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From Cold to Hot Memory: Nuremberg Trials' Cultural Memory in the FRG

Fei Yu*

School of Foreign Studies, Northwestern Polytechnical University, Xi'an 710072, China

**Corresponding author: Fei Yu.*

Abstract

This study examines the construction of cultural memory surrounding the Nuremberg Trials in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) based on cultural memory theory and using "cold memory" and "hot memory" as the core analytical concepts. The analysis finds that this memory construction underwent a three-stage transformation "from cold to hot". In the early postwar period, the official authorities relegated the Nuremberg Trials to a state of "cold memory" through marginalization of the judgment, routine functionalization of the courtroom, and absence of commemorative rituals. From the 1960s to the 1980s, the content of the judgment gradually permeated national education, and the courtroom evolved into a space of remembrance, marking the institutionalization of "hot memory". From the 1990s onwards, the state has continuously "presentified" the Trials through canonization of the judgment, conversion of the courtroom into a memorial space, and periodic commemorative ceremonies, elevating them to a core symbol of hot memory for national identity. The article argues that the states of "cold-" and "hot memory" are the results of strategic state intervention, and that the transition from cold to hot memory follows a carrier-activation logic in which documentary texts, memorial spaces, and state rituals are progressively activated to move historical interpretation from the archival sphere into lived cultural memory.

Keywords

hot memory, cold memory, cultural memory, Nuremberg trials, Federal Republic of Germany

1. Introduction

After the Second World War, the Allied powers conducted the Nuremberg International Military Tribunal against the war crimes of Nazi Germany. This tribunal demonstrated the common will of the international community to punish fascist war criminals, laid the foundations of modern international law, making it an important pillar of the postwar international order [1]. Through this international military trial, the legal boundaries of justice were articulated. Yet maintaining justice extends beyond legal rules, it is also deeply embedded in national historical narratives and cultural memory of a country.

More than eighty years have now passed since the opening of the Nuremberg Trials. With the successive passing of eyewitnesses, the transmission of historical justice increasingly relies on the state's guidance of historical narrative and the shaping of cultural memory. Today, the Federal Republic of Germany has assumed a prominent moral position regarding historical responsibility and international human rights. However, this nationally reflective identity was not a natural or automatic outcome but rather the outcome of dynamic

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memory politics. Therefore, exploring how the German government constructed cultural memory of the Nuremberg Trials over more than eighty years is of considerable practical significance for understanding the post-war reconstruction of national identity and for maintaining international order.

Existing scholarship on the history and memory of the Nuremberg Trials has accumulated a certain body of work, but the literature has largely focused on legal perspectives and macro-political contexts. Earlier studies emphasized the operation of legal procedures, the application of particular charges, and the broad historical consequences of the trials. Although later studies became more specialized and some foreign scholarship shifted from legal analysis to memory-political analysis, there are evident limitations. For instance, some scholars have identified the broader process through which Germany internalized the Nuremberg Trials as part of a national process of contrition and a "historical rupture", arguing that the trials opened a path toward postwar moral reconstruction. Nevertheless, studies of the memory of the Nuremberg Trials have rarely examined the micro-level mechanisms of cultural memory formation through a systematic longitudinal perspective. Most existing literature remains at the macro-political level, tending to treat Germany's reflective cultural memory as a static political outcome, neglecting the deeper dynamic mechanisms of how cultural memory is concretely formed and operates. In other words, how the "historical interpretation" of the Nuremberg Trials in postwar FRG gradually broke through the initial cold treatment and dynamically transformed into the current "cultural memory" has not yet been systematically modelled or microscopically examined

The principal contribution of this article is to move beyond conventional macro-political narratives and construct a micro-level analytical framework for tracing the dynamic transformation from "historical interpretation" to "cultural memory". This study takes the Federal Republic of Germany as the sole state-level subject of memory construction and, rather than emphasizing horizontal comparisons, focuses on longitudinal change. It should be noted that the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) is not included in this analysis, mainly because the East German official "anti-fascist" narrative externalized war guilt, fundamentally blocking any internal reflective transformation from cold to hot; moreover, the reunification of Germany essentially continued the legal tradition of the West Germany, and today's German cultural memory of the Nuremberg Trials fully follows the FRG developmental path.

Theoretically, this article draws on Jan Assmann's cultural memory theory, strictly defining and employing the concepts of "cold memory" and "hot memory" as analytical tools for examining the FRG's framing of the Nuremberg Trials. "Cold memory" reveals how the state, through objectification and neutral archiving, freezes historical trials and strips them of their contemporary relevance. By contrast, "hot memory" explains how the state continuously activates historical guilt, transforming it into "living momentum" for current political and cultural life. Within this framework, the article asks how the FRG over time and through three principal memory carriers—legal texts, memorial spaces, and state rituals—transformed historical interpretations of the Nuremberg Trials from early postwar cold framing into a form of hot memory that now supports modern national identity. By tracing this "from-cold-to-hot" dynamic pathway, the study seeks to clarify how state power intervenes in the construction of memory and to provide a micro-level explanatory model for understanding the mechanisms of cultural memory formation and the shaping of national identity.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Cultural Memory and Its Carriers

Jan Assmann and Aleida Assmann systematically developed the theory of cultural memory on the basis of Maurice Halbwachs's work on collective memory. Cultural memory refers to the total concept of all knowledge that governs behaviour and experience in a specific interactive framework and that requires repeated acquisition and mastery across generations – it is "maintained by institutionalised agencies, and its existence no longer depends on human beings as memory carriers" [2, 3]. It examines how a society preserves and reconstructs past events that are crucial for collective identity over the long term through carriers.

Within this theoretical framework, the Assmanns distinguish between communicative memory and cultural memory and emphasize the institutionalization of memory through carriers. The spontaneous narration of historical events as communicative memory can persist through intergenerational transmission for no more than approximately eighty years—the limit of three generations. Thereafter, the event is either forgotten or

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transformed into another form of memory, namely cultural memory [2]. In Assmann's view, unless societies institutionalize communicative memories of historical events through specific carriers—such as written texts, images, and rituals—that history may fall into the "floating gap" and gradually dissipate as witnesses pass away [4].

In the construction of cultural memory, carriers function as memory containers (Speicher) that transform the abstract past into perceptible cultural symbols. Texts and standardized documentary records are the most direct recording carriers: they integrate fragmented historical experiences into storable objective narratives, establishing a factual boundary and an authoritative framework for memory. Historical sites or sites of memory (Erinnerungsräume) materialize historical narratives through the experiential quality of physical presence. Aleida Assmann emphasizes that the durability of sites gives them a distinctive capacity to resist the erosion of time: they solidify an abstract and distant past into a spatial setting in which people can pause, reflect, and commemorate, allowing individuals to encounter history through sensory presence with minimal mediation. In addition, anniversary ceremonies and rituals are highly regular and collective forms of memory carrier. By repeatedly assigning present significance to a particular past at recurring temporal points, they reactivate the past and reassert its "binding force" against forgetting. This study selects texts, sites, and rituals as analytical carriers because they represent, respectively, the archival-material, spatial-experiential, and temporal-performative dimensions of memory fixation.

Overall, cultural memory is not naturally formed but is constructed by institutionalized organizations or power subjects through the selection, interpretation, and re-coding of key historical events via various memory carriers, giving history a relatively objective anchoring at the cultural level and gradually elevating it into a symbolic system inseparable from collective identity. In this process, memory of key historical events transcends generations and does not fall into the historical "gap" – this is what is commonly called cultural memory.

2.2 Cold Memory and Hot Memory as Cultural Options

Within cultural memory theory, cultural memory may be divided into storage memory (Speichergedächtnis) and functional memory (Funktionsgedächtnis), the most common distinction based on memory function. The ultimate function of cultural memory lies in how a society handles the relationship between "storage" and "function", or how it regulates the flow of history between these two modes.

This article focuses instead on another classification of cultural memory, namely based on "cultural dynamics" (kulturelle Dynamik) or "cultural options" (kulturelle Optionen): cold memory (kalte Erinnerung) and hot memory (heiße Erinnerung) [5]. These types are determined by different modes of remembering (Erinnerungsmodi). In the construction of cultural memory, states use particular modes of remembering to shape shared knowledge and emotional resonance concerning historical events, provide sources of legitimacy and value norms, and ultimately serve the collective identity of "us". This study interprets a state's mode of remembering a historical event as the construction path of cultural memory.

Cold memory refers to a mode of remembering that seeks to interrupt historical change through processes of sacralization and isolation in order to preserve an absolute continuity of identity. Society tends to erase the sense of historical rupture, freezing the past into a static and unquestionable cycle that cannot disrupt the present social order. Hot memory, in contrast, refers to an active embrace of historical rupture that treats the past as a source of social development and moral purification. Rather than avoiding historical crises, it repeatedly activates media carriers and traumatic historical narratives so that historical events can become a driving force for civilisational change and the reconstruction of identity [4].

It is important to note that in the "cold memory" path, society does not forget the past or neglect memory altogether; nor does it lack memory carriers. Rather, society maintains key historical events at the level of "storage memory", "does not intend to study the past" and "does not allow major events to enter historical writing", stripping them of their contemporary relevance [4]. Through this treatment, the present and the past gradually separate and can even cause historical stagnation. Cold memory is therefore better understood as an active and strategic process of depoliticization and demoralization whose purpose is to remove a historical event from public discussion. In this context, "cold" is produced. Within the politics of memory, the denial of history can itself serve another mode of remembering.

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Conversely, in the "hot memory" path, society tends to keep key historical legacies in the "functional memory" layer, transforming them into moral norms and historical beliefs closely linked to the present through deep engagement with the past (Auseinandersetzung mit der Vergangenheit). Through the hot memory path, society uses various memory carriers to continuously endow "remembered past" with significance in contemporary narratives, keeping historical legacy in a state of vitality and forcing the group to internalise memory through ongoing reflection.

The choice between cold and hot modes of remembering ultimately determines whether historical events are archived as relics in "storage space" or transformed into living moral norms in "functional space". Cold memory tends to preserve events marked by rupture as static archival materials, whereas hot memory seeks to "presentify" historical events as functional memory. Through continuous reflection and interpretation, the past becomes cultural memory capable of shaping collective identity. The choice of a memory pathway therefore reveals a society's basic orientation toward its own past.

3. Results and Findings

3.1 Overview of the Nuremberg Trials

The Nuremberg Trials (November 1945 to October 1946) were an international judicial proceeding conducted after the Second World War by the Soviet Union, the United States, the United Kingdom, and France, within the framework of the Allied European Advisory Commission, through the International Military Tribunal to prosecute the leading political and organizational figures of Nazi Germany. The trial was held in Courtroom 600 (Der Saal 600) of the Palace of Justice in Nuremberg. The indictments covered four major categories: common planning or conspiracy, crimes against peace, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. Twenty-two leading Nazi defendants, including Hermann Göring, were tried publicly, and twelve were ultimately sentenced to death [6]. The trials established landmark legal principles, including the principle that individuals can bear criminal responsibility for international crimes committed in the name of a state, and left an exceptionally detailed body of trial records and evidence. This authoritative documentary interpretation provided the postwar German state with an indispensable source of legitimacy and a factual boundary for progressively internalizing and activating the historical responsibility embodied in the Nuremberg Trials.

3.2 The "From-Cold-to-Hot" Memory Construction of the Nuremberg Trials

In the cultural memory framework, the "encoding" of historical events follows two modes of remembering – "cold memory" and "hot memory" – corresponding respectively to the paths of archiving history in storage memory and activating it as functional memory. This section traces the FRG's construction of Nuremberg memory from 1945 to the present through three core memory carriers—documentary texts, sites of memory, and state rituals. The longitudinal analysis identifies an initial cold-memory phase, a transitional phase of institutionalized activation, and a later phase in which the Nuremberg Trials become a normalized form of hot memory supporting contemporary national identity.

3.2.1 Early Postwar–1950s: Strategic Cooling and the Consolidation of Cold Memory

The final judgment of the Nuremberg Trials established the Allied official characterization of Nazi crimes, thoroughly rejecting the defendants' arguments. It therefore played a cleansing and prosecutorial role at the trial itself. In the constitutional reconstruction of postwar West Germany, the judgment was also internalized as a "founding myth" (Gründungsmythos) and incorporated into the constitutional foundations of the Basic Law [7]. Yet an authoritative historical archive does not automatically become cultural memory. A process of activation is required to move memory from storage space into functional space, and such activation did not occur in the first decade or so of the FRG's existence.

The early FRG's memory politics was embedded in postwar reconstruction, Allied occupation, and Cold War anti-communism. Under Adenauer's pragmatic policy of Western integration and sovereign recovery, dealing with Nazi guilt was widely regarded as a destabilizing burden. The prevailing "collective silence" and the East German "anti-fascist" narrative further encouraged West German officials to externalize responsibility and to frame Nuremberg as "victor's justice". These conditions provided the structural incentive for keeping the Trials within storage memory rather than activating them as a living moral resource.

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Within this structural context, the state did not deny the judgment outright but rather depoliticized the trial legacy through the three carriers of text, space, and ritual, thereby placing Nuremberg memory within a static frame of cold memory.

At the level of archival texts, the Nuremberg Trials left extensive judgments and trial records, but these documents were regarded primarily as repositories of knowledge and were kept within storage memory. The FRG officials widely invoked traditional legal doctrine and tended to characterize the judgments as externally imposed "victor's justice" [8]. The government also pursued amnesty policies that facilitated the reintegration of former officials, thereby legally diluting the judgments' characterization of systemic state responsibility. In 1949 and 1954, the Bundestag passed two amnesty laws that released large numbers of people imprisoned for Nazi-related crimes. The Adenauer government actively advanced negotiations over reparations with Israel, but it also largely "diplomatized" and "fiscalized" the issue of Nazi responsibility, removing it from the public sphere of moral reflection [9]. The historical interpretation embedded in the judgments was therefore not denied, but it did not enter public discussion or civic education.

At the level of memorial space, Courtroom 600—the site in which the Nuremberg Trials took place—was restored by the FRG authorities, after the Allied powers returned jurisdiction, to ordinary use as a criminal courtroom of the Nuremberg local court. This "daily functionalization" of the historical site stripped it of its distinctive political and moral significance as a place of international justice [10]. No memorial marker concerning the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg was installed, and the symbolic meaning of the site was gradually weakened by ordinary judicial-administrative operations. At the same time, the Federal Republic displayed a deliberate ritual silence. No commemorative activities were established at key dates such as the anniversary of the judgments or the opening of the trial.

For these reasons, even though the Nuremberg Trials formed part of the legal foundations of the Federal Republic, the dominant memory mode in this period should be defined as cold memory. As Assmann argues, the defining feature of cold memory is not the forgetting of history but the maintenance of history within storage memory, stripped of its immediate relevance so that past and present become separated. The Nuremberg Trials occupied precisely this position: stored in legal archives and historical documents, but excluded from the center of public debate and prevented from becoming a living resource for collective identity. Through the marginalization of the judgments, the depoliticized use of Courtroom 600, and the absence of commemorative rituals, the state maintained Nuremberg memory in a cold form lacking contemporary relevance.

3.2.2 1960s–1980s: The Institutionalization of Hot Memory

With generational change and shifts in the domestic and international political climate of the FRG, the government faced increasing pressure for historical reflection during the 1960s. The student movement of 1968 criticized the continuity of authoritarian personnel and the parental silence about Nazi crimes, thereby breaking the postwar "collective silence" from within. Together with détente and the new Ostpolitik, these developments expanded the public sphere and generated social pressure for confronting the past. It was this conjuncture that made the activation of Nuremberg memory socially possible.

This social pressure was further intensified by two judicial events. In 1961, Adolf Eichmann was tried in Jerusalem, and the proceedings were broadcast internationally by television. German audiences were confronted with the horrifying details of the Holocaust, and the collective illusion that "most Germans did not know" began to break down. Almost simultaneously, the Frankfurt Auschwitz Trial of 1963–1965, as subsequent proceedings to the Nuremberg Trials, exposed the everyday mechanisms of concentration-camp operations and generated sustained public debate within the FRG. Unlike the Nuremberg Trials, the Frankfurt proceedings were conducted by German courts, rendering the "victor's justice" narrative untenable. These judicial events thus translated diffuse social pressure into a concrete public confrontation with the Nazi past, providing the immediate trigger for the Nuremberg memory to turn "from cold to hot" [11].

Under this social atmosphere, the federal government intervened more actively in the construction of Nuremberg memory. At the textual level, the Frankfurt Auschwitz Trial broke the inertia of inaction in German domestic justice concerning Nazi crimes. The legal principles established by the Nuremberg judgment, including individual criminal responsibility, gradually broke out of the frozen archival sphere and entered civic

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education and public discussion. History textbooks began to include limited excerpts and records of atrocities drawn from the trial record, marking a transition from avoidance toward preliminary confrontation.

At the level of memorial space, although Courtroom 600 continued to operate as an ordinary courtroom, its historical symbolic value increasingly came into tension with its everyday practical function. According to Aleida Assmann, the stability of cultural memory depends to a significant extent on its anchoring in concrete places [12]. During this period, Courtroom 600 gradually changed from an ordinary criminal courtroom into a site of memory carrying distinctive historical meaning. As international visitors and historical scholarship focused increasingly on the site, official awareness of its commemorative potential began to emerge. Permanent exhibitions were introduced, systematically presenting the trials of major Nazi war criminals. The exhibition did not merely present the trial as "victors' justice"; rather, through extensive original images, audio recordings, and trial transcripts, it reconstructed the concrete brutality of Nazi crimes, compelling visitors to face the cruel details of history. This kind of place-based memory evocation precisely matched the core mechanism of hot memory – not avoiding historical rupture and trauma, but continuously activating the past as a practical resource for contemporary moral reflection.

At the ritual level, the official "ritual silence" was broken. In 1985, Federal President Richard von Weizsäcker, in his famous speech commemorating the end of the war, explicitly described the collapse of the Nazi regime as "liberation" rather than "defeat", signalling that official discourse had formally accepted the Nuremberg judgment's characterisation of the Nazi regime as criminal, providing authoritative discursive endorsement for the official turn in the historical interpretation of the Nuremberg Trials.

It should be noted that although the memory construction in this period showed clear tendencies toward hot memory, its influence remained largely confined to the intellectual and politically engaged elites, and had not yet formed a widespread cultural consensus across the whole society. Thus, the 1960s–1980s can be seen as the institutional launching phase of the Nuremberg Trials memory turning "from cold to hot". During this period, memory moved from state-level reinterpretation toward public-space activation, creating the basis for later social normalization.

3.2.3 1990s–Present: The Normalization of Hot Memory

After reunification, the FRG's memory politics was reshaped by the extension of the West German legal order, European human rights discourse, and the global reception of international criminal law. At the same time, the rise of right-wing extremism gave the Nuremberg symbol a renewed warning function. These domestic and international conditions raised the political stakes of Nuremberg memory and encouraged the state to move from occasional activation toward full normalization.

At the textual level, the Nuremberg judgment was fully canonized. In modern German mainstream history textbooks (e.g., Klett's Geschichte und Geschehen), the trial is no longer described as a defeat shame but as a turning point for German civilization "from darkness to light". Canonical formulations from the judgment were incorporated into educational narratives, guiding successive generations of students to regard the trials as a foundation of modern rule of law and mechanisms of historical reflection [13].

At the level of memorial space, the FRG shifted Courtroom 600 toward a globally legible site of memory. The courtroom formally entered a new stage dominated by commemorative exhibitions [14]. The FRG authorities established the Memorium Nuremberg Trials on an upper floor and introduced a permanent exhibition together with the "Courtroom 600 Time Travel" VR multimedia project, generating a strong presentifying effect within the physical site. Since its official opening in 2010, visitor numbers have steadily increased. By the 80th anniversary of the trials in 2025, attendance had reportedly reached a historical peak of approximately 180,000 visitors, nearly doubling from 2015 [15]. In 2024, the FRG submitted an application to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre seeking international recognition for Courtroom 600 as a shared and "living place of memory" (lebendiger Gedächtnisort) for reflecting on war crimes and defending human rights. This initiative and application itself marks that the memory of the Nuremberg Trials has transcended national borders, evolving from national memory in the Federal Republic toward a form of memory with global and civilizational resonance.

At the ritual level, commemorative practices surrounding the Nuremberg Trials developed from occasional site visits into standardized and recurring rituals, establishing a mechanism of periodic activation. In 1995, on the 50th anniversary of the Nuremberg Trials, Germany established the Nuremberg International Human

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Rights Award, presented every two years. The award ceremony takes place at the Nuremberg Opera House, a venue associated with the city's Nazi past, and recipients are symbolically guided to Courtroom 600. By creating a dialogue across time between the historical trial and contemporary struggles for human rights, the ritual design transforms the Nuremberg Principles from "past judgments" into an "ongoing covenant" supporting contemporary civilization.

In the 21st century, the frequency and stature of Nuremberg Trials commemorative rituals have further increased. On 1 October each year, the anniversary day of the judgment, the Nuremberg Trials Memorial holds a public reading of the judgment. Volunteers, performers, and descendants of victims read the text aloud for several hours, transforming cold judicial archives into audibly perceptible public language, achieving memory "presentification" at the sensory level. In 2020, President Frank-Walter Steinmeier delivered a keynote speech at a national commemoration for the 75th anniversary in Courtroom 600, reaffirming that the Nuremberg Principles "remain the cornerstone of international criminal law to this day", providing authoritative political confirmation of the trial's legacy [16]. In 2025, events surrounding the 80th anniversary, including the Nuremberg Forum and the ceremonial ringing of the "Bell of Justice", further intensified the public visibility and symbolic heat of Nuremberg memory.

At this point, the Federal Republic's construction of Nuremberg memory had completed the path from cold to hot. The legacy of the Nuremberg Trials moved from being archived in cold memory, through the staged activation of spatial carriers and subsequent judicial events, to a hot-memory symbol continually reinforced by recurring rituals and national political discourse. It became a core symbol supporting both national identity and Germany's international moral image.

In the current German political context, the symbol of the Nuremberg Trials is endowed with a high warning function. Facing real challenges such as the rise of right-wing extremism, the Nuremberg Trials, as an emblem of "institutionalised reflection", are constantly reaffirmed by state commemorative rituals and historical education. It is not merely the end of a post-war history, but the most frequently invoked historical point of reference for contemporary German society in upholding open, democratic, and human rights values.

4. Conclusion

Based on cultural memory theory and using "cold memory" and "hot memory" as core analytical concepts, this study systematically investigated the construction path of cultural memory surrounding the Nuremberg Trials in the FRG from 1945 to the present. The findings indicate that the cultural memory of the Nuremberg Trials in Germany was neither naturally formed nor a static political outcome, but rather underwent a dynamic "from cold to hot" transformation driven by changing configurations of domestic politics, international relations, generational experience, judicial events, and national identity needs, and operationalized by the state through the selective activation of memory carriers.

The pathway unfolded in three stages, but its driving forces must be understood in an integrated rather than sequential manner. The transition from cold to hot memory was neither automatic nor linear. In the early postwar period, postwar reconstruction, Allied occupation, Cold War and Adenauer's pragmatic policies of Western integration and sovereign recovery made a thorough confrontation with Nazi guilt appear socially and politically destabilizing. Under conditions of "collective silence", the state marginalized the Nuremberg judgment, routinized the use of Courtroom 600, and maintained an absence of commemorative rituals, thereby keeping Nuremberg memory within storage memory. From the 1960s to the 1980s, generational change, the 1968 student movement's critique of parental silence, the televised Eichmann Trial, the Frankfurt Auschwitz Trial created social and psychological pressure for confronting the past. These developments changed the state's incentive structure and made the activation of Nuremberg memory politically possible and socially necessary. After the 1990s, reunification, European human-rights discourse, the globalization of international criminal law, and the need to counter right-wing extremism further normalized hot memory. In this later phase, the state no longer merely permitted memory activation but actively codified, spatialized, and periodically renewed it as a core element of national identity.

Crucially, the transformation from cold to hot memory was not produced by texts, sites, and rituals operating separately. It resulted from their coordinated operation as an activation chain. Texts moved from archival records to educational canons, providing authoritative factual boundaries and normative legitimacy

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for remembrance. Sites moved from ordinary courtrooms to memorial spaces, translating abstract legal judgments into sensory and experiential encounters. Rituals moved from absence to periodicity, repeatedly reactivating the past and binding it to contemporary political values. Texts legitimize what is to be remembered;, sites spatialize that memory and rituals temporalize and renew it. Their coordination produces a compound activation effect of legitimacy, experience, and periodicity, which is the direct mechanism through which cold memory becomes hot memory.

The FRG's construction of Nuremberg memory demonstrates that cultural memory is a dynamic product constantly reconstructed under official guidance. The study further distils two theoretical insights: First, the states of "cold" and "hot" cultural memory are not inherent attributes but results of active choice and strategic intervention by state power in specific political contexts – both "cold" and "hot" are produced. Second, the transformation "from cold to hot" follows the core logic of "activation through carriers": texts move from "archives" to "canons", spaces from "sites" to "memorials", and rituals from "absence" to "periodicity". The coordinated operation of these three carriers provides the direct momentum for transforming cold memory into hot memory.

The German experience suggests that trial memory constructed through a hot-memory pathway can transform a traumatic past into a future-oriented form of moral responsibility. This process has contributed to Germany's broad trust among its European neighbors and strengthened its moral standing in international human rights and rule-of-law discourse. Assmann characterizes Germany's cultural-memory construction as an instance of hot memory: "We live in Germany—in a 'hot' society that has internalized the most reprehensible period in its history in order to 'make it the motor of its development'" [17]. Hot memory is therefore not only a way of confronting the past, it can also provide normative energy for the contemporary international peace order and reshape patterns of political trust. Conversely, allowing historical memory to cool into a mode of cold containment may create conditions conducive to renewed geopolitical instability.

Finally, this study limits its focus to the FRG government and concentrates on the top-down operation of official power over memory carriers and gives limited attention to other social variables. In addition, the three carriers selected here—texts, memorial spaces, and rituals—are derived primarily from the specific historical circumstances of the Nuremberg Trials, their applicability to other historical events requires further empirical testing. Subsequent research could extend this carrier-activation model to other contexts, such as Japan's memory of the Tokyo Trials, or incorporate more memory actors to examine the interplay between official and civil society memory construction.

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