SELECTED COURSEWORK EXCERPT

Short Wars, Long Shadows:
Memory Politics and Bilateral Tensions

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Research Question

Why does the memory of brief wars (defined as lasting fewer than 90 days) remain so influential in shaping diplomatic relations between former enemies, rather than fading over time?

Research Design Justification

This project employs a control-based comparative research design, focusing on three different short wars: the Falklands War (1982), the Six-Day War (1967), and the Sino-Indian War (1962). In each case, the conflict lasted fewer than 90 days yet continues to exert substantial influence over diplomatic relations and national political discourse. […] The goal is not to generalize across all conflicts, but to explain a particular, puzzling pattern: why some brief wars produce outsized and persistent effects on diplomacy, while others fade from public and political relevance.

Limitations

A key limitation is that memory alone may not account for all aspects of prolonged diplomatic conflict. Economic interests, regime change, alliance systems, and geopolitical shocks also matter. Additionally, memory is difficult to measure directly, requiring proxy indicators like political rhetoric, education systems, or official commemorations.

However, process tracing allows for context-sensitive inferences. By examining speeches, textbooks, anniversaries, and policy shifts, this study identifies plausible links between memory and diplomatic outcomes, even if causality remains probabilistic rather than deterministic.

Comparative Analysis and Synthesis

Comparative matrix (selected columns)

Case	Memory Type	Memory Mechanism
Falklands	Heroism & Sovereignty	Annual speeches, school curriculum, rituals
Six-Day War	Triumph & Destiny	Religious-nationalist framing, anniversaries
Sino-Indian War	Trauma & Caution	Secrecy, media coverage, parliamentary use

Future research

Future research could expand this design by testing whether democracies are more likely to maintain short war memory in policy due to electoral incentives, or by tracing media coverage as a mechanism for memory transmission. Further work might also explore how international law and transitional justice frameworks interact with memory politics in postwar settings.

Selected references

Bibliographic details normalized for this excerpt. Titles link to the publications.

Benwell, Matthew C. From the banal to the blatant: Expressions of nationalism in secondary schools in Argentina and the Falkland Islands. Geoforum 52 (2014): 51–60.

Jacob, Jabin T. Remembering 1962 in India, 50 years on. In The Sino-Indian War of 1962: New Perspectives, edited by Amit R. Das Gupta and Lorenz M. Lüthi. Routledge, 2017, pp. 233–252.

Stern, Yedidia. How the Six-Day War Built a Messianic Strain Still in Israeli Politics. TIME, June 5, 2017.