The Bronze Soldier of Tallinn and the Politics of Memory in Estonia

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Introduction

In April 2007, the streets of Tallinn bore witness to the worst civil unrest seen in Estonia since the Soviet Red Army arrived in the city in 1944. The riots, in which one ethnic Russian protester was killed and over 1,000 were arrested, came to be known as 'Bronze Night' and were sparked by the removal and relocation of a Soviet era monument, the 'Bronze Soldier', which had stood in the centre of the city since 1947.

In recent years, a line has been drawn between the 2007 unrest in Tallinn and subsequent events including Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea and the ongoing conflict in Eastern Ukraine. 'Bronze Night' has been held-up in some quarters almost as a 'test-run' for subsequent actions taken in these conflicts. It is viewed as an example of the hybrid threat posed by Russia to ex-Soviet states with large ethnic Russian populations and the potential for these populations to be manipulated by Russian disinformation for nefarious purposes. In such instances, the ethnic Russian population in Estonia is defined as a potential 'fifth column', loyal to Moscow and potential willing pawns in Russia's pursuit of further influence in its 'Near Abroad'[1]. Estonia politicians are indeed more than happy to draw on this narrative in order to retrospectively justify their actions during the 2007 unrest as well as subsequent security policies.

This study however seeks to look away from Russia and focus instead within Estonia by looking at the 'politics of memory' in Estonian society. The 'politics of memory' is described as 'a politics endeavouring to shape the society's collective memory and establish notions of what is and what is not to be remembered of the past'[2]. As such, was the removal of the

[1]Nikolas K. Gvosdev and Christopher Marsh, *Russian Foreign Policy: Interests, Vectors and Sectors* (CQ Publications: California, 2014) at 34

[2] Marek Tamm, 'In search of lost time: memory politics in Estonia, 1991 – 2011' (2013) *The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity* Volume 41, 2013, Issue 4 at 654

‘Bronze Soldier’ monument representative of a long-running attempt by the Estonian government to shape Estonian society’s collective memory?

This study argues that the removal of the ‘Bronze Soldier’ can be viewed as the culmination of a ‘memory war’ which has played out since independence and which highlights and contributes to a rift in Estonian society. Drawing on insights garnered from memory studies and elements of securitization theory, this study argues that the construction of a singular focused ‘memory regime’ by the Estonian state has led to increased marginalisation of the ethnic Russian population in the state. Such marginalisation led to the creation of a counter memory regime, embodied by the ‘Bronze Soldier’, which was easily exploited by the Russian state. The ensuing ‘memory war’ between both discourses or interpretations of history ensured on-going hostility and antagonism between both ethnic groups which culminated in the events witnessed in 2007. It can thus be argued that the construction of a more critical and pluralistic historical narrative on the part of the Estonian state, as opposed to an incessant fixation on Russia, would ensure increased integration in Estonia and subsequently foster a greater feeling of security on the part of the Estonian state.

The 'Bonze Soldier' of Tallinn

(Source: Britannica ImageQuest: https://quest-eb-com.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl/search/soviet-tallinn/1/176_614847/Monument-To-The-Soviet-Soldier-Liberator-Of-Tallinn)

Chapter 1

1.1 Literature Review

Much of the literature on 'collective memory' alludes to a so-called 'memory boom' which has taken place in the last few decades, leading to widespread analysis in several academic disciplines. Duncan Bell, for example, states this 'boom' has played an important role 'in the disciplines of history and sociology'[3]. Likewise, Kazuya Fukuoka states this memory boom has been 'widespread in the humanities and in the social sciences over the last three decades'[4]. One area in which this rush to analysis the impact of memory was not replicated however was political science and thus international relations. Erin Langenbacher & Yossi Shain bemoan this lack of attention by stating that 'collective memory…has not received the systematic attention… it deserves' in the discipline[5]. They deem this unusual given the important impact collective memory has on domestic and international politics. Hence, a lot of the literature regarding memory, especially understandings of 'collective memory' and its relationship to 'collective identity', is drawn from social science and the humanities. Mark Wolfgram describes this as 'regrettable'[6] as international relations has much to gain from engaging in this field of study.

From an IR standpoint, Langenbacher states that the development of constructivism has 'laid the groundwork and created a promising opportunity for integrating the influence of collective memory'[7]. This is because constructivists have outlined that 'behaviour is always socially constructed, historically determined and, culturally contingent' and are thus 'creating

[3] Duncan S. A. Bell, 'Mythscapes: memory, mythology, and national identity' (2003) *The British Journal of Sociology* Volume 54, Issue 1 at 65
[4] Kazuya Fukuoka, 'Memory, politics and international relations' (2011) *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs* (Vol. 12, Issue 1)
[5] Erin Langenbacher & Yossi Shain, *Power and the Past: Memory and International Relations* (Georgetown University Press: Washington D.C., 2010) at 1
[6] Mark A. Wolfgram, 'Collective Memory Formation and International Relations' (2013) *International Studies Review* Vol. 15, No. 3 at 1
[7] *Supra*, note 5.

a paradigm that models the negotiation and construction of national and transnational identities, values, norms, and behaviours, and that highlights contingency and dynamic change'[8]. Stephanie Lawson likewise states that memory studies 'resonate broadly with constructivist approaches to international relations which emphasize the importance of ideational factors underpinning state behaviour'[9] and that both intersect at 'the point at which the "reality" of the world is conceptualised as socially constructed in practice and linked to particular identities'[10].

What is meant by 'collective memory'? Duncan Bell emphasises a 'social agency' approach to the concept of memory which sees memory as a 'socially framed property of individual minds'[11]. 'Collective memory' in turn is 'the product of individuals…coming together to share memories' of past events[12]. Unlike 'memory', which can only be shared with those who were actually present at an event, 'collective memory' he argues is 'an experientially formatted inter-subjective phenomenon' and thus cannot be categorised as 'truly mnemonic' but 'should be conceived as mythical'[13]. This distinction between 'individual' and 'collective' memory is emphasised throughout the literature. Jan-Werner Müller refers to 'individual' memory as 'the recollection of events which individuals actually lived through' whilst 'collective memory' 'establishes a social framework through which nationally conscious individuals can organise their history'[14]. Hence Müller disagrees with Bell's classification of 'collective memory' as a form of myth, stating such an approach is 'somewhat misleading'[15]. Müller uses 'collective memory' and 'national memory' interchangeably as he states it is 'mutually constitutive' with national identity. He thus describes the relationship between

[8] *Ibid.*
[9] Stephanie Lawson, 'War memories and Japan's "normalisation" as an international actor: A critical analysis' (2010) *European Journal of International Relations* 17(3) 405-428 at 407
[10] *Ibid*, at 409
[11] *Supra*, note 3 at 65.
[12] *Ibid.*
[13] *Ibid.*
[14] Jan-Werner Müller (ed.), Memory & Power in Post-War Europe: Studies in the Presence of the Past (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2002 at 3
[15] *Ibid.*

'collective memory' and 'collective identity' as a 'circular relationship', a description which is echoed in the work of John R. Gillis. Gillis states that the 'notion of identity depends on the notion of memory, and vice versa' as the 'core meaning of any individual or group identity, namely a sense of sameness over time and space, is sustained by remembering; and what is remembered is defined by the assumed identity'[16]. Langenbacher, likewise, outlines that a key finding from the field of memory studies is that 'collective memory' plays an integral role in the construction of collective identity. This is because memory 'allows for a kind of certification or validation of the existence of a self – individual and collective'[17].Like Gillis above, Langenbacher states 'collective identities have a unified conception of time in which past, present, and future are fully integrated and intimately linked. The remembered past helps to explain who people are today…generating emotional bonds, solidarity, and trust'[18]

A key point emphasised throughout the literature is that both collective memory and collective identity are never entirely fixed but are both an ongoing process. They are malleable factors which can be shaped by various agents to suit their interests. As Gillis states, memories are 'constructions of reality…we are constantly revising our memories to suit our current identities'[19]. This constant revision is highly contestable as it is 'embedded in complex…power relations that determine what is remembered (or forgotten), by whom and for what end'[20]. Thomas Berger likewise describes collective memory as the 'outcome of a series of ongoing intellectual and political negotiations' and while it may be fixed for a certain period, it will be 'constantly subject to challenges and alternative interpretations'[21]. This constant state of contested fluidity has led to the rise of so-called 'memory politics', itself a

[16] John R. Gillis (1994). 'Memory and identity: The history of a relationship', in John R. Gillis (ed.), *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1994) at 3
[17] *Supra*, note 5 at 22.
[18] *Ibid.*
[19] *Supra*, note 16 at 3.
[20] *Ibid*.
[21] Thomas Berger (2002). 'The power of memory and memories of power: the cultural parameters of German foreign policy-making since 1945', in Jan-Werner Müller (ed.), *Memory & Power in Post-War Europe: Studies in the Presence of the Past* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2002) at 83

form of 'identity politics. Marek Tamm describes 'memory politics' as 'a politics endeavouring to shape the society's collective memory and establish notions of what is and what is not to be remembered of the past'[22]. Eva-Clarita Onken meanwhile states that 'memory politics' involves public representatives invoking 'memory to shape collective images and influence decisions and policy outcomes'[23]. This is done through 'the public use of historical analogies and public-symbolic action' on the behalf of state representatives[24]. Stuart Burch and David J. Smith point out that 'memory politics has assumed a growing prominence in recent literature on Estonia as authors examine the conflicting views of the past held by Estonians and ethnic Russians in the country and the impact of this on social integration. They state that monuments are central to such studies as 'they frequently act as "catalysts" eliciting both official and unsanctioned expressions of collective identity'[25].

A number of authors, in their study of 'memory politics' have drawn on securitization theory to explore the impact of collective memory on government policy. 'Securitization', as developed by the 'Copenhagen School', is a discursive process through which certain issues or entities are turned into 'threats'[26]. As Michael Williams outlines, 'security' is not an objective condition but the outcome of the social construction of security issues[27]. What object is being secured, and against what, is determined by analysing securitizing 'speech acts' which classify issues or entities as threats to security by referring to them as such, thus justifying an extraordinary response. In short, a successful securitization process involves 'the designation of an existential threat requiring emergency action or special measures and

[22] *Supra,* note 2 at 654.
[23] Eva Clarita Onken, 'The Baltic states and Moscow's 9 May commemoration: Analysing memory politics in Europe' (2007) *Europe-Asia Studies* 59:1 23-46 at 28
[24] *Ibid.*
[25] Stuart Burch and David J. Smith, 'Empty Spaces and the Value of Symbols: Estonia's "War of Monuments" from another angle' (2007) *Europe-Asia Studies* 59:6 913-936 at 915
[26] Maria Mälksoo, 'Memory must be defended: Beyond the politics of mnemonical security' (2015) *Security Dialogue* Vol. 46(3) 221-237 at 226.
[27] Michael C. Williams, 'Words, Images, Enemies: Securitization and International Politics' (2003) *International Studies Quarterly* Vol. 47 (4) 511-531

the acceptance of that designation by a significant audience[28]'. Williams states that the Cophenhagen School's casting of security as a 'speech act' accurately reflects a narrow linguistic focus and deems this problematic as it 'stands in contrast with a communicative environment ever more structured…by the importance of images'[29]. He outlines that 'in this environment, speech-acts are inextricable from the image-dominated context in which they take place and through which meaning is communicated'[30]. He thus advocates for an 'examination of the ways in which images themselves may function as communicative acts, (and) an analysis of how meaning is conveyed by images'[31].

Lene Hansen echoes William's call to bring images into the field of security studies and examines the process of 'visual securitization' which she describes as the 'processes through which images come to have political implications'[32]. Hansen advocates an inter-visual/intertextual approach to the examination of such processes as she states policy responses do not emerge from an image itself. Images, in contrast with text, are imbued with ambiguity and thus to understand how such policy responses arise, one needs to examine 'how the visual is responded to and constituted through spoken and written discourses[33]. Hansen draws on Julia Kristeva's theory of intertextuality to support the 'securitizing capacity of images'. Kristeva outlines that whilst a text may be unique in that it differs from all others, it invariable refers to texts that have come before it. These 'intertextual links' may be direct quotes or may be indirect 'conceptual references such as "security" or "democracy"'[34]. Hansen argues that images may operate in the same way and may be 'intertextually constituted as speaking security'[35]. An example would be those images that have obtained

[28] *Supra*, note 26 at 226.
[29] *Supra*, note 27 at 525
[30] *Ibid.*
[31] *Ibid*, at 527.
[32] Lene Hansen, 'Theorizing the image for Security Studies: Visual securitization and the Muhammad Cartoon Crisis' (2011) *European Journal of International Affairs* 17 (1) 51-74 at 53
[33] *Ibid*.
[34] *Ibid*, at 54.
[35] *Ibid*.

'icon status' and form part of a group's 'collective visual memory'. Such images she argues would possess 'securitizing capacity'[36]. In other words, images obtain their securitising capacity by interacting with other images, interacting with texts and when placed within the historical and social context in which these images and texts are created, distributed and viewed by an audience.

This study seeks to draw on insights garnered from collective memory studies and securitization theory to examine collective memory in Estonia, the construction of Estonia's official memory regime and the influence of both on the events of 'Bronze Night'. The insights drawn from securitization theory will be focused on the idea of the 'securitization of memory' which has found fertile ground for development in literature regarding Estonia's 'war of monuments'.

1.2 Methodology

This study is largely concerned with visual sources in the form of monuments which act as the primary source for this study. As such it draws on insights garnered from the so-called 'visual turn' in international relations. Much of the literature on visual sources stress that imagery plays a key role in global politics in the 21st century as more and more people receive their information through visual sources. Despite this, as Roland Bleiker states, 'we still know far too little about the precise role visuality plays in the realm of politics and international relations'[37]. Indeed, to combat this, Bleiker argues for the need to validate an entirely different aesthetic approach to the study of world politics which 'assumes that there is always a gap between a form of representation and what is represented therewith'. This gap, he states, represents 'the very location of politics'[38]. Bleiker describes representation as

[36] *Ibid*.
[37] Roland Bleiker (ed.) *Global Visual Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2018) at 1.
[38] Roland Bleiker, 'The Aesthetic Turn in International Political Theory' (2001) *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 30.3 509–533 at 510

'a process through which we organise our understanding or reality'[39] and argues that significant insights can be garnered by exploring how such representative practices 'have come to constitute and shape political practice'[40].

One method for exploring how images shape political practice, which this study will seek to apply, is discourse analysis. Gillian Rose refers to discourse as 'a group of statements which structure the way a thing is thought, and the way we act on the basis of that thinking'[41]. Taking a social constructivist approach to discourse, Liu Yungtao argues that discourse is a social practice which produces meanings and these 'social meanings are not naturally given but socially produced'[42]. It can thus be a source which 'helps shape (in)security' as a 'State's foreign and security policy discourse not only articulates certain ideas of that State's policy and strategy, but also creates social interactions in IR through conveying meanings to other States'[43]. Antagonism between states, and within states, can thus be constructed through discursive means. Discourse is thus extremely powerful. Rose draws on Michel Foucault who states that discourse is powerful because it is productive and 'disciplines subjects into certain ways of thinking and acting'[44]. It does not impose rules of thinking and acting on pre-existing subjects but instead creates these subjects through discourse. In effect, discourse 'produces the world as it understands it'[45].

Many different discourses can operate at any one time but those that achieve dominance are usually located within 'socially powerful institutions' and maintain a claim to 'absolute truth'[46]. Foucault states that such claims arise through the interaction of power/knowledge, both of

[39] *Ibid*, at 512.
[40] *Ibid*, at 510.
[41] Gillian Rose, *Visual Methodologies* (SAGE Publications: London, 2001) at 136
[42] Lieu Yungtao, Discourse, Meanings and IR Studies: Taking the Rhetoric of "Axis of Evil" As a Case (2010) *Confines de Relaciones Internacionales y Cienncia Polĺtica* Vol. 6, No. 11 85 - 107
[43] *Ibid.*
[44] *Supra,* note 41 at 137.
[45] *Ibid.*
[46] *Ibid*, at 138.

which overlap with the other creating a so-called 'regime of truth'[47]. The official 'memory regime' of a state is an example of such a dominant discourse which claims 'absolute truth' with the aim of shaping society's collective memory and determining what should and should not be remembered of the past.

Rose states that one can think of 'visuality' as a type of discourse[48]. She quotes Hal Foster in describing visuality as the 'way in which vision is constructed in various ways: "how we see, how we are able, allowed, or made to see, and how we see this seeing and the unseeing therein"'[49]. A visual discourse can thus be constructed to produce certain meanings and 'subjects will be produced and act within that field of vision'[50]. In this sense images are not 'transparent windows on to the world' but they interpret it and display in very particular ways in order to elicit a certain effect from the audience[51].

Bleiker argues that in order to fully understand visual politics, it is important to examine what he describes as three-dimensional 'visual artefacts' alongside two-dimensional images. Monuments fall into this category of three-dimensional 'visual artefacts'[52]. Whilst monuments may seem at a disadvantage due to their fixed physical nature, in comparison to more easily distributable images, global communication has ensured 'the boundaries between images and visual artifacts (have) become more and more blurred'[53]. Like images, Bleiker states 'visual artifacts tell us something about the world and, perhaps more importantly, how we see the world'[54]. Monuments, specifically, 'remind us of past events and their significance for today's political communities'[55]. Their very presence demonstrates what a people collectively

[47] *Ibid,* at 138.
[48] *Ibid,* at 137.
[49] *Ibid,* at 8.
[50] *Ibid,* at 137.
[51] *Ibid,* at 8.
[52] *Supra,* note 37 at 2.
[53] *Ibid*.
[54] *Ibid*.
[55] *Ibid,* at 3.

choose to remember while their absence often demonstrates what a people collectively choose to forget. As Roland Bleiker outlines, in any society there exists 'boundaries between what can be seen or not, felt and not, thought and not, and, as a result, between what is politically possible or not'[56]. Monuments invariably help to define these boundaries as 'they frame or reframe the political, either by entrenching existing configurations of seeing, sensing and thinking, or by challenging them'[57]. Bleiker thus states, monuments are 'political forces in themselves. They often shape politics as much as they depict it'[58].

Monuments are thus not merely passive objects objectively marking a particular event but contribute to the overall construction of the discourse surrounding the event. This can clearly be seen from their dominance in recent discussions, debates and protests sparked by the murder of George Floyd in May 2020. In the United States, and several other countries, monuments associated with discourses of racial injustice, colonization and the transatlantic slave trade have become focal points of civil unrest leading to the vandalization, removal and destruction of a large number of them. Such acts highlight the political force wielded by these monuments as protestors seek to challenge and reshape society's collective memory through their removal, alteration, or destruction.

[56] *Ibid,* at 20.
[57] *Ibid.*
[58] *Ibid,* at 3.

Chapter 2: The Construction of Collective Memory

This chapter will firstly examine the construction of Estonia's official 'memory regime'. It will outline how in the aftermath of the collapse of the USSR, Estonia sought to expunge an historical discourse of Soviet liberation and brotherhood and construct in its place a discourse emphasising the continuation of the pre-War Estonian Republic and the suffering endured by the Estonian people under the Soviet regime. Secondly, it will examine the position of ethnic-Russians in the state who have largely been excluded and ignored by this dominant historical discourse.

2.1 Collective Memory & Identity in Estonia

A point reiterated throughout the literature on collective memory is that the collapse of the USSR and the events that followed it, including NATO & EU enlargement, played a critical role in the so-called 'memory boom'. As Burch & Smith note, these events 'led communities and groups across the continent to revisit existing understandings of who "We" are and where "We" are going'. As collective memory plays a key role in such identity construction, the authors state this process thus 'involved renegotiation of the Past as well as debates concerning the Present and Future'[59]. Likewise, Tamm states that in response to major upheavals, transitional societies 'work in two directions at once: they are building a bright future and settling their accounts with a complicated past'[60]

This 'renegotiation of the past' was especially striking in those newly independent ex-Soviet states, such as Estonia, which were emerging from under an official Soviet 'memory regime'.

[59] *Supra,* note 25 at 917.
[60] *Supra,* note 2 at 651

Tony Judt states that the ensuing memory conflict in these states was inevitable because here there is 'too much memory, too many pasts on which people can draw, usually as a weapon against the past of someone else'[61]. For these newly independent states 'the past is not just another country but a positive archipelago of vulnerable historical territories, to be preserved from attacks and distortions, perpetrated by the occupants of a neighbouring island of memory, a dilemma made the more cruel because the enemy is almost always within'[62].

Regarding the official Soviet 'memory regime' from which Estonia was emerging, Judt notes that upon arrival, the Soviets had 'appropriated national myths for its own end, banned all reference to uncomfortable or conflictual moments save those which retroactively anticipated its own arrival and enforced a new "fraternity" upon the Eastern half of Europe'[63]. As such, it was extremely difficult for Estonians to share their personal memories during this period because, as Gail Kligman notes, 'the public sphere belonged to the party-state, which appropriated unto itself the rights to space, privilege, discourse and communication[64]. The public 'memorial landscape' was also reshaped as pre-war Estonian independence monuments were removed and replaced with Soviet victory monuments[65]. It was at this time that the 'Bronze Soldier' was erected in Tallinn and named the 'Monument to the Liberators of Tallinn' in honour of those who had 'liberated' the city in 1944. Onken outlines that is important to study the influence the Soviet authorities had over the construction of memories themselves within the Soviet states. She states that Estonia, along with the rest of the Baltic States, serves as a good example for how 'Soviet authorities…tried to establish an official "history" and, through education and youth organisation, a long-term "collective memory" of

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[61] Tony Judt (2002). 'The past is another country: myth and memory in post-war Europe', in Jan-Werner Müller (ed.), *Memory & Power in Post-War Europe: Studies in the Presence of the Past* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2002) at 172

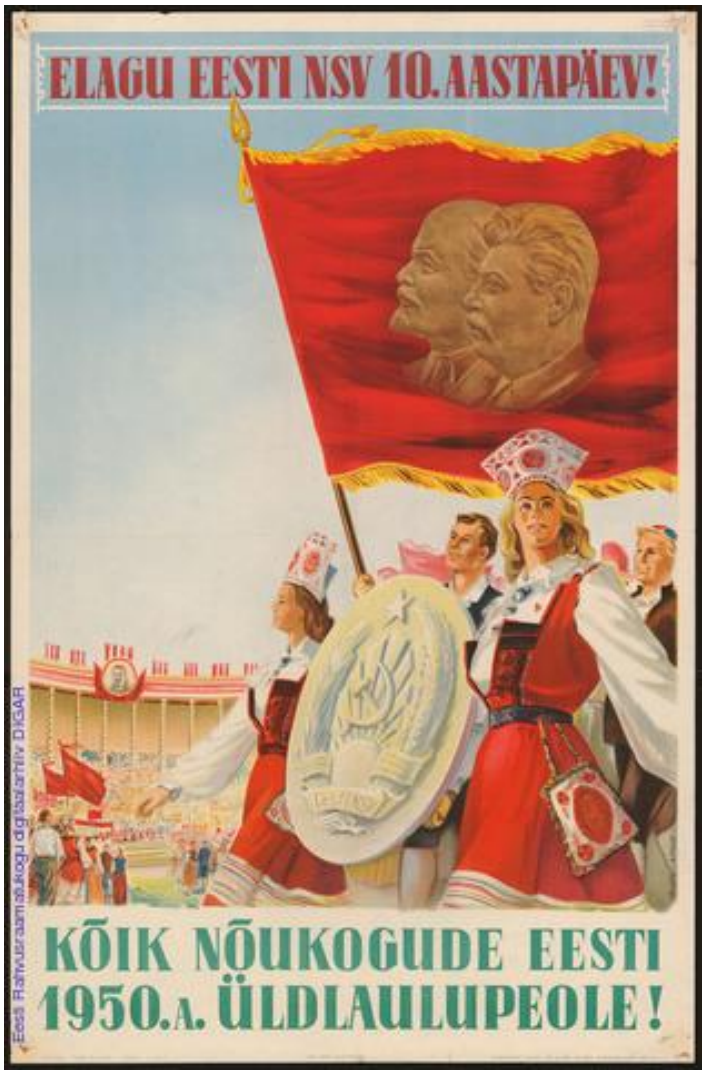
[62] *Ibid.*

[63] *Ibid.*

[64] Inge Melchior and Oane Visser, 'Voicing past and present uncertainties: The relocation of a Soviet World War II memorial and the politics of memory in Estonia' (2011) *Berghahn Journal* Vol. 59 33-50 at 36

[65] *Ibid*, at 37.

Soviet brotherhood and liberation'[66]. Meanwhile, in conflict with this official memory regime, there existed within Estonian homes a 'private sphere of family memory…a parallel collective memory of lost statehood, of individual suffering and political terror under the Stalinist regime'[67].



"Long live the 10th Anniversary of the Estonian SSR…All to the Soviet Estonian Song Festival 1950"

Established in 1869 during Estonia's 'national awakening' and held regularly since, the Estonian National Song Festival celebrates Estonian culture and is considered a cornerstone of Estonian national identity.

The authorities allowed the event to continue during the Soviet period as they saw an opportunity to foster feelings of Soviet unity and fraternity. Hence this poster deliberately shows men and women in traditional Estonian national dress proudly carrying Soviet emblems.

Considered the 'darkest chapter' in the event's history, Soviet anthems and propaganda songs dominated the 1950 festival as Soviet miners and the Soviet army choir participated for the first time[68].

(Source: DIGAR: National Library of Estonia Digital Archive: https://www.digar.ee/viewer/ru/nlib-digar:106016/18972)

[66] *Supra*, note 23 at 31.
[67] *Ibid.*
[68] *150 Years of Song: The Jubilee Year of Estonian Song and Dance*, Laulupidu 150 (https://2019.laulupidu.ee/en/history/)

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Estonia sought a reappropriation of its history as part of its nation-building process. Müller describes the type of nation-building which took place in such post-Soviet states as 'a process of a *nacholende* (catching-up) nation building' in which collective memories were mobilised in conjunction with national passions in the pursuit of 'founding myths'[69]. As such, the process involved 'excavating national pasts, imagining traditions, and writing certain groups out of their history'[70]. Likewise, Judt outlines that with regard to the recent communist past, it was tempting for such states to 'erase from the public record any reference to the Communist era…and in its place we find an older past substituted as a source of identity and reference'[71] This is especially true in the Estonian case as, according to Tamm, their nation-building was characterised by two words, 'repression and revocation'[72].

The 'repression' element refers to the re-emergence of the 'personal memories' mentioned above as this 'parallel collective memory', dominated by a notion of suffering and heroism, was transformed into the official state 'memory regime'. Historical episodes long repressed by the authorities during the Soviet period emerged into the public discourse, such as the mass deportations from Estonia perpetrated by the USSR in the initial phase of Soviet rule. In 1941 about 10,000 people, mostly women and children, were deported to prison camps and forced settlements in Russia. A further 20,000 were deported in 1949, which served largely as a prelude to the violent experience of forced collectivization of agriculture[73]. Tamm refers to the public emergence of these memories as a 'collective "return of the repressed"'[74] which evolved in clear opposition to the official Soviet memory regime of brotherhood and liberation. Melchior and Visser likewise state that the intense remembering of these events in

[69] *Supra*, note 14 at 9.
[70] *Ibid.*
[71] Vladimir Tismaneanu (ed.), *The Revolutions of 1989* (Routledge: London, 1999) at 171
[72] *Supra*, note 2 at 653.
[73] Mikko Lagerspetz, *Constructing Post-Communism: A Study in the Estonian Problem Discourse* (University of Turku: Turku, 1996) at 67
[74] *Supra*, note 2.

the aftermath of independence 'created an atmosphere in which people remember the Soviet era as one long period of repression' and made any Soviet nostalgia 'a problematic and taboo issue'[75] While similar collective memories of suffering exist in most post-Soviet states, Onken points out that 'only in the Baltic States do they form the dominating narrative and state-supported memory regime'[76].

Meanwhile, the 'revocation' element listed by Tamm above refers to the new Estonian state's attempt to connect itself to an 'older past' prior to the Soviet period. Tamm notes that the new emerging memory politics 'fed on the idea of legal and historical continuity' between the newly independent Estonian state and the pre-war Estonian Republic. Estonia first achieved independence in 1920 after defeating Bolshevik and German forces in the aftermath of world war one. This independence lasted for twenty years until the Soviet invasion of 1940. Melchior and Visser state that this initial period of independence has become a key period in the official Estonian histography. Following independence, the period 1920 – 1940 was reimagined as 'a time of economic and democratic progress'. This is despite the fact that the sovereign government of this period was 'unstable and the country was enduring the economic depression of the 1930s'[77]. Mikko Lagerspetz likewise states that the 'pre-war independence period was gradually rehabilitated' upon independence[78]. This rehabilitation and restoration took a concrete form in 'memory politics' as, for example, town and street names which had been changed by the Soviet regime were restored to their pre-war names[79]. The 'memorial landscape' was also restored as monuments to the 1918 - 1920 War of Independence, removed by the Soviets, were reinstated in public spaces. Through these concrete measures, the State 'stressed that they were continuing the traditions from

[75] *Supra*, note 64 at 37.
[76] *Supra*, note 23 at 31.
[77] *Supra*, note 64.
[78] *Supra*, note 73 at 69.
[79] *Supra*, note 2 at 654.

the time before Soviet rule in Estonia' and 'restoring a sense of historical continuity to everyday life'[80].

In doing so, the Estonian State was constructing a new 'collective memory' for the Estonian people. As Lagerspetz outlines, what took place in the aftermath of independence 'was not only a *reconstruction* of historical memory, it was also a process of *construction*' as previously known facts were interpreted in a different way[81]. Estonians were fully aware of their pre-war history and the collective suffering endured under the Soviet regime. However, the public discussions of these episodes allowed for a change in the public narrative in a process Lagerspetz describes as 'the cognitive framing of different historical periods'[82]. This ties into Müller's description of 'collective memory' as establishing a 'framework through which nationally conscious individuals can organise their history[83]'. The Estonian state constructed a new framework to organise the history of the newly independent state. Lagerspetz outlines how official Soviet histography interpreted the pre-war Estonian Republic as 'an unnatural interlude, a temporary delay in the *re-establishment* of Soviet power'[84]. In the newly constructed interpretation of history however, the pre-war Estonian Republic was seen as the natural continuation of the Estonian people's 'national awakening' in the 19th century. The period of Soviet rule was thus reconfigured as the real 'interlude that should be concluded in order to continue the normal development of society'[85]. The official 'memory regime' of the newly independent Estonian state thus organised its history as follows. There was the Golden Age of the pre-war Estonian Republic, which was interrupted by the interlude of Soviet rule, which ushered in period of collective suffering only ended by

[80] *Supra,* note 73 at 71.
[81] *Supra,* note 73 at 73.
[82] *Ibid.*
[83] *Supra,* note 14.
[84] *Supra,* note 73 at 74.
[85] *Ibid.*

the ‘return to the promised land…an independent Estonian state’[86]. Now, what place do ethnic Russians have in a society dominated by this historical discourse?

2.2 Ethnic Russians in Estonia

Ethnic Russians account for 25% of Estonia’s total population[87], the majority of whom came, or are descended from those who came, to Estonia after the re-establishment of Soviet control in 1944. In the post-war era, the Soviet government promoted the migration of more than 500,000 ethnic Russian workers to the Baltic states[88]. As Ivo Mijnssen outlines, these ethnic Russian enjoyed a privileged position in Estonia during the Soviet period as the authorities provided these immigrants with higher pay and special housing. Their working language was Russian, and their children went to Russian-language schools. As a result, ‘these policies created two separate communities in Estonia, with a privileged minority and a more disadvantaged majority’[89].

The collapse of the Soviet Union however led to a drastic reversal in the fortunes of both ethnic groups. Following independence in 1991, the Estonian government denied automatic citizenship to Russian migrants who had entered the state after its incorporation into the USSR in 1940, leading to about one-third of the country becoming stateless. This measure was based on the idea of the ‘legal continuity’ of the pre-war Estonian republic[90]. Melchior and Visser state that the idealised image of the pre-war Estonian Republic, as outlined above, provided legitimation for the policy. They state that ‘in symbolic terms, members of the Russian minority were classified as illegal occupants…(who) lacked a positive place in

[86] *Ibid.*
[87] *Statistical Yearbook of Estonia 2014*, Tallinn: Statistics Estonia, 2014
[88] Ivo Mijnssen, *The Quest for an Ideal Youth in Putin’s Russia I* (Columbia University Press: Columbia, 2014) at 100
[89] *Ibid.*
[90] Raivo Vetik, ‘Citizenship, Statelessness and belonging in Estonia’ (Paper presented at ECPR General Conference, Reykjavik 2011) at 2

the country's history'[91]. On top of the symbolic exclusion, the authors note that the statelessness of many ethnic Russians also curtailed their official power as it meant they were unable to vote or partake in politics. In order to obtain citizenship, migrants to Estonia from the Soviet period had to go through a process of naturalisation which involved having knowledge of the Estonian Constitution, taking an oath of loyalty to the newly independent state and most importantly, the passing of a difficult Estonian language exam[92]. As Raivo Vetik states, the exclusive nature of these citizenship policies 'should be considered in the context of the high level of mistrust between the ethnic Estonian majority and the Russian-speaking minority population'[93]. In 2011, four years after the events of 'Bronze Night', 16% of the total population of Estonia remained 'non-citizens'. Half of this 16% were 'stateless' while the other half were citizens of other states, mostly Russia. As Russia was considered the successor state of the Soviet Union, all former Soviet citizens were entitled to Russian citizenship. Hence, between 1992 and 2008, over 100,000 people within Estonia acquired Russian citizenship.

In 2014 the International Centre for Defence and Security noted, nearly a quarter of a century after independence, that Estonians and ethnic Russians remained as 'two quite separate societies living side by side with only superficial connections between them… (and who) hold divergent perceptions and perspectives…about the Estonian state'[94]. Despite immensely resourced integration programs, they noted 'no working dialogue, common values, or shared perception of the state have been established'[95] This divergence in outlook between the 'two Estonias' was reflected in a report entitled 'Public Opinion and Nation Defence' ordered by the Estonian Ministry of Defence and released in 2015. The report surveyed ethnic Russians and Estonians on a wide variety of issues including NATO

[91] *Supra*, note 64.
[92] Supra, note 90 at 3.
[93] Supra, note 90 at 4.
[94] Juhan Kivirahk, *Integrating Estonia's Russian-Speaking Population: Findings of National Defense Opinion Surveys.* Tallinn: International Centre for Defence and Security, December 2014 at 2
[95] *Ibid.*

membership, the security threat posed by Russia, and trust in domestic institutions and found widely differing opinions split along ethnic lines. For example, a 'fundamental difference' was noted between both groups regarding security issues. 64% of ethnic Estonians consider 'the activities of Russia to restore its authority over former Soviet territories' as the number one threat to global security whilst the same opinion is shared by only 6% of ethnic Russian respondents[96]. Two-thirds of ethnic Russian respondents meanwhile do not see Russian activities as a threat at all[97]. A key point to note regarding this study however was that the report concluded the opinions of both groups were largely 'not based on personal experience but from transferred experience, based on information from trusted information sources and spokespersons'[98]. Their opinions were thus largely shaped by 'the current status of discussions taking place in society as well as on events that have actually taken place'[99].

The Estonian Mistry of Culture also carries out an integration monitoring survey every three to four years to assess the success or failures of current government integration policies. A key negative point noted in their latest 2015 report was that the trust of ethnic Russians in the state institutions of Estonia continued to be considerable low when compared to that of ethnic Estonians[100]. Importantly for this study also, the report noted that the national identity of both groups is greatly influenced by 'the perception of threats'[101]. While ethnic Estonians perceive Russia as a threat to their national identity, ethnic Russians perceive Estonian government policies as a threat to their national identity. The report thus states the creation of a strong unified Estonian identity should be one of the 'central tasks of integration policy'

[96] *Ibid.*
[97] *Ibid.*
[98] *Ibid.*
[99] *Ibid.*
[100] *Estonian Society Monitoring 2015*, Tallinn, The Institute of Baltic Studies at 2
[101] *Ibid.*

but concedes that such a task is extremely difficult for ‘a variety of historical and psychological reasons’[102].

The idea that perceptions of the past are socially constructed is important for this study as it highlights that groups which fall outside of official society, or minority groups, will more than likely develop conflicting discourses to those espoused through the official ‘memory regime’. As Foucault states, ‘where there is power, there is resistance…a multiplicity of points of resistance’[103]. In the first two decades of independence, the ethnic Russian minority in Estonia remained, and to a certain extent still is, a ‘society apart’. It thus follows that ethnic Russians would develop a conflicting discourse or ‘memory regime’, a fact laid bare in the run-up to ‘Bronze Night’ as both historical discourses came into conflict with each other.

[102] *Ibid.*
[103] *Supra,* note 41 at 137.

Chapter 3: Collective Memory in Conflict

This chapter will examine the place of monuments within memory politics and the way in which both the Soviet authorities and the independent Estonian state used monuments in the construction of their official memory regimes. It also introduces the 'War of Monuments' in Estonia and illustrates how the presence of the 'Bronze Soldier' in the public space lies at the heart of a 'memory war' between two differing interpretations of the Soviet army's entry into Tallinn in 1944.

3.1 The Discursive Power of Monuments

As mentioned above, Estonian nation-building post-independence took a concrete form in 'memory politics' in the form of changes to the public space. As Francisco Martínez outlines, the transformation of public space 'provided the ground for former Soviet republics to re-establish themselves as nation-states…(by) constructing pasts and futures through the built environment[104]'. This reorganisation of official memory, on a symbolic level, involved the reclaiming of the public space, the removal of physical reminders of the Soviet era and the reinstating of physical reminders of the pre-war Republic. As such, the vast majority of monuments to the War of Independence which had been destroyed, hidden, or removed during the Soviet era were reinstated. As Tamm records, the early period of Estonian independence saw the reinstating of 15 original monument, while 27 more were restored with fragments from the original and 68 monuments were erected as copies of the original[105]. In total, only around 20 of the War of Independence monuments in place prior to the Soviet

[104] Francisco Martinez, *Remains of the Soviet Past in Estonia: An Anthropology of Forgetting, Repair and Urban Traces* (UCL Press: London, 2018) at 22

[105] *Supra*, note 2 at 665.

period remain unrestored. Tamm refers to this process of reinstating these monuments as the 'reshaping of the Estonian monumental memory landscape'[106].

Monuments are an extremely important factor in the construction of official collective memory as their presence in public places help to shape public perceptions of the past. As Tamm notes, monuments constitute 'materialised "memory places"' and their erection and removal 'reflect memory politics in practice…(as) they point tangibly to the nature of the dominant memory regime'[107]. Likewise, Gillis states that 'commemorative activity', of which monuments form an important part, is by definition 'social and political'[108] as it involves the merging of individual and collective memory, the product of which may appear consensual but in reality, involves 'processes of intense contest, struggle, and, in some instances, annihilation'[109]. Echoing Gillis' point, Melchior and Visser outline that while individuals may attach different meanings to a particular monument, these meanings are not formed in a 'social vacuum'[110]. They state the memory invoked by certain monuments are primarily embedded in 'vicarious memory' which is a perception of history as if one has actually experience it him/herself i.e., 'individual memory' mentioned above. This perception is influenced by state officials through official commemoration days, ceremonies, and the erection of monuments. All these contribute to the state's common framework for organising history as mentioned above. This framework provides groups with a means to 'interpret the world that surrounds them…(and) guides collective remembering as well as intended and unintended forgetting'[111].

Hence monuments act as a marker for the prevailing 'memory regime', in symbolic and material terms. However, as outlined above, conflicting memory regimes operate in tandem

[106] *Ibid.*
[107] *Ibid.*
[108] *Supra,* note 16 at 5.
[109] *Ibid.*
[110] *Supra,* note 64 at 34.
[111] *Ibid,* at 35.

with that of the state and as such, monuments can invoke conflicting memories. Monuments can be reappropriated within a social framework which challenges the state's organisation of history. Hence Burch and Smith state that monuments play an integral role in the 'memory politics' of a state precisely because they often act as 'catalysts' for tension in 'eliciting both official and unsanctioned expressions of collective identity'[112]. This potential of monuments to expose conflict between competing memory regimes was brought into sharp focus with the eruption of the so-called 'War of Monuments' in Estonia which largely started in 2002 and came to a climax with 'Bronze Night' in Tallinn in 2007.

3.2 The War of Monuments in Estonia

The so-called 'War of Monuments', which can be describe as a 'memory war', began in 2004 in the town of Lihula, in Western Estonia. It started when a veteran's association unveiled a monument to those Estonians who joined the German army and fought on the eastern front against the Soviet Union. The monument had initially been erected in the town of Pärnu in 2002 but had been dismantled by the city authorities before its official unveiling[113]. It featured a soldier dressed in a German uniform with Nazi insignia and bore an inscription which read, '*To Estonian men who fought in 1940 – 1945 against Bolshevism and for the restoration of Estonian independence'.* This was an alteration of the previous inscription erected in 2002 which read, *'To all the Estonian soldiers who fell in the Second War of Independence for Homeland and Free Europe 1940 – 1945.* Many Estonians fought alongside Nazi Germany to prevent Soviet reoccupation.

[112] *Supra,* note 25 at 915.
[113] *Supra,* note 2 at 666.

'Monument of Lihula'

(Source: Enacademic https://enacademic.com/dic.nsf/enwiki/3887795)

These men were castigated as 'fascists' during the Soviet period but were rehabilitated as heroes and freedom fighters in the wake of independence. As the governor of Lihula parish noted at the unveiling, these men 'had to choose between two evils, and they chose the less evil one. They already had experience of the Soviet occupation, and they didn't want it to come back'[114]. The organisers thus rejected any link between these men and the atrocities committed by the Nazi regime.

The monument inevitably received widespread international condemnation from Russia, the EU, and several Jewish organisations[115]. A flavour of the condemnation can be garnered

[114] 'Estonia Unveils Nazi War Monument', BBC News, 20 August 2004 http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/3585272.stm (accessed 04/10)
[115] *Supra*, note 25 at 913.

from a 'BBC News' headline which read 'Estonia unveils Nazi war monument'[116]. Under such international pressure, the Estonian government ordered the monument removed. Nationalist Estonians saw the demand for removal as a misunderstanding of Estonia's wartime experience by the international community and felt ignored by the Estonian government who they saw as caving to 'external demands'[117]. The subsequent police operation to remove the monument saw clashes between police and Estonian protesters and the episode led to fierce debate regarding other monuments in the country. As Burch and Smith note, critics of the Government's actions argued that if the moment at Lihula was going to be 'construed as glorification of totalitarianism, then the same logic should be applied to Soviet monuments that had been left standing following the restoration of Estonian independence'[118]. One such monument that came under scrutiny was the 'Bronze Soldier' in Tallinn.

The 'Bronze Soldier' is the unofficial name of a Soviet war monument and memorial which used to be located on Tõnismägi hill in central Tallinn. It consists of a bronze statue of a Soviet soldier against a stone backdrop and was erected by the Soviets in 1947 at the site of a number of graves of Soviet soldiers killed during the war. The monument replaced a preceding wooden memorial, a one-metre-high pyramid topped with a red star, which had been blown-up by two Estonian schoolgirls in 1946. The two girls, Ailil Jõgi and Ageeda Paavel, destroyed the previous monument in retaliation for the destruction of war memorials to the Estonian war of independence and because they viewed it a symbol of repression and occupation. As Jõgi later stated, 'how long should we watch this red star, a memorial for Russian looters, at the time when all our statues are being destroyed?'[119]. Both girls were subsequently arrested and deported from Estonia to forced-labour camps in Russia.

[116] *Supra*, note 114.
[117] *Supra*, note 64 at 40.
[118] *Supra*, note 25 at 914.
[119] Rory McLean, *Pravda Ha Ha: Truth, lies and the end of Europe* (Bloomsbury Publishing: London, 2019)

As mentioned previously, once the Soviet authorities had recaptured Estonia, they sought to reconstruct the ‘memorial memory landscape’ by removing physical representations of the pre-war Estonian Republic in various towns and cities and replacing them with Soviet monuments.

"Monument to the Liberators of Tallinn" in its original position on Tõnismägi hill in central Tallinn

(Source: Britannica ImageQuest < https://quest-eb-com.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl/search/liberator-of-tallinn/1/176_614845/Monument-To-The-Soviet-Soldier-Liberator-Of-Tallinn>)

Like their Estonian successors, these Soviet monuments sought to shape the ‘collective memory’ of the Estonian population by contributing to the construction of the collective framework through which they would organise their history. One of the main perceptions of the past that the Soviet authorities wished to embed in the ‘collective memory’ of the Estonian people was that the arrival of the Red Army in Tallinn on 22nd September 1944 marked the ‘liberation’ of the Estonian nation from Nazi Germany. Hence, the original name

of the 'Bronze Soldier' was 'Monument to the Liberators of Tallinn' and was unveiled on the third anniversary of the Soviet's arrival in the city on 22nd September 1947. This interpretation of history stands in direct conflict with official Estonian histography which states that the arrival of the Soviets marked the beginning of a second 'occupation' of Estonia. The conflict between these discourses or 'memory regimes', i.e., 'liberation' v 'occupation', lies at the very heart of the 'memory war' that erupted over the 'Bronze Soldier'.

3.2 Conflicting memories: Occupation or Liberation?

Siobhan Kattago states that the 'memory politics' in Estonia touches on one of the core issues for democratic societies i.e., 'how to recognize different interpretations of the past without falsifying history'[120]. She outlines that all liberal democracies are faced with the challenge of reconciling different and most often conflicting memories of the past. She notes that too much 'charged memory' within a state often leads to 'instability'. The two competing narratives of 'liberation' and 'occupation' can both aptly be described as 'charged memories' as both are existentially linked to the 'collective memories' of both ethnic groups in Estonia.

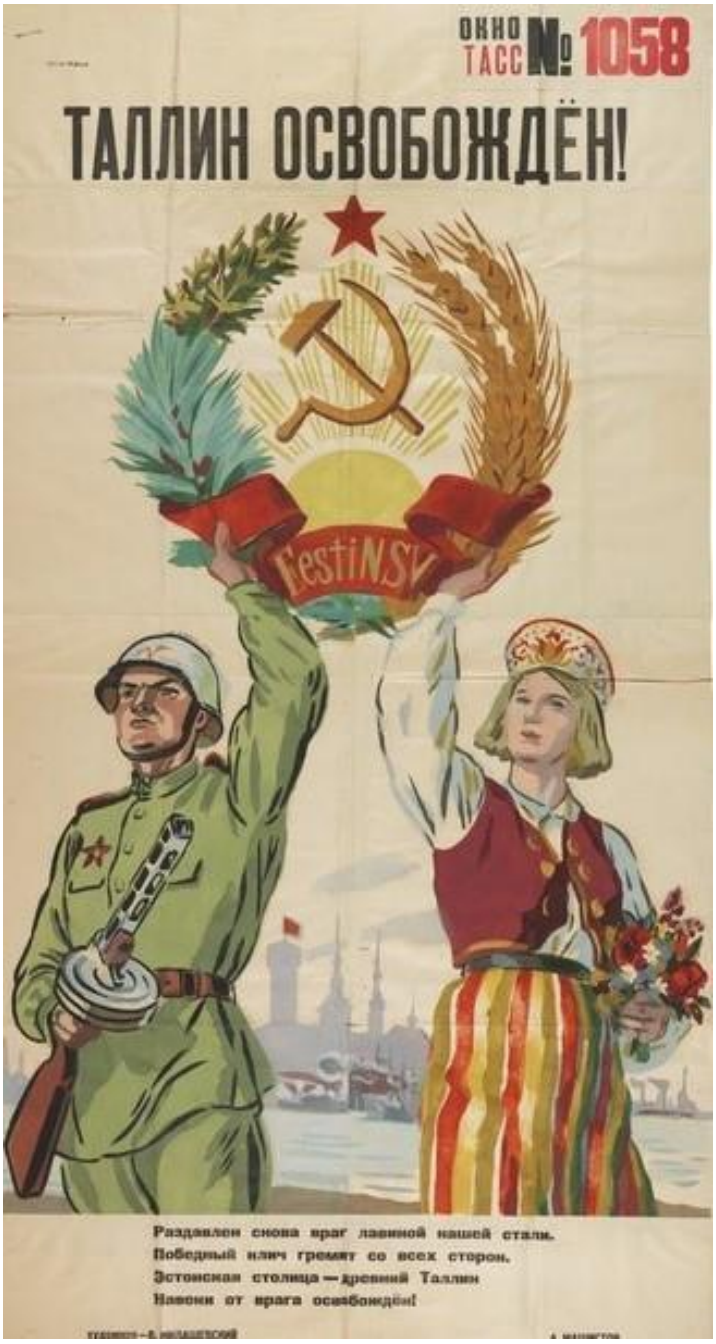
The Baltic States were allocated to the Soviet Union under the terms of the 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact between the USSR and Nazi Germany. In August 1940, the Baltic States were officially annexed as part of the Soviet Union and the following months under the Soviet regime saw the mass deportation of Estonians labelled 'enemies of the people' to Siberia. Nazi Germany subsequently attacked the USSR in 1941, drove the Red Army out of the Baltics, and occupied Estonia until 1944. Melchior and Visser suggest that the collective national trauma caused by the Soviet deportations explain why many Estonians welcomed the Germans as liberators in 1941 and why so many fought alongside Nazi Germany when

[120] Siobhan Kattogo, 'Memory, pluralism and the agony of politics' (2010) *Journal of Baltic Studies* Vol. 41(3) 383-394 at 383

the Soviets returned[121]. These men, who were labelled as 'fascists' during the Soviet period were subsequently honoured as heroes after 1991. Meanwhile, the Soviets launched their 'Baltic Offensive' in 1944 and on the 22nd of September entered Tallinn, marking the beginning of the second period of Soviet rule which lasted until 1991.

The 'liberating' role of the Red Army in world war two, as perceived by the Soviets, played an extremely important role in Soviet nation-building and thus their collective memory and identity. The idea of 'Soviet liberation' was central to the Soviet memory regime as they constructed a narrative that construed world war two as primarily an 'anti-fascist war' in which the Nazi Germans had served capitalist and imperialist ends and had been whole-heartedly opposed by the undifferentiated workers and peasants of the lands they occupied[122]. This interpretation of the past has been carried down to the present day in the Russian collective memory. The memory of 'heroic liberation' has been embedded in the official Russian memory regime alongside the memory of collective suffering at the hands of Nazi Germany. For Russians, world war two is remembered as the 'Great Patriotic War' in which Europe was liberated from fascism at the expense of millions of Russian lives. Similar to Estonia's 'collective memory of suffering', the collective trauma endured by the Russian people during world war two is 'sacred' and central to the official Russian state's 'memory regime'. Many ethnic Russians within Estonia, living 'outside' of Estonian society and excluded or ignored by the state's official historical discourse, subscribe to this interpretation of history and see themselves as carriers and protectors of this particular war memory[123].

[121] *Supra,* note 64 at 37.
[122] *Supra,* note 61 at 165.
[123] *Supra,* note 23 at 386.



"Tallinn is Liberated!": A Soviet propaganda poster from 1944 depicting a Russian soldier and a woman in Estonian national dress holding a wreath together above their heads, to celebrate the liberation of Tallinn from Nazi occupation

(Source: Australian War Memorial: https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/ARTV0749)

The Estonian interpretation of the Soviet's arrival in Tallinn meanwhile is that it constituted a 're-occupation' of the state by the Soviet authorities, and it is this interpretation which forms part of the Estonian collective memory. Lagerspetz refers to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact as

the ‘greatest taboo of all Soviet history’ to be examined in the aftermath of independence. He notes that the existence of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact and its secret supplementary protocol, which divided Eastern Europe into spheres of influence between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany, was strenuously denied by Soviet authorities throughout the Soviet period. He remarks such denial is understandable as in light of the pact, ‘the Soviets no longer appear as the liberators of Eastern Europe from Nazi occupation, but as the instigators of the war in co-operation with the Nazis’[124]. The official Russian stance was that a ‘voluntary association’ of the three Baltic States with the Soviet Union had occurred in 1940[125]. Mijnssen outlines how, in the late 1980s, newly founded civic organisations demanded that the Soviet Union acknowledge the existence of the supplementary protocol in the pact. During *glasnost,* the first anti-Soviet mass protest demanded recognition of the protocol’s immorality. It was not until 1989 that the Soviet Union finally acknowledged the existence of the protocol. This view of the Soviet period as an ‘occupation’ is integral to the official Estonian ‘war memory’[126].

Hence it is easy to see why such memories can be viewed as ‘charged memories’ as they both lie at the heart of the collective identity of both ethnic groups. As mentioned above, discourse ‘produces the world as it understands it’[127] and the intractability of both historical discourses invariably leads to the construction of an intractable social and political environment. This goes some way to explaining the build-up of tension between both groups that culminated in the events of ‘Bronze Night’. The ‘Bronze Soldier’ shapes and in turn is shaped by these conflicting discourses and constructs the highly charged political environment in which it is viewed. It is this that gives the ‘visual artifact’ its ‘securitising capacity’.

[124] *Supra,* note 73 at 68.
[125] *Supra*, note 23.
[126] *Supra*, note 88 at 98.
[127] *Supra*, note 41 at 137.

Chapter 4: The Securitization of Collective Memory

This chapter will examine the events leading up to 'Bronze Night', the events of 'Bronze Night' itself and the securitization of memory by the Estonian government. It is argued that the Estonian government created a 'security problem' in order to gain control over the issue of the 'Bronze Soldier' and secure success in the 2007 parliamentary elections. The chapter also outlines how such actions on the part of the Estonian Government created an opening for Russian disinformation leading to the counter-securitization of the collective memory of the ethnic Russian population.

4.1 'Bronze Night'

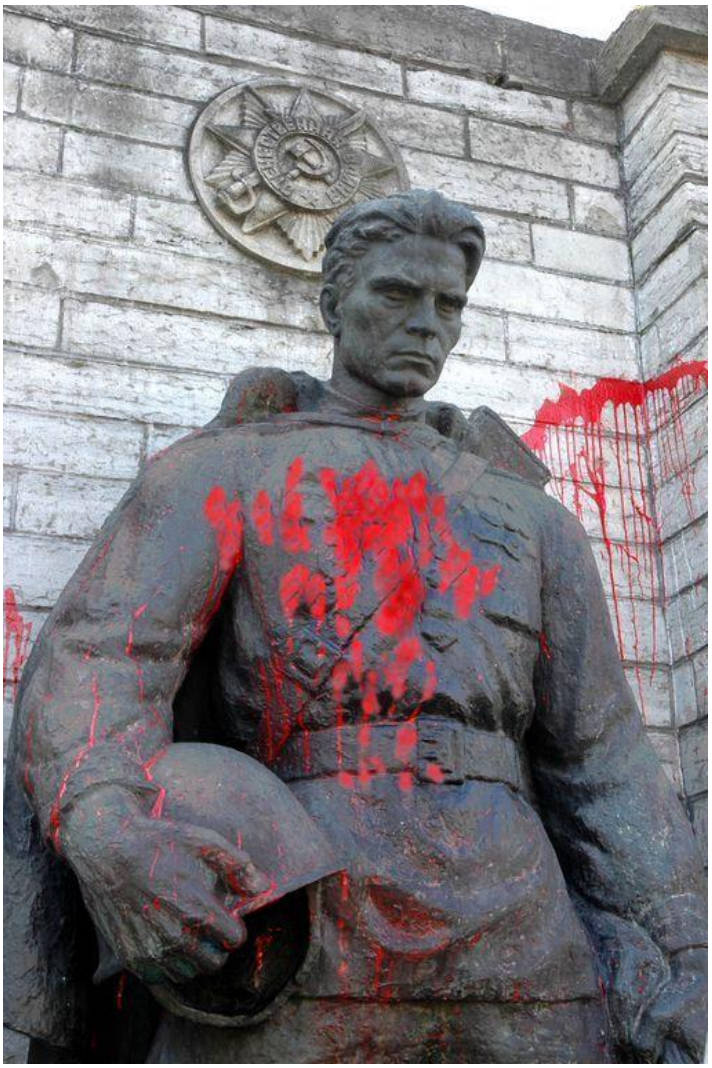
The 'Bronze Soldier' was one of the few Soviet monuments to remain in place after the official 'reshaping of the Estonian monumental memory landscape'. The only change made to the monument was to the inscription on its plague which initially had read '*Eternal glory for the heroes who have fallen for the liberation and sovereignty of our country'*. This was changed to the more neutral sounding, '*For the fallen in World War II'*[128]*.* Post-independence, the monument became a gathering point for both ethnic groups but for very different reasons. These reasons aligned to their respective interpretations of the past, which the monument helped shape through its continued presence in the public space. Ethnic Russians used it as a place to celebrate Soviet victory in the war whilst Estonian nationalists used it as a gathering point to protest such commemorations of the Soviet regime. Indeed, Martinez outlines that the monument 'filled the gap in representational politics for the Russian speaking counter public'[129]. This is because monuments can act as 'reparations in the public space, answering to some damage, occultation, loss'[130]. Despite their exclusion

[128] *Supra,* note 64 at 38.
[129] *Supra,* note 104 at 43.
[130] *Ibid.*

from Estonian society, the presence of the 'Bronze Soldier' in the public space signalled for ethnic-Russians that they still had a place in the State. Likewise, Burch and Smith describe the monument as a 'locus of identification' for the ethnic Russian community in Tallinn as it provided the site for their unofficial commemoration and celebration of May 9[131]. Hansen states, as mentioned above, that images may be 'intertextually constituted as speaking security' and an example of such an image would be one that has achieved 'icon status'[132]. It is clear that the 'Bronze Soldier' possesses 'icon status' for the ethnic Russian population as it forms part of the communities 'collective visual memory' and as such possesses 'securitising capacity'[133].

May 9 marked 'Victory Day' during the Soviet period and hence usually constituted the day in which the symbolic tension between the two competing memory regimes, the official Estonian memory regime and unofficial ethnic Russian counter memory regime, boiled over into material conflict between the two ethnic groups. Just prior to 'Victory Day' in 2005, red paint was thrown over the monument and a number of other Soviet war memorials were attacked across the country. Around 'Victory Day' in 2006, tensions erupted again with ethnic Russian youths mounting round-the clock surveillance of the 'Bronze Soldier' and scuffling with Estonian nationalist protesters. The monument was subsequently cordoned off by police pending a decision on its future.

[131] *Supra*, note 25 at 914.
[132] *Supra*, note 32 at 54.
[133] *Ibid*.



The 'Bronze Soldier' vandalized with red paint in 2005.

(Source: Britannica ImageQuest https://quest-eb-com.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl/search/liberator-of-tallinn/1/176_438309/Liberator-Of-Tallinn-From-Nazi-Invaders-Monument-Was

Estonia held parliamentary elections in March 2007 and the run-up to these featured vigorous debates regarding the future of the monument. Right-wing parties promised a quick solution to the issue and upon their victory, Prime Minister Andrus Ansip ruled that the monument should be removed and relocated, along with the war graves at its feet. The monument was subsequently relocated to the Defence Forces Cemetery, some three kilometres from the city centre. The decision led to widespread rioting throughout Tallinn and other parts of the country, the worst in the country since the Soviet's entered Tallinn in 1944.

Over 1000 people, mostly ethnic Russians, were arrested, 171 people were injured, and one ethnic Russian protester was killed. These events subsequently came to be known as 'Bronze Night'.

Martin Ehala touches on a key question with regard to 'Bronze Night'. No real serious attempts had been made to relocate the monument prior to 2006. It had largely been accepted as part of the public landscape for 15 years and was mainly only visited by a decreasing number of elderly war veterans. Therefore, the question that arises is why in 2007 did it suddenly become such an issue that it needed to be removed and why did its removal suddenly incite hundreds of young people to riot in the streets?[134]

4.2 Securitization of Memory and the Estonian Government

As Ehala notes, demand for the removal of the 'Bronze Statue' was low among the Estonian public prior to May 2006 and was only sought by a small number of conservative Estonians.[135] These conservatives thus believed that it was necessary to make a statement and strike a blow against the pride of the Estonian people in order to alter the course of the debate. This statement was made when two Estonian nationalists staged a provocative demonstration at the 'Victory Day' celebrations on May 9th, 2006. They entered the crowd carrying the Estonian national flag and a banner alluding to Soviet occupation. To avoid a larger incident, Estonian police removed the Estonian protesters from the ethnic-Russian crowd, a scene which was broadcast widely in the media. It raised the question of why Soviet flags and symbols were tolerated on the streets of Tallinn whilst Estonian protesters waving the Estonian national flag were removed by the police. Indeed, one of the protesters, Jüri Böhm, later stated that their aim was for the Estonian national flag to be desecrated in

[134] Martin Ehala, 'The Bronze Soldier: Identity, Threat and Maintenance in Estonia' (2009) *Journal of Baltic Studies* Vol. 40(1) 139-158 at 139.
[135] Ibid, at 144.

order to influence the wider Estonian public in support of their objectives[136]. Ehala states that the protesters were successful as their 'identity dialogue' was amplified by the media and this was decisive in determining the following actions of the Estonian government. Pääbo likewise states the incident was a success on the part of the Estonian radicals as it injected collective memories into the public debate which helped mobilise nationally conscious Estonians in support of their ideas.[137] Sensing that the public mood was changing, the Estonian government followed suit.

Ole Waever describes security problems as 'developments that threaten the sovereignty or independence of a state in a particularly rapid or dramatic fashion'[138]. Such problems threaten the 'political order'[139] and thus justify 'extraordinary measures' being taken against them. How do objects, such as the 'Bronze Soldier', go from fringe issues to security problems? Securitization theory maintains that issues become securitized through 'securitizing speech acts' which 'do not simply describe an existing security situation but bring it into being *as* a security situation by successfully representing it as such'[140] These 'speech acts' always come from elites as an object is not a security problem until the elites declare it to be so'[141]

The role of elites in constructing a 'security problem' mirrors their role in the construction of 'collective memory'. As Langenbacher outlines, the 'concerns of power' is one of the most important dynamics regarding memory[142]. He draws on a quote from James Young which states, 'if societies remember, it is only insofar as their institutions and rituals organize,

[136] *Ibid*, at 153.
[137] Heiko Pääbo, 'War of Memories: Explaining "Memory War" in Estonia' (2008) *Baltic Security and Defence Review* Vol. 10 at 14
[138] Ole Waever, 'Securitization and Desecuritization' in Barry Buzan and Lene Hansen (ed.) *International Security: Widening Security*, vol. 3 (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2007) 66–99 at 72.
[139] *Ibid.*
[140] *Supra*, note 27 at 513.
[141] *Supra*, note 138 at 75.
[142] *Supra*, note 5 at 30.

shape, even inspire their constituents' memories. For a society's memory cannot exist outside of those people who do the remembering, even if such memory happens to be at society's bidding, in its name'.[143] As outlined above, the Estonian government shaped the memory regime of the state to emphasise the Soviet 'occupation', the suffering inflicted on the Estonian people by that occupation, and the view of independence in 1991 as a restoration of the pre-war Estonian republic. That official memory regime thus legitimised their own position of power. However, this memory regime is challenged by the counter memory regime of the ethnic-Russian minority. Pääbo states that when different national groups have conflicting memories, it can lead to a situation where national identities are perceived as being under threat leading to the 'securitisation of collective memory by the political elite of the nation'[144]. The government labels their policies relating to the securitised object as 'extraordinary measures' and to gain the support of the public they use 'collective memory as a source of their propaganda, at the same time reproducing the narratives and myths, which reconstruct the collective memory and national identity'[145]. Also, while the official memory regime is securitized, conflicting regimes are delegitimised or indeed criminalised.

As mentioned above, Estonia held parliamentary elections in March 2007 and the change in the public discourse surrounding the 'Bronze Soldier' greatly affected the election. Pääbo states that politicians purposely used collective memory to drum-up support for their respective political parties[146]. Likewise, Kaiser notes that the public mood surrounding the monument was subject to 'political manipulation' from May 2006 and that Prime Minister

[143] *Ibid.*
[144] *Supra,* note 137 at 7.
[145] *Ibid*.
[146] *Ibid,* at 15.

Andrus Ansip used the situation to mobilize support for his Reform Party in the elections[147]. As Waever states, 'elites frequently present their interests in "national security" dress'[148]. Ansip sought to pin the blame for the increasing inter-ethnic tension on Russia and stated that the only solution to the threat posed by the Russian Federation was the removal of the 'Bronze Soldier'. Peeter Selg notes that this assertion was 'a recurrent claim in Ansip's public addresses between summer, 2006 and spring, 2007'[149]. For example, in 2006 he stated 'It has become all the more clear that the monument cannot remain in its old place. The question rose: whose word has authority in Estonia? The word coming from the Kremlin or the word from Old Town? We cannot say to our people, that Estonia is after all only a union republic, and our word in this country is not worth a "brass farthing"'[150]. In this statement, Ansip invokes official historical discourse of Soviet occupation by linking the presence of the monument in the public space to the external influence of Russia in Estonian political and social life. In doing so, Ansip claims that as long as the monument remains in its current position, Estonia will remain a subjected and oppressed territory of Russia. It can only truly break free and regain its sovereignty by removing the 'Bronze Soldier'. Ansip stated as much again when reflecting on the events of 'Bronze Night', stating that he could not have decided otherwise with regard to the relocation as that would mean that 'Estonia was still a Soviet state'[151].

Such justifications for the removal of the monument were echoed in statements made by the Estonian Defence Minister, Jaak Aaviksoo, in the aftermath of 'Bronze Night'. When asked why the monument had to be removed, he turned to Russia and stated that after Putin became President, 'Estonia's regained independence became subject to attacks and the

[147] Robert Kaiser, 'Reassembling the Event: Estonia's Bronze Night', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* (December 2012) 1046-1063 at 1052

[148] *Supra,* note 104 at 75.

[149] Peeter Selg, 'A political-semiotic introduction to the Estonian 'bronze night' discourse' (2013) *Journal of Language and Politics* 2013, Vol. 12 Issue 1, 80-100 at 81

[150] *Supra,* note 147.

[151] *Supra,* note 64 at 44.

Soviet Union as a totalitarian regime (had been) glorified'.[152] He alluded to the events of May 2006, stating 'red flags were flown in front of the 'Bronze Soldier', an Estonian tricolour was pulled down, and its bearer was forced to leave, and the police had no other way of securing public order than leaving the red flags where they were'. This marked, he concluded, 'the moment when many Estonian people felt they had had enough'.[153] In this statement, Aaviksoo, like Ansip, invokes the collective memory of the Soviet occupation and delegitimises the collective memory of the ethnic Russian minority. He states that the 'Victory Day' commemorations of the ethnic Russian minority merely symbolise the glorification of a 'totalitarian regime' and as such constitute a direct threat to 'Estonia's regained independence'. The emotive image alluded to of the Estonian national flag being 'pulled down' whilst 'red flags' remained is exactly what Jüri Böhm sought to sear into the Estonian public's consciousness, as noted above. The image portrayed also echoes the justification of Aili Jõgi for the destruction of the Bronze Soldier's predecessor in 1946 mentioned above. The sense of injustice imbued in Jõgi's recollection of the red star, this symbol of 'foreign occupation', dominating the public space whilst monuments commemorating Estonian independence and nationhood are destroyed has palpable echoes in Aaviksoo's statements. Indeed, early in 2007, in line with the view that marked Soviet era symbols as a threat to the state sovereignty, Estonia's parliament passed the Law on the Removal of Forbidden Structures. This law prohibited the use of Soviet era symbols in public displays and could potentially have led to the removal of all Soviet era monuments. Estonia's President however declared the law unconstitutional and vetoed it[154].

It can be argued that the statements of Ansip and Aaviksoo constitute 'speech-acts'. The 'Bronze Soldier' was a fringe issue prior to 2006 but the Estonian government created a

[152] 'Estonia: Defence Minister says Bronze Soldier had to go', Radio Free Europe: Radio Liberty, 09 May 2007 <https://www.rferl.org/a/1076363.html>
[153] *Ibid*.
[154] *Supra*, note 147 at 1052.

security situation around the monument by representing it as a 'security problem'. The government turned the monument into a 'security problem' by claiming that as long as it remains in its current position, Estonia is threatened to remain a subjected and oppressed territory of Russia. It can therefore only truly break free and regain its sovereignty by removing the 'Bronze Soldier'. As Waever notes, 'power holders can always try to use the instrument of *securitization* of an issue to gain control over it'[155]. Through securitization, Ansip, and his party colleagues, took control of the 'Bronze Soldier' issue and their efforts to manipulate the public discourse proved successful as they won the most parliamentary seats in the March 2007 election. Their victory then set the stage for the removal of the monument to fulfil a central campaign pledge made by the party[156]. According to Mälksoo, the issue of the 'Bronze Soldier' can thus be seen as a successful securitization process as it involved the designation of an existential threat (the counter memory regime of the ethnic Russian minority as symbolised by the 'Bronze Soldier') requiring emergency action or special measure (the removal of the monument) and the acceptance of that designation by a significant audience.

The extent to which the threat posed by the continuing presence of the monument in the public space was accepted by the Estonian people is reflected in ethnographic fieldwork carried out in Tartu in the aftermath of 'Bronze Night'. Melchior and Visser state that the opinions gathered during this fieldwork 'clearly reflect the public discourses of insecurity and victimhood'[157]. They note that the ethnic Russian respondent's interpretation of the monument as a symbol of Soviet 'liberation' was viewed as threatening by Estonian respondents as 'they perceive continuity between the former Soviet discourse and the perceived "false" memory of present-day Russians'[158]. The memories of the ethnic Russian respondents were thus deemed to be a symbolic, or even physical and political threat, to

[155] Supra, note 138 at 73.
[156] *Supra*, note 147 at 1054.
[157] *Supra*, note 64 at 43.
[158] *Ibid.*

Estonian sovereignty. Even further, the authors note, not only are the ethnic Russian minority held responsible for the suffering inflicted on the Estonian people as the successors of the Soviet regime, but they are also themselves seen as threats. Many Estonian respondents saw a connection between the 'disloyalty' of the minority and the external threat posed by Russia, a connection established in official discourse as demonstrated by the 'speech acts' of Ansip and Aaviksoo above.

In a similar vein, in the aftermath of 'Bronze Night', Aaviksoo explicitly stated that the collective identity of the ethnic Russian community constituted a threat to Estonian independence and sovereignty. He stated that many ethnic Russians in Estonia are 'unable to accept the demise of the Soviet Union' and that their 'self-identity…cause them to resent the developments that have taken place in Estonia. He further stated that 'Bronze Night' was partly a result of the Estonian government 'granting permanent residence to a very large number of people who had arrived during the occupation' and that it demonstrates 'what it really means to have in Estonia a great number of people who are not reconciled to the independence and sovereignty of the Republic of Estonia'[159]. Given such statements, it is easy to argue that members of the public who approved of the relocation of the monument merely espoused a discourse of 'fear, continuity of suffering, or negative attitudes toward the (Estonian) Russians' that was constructed by Estonian government elites[160].

4.3 Securitization of Memory and the influence of Russia

The European Commission describes 'hybrid threats' as a 'mixture of coercive and subversive activity, conventional and unconventional methods (i.e., diplomatic, military, economic, technological) …coordinated… by state or non-state actors to achieve specific

[159] *Supra,* note 152.
[160] *Supra,* note 64 at 44.

objectives while remaining below the threshold of formally declared warfare'[161] One such vehicle mentioned for hybrid threats is 'massive disinformation campaigns…to control the public narrative'[162]. As Kivirähk notes, when security issues arise in Estonia, the propaganda machine of the Kremlin seeks to 'shape, in an overt and covert way, the perceptions of ethnic non-Estonians'[163]. This is made easier by the fact that both ethnic groups reside in separate 'information spaces' given the linguistic divide. Also, given the discourse of insecurity and victimhood espoused by the Estonian government in pursuit of securitization and the resultant delegitimization of their collective memory, it is only natural that ethnic Russians would turn away from the official organs of the state and seek security and legitimization elsewhere. The European Commission notes that with hybrid threats, there is 'usually an emphasis on exploiting the vulnerabilities of the target'[164] and it can be argued that the Estonian government's 'othering' of the ethnic Russian population ensures its vulnerability to hybrid threats. In essence, by 'othering' and ostracising the ethnic Russian population, the Estonian government creates an opening for Russian disinformation.

Hence, while the Reform Party was fostering anti-Soviet/Russian sentiment by drawing on collective memory to garner support, Russian media was actively shaping anti-Estonian sentiment among the ethnic Russian population. Much like the discourse constructed by the Estonian elite, Russian media sought to instil a sense of 'insecurity' in the ethnic Russian community by claiming their national identity was under threat. This led to the counter securitization of the ethnic Russian collective memory as the Russian media used 'collective memory as a source of their propaganda, at the same time reproducing the narratives and myths, which reconstruct the collective memory and national identity'.[165] Hence Russian media sought to glorify the heroism of Russian war veterans and emphasise the sacrifice of

[161] 'Joint framework on countering hybrid threats: a European Union response' (2016) European Commission <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52016JC0018&from=SV> at 1
[162] *Ibid.*
[163] *Supra,* note 94 At 3.
[164] *Supra,* note 161.
[165] *Supra,* note 137 at 7.

the Russian people during the war. The media also sensationalised comments made by Andrus Ansip in which he referenced a number of urban legends in explaining the necessity for exhuming and examining the Soviet war graves surrounding the monument. These urban legends included that the graves held the bodies of executed looters or drunk Red Army soldiers who had been mistakenly run over by a Soviet tank. Such comments were presented as extreme insults to Russia's war veterans and thus an attack on the communities collective memory of heroism and self-sacrifice.

Pääbo states that the Russian media also sough to highlight the historical narrative that if one does not accept that the Red Army liberated Tallinn from fascism, then one is a fascist. The Estonian government's refusal to accept this interpretation of the past meant that they were a fascist government and were as inhuman and as cruel as the Nazi regime[166]. In disseminating this narrative, the Russian media sought to foster anti-Estonian sentiment by drawing on the 'anti-fascist emotions' embedded in the ethnic-Russian collective memory[167]. In 2006, the Russian embassy in Tallinn even contributed to the production of a film entitled 'Estonia – the Crossroads of History' which explored the Estonian Republic's role in atrocities committed by Nazi Germany. The 'Bronze Soldier' played a central part in the production[168].

Russian media fostered feelings of insecurity among the ethnic Russian community and greatly contributed to the inter-ethnic tension that pervaded Tallinn when Estonian work crews arrived in Tõnismägi Square in the early hours of 26 April 2007. Initially these crews merely sought to do an archaeological assessment of the site and fenced off the square before erecting a tent that hid the monument from public view. Kaiser states that this act can

[166] *Ibid,* at 22.
[167] *Ibid*.
[168] 'Russia's Involvement in the Tallinn Disturbances', World Security Network, 07 May 2007 < http://www.worldsecuritynetwork.com/Europe/no_author/Russia%E2%80%99s-Involvement-in-the-Tallinn-Disturbances>

be seen as the conversion of an open public space celebrating Russian collective memory into a closed space of Estonian state control[169]. As the monument was hidden from view and equipment could be heard running, 'rumours and news of the monument's dismemberment and of the desecration of the soldiers' bodies spread throughout the city'[170]. Many ethnic Russians, feeling ostracised from Estonian society and influenced by a constructed discourse of insecurity and victimhood, flocked to Tõnismägi Square to defend, as they would see it, their collective identity and place in Estonian life. As Martinez outlines, the removal of the 'Bronze Soldier' can be best understood as the 'disruption of dialogue between marginal and hegemonic parts of the society, ostracising minorities even more'[171]. The riots that ensued can thus be viewed as 'a radical attempt to subvert the new relationship between the centre and margins of Tallinn and Estonian society at large'[172].

[169] *Supra,* note 147 at 1052.
[170] *Ibid.*
[171] *Supra,* note 104 at 43.
[172] *Ibid.*

The 'Bronze Soldier' in its new permanent location, the Tallinn Military Cemetery.

(Source: Wikimedia Commons https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bronze_Soldier_of_Tallinn,_2007.jpg)

Conclusion: The Democratization of Collective Memory

It is clear form this study that memory can have a crucial impact on domestic and international politics. IR thus has much to gain through the study of memory politics as it 'reveals important underlying dynamics and motives that would otherwise remain concealed'[173]. As Shain highlights, tensions between certain states do not merely have a 'realist geopolitical cause' but are often 'constructed by certain cultural and memory sensibilities'[174]. Such sensibilities pervade relations between Russia and Estonia, and it can be argued that a deeper understanding of this could lead to better policy decisions on behalf of the Estonian government to prevent events like 'Bronze Night' reoccurring.

As Martinez states, the events of 'Bronze Night' serve as a reminder that Estonia is still struggling with the difficult question of what to do with its Soviet heritage. It is a question 'mingled with ideological confrontations, power relations and marginalisation'[175]. It is interesting to note that the approach of many of Estonia's elite to this question remains largely unchanged from 2007. Reflecting on the events of 'Bronze Night' a decade later in 2017, former Prime Minister Andrus Ansip stated that he saw a 'straight line' between what occurred in Tallinn and subsequent events in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine. He outlined that had his government not removed the monument in 2007, they would have had to do it eventually 'after three years at the latest…but, at a noticeably higher price to society'[176].

[173] *Supra*, note 5 at 214.
[174] *Ibid.*
[175] *Supra,* note 104 at 44.
[176] 'Andrus Ansip: "We decided to solve the problem before it got out of hand"', Estonian Public Broadcasting, 24 April 2017 https://news.err.ee/592076/andrus-ansip-we-decided-to-solve-the-problem-before-it-got-out-of-hand

Ansip thus saw the removal of the 'Bronze Soldier' as an inevitability as its presence in the public space constituted too great a threat to public security. Had it not been removed, Estonia could have found itself in the same position as Eastern Ukraine, embroiled in armed conflict between state forces and pro-Russian separatists. The government's response to the issue however averted the threat and ensured that the ethnic Russian population understood that Estonia is an 'independent country with its (own) government and parliament, and that decisions aren't made in the Kremlin'[177]. In drawing this conclusion, Ansip underlines the view that symbols of Estonia's Soviet heritage and ethnic Russian collective memory cannot exist in the public space without leading to tension and conflict. This argument needs to be challenged with a new approach to Estonia's Soviet past, drawing on a deeper understanding of memory politics.

One possible approach is the 'desecuritization of memory' as argued for by Mälksoo who states that desecuritization 'escapes the tendency of mnemonical securitization to actually depoliticize deeply political issues and public concerns'[178]. She outlines that whilst desecuritization, like securitization, involves the 'configurations of self-other relations', it does not necessarily follow that the 'other' needs to be securitised or defined as a threat. Instead, 'self-other relations could be reconfigured so that the perceptions of threat would be removed'[179]. Such reconfiguration could be achieved by moving beyond 'habitual routines of self-definition' and reconceptualizing oneself 'in the interests of a healthier…self-other relationship'[180]. Political actors could thus learn to shape a new official memory regime which is more self-critical and pluralistic in order to accommodate the perceptions of marginalised groups.

[177] *Ibid.*
[178] *Supra,* note 26 at 230.
[179] *Ibid.*
[180] *Ibid.*

Such reconfiguration could be achieved through the development of a more critical and pluralistic understanding of Estonia's recent history. Onken states that Estonia lacked an element of self-critical evaluation in the development of its post-independence memory regime. Whilst it did establish an International Historical Commission, this mainly served the function of 'explaining Estonian history and clarifying still open questions' as opposed to 'triggering critical debate…that would support the development of a diverse and pluralistic public history culture'[181]. She alludes to the events in Lihula as evidence of how little has been done to 'raise political awareness and a critical attitude towards the past in Estonia' as the public debate surrounding its removal focused more on the methods used by the government to take it down as opposed to 'the historical implications of the monument'[182]. In the run-up to 'Bronze Night', Onken likewise notes that little public debate emerged around the main issue at stake i.e., 'the fact that a large part of Estonia's population identifies with a particular view of the past that differs from that of the majority population'[183]. Instead of initiating such debate, the government doubled down on its singular and uncritical memory regime and 'resolved' the issue by removing the monument.

Kattago likewise states that this uncritical memory discourse with its emphasis on ethnic or national heroism and suffering 'crudely twists historical complexities into stereotypes'. It casts all ethnic Russians as 'occupiers…collectively guilty for the crimes of communism' and all ethnic Estonians as 'fascists' which invariably leads to 'resentment and endless antagonism' between both groups as witnessed in the events of 'Bronze Night'[184]. Instead of 'fighting with monuments', former Estonian President Toomas Iles implored a thorough examination of the Soviet period which explored, not only Estonia's role as a victim, but also

[181] *Supra*, note 23 at 35.
[182] *Ibid*, at 36.
[183] *Ibid*, at 37.
[184] *Supra*, note 120 at 387.

'the times we may not please, when the blame may not rest only on the shoulders of the occupiers from abroad'[185].

In this vein, Richard Kearney states that rectifications brought by contemporary individuals to the historical accounts of their forebears are highly influential as 'historical communities are constituted by the stories they recount to themselves and others'[186]. Historical communities are in effect, through discourse, responsible for the formation and reformation of their own identities. Kearney states that this 'ethic of responsibility' brings with it an accompanying 'ethic of flexibility'[187]. He outlines that when 'one recognises that one's identity is fundamentally narrative in character, one discovers an ineradicable openness and indeterminacy at the root of one's collective memory'[188]. Collective memory is thus a narrative construction possessing the flexibility to be deconstructed and reconstructed again and again and any tendency on the part of a community to drift towards xenophobia or insular nationalism can be halted with recourse to the community's 'own narrative resources to imagine itself otherwise, either through its own eyes or those of others'[189]. Kearney thus states that conflict between historical communities could be resolved through both sides exchanging narrative memories and thus 'learning to see each other through 'alter-native eyes'[190].

It is thus entirely possible for the official memory regime of the Estonian state to be reconstructed through engaging with and incorporating the alternative counter memory regime of the ethnic Russian minority. Such themes to be explored are the Estonian role in Nazi atrocities during the Nazi period and the impact of collaboration and informing during

[185] *Supra*, note 120 at 391.
[186] Richard Kearney, 'Narrative and the Ethics of Remembering' in Mark Dooley & Richard Kearney (eds.), *Questioning Ethics: Contemporary Debates in Philosophy* (Routledge: London, 2002) at 26
[187] *Ibid.*
[188] *Ibid*.
[189] *Ibid*.
[190] *Ibid*, at 27.

the Soviet period. A thorough examination and engagement with such topics in Estonian society would allow for a more inclusive and pluralistic interpretation of the past or historical discourse which would reduce antagonism by creating space for marginalised groups within a pluralised and more democratic official memory regime.

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