreement and ordered the closure of Clark and Subic Bay bases.

In the post-Cold War period, both alliances have experienced further significant peaks and troughs. The US rewarded Thailand for its contribution of peacekeepers after the 2003 Iraq invasion, making it a Major Non-NATO ally in 2005. But angry exchanges and the cutting of US military assistance programs followed Thai military coups in 2006 and 2014. The centrepiece of the alliance, multilateral exercise Cobra Gold, dwindled in scale and Thailand rejected US access requests (Raymond, forthcoming; Walton 2015). Similarly, the US and Philippines alliance reached a highpoint in 2014 with the establishing of a significant new agreement, the Enhanced Defence Cooperation Agreement under which the Philippines obtained more assistance with its defence modernisation whilst allowing US forces greater access to bases. Only two years later, however, the newly elected President Duterte announced he was ending the alliance and turning to China. He also threatened to abrogate the Visiting Forces Agreement providing the legal underpinning for US defence cooperation with the Philippines armed forces (Lema et al, 2020).

There are, therefore, some parallels in the histories of the Thai and Philippines alliances with the United States, including their origins in the Cold War and their post-Cold War turbulence. The question for this paper is, however, whether conventional alliance theory provides a sufficient means for explaining the instability both relationships have encountered in their more recent phases, a question to which we now turn.

Alliances and alliance theory

The International Encyclopaedia of Political Science (Badie, Berg-Schlosser and Morlino 2011, pp.61-62) defines an alliance as "a formal agreement among independent states in the international system to cooperate militarily in the event of militarized conflict with outside parties." Alliances are therefore binding commitments to another state's security that encompasses joint military operations. They are a very significant feature of international relations, and are the subject of considerable scholarship in the field of strategic studies.

Within alliance research, bargaining and rational utility maximisation has remained the dominant theoretical framework. This framework assumes the primary motive for states entering alliances is capability aggregation: a bigger force bringing higher chances of victory. Analysing alliances in this way means measuring costs, risks, benefits and assurances. For example, Wilkins (2019), in assessing the ANZUS alliance between Australia and the United States, identified what each partner might offer and obtain in terms of tangible and intangible assets such as loyalty, military contributions, purchase of arms, capacity to further US goals with third countries, and congruent threat perceptions.

Nonetheless, for three reasons this article contends that relying on bargaining frameworks for alliance analysis is insufficient. First, the decline in frequency of military conflict is reducing the applicability of models developed during the Cold War. When Diesing and Snyder first compiled their classic *Conflict Among Nations* in 1977, the Cold War was in full swing. They based their analysis of international behaviour on the concept of crisis bargaining, in which coercion has a high degree of prominence. They tested three models of crisis decision-making- utility maximisation, bounded rationality and bureaucratic politics and studied 13 cases, from the Fashoda crisis of 1898 to the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 (Snyder and Diesing 1977, pp. xii- 28). Seven of these crises were in the post-Second World War period, an era with two large drivers of conflict, colonialism and the bipolar Cold War competition between the United States and the Soviet Union.

In the post-Cold War period both these drivers have disappeared. Interstate warfare has become rare. In fact, the post-Cold War period coincides with what some scholars have called the East Asian Peace (Tonnesson 2017). The last major military conflict in East Asia was over four decades ago, when in 1979 China decided to teach Vietnam a lesson and attacked it, following Vietnam's own invasion of Cambodia in 1978. But it was also harbinger of the final decade of the Cold War, after which Southeast Asia no less than other part of East Asia, sought energetically to turn battlefields into marketplaces. The reasons for this peace are not agreed. Realists like White (2013, p. 11) credit United States primacy. Others credit Japan as important to this *Pax Mercator*, as it provides a model of a state focussed above all on industrialisation, trade and technological modernisation, with the converse rejection of nationalism and expansionism (Tonnesson, 2015). Others view the absorption, and indigenisation of Western political concepts of norms such as sovereignty, and the

development of localised forms of shared identity and modes of diplomatic practice, most prominently displayed in 'the ASEAN way' as equally important (Acharya 2018).

Regardless of the antecedents of the East Asia peace, many scholars agree that this perception reduces the importance of military conflict for understanding international politics (Baldwin 1995, p. 118.) If states rarely confront a crisis with a potential for serious military conflict, then the habits of thought employed for military crises, and alliance management might, if they ever existed, atrophy. Moreover, if alliance bargaining, which as Diesing and Snyder (p. 430) point out, is mainly a matter of each ally's military power, the power of the adversary, and alternatives for alignment, what happens to the analytical efficacy of this model when there is no clear adversary? This article will argue that other factors like emotion and identity intrude, consistent with Liska's (1968, p. 37) observation that once "overt formalized alliances between unequal states fail visibly to foster military security and stability… their intangible effects assume inordinate importance"

A second problem of alliance theory is its tendency to view decision-making international politics as primarily a matter of rational utility maximisation. Influenced by neoclassical economics, this approach tends to downplay the role of emotion, seeing it as erroneous and aberrant (Mercer 2005). In the last two decades, IR scholars have sought to roll back the dominance of rational choice theory, leading to new ways of conceptualising the way states think, 'feel' and act. One of these posits that states need ontological security, a consistent sense of self.   Drawing on this more holistic conception, Subotic (2016) for example argues that Serbia's decision to launch its war on Kosovo in defiance of international pressure was not a materially rational decision. Only by understanding the meaning of Kosovo for Serbia's sense of self-identity, one marked by a belief that Serbia was destined to become a victim despite its pursuit of righteous causes, could one understand what drove Serbia to embark on its futile and expensive war. In essence, this theoretical standpoint argues that emotion shapes how actions in the present are interpreted. As Crawford (2000, pp. 134-135) puts it:

> A pre-existing feeling that a relationship is warm, or one that is characterized by empathetic understanding with the other, may help actors frame ambiguous behaviour as neutral, positive, or motivated by circumstances rather than hostile intentions. Conversely, fear and antipathy may promote negative evaluations and make a neutral or positive reception of ambiguous behaviours and events less likely.

Economists are also expanding their understanding of how decision-making occurs, to encompass processes beyond value-maximising within constraints. Informed by neuroscience, economists state that for individuals, "emotions and rational decision-making are not orthogonal" and in fact emotional engagement during risk-taking is part of 'reasoned' decision-making (Bossaerts and Murawski, 2015, p. 40). In this, they are in agreement with psychologists of international politics, who have long argued against restricting analysis of decision-making to rational factors. Volkan (1997, p.117), for example, contends that the rational components of the Turkish-Greek relationship – the economic, legal, military, and political factors – were highly

> contaminated with shared perceptions, thoughts, fantasies and emotions (both conscious and unconscious) pertaining to past historical glories and traumas: losses, humiliations, mourning difficulties, feelings of entitlement to revenge, and resistance to accepting changed realities.

The third key reason why traditional bargaining approaches to understanding alliances are insufficient is that these models do not sufficiently incorporate domestic politics. As a product of the Cold War period, most of the alliance literature is squarely within the realist paradigm. Realism, as a paradigmatic school of international relations, is inclined to view states as unitary, security-maximising actors and discount domestic politics as important in international politics. But is it realistic to ignore domestic politics as a factor impinging on alliance politics? There is considerable reason to think that Japan and South Korea have a natural commonality of interests that could drive greater cooperation and commitment to each other's security. Both are US allies and both are increasing subject to pressure from a more powerful and assertive China, leading to their shared negative views of the PRC (Silber, Huang and Clancy 2022). But efforts to foster a United-States-South Korea security axis have foundered, even on small initiatives like a proposed information sharing agreement (Jo, p. 122). The reasons are less Japan's alleged impenitence for its colonial projects in Korea than the enmeshment of the issue in Korea's domestic politics (Jo, 2022). In the contests over the memory of the Japanese occupation, Korean willingness to collaborate with or forgive Japan has increasingly been associated with conservativism and authoritarianism, making any moves to improve relations or adopt a pragmatic approach a sure path to electoral defeat in Korea's robust democracy.

Bringing identity, emotion and memory into alliance theory

While conventional alliance theory dwells mainly on rational bargaining processes, some key realist texts do not in fact preclude the possibility that identity and emotion might be important in alliance dynamics. For example, it is well established that the *reputation* of allies can shape alliance decision-making (see for example, Miller 2011). Moreover, one of the foremost writers on alliances, Walt (2013), analyses alliances in a way that leaves room for emotion, identity and memory. Walt argued that states form alliances to balance against *threat*, challenging Kenneth Waltz's position that states form alliances to balance against *power*. In substituting threat for power, Walt implicitly introduces the question of how states determine threat. States must decide which states pose a threat based on a reading of the "Other's" actions and intentions. Given that these are fundamentally unknowable, states bring *prior belief* to the question of intent, illuminated by the state's own history, culture, values and identity. The argument here is that considering memory and identity can compensate for some of limitations of the rational utility and bargaining rubrics that tend to dominate alliance theory.

Identity has been extensively addressed in constructivist international relations (IR) research, but there is considerable variation of opinion on how it is formed (see for example Zehfuss 2001; Brubaker and Cooper 2000). Wendt (1992) argued that state identities form as states interact with one another. Cooperative encounters could lead to perception of the world as benign, while conflictual episodes could foster a perception of a 'self-help world' (a core tenet of neo-realist IR theory). Mercer (1995) sees the designation of a hostile and inimical 'Other' as inherent to defining the 'Self'. Berenskoetter (2007) points out that states can find identity through group membership. He argues (pp.663-666) that friendship is yet another kind of Self-Other encounter, a special type in which the Self feels able to be authentic, and yet still accorded recognition by the Other. The literature, then, strongly implies that the sum of 'Self-Other' perceptions will lead to a designation of the 'Other' as friend, enemy, or something else.

The argument made here is that memory enters the equation because it is constitutive of identity. This is easy to see in the case of individuals. The English philosopher John Locke wrote that for individual human beings, memory and identity were deeply interlinked:

> in this alone consists personal Identity, i.e. the sameness of a
> rational Being: And as far as this consciousness can be extended
> backwards to any past Action or Thought, so far reaches the

> Identity of that Person; it is the same self now it was then; and 'tis
>
> by the same self with this present one that now reflects on it, that
>
> that Action was done (quoted in Yaffe 2007 p. 215).

Contemporary scholarship, however, suggests the same co-constitutive relationship applies for groups. Just as beliefs are a kind of societal glue, so does collective memory offer an epistemic basis for shared identity (Head 2016). National identity also arises from collective memory, whether this is a state-sanctioned narrative or shared myths, stories and memories that give rise to a sense of shared ancestry (Smith 1989 p. 353).

Nonetheless, the formation and invoking of collective memory is subject to factors different to the unique physiological and psychological traits that might influence how a particular individual remembers their life. Collective memory, according to sociologist Halbwachs (1992, p. 38), is different from personal autobiographical memory, because it is reinforced by the interaction of the individual with society. This means it comes from written records, photographs, commemorations, rituals and festivals. Accordingly, it is the writing of history and other practices, such as art and ceremony, that shape collective remembering.

Political and social power structures, especially domestic but also international, surround and shape memory practices. Memory studies research now speaks of the existence of mnemonic hegemonies, in which tensions exist between official master narratives and community-based counter-narratives (Molden 2016 pp. 125–142). Some memory theorists go as far as to contend that for states, it is only by the accretion of political actors invoking memory that collective memory has any existence at all (Jo, 2022).

Collective memory is capable of triggering considerable emotion, especially where the past has involved trauma. Volkan (1997) noted for traumatic events, collective memory can change perceptions of time. After observing the way in which Serbs invoked the memory of the Battle of Kosovo in 1389, while conducting ethnic cleansing in Bosnia after 1992, he coined the term "time collapse" (p. 35). "Time collapse" is where "people may intellectually separate the past event from the present one, but emotionally the two events are merged" (p. 35). It is not uncommon. The persecution of Muslims and especially the Rohingya in contemporary Myanmar, where Baman Burmese invoke their historic sense of victimhood from British colonialism to justify violence against innocents is another example (Herath,2020).

If collective memory, including collective traumas, can affect the emotional content of relationships, it can also affect alliance dynamics. That is to say, we can posit emotional content as an intermediate variable, between the independent variable of collective memory and the dependent variable of alliance dynamics, the latter measured in terms of practical cooperation and trust in the 'Other'. While emotional content normally lies below the surface of formal strategic calculation and alliance management process, pre-existing feelings affect how actions in the present are interpreted. This emotional content may emerge in stressful contexts, such as negotiations, and may turn policy disagreements into a larger alliance rift.

To summarise, the question of how states decide who a threat is, and indeed, who a friend is, opens the door to a constructivist reading of alliances. Constructivists posit that factors such as national identity shape interests, and additionally, factors such as culture and memory, shape policy. In constructing who is a friend and who is a threat, states take memory of past behaviour into account. In constructing who is a friend, and indeed who is an ally, states take formal legal statements such as treaties into account, but they also consider the present circumstances, and the past track record of that friend. In considering the past track record of that friend, states draw on and are influenced by collective memory, extant in both official narratives and civil society. In this article I argue that where the character of threat is unclear, as it is in the post-Cold War era, and where the future source of threat is also unclear, the role of memory may increase as a factor shaping perceptions of friends and allies.

Having established a theoretical argument that collective memory impacts international relationships, including alliances, it becomes necessary to define a working method to allow practical investigation of how, when and where the collective memory in a given polity, society or community might affect alliances. Here it is important that we mine the work already done in the discipline of memory studies. One of the most significant works in memory studies, certainly in terms of scale but also in terms of conceptual innovation and subsequent influence, is Nora's (1992) *Realms of Memory* project on France's national identity.

Nora's undertaking sought to capture French "national feeling" through a systematic analysis of the *places* of *collective memory* (1992, p. xv). This approach assumed that "memory places" - *lieux de memoire* or sites of memory – were the building blocks out of which traditional images of France had been constructed. Nora (p. xxi) sought to identify these "symbolic fragments" of the "symbolic whole" and to "shed light on the construction of representations, the formation of historical objects over

time." These covered sites of memory as diverse as real people (such as Joan of Arc), events (such as the French Revolution and the Tour de France), and geographic concepts (such as Frances territorial boundaries, the "hexagon"). Nora (1992, p. 14) stated that *lieux de memoire* could be material (like an archive), functional (a textbook) or symbolic (a ritual like a minute's silence).

Nora's "sites of memory" recognize that collective memory has *structure* rather than merely *recency*. All things being equal, recency, the elapsed time between an event and its recollection, does appear to apply to human memory of world history. When Liu et al (2009 pp. 667 - 692) assessed social representations of world history amongst university student in 12 countries, asking them to nominate the most important events and figures in history, they found a significant recency effect. Two thirds of the events and people nominated were within the past 100 years. In contrast, Nora's approach to collective memory does not attribute equal weight to all events, figures and all periods; it is *lumpy*, there are periods and phenomena of which there are high levels of collective recollection, while others are forgotten or live only in obscure texts. Zerubavel (2003, p. 26) terms this phenomenon *mnemonic density*. For any community there are mnemonic 'hills' that are remembered well, and also mnemonic valleys, where little is recalled. Varying mnemonic density can be detected in historical texts, such as in a US history book that devotes twenty-four pages to the three year period 1775 to 1777, and the same number of pages to the sixty year interval 1690 to 1749 (Zerubavel, 2003, p. 28). In essence, the social memory of nation states is not simply matter of recalling the most recent events to do with that nation.

In assessing how collective memory affects alliances, the approach proposed here is to look at specific sites or fragments of memory connected with particular themes or events that have an international dimension. For the Thai collective memory of the United States, examples might be memory of Cold War cooperation in joint US-Thai military operations, the circumstances of the US troop withdrawal after the Vietnam war, or US policy during the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997. We can conceive of these memory fragments as being either positive, negative or neutral in the degree of warmth or antipathy that they generate towards the foreign actor. We can also conceive of these sites of memory fragments as being additive. An overabundance of negative events and themes will produce a negative overall site of memory. The converse will produce a negative relationship site. This aggregation allows us to conduct a 'balance of identity' approach to understanding alliance strength. This approach assesses the extent to which accumulated memories and narratives belonging

to Country A deliver to the present a positive, less positive or negative identity of the putative ally, Country B.

To construct the sites of memory triangulation, drawing on a variety of sources, is necessary. Surveys and interviews provide cues for deeper investigation. Historiography is clearly important, as it is important to understand the biases in history-writing, but so are the physical manifestations of memory, such as monuments and commemorative actions. Popular culture, expressed through forms such as cinema is also important.

Fundamental to the process of constructing the sites of memory is recognition of the politics of collective memory. The construction of memory is not a neutral process, and as King (2003, p. 3) writes, "its production is inevitably linked to power". Therefore, in addition to identifying individual sites of memory, broader awareness *of memory regimes* is important (Langenbacher, E. and Shain, Y. 2010). That is, how public memory is controlled and by who, and what contestation exists over memory. As such, it is often, but not always, state-sponsored collective memory that is important. Identifying these gatekeepers is another important aspect of any investigation for how collective memory affects alliances. Building a memory regime is important is because it enables the analysis to incorporate non-verbal manifestations of identity and memory: such things as mnemonic sites (for example, monuments and statues) and commemorative acts and rituals (for example, parades and festivals). Having theorised how collective memory can affect alliances through identity and emotion, and a methodology for analysing collective memory, we can apply these to the United States' Southeast Asian alliances, beginning with the US-Thai alliance.

Collective memory and the Thai-US Alliance

Thailand's two most powerful institutions, the military and the monarchy, collective memory, are powerful gatekeepers. They have shaped a state-sanctioned memory scape that reflects a royalist-nationalist view of Thai history (Raymond and Blaxland 2021). This memoryscape celebrates the deeds of royals, or their loyal servants especially in Thailand's pre-modern history. In 2022, of the country's 26 days of public holiday, nine were for royals and four were for the Buddha (National Holidays 2022). Other than royal birthdays and accessions, there are few commemorations of events from the recent past. That is not to say there is no collective memory outside of state-sanctioned history. Thailand's democracy movement has indeed offered a counter narrative to state-sanctioned royalist-nationalist narratives of Thailand's past. Neither of these agents of collective memory are, however, particularly favourable to a positive

collective memory of the US alliance (Raymond and Blaxland 2021, p. 184). Analysing two sites of memory, firstly that for the World War II cooperation between the United States and Thailand's Seri Thai anti-Japanese resistance movement, and secondly that for the extensive Cold War US-Thai cooperation, show why this is the case.

While the Seri Thai (Free Thai) movement and its collaboration with the United States predates the formal alliance pact signed in 1954 through the Manila Pact, it was a critical moment in Thailand's history. But for this resistance movement, and the US recognition of it, Thailand's fate after the Second World War could have been much worse. Having collaborated with Japan and allowed it to station forces there, Britain in particular wanted harsh reparations that might have included loss of territory and the disestablishment of the Thai military (Raymond 2018, p. 186). Therefore, it might be thought that Thailand would actively commemorate the Seri Thai, and its contribution to Thai independence, and in doing so strengthen public appreciation of the US-Thai alliance.

In fact, while some Thai history books do acknowledge the Seri Thai and its accomplishments, there are no significant commemorations of the Seri Thai, let alone the Seri Thai-United States partnership (Raymond 2018, pp.181-182). Moreover, the Thai state and media routinely overlook ad hoc opportunities to recall the joint effort. The 2015 commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, was one such opportunity. In Thailand, the day was ignored, even in the media (Raymond, 2018, p. 177). When Thai politicians attended China's commemorative events, commentary focussed on economic cooperation and the procurement of submarines. The only event held in Thailand was a gathering of some descendants of the Seri Thai, very much a local affair driven by the Seri Thai veterans themselves (Raymond 2018, p. 181)

Thailand's combative post-Second World War domestic politics explain this significant absence in public consciousness. The Seri Thai movement became powerful in the war's immediate aftermath and humiliated the mainstream military including by excluding it from the victory parades and stripping it of funding (Raymond 2018, p. 187). Eventually the military regained its ascendancy, driving the Seri Thai leader, Pridi Phanomyong into exile and assassinating many of its leaders. Thereafter Pridi and remaining Seri Thai veterans, many in the Thai Navy, attempted several comebacks such as the Palace and Manhattan Rebellions, but none were successful (Raymond 2018, p. 187). The monarchy for its part, had never warmed to Pridi Phanomyong. First, he had been a key architect of the 1932 revolution ending

Thailand's absolute monarchy. Secondly, his ideas for reengineering the Thai economy along socialist lines meant many suspected him of communist leanings. Third, he was wrongly implicated in the tragic shooting death of the young king Ananda Mahidol in 1946. Though later exonerated, he has remained a controversial figure (Raymond 2018, p. 187). Therefore, the domestic politics of the Seri Thai mean the gatekeepers of Thailand's state-sanctioned collective memory marginalise one of the most crucial and positive episodes in the history of Thai-US relations.

The United States-Thai Cold War military cooperation is also, unfortunately for the strength of the US-Thai alliance, a net negative. While hosting up to 48,000 US troops (Kirk 1979, pp. 179, 181), Thailand was a huge beneficiary of US largesse. About $USD 1 billion was spent on economic and military aid between 1946 and 1966 (Lissak, p.94). Designed to give Thailand greater logistics capacity to respond to threats from China or North Vietnam, US military construction included 563km of asphalt road, airfields and the development of Sattahip port (Muscat, 1990, p.65). The support also included education and training. This support, together with Japanese investment, helped Thailand emerge from the Cold War as a tiger economy.

Despite the degree of Thai-United States enmeshment, and their joint military cooperation in wars in Laos, Vietnam and Korea, there is relatively little public awareness or acknowledgement. The reasons for this are twofold. First, Thailand has relatively few military or war monuments, and these are often associated with monarchs, and many from Thailand's pre-colonial history. This is consistent with Thailand's royalist-nationalist perspective on its history. Monuments to significant royals such as Chulalongkorn (monarch during the 1893 confrontation with France) and Taksin (monarch who drove Burmese force out of Thailand after the fall of the old capital of Ayutthaya in 1767) abound (Raymond 2018, p. 180; Raymond and Blaxland, pp.111-112) but monuments to wars of the twentieth century are fewer in number. A monument to Thailand's very significant contribution to the Vietnam War, is located far from the Thailand's capital on a military base in a distant province (Raymond and Blaxland, p. 86). Secondly, in a significant foreign policy reorientation, Thailand's establishment made a conscious decision to disown its participation in wars against its communist neighbours China, Laos and Vietnam following the departure of US forces in 1976. Very aware of the Guam doctrine precluding the involvement of US forces in land wars in Southeast Asia, Thai leaders pursued rapprochement and economic cooperation, and downplayed its Cold War cooperation with the United States (Raymond and Blaxland, pp.114-115).

Consequently, many current Thai military officers are not well informed about of the roots of their alliance. Some 40% of 1800 Thai officers surveyed between 2015 and 2017 had not heard of SEATO, despite its treaty underpinning the formal US-Thai alliance (Raymond and Blaxland 2021, p. 4).

The absence of a state-sanctioned, positive narrative on Thai-US Cold War cooperation means that Cold War collective memory tends to be dominated by community sources of collective memory. One of these, from the democracy movement of Thai politics, is not positive because it sees the close alliance with the United States as responsible for the long tenure of military dictators such as Sarit Thanarat (1957-1963) and Thanom Kittikachorn (1963-1973). Very powerful events in the Thai democracy site of memory, like the 1973 revolution overthrowing Thanom, therefore tend to be negative towards the United States (Raymond and Blaxland, p. 83).Another element of community collective memory is that the Cold War was a significant source of social problems in Thailand. For example, in the 1990s Thailand produced a very popular TV series, *Khao Nork Na* (roughly translated, 'rice outside the fields') about Amerasian children born of relationships between US servicemen stationed in Thailand and local women (Raymond and Blaxland, p. 86).

In sum, the Thai-US site of memory does not buttress the contemporary Thai-US alliance in ways that it might have, had domestic politics not endowed Thai collective memory, both community and state-sanctioned, with the character discussed here. Instead, the positive aspects of past collaboration, such as cooperation against Japan or Communist forces in Korea, occupy quite limited places in Thai collective memory. On the other hand, some of the less positive aspects, such as social problems from troops stationed in Thailand, fill this vacuum. This has meant that state of collective memory for the United States has not been able to cushion the relationship and the alliance, as the two have had less cooperation and especially as the United States has pursued a harder line against Thailand's military coups. The observation of Crawford (2000), that pre-existing feelings shaping the interpretation of current events is hence particularly germane for Thai -US alliance dynamics after the 2014 coup. In a bracing and unexpected result, Thai officers nominated the United States a greater military threat to Thailand than revisionist, communist China (Raymond and Blaxland, p. 4). In doing so they focussed on the post-coup acrimony, informed by a collective memory that overlooks the enmity that existed between Thailand and China during the Cold War, and the brotherhood of wars fought side-by-side their American

counterparts. The condition of the Thai-United States site of memory is summarised in the following table:

Individual site of Memory	Impact on bilateral relationship and alliance
Seri Thai Second World War cooperation	Very weakly positive
Cold War enmeshment	Medium negative
Balance of Identity	Weak negative

Table 1. United States – Thailand Alliance Site of Memory

The Philippines: alliance ambivalence

The Philippines collective memory for its relationship with the United States is similarly both a consequence of top-down and bottom-up memory processes. On the one hand, official state-sanctioned collective (top down) memory emphasises the United States and Philippines as "brothers in arms", drawing on their shared experience of resisting Japan's Second World War invasion and occupation. On the other hand, a collective memory of the Philippines – America war 1899-1902 remains a powerful counter- narrative amongst various Philippines communities, at times erupting into prominence and endangering the alliance.

These two antithetical sites of memory engender a profound – and well-recognised - ambivalence within the Philippines – United States alliance. McCoy (2016, p. 1050) comments on the paradox of Duterte's "break" with the United States, asking "How can a leader enjoy 90 percent approval after lambasting an ally approved by 92 percent of his people?" Kausikan (2017) cites a Filipino joke from the late 1980s, after the U.S. military had left Clark Airbase and Subic Bay: "Yankee go home, and take me with you."

While this ambivalence is recognised, it is rarely critically interrogated. Most accounts of the United States – Philippines alliance employ a traditional bargaining framework. They consider factors such as the benefits of the alliance for the United States in terms of its status as a regional power and the risks for the Philippines, such as entrapment and abandonment. Alliance commentators such as Campbell (2016, p. 224) and Heydarian (2017, p. 574) attribute instability to "outbreaks of nationalism",

but spend little time investigating the collective memory dynamics driving alliance turbulence. The argument here is that these identity dynamics are worthy of study in themselves if any complete understanding of Philippines-US alliance politics is to be achieved. That collective memory offers one means of doing this will now be demonstrated.

The first of two powerful sites of memory for the US-Philippines alliance is that of "brothers in arms". Following their successful invasion in December 1941, Japanese forces forced defeated Filipino and American troops on the Bataan Death March, in which 650 Americans and between five and ten thousand Filipinos died (Blackburn, K. 2010, p.10). Subsequently Philippines governments established a national public holiday called the Day of Valour (Araw ng Kagitingan), commemorating the fall of Bataan to the Japanese in 1942. The Philippines congress signed the holiday into law in 1961 (Official Gazette 1961), calling for all citizens to observe a one-minute silence at 4.30PM and "hold appropriate rites in honor of the heroic defenders of Bataan". Heads of defence services and senior politicians attend ceremonies on this date annually. As an official public holiday, the commemoration supports an official narrative extolling the United States and the Philippines as fraternal warriors. Past presidents such as Manuel Roxas (1946-1948) and Ramon Magsaysay (1953-57) spoke of a 'brotherhood of arms' having formed at Bataan (Blackburn, K. 2010, p.11). American observance has supported this discourse, with the United States awarding Congressional Medals to Philippine veterans and emphasising the way in which Philippines soldiers and civilians "fought side-by-side" to resist the invaders (U.S Embassy in the Philippines, 2019).

As with all state-sanctioned narratives, there are absences or deliberate acts of forgetting, as well as instrumental uses. The Day of Valor and "brotherhood narrative" involves a deliberate forgetting concerning the Filipino elites, such as Roxas, who collaborated with the Japanese. Moreover, Philippines leaders use the Araw ng Kagitingan event to prosecute various foreign policy agendas depending on the security issue of the day. In 2003, President Gloria Arroyo used the occasion to discuss international cooperation against terrorism, topical at that time given the US invasion of Iraq and Philippines support (Jose 2012, p. 149). In 2012, President Benigno Aquino used the Bataan speech to stress the need to defend Philippines offshore territories against China's claims (Jose 2012, p. 149).

The second site of memory with powerful implications for the US-Philippines alliance is, in contrast with the "brothers in arms", one that most Philippines

governments would prefer not to dwell on. But as it is an collective memory residing within the Philippine community that has some characteristics of an intergenerational trauma: it is not easily put aside and can burst into prominence in responses to any perceptions of US highhandedness (Volkan 1997, McCoy 2016). This site of memory is the Philippines-America war of 1900-1902. In this brutal conflict some 126,000 American soldiers put down resistance to the reimposition of colonial rule, costing the lives of over 600,000 Filipinos (Bankoff 2001, p. 549). Suppressing the resistance took over a decade, involved the destruction of entire communities, and later the use of harsh sedition laws prescribing death or long prison sentences to anyone vocally supporting Philippines independence (pp. 60-64).

Evidence for the potency and longevity of this site of memory can be found in the way the issue is brought into play decades later. It has the power to disrupt what Bankoff (2001, p. 550) calls a "careful fabric of purposeful oversight and selective remembrance". Philippines commentator Simbulan (1985), for example, in a book addressing the US bases issue in the 1980s, did not restrict himself to future-oriented analysis of the costs and benefits. Instead, he also discussed the colonial war, quoting from letters written by American soldiers: "Callocan was supposed to contain 17,000 inhabitants. The twentieth Kansas swept through it, and now Callocan contains not one living native" (p. 69) and "Our fighting blood was up, and we all wanted to kill 'niggers'…This shooting human beings beats rabbit-hunting all to pieces." Incidents such as the punitive sacking of the town of Balangiga in September 1901 and theft of the town's church bells continue to be remembered, while efforts to have the bells returned to the Philippines have been unsuccessful (Bankoff, p. 550).

This site of memory, is not uniformly strong everywhere and amongst all Philippines citizens. Constantino (1978) comments that Filipino accommodation of United States colonialism occurred principally through the adoption of English, a national education system, and "glorification of the American way of life, its heroes and institutions" (p. 65). This produced a Filipino elite who embraced and supported American rule, especially if they had been recipients of colonial education. This elicits ambivalence, such as when President Fidel Ramos, was reluctant to comment on US colonial aggression and would only say it was a bittersweet history (Bankoff, 2001, p. 549).

Outside the Manila political elite however, non-establishment figures, such as recent President Rodrigo Duterte, have been much more prepared to invoke this painful past. Early in his tenure, Duterte raised the 1906 killing of 600 Moro people by

American soldiers, stating that the United States had not apologized to the Philippines for atrocities committed at the turn of the century (Estreme, 2016). His attitude was one shared by locals on the island of Mindanao, who still recall the events of over a century ago (Moss, 2016). In the case of Duterte, the pre-existing emotion shapes responses to criticisms in the present, such as his angry rejection of President Obama's criticism of the Philippines police drug-related killings. Duterte's knowledge of the ambivalence within Philippines collective memory, in which Filipino people both admire and resent the United States, means Duterte can take this stance and remain popular, even whilst the United States also remains popular for the Philippines public.

In sum, this conflicted site of memory has been a potent shaping force in the history of the United States –Philippines alliance. It drives instability, like the near decade-long break following the refusal of the Philippines Senate to extend the bases agreement in the 1990s, or the more recent ructions during the tenure of Rodrigo Duterte. These memory dynamics and consequent balance of identity are summed up in the following table.

Individual site of Memory	Impact on bilateral relationship and alliance
"Brothers in arms" Bataan Death March	Strongly positive
Philippines- America war	Strongly negative
Balance of Identity	Extreme ambivalence

Table 2. United States – Philippines Alliance Site of Memory

Conclusion

This article argues that scholars and policymakers concerned with alliances and their health cannot ignore emotion, identity and collective memory as powerful shaping variables. It sets out a case for why, in the complex and ambiguous post-Cold War era, memory and identity dynamics must be considered alongside rational actor analyses of alliance bargains. War is less common and actors are not in most cases facing the existential threat environment that characterised the Cold War, the Second World War and the early twentieth century and late nineteenth century. At the same time,

contemporary research on decision-making has demonstrated conclusively that memory, emotion and rational calculation are never separable.

This article has set out one methodology by which collective memory as a shaping variable for alliances may be systematically and objectively understood. Drawing on the work of Nora, a pioneer in the field of memory studies, its builds on a simple proposition: that collective memory has structure, and discrete sites of memory can be identified. These can be aggregated to provide an overall profile of the relationship site of memory, and the aggregate balance can be assessed. This is of course not a predictive tool, but an explanatory one, which can help us understand why some alliances seem perennially robust and others fragile and volatile.

In this article, the method has been applied to understanding America's troubled alliances in Southeast Asia. Although Thailand and the Philippines are longstanding US allies, their relations with their Great Power partner have been beset with difficulties in the post-Cold war era. In the Thai case particularly, the domestic politics of memory has not been favourable for a positive alliance memory. This has meant that disagreements over Thai domestic political directions have been able to destabilise the alliance more than might have been the case had there been strong elite and community appreciation of the United States role in Thai security and prosperity. In the case of the Philippines, very strong and positive fundamentals, such as annual commemorations of a powerful shared war memory, cannot obviate the memory of the tragic, brutal and bloody war that inaugurated the commencement of United States imperial rule.

None of this is to deny that calculations about US reliability and longevity in East Asia, evaluations of China as a threat, friend or partner, or concerns about entanglements in US-China strategic competition are not important determinants of the future of these alliances. It is simply to note that, as Volkan put it, "If diplomacy is like a basketball game, then the historical traumas of a people are like a thousand bottles of olive oil poured on the court" (Castelloe 2020).

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