



REPORT

THE BRONZE SOLDIER CRISIS OF 2007

REVISITING AN EARLY CASE OF HYBRID CONFLICT

| IVO JUURVEE | MARIITA MATTIISEN |

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BNS	Baltic News Service
Covid-19	Coronavirus disease 2019
DDoS	Distributed Denial of Service
DIME	Diplomacy, Information, Military, Economy
DIMEFIL	Diplomacy, Information, Military, Economy, Finance, Intelligence, Law [Enforcement]
DNS	Domain Name Server
DoS	Denial of Service
ECHR	European Court of Human Rights
EU	European Union
FSB	<i>Federal'naya Sluzhba Bezopasnosti</i> [Federal Security Service]
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GDR	German Democratic Republic
GONGO	Government-Organised Non-Governmental Organisation
ICDS	International Centre for Defence and Security
IP	Internet Protocol
IT	Information Technology
KGB	<i>Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti</i> [Committee for State Security]
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MoD	Ministry of Defence
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PBK	<i>Pervyy Baltiyskiy Kanal</i> [First Baltic Channel]
POW	Prisoner of War
PPP	Purchasing Power Parity
RF	Russian Federation
RSFSR	Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic
RTR	<i>Rossiyskoye Televideniye i Radiyo</i> [Russian Television and Radio]
SMS	Short Message Service
SSR	Soviet Socialist Republic
SVR	<i>Sluzhba Vneshney Razvedki</i> [Foreign Intelligence Service]
US	United States
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WWII	World War Two

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The crisis in Estonia in the spring of 2007 that escalated around the World War II memorial known as the Bronze Soldier statue is remembered both in Estonia and abroad. In the former this is mostly because of two nights of rioting in the capital, something that Tallinn has never witnessed before or since. In the West it is associated with the first ever cyber-attacks conducted by one country against another. These events were one of the first wake-up calls for the West to acknowledge the cooling of relations with Russia.

While the case and, especially, the cyber-attacks are frequently mentioned by academics and think-tankers, their approach has frequently been superficial, lacking not only empirical data but also historical context and impact on Russia's strategic mindset. This report aims to address these knowledge and contextual gaps.

At the centre of the crisis was a statue of a soldier-liberator (*voyn-osvoboditel'* in Russian), or more generally a different understanding of history. While the entry of the Red Army into Estonia in 1944 meant liberation from Nazi Germany, it was also the start of almost half a century of Soviet subjugation that did not bring freedom, but instead brought mass deportations, poverty and change in the country's ethnic composition. The commemoration of 9 May as Victory Day in the Great Patriotic War—as the Nazi–Soviet war of 1941–45 is known in Russia—with a military parade was reinstated in 1995 by president Boris Yeltsin as he faced domestic political problems. It was even reinforced by president Vladimir Putin a decade later with lavish a commemoration and the launch of the Ribbon of St George campaign in 2005. This clearly had some influence on Russian-speakers abroad who follow the Russian media, further popularising the celebration of 9 May among them. This began to create tension in Estonian society and by 2006–07 the statue had become an important political issue; the decision was taken to move those buried in the adjacent war graves and reinter them in the Estonian Defence Forces Cemetery in Tallinn, as well as relocate the statue to the same cemetery.

Looking back, the first signs of coordinated Russian action can be traced to January 2007, when diplomatic pressure and high levels of media coverage began and, quite probably, the secret services received their marching orders. In March and April, semi-clandestine meetings were detected between one of the leading figures of the soon-to-be rioters and Russian diplomats. By April tensions were high and, when excavations next to the statue started on 26 April, a crowd of mainly Russian-speakers gathered and began to riot as night fell. The following days saw diplomatic pressure from Russia (even a demand for the Estonian government to resign), a blockade and attacks on the Estonian Embassy and Ambassador in Moscow by members of a pro-Kremlin youth organisation, and aggressive media coverage. Activity on social media—then still in its infancy, consisting of forums and commentaries on the websites of media outlets—was extensive and included the use of a doctored image showing the removal of the Bronze Soldier by cutting it up. Cyber-attacks on Estonian state institutions and businesses (notably the media and banks) began sporadically on 27 April and were followed by four massive waves on 4 May, 8–10 May, 15 May and 18 May.

Russia threatened economic sanctions against Estonia but, with the passage of time, it became clear that in reality only railway transit via Estonia was slightly affected. This was not a coincidence; it allowed the crisis to be used as a political excuse to promote the business interests of one of Putin's favourite project—new port facilities at Ust-Luga.

What occurred in Estonia in 2007 would now be called a hybrid conflict, or hybrid threats materialising. The division in Estonian society that was used to sow discontent was the different interpretation of history by Estonians and by Russian-speakers; simultaneously, the crisis was fanned by the concerted use of diplomacy, social and traditional media (and what now would be called fake news), economic pressure and—for the first time—cyber-attacks. The only often-mentioned leverage not used at that time was military force. In later examples of Russian aggression, in Georgia (since 2008) and Ukraine (since 2014), the military has been an integral part of the hybrid mix. Unlike Estonia, these countries were not members of NATO and the EU.

The Kremlin has certainly been drawing its own lessons from its actions against Estonia. In later versions of its strategy documents adopted since 2007, such as its Foreign Policy Concept and Military Strategy, the mixture of different types of leverage has been underlined. Historical propaganda has proved a handy tool for Putin's regime and its use has only intensified over the last decade. Since feelings towards the Red Army in many countries of Eastern Europe are at least mixed due to historical experience, it has created and will continue to cause tensions in the future. As an antidote, better public knowledge of history has a pivotal role to play in defusing this particular component of the hybrid threat posed by Russia.

INTRODUCTION

The crisis in Estonia in the spring of 2007 that escalated around the World War II (WWII) memorial known as the Bronze Soldier statue is remembered both in Estonia and abroad. In the former this is mostly because of two nights of rioting in the capital, something that Tallinn has never witnessed before or since. In the West it is associated with the first ever cyber-attacks conducted by one country against another. These events were one of the first wake-up calls for the West to acknowledge the cooling of relations with Russia.

There has been previous interest in the issue and some very diverse publications. The first Estonian institution to cover the topic was the Police Board, publishing as early as May 2007 a booklet thanking its employees and cooperation partners.¹ Although this was not intended for study, it provides useful information on the timeline of events and actions on the Estonian side. A year later the Estonian Internal Security Service followed suit.² Think-tankers were also quick to show interest, starting with the ICDS, and others followed, usually covering wider topics such as Russia or strategic communications and information warfare.³ Academic interest in the subject has

¹ Politseiamet (Police Board), "16 kevadpäeva" [16 Days of Spring], Tallinn, 2007.

² Estonian Internal Security Service, *Annual Review 2007* (Tallinn: Kaitsepolitseiamet, 2008), 12-20, https://www.kapo.ee/sites/default/files/public/content_page/Annual%20Review%202008.pdf.

³ Rahvusvaheline Kaitseuringute Keskus (International Centre for Defence Studies), "Moskva käsi Tallinna rahutustes" [Moscow's hand in Tallinn riots], ICDS Blog, 11 May 2007, <https://diplomaatia.ee/moskva-kasi-tallinna-rahutustes/>; Ministry of Defence of Finland, *Russia of Challenges* (Helsinki: Ministry of Defence, 2008), 117-118, https://www.defmin.fi/files/1298/Russia_of_Challenges_nettiversio.pdf; Ben Heap et al, *Hybrid Threats: A Strategic Communications Perspective* (Riga: NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence, n.d.), 52-53, 84-85, <https://stratcomcoe.org/download/file/fid/80212>; Edward Lucas and Peter Pomeranzen, *Winning the Information War: Techniques and Counter-strategies to Russian Propaganda in Central and Eastern Europe* (A Report by CEPA's Information Warfare Project in Partnership with the Legatum Institute) (Washington, DC: CEPA, 2016), 21-24, https://cepa.ecms.pl/files/?id_plik=2715.

also been present from the very beginning, although, due to differing publication cycles, it took some time for more studies to appear.⁴ Since the riots and their prelude and aftermath constitute one of the central political events in Estonia's recent political history, the coverage has found its way into general overviews of history or comprehensive studies of more specific problems.⁵ The events are also covered in publications meant for wider audiences interested in riots more generally or political struggle in Estonia.⁶ Last, but not least, the Bronze Soldier crisis inspired several films and art projects.⁷

However, there are still some gaps in knowledge to be filled. On the one hand, particularly in recent years, there is plenty of discussion of 'hybrid warfare' or 'hybrid threats'—and a number of closely related concepts, some with precise definitions and some rather vague, that would be hard to apply here out of context, such as reflexive control, meddling, fake news, subversive leverage, asymmetric war(fare), fourth-generation warfare, sixth-generation warfare, non-linear war(fare), non-traditional warfare, unconventional warfare, the Gerasimov doctrine, and multidimensional warfare. This report, on the other hand, does not seek to give any new definitions for the phenomenon that is already comprehensively

⁴ See Olga Davydova, "Bronze Soldier goes Transnational: Mediascapes and the Formation of Identities in Internet Discussions," *Ethnopolitics*, 7:4, 2008, 391-411; Marko Lehti, Matti Jutila, and Markku Jokisipilä, "Never-Ending Second World War: Public Performances of National Dignity and the Drama of the Bronze Soldier," *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 39:4, 2008, 393-418; Siobhan Kattago, "Commemorating Liberation and Occupation: War Memorials Along the Road to Narva," *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 39:4, 2008, 431-449; Martin Ehala, "The Bronze Soldier: Identity Threat and Maintenance in Estonia," *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 40:1, 2009, 139-158.

⁵ Mart Laar and Toomas Hiio, *Eesti riigi 100 aastat. II osa: Rahvusvahelise õiguse pelgupaigast esimese Euroopa Liidu eesistumiseni* [100 years of Estonian state. Vol. 2: From the refuge of international law to the first presidency of the EU] (Tallinn: PostFactum, 2018), 252-255; Ivo Jurvee, *100 aastat luuret ja vastuluuret Eestis* [100 years of intelligence and counterintelligence in Estonia] (Tallinn: Post Factum, 2018), 165-168.

⁶ Tiit Pruuli (ed), *Mäss: Detsembrimäss/Aprillimäss* [Mutiny: December mutiny/April mutiny] (Tallinn: Eetriüksus, 2008); Tiit Made, *Valitsejate vastu: Eesti Vabariigi 95. sünnipäevaks* [Against the power: For the 95th anniversary of the Republic of Estonia] (Tallinn: Agro, 2013), 499-512.

⁷ "Monolith" (Mocumentary 15'), directed by Kristina Norman, (Tallinn: Rühm Pluss Null, 2007), <https://www.kristinanorman.ee/monolith/>; "Pronksöö: Vene mäss Tallinnas" [Bronze night: Russian uprising in Tallinn], directed by Urmas Eero Liiv (Tallinn: Kanal2, 2007); "Aljoša", directed by Meelis Muhu (Tallinn: In-Ruum, 2008); Kristina Norman (ed.), *After War* (Tallinn: Center for Contemporary Arts, 2009), https://www.kristinanorman.ee/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/kristina_norman_venice_catalogue.pdf.

defined inter alia by the European Commission, which stated:

While definitions of hybrid threats vary and need to remain flexible to respond to their evolving nature, the concept aims to capture the mixture of coercive and subversive activity, conventional and unconventional methods (i.e. diplomatic, military, economic, technological), which can be used in a coordinated manner by state or non-state actors to achieve specific objectives while remaining below the threshold of formally declared warfare. There is usually an emphasis on exploiting the vulnerabilities of the target and on generating ambiguity to hinder decision-making processes. Massive disinformation campaigns, using social media to control the political narrative or to radicalise, recruit and direct proxy actors can be vehicles for hybrid threats.⁸

It must be kept in mind that emphasis on such concepts concerning Russia has increased only since the Russian action in Ukraine in 2014, i.e. seven years after the events in Tallinn. However, it is worth finding out what Russia's doctrine has to say about using and mixing different state leverages known in the West in models such as DIME (diplomacy, information, military, economy) or later DIMEFIL (diplomacy, information, military, economy, finance, intelligence, law [enforcement]). In order to see how Russia's modus operandi has evolved, one of the earliest post-Cold War cases of hybrid threats materialising in Europe—the Bronze Soldier crisis—will be examined.

The current report aims to take a fresh look at Russia's use of these elements of leverage and detect possible coordination. As part of the introduction it gives an overview of non-kinetic leverage in Russia's mindset and strategy documents. Since the interpretation of history was at the heart of the crisis, the paper explains the historical background that makes

the issues emotional for most inhabitants of Estonia and Russia. The report discusses the events leading up to the riots, and the aftermath including cyber-attacks. Before arriving at the conclusions, the reader will get to know how Russia has developed its use of non-kinetic leverage and use of history in its political interests since 2007.

The report offers, for the first time, quantitative media analysis and, as far as possible, determines the profile of the rioters on the streets of Tallinn. In order to overcome some gaps in information, material not previously accessible to researchers has been made available to the authors by Estonia's Government Office, Estonian Internal Security Service and Prosecutor's Office. Interviews were conducted with some individuals who held key positions when dealing with the crisis that have not previously been in the field of interest for researchers or journalists.

For the serious researcher there remain some obstacles. Not all the relevant classified documents are yet available. However, most secret documents concerning the case (mostly situation reports and forecasts by security authorities) are classified for 50 years, and

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2057 might be too long to wait to conduct a useful study. Furthermore, it appears from the material available and interviews that many documents did not exist in the first place. There were no comprehensive plans concerning the statue,⁹ and information was exchanged by email—with mailbox contents lost if an individual changed his or her post or IT departments changed the mail server (at the time there was no legal framework for retaining emails¹⁰)—or, as the speed of events took over,

⁸ European Commission, "Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council: Joint Framework on countering hybrid threats—a European Union response," JOIN/2016/018 final, 2016, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52016JC0018>.

⁹ Madis Mikko (former official of the Estonian Ministry of Defence, 1999-2013), interview by Ivo Juurvee, Tallinn, 14 August 2019; Meelis Oidsalu (official of the Estonian Ministry of Defence, 2000-present), interview by Ivo Juurvee, Tallinn, 17 July 2019.

¹⁰ Tiit Arumäe et al, *Rahvusarhiivi juhised: dokumendi- ja arhiivihaldus* [Guidelines of the National Archives: Document and archive management] (Tallinn: Rahvusarhiiv, 2003), 17, <https://www.digar.ee/arhiiv/et/download/116381>.

on the phone or face-to-face.¹¹ Even worse, almost everybody researching the events agrees that Russia's media coverage had a lot to do with the outcome. What were the Russian media saying at the time? It appears very hard to find out, since the results of monitoring by both Estonia and other countries and the EU have been lost forever on replaced computer devices. However, with some newly declassified material available, interviews and hard work with internet archives, databases, and contemporary Estonian and Russian print newspapers, it was possible to overcome most of these obstacles.

1. A GLANCE AT RUSSIA'S MINDSET PRIOR TO 2007

The idea of using Russian-speakers living abroad in the interest of the state and calling them 'compatriots' (*sootechestvenniki*) is not new in Russia. It dates back to at least the 1960s. The Soviet Committee for Cultural Relations with Compatriots Abroad was formed in May 1963 for the work of emigres from the USSR. The KGB counterintelligence handbook of 1972 smuggled to the West by Vasiliy Mitrokhin reads:

*The First Chief Directorate [i.e. KGB foreign intelligence] is responsible for directing the activities of the Soviet Committee for Cultural Relations with Compatriots Abroad and its mission in the GDR, and also for coordinating the work of the Societies and Committees in the Union Republics.*¹²

In other words, although officially an NGO it was in reality a KGB front organisation, something that nowadays would be called a government-organised NGO (GONGO).

The situation at the time was very different, of course, since most of the people considered

compatriots had fled Russia due to the Bolshevik takeover in 1917 or the USSR during WWII. The KGB estimated the number of

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such people at 12 million, mostly in capitalist countries and in large part hostile to the Soviet cause. Although the main aim was to dismantle organisations in the diaspora, create new ones under Soviet control and use compatriots as intelligence assets if possible, the 1968 KGB handbook already foresaw some possibility of using history in dealing with them. For example, the 50th anniversary of the so-called Great October Revolution in 1967 was widely used for propaganda purposes. On the other hand, commemorations by diaspora Armenians of the 50th anniversary of the start of the massacre of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire in 1915 was seen as problematic due to improving relations between the USSR and Turkey at the time.¹³

After the fall of the Soviet Union it did not take long for Russia to realise the possibilities that Russian-speakers offered for achieving foreign-policy goals. The first to point this out was the deputy director of the Institute of Europe of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Sergey Karaganov, in his essay 'Problems of protection of the Russian-oriented population in the "near abroad"', published in the Russian foreign-policy magazine *Diplomaticheskii Vestnik* in November 1992.¹⁴ The document, later sometimes called 'the Karaganov doctrine,' was soon official Moscow policy. In December the same year, Russia's foreign minister, Andrei Kozyrev, shocked delegates at the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe in

¹¹ Marina Kaljurand (former Estonian ambassador to Russia, 2005-08), phone interview by Ivo Juurvee, 19 August 2019.

¹² Vasiliy Mitrokhin (ed.), *KGB Lexicon: The Soviet Intelligence Officer's Handbook* (London: Frank Cass, 2002), 376.

¹³ A. A. Fabrichnikov and I. A. Ovchinnikov, *Ispol'zovaniye vozmozhnostey Sovetskogo komiteta po kul'turnym svyazyam s sootechestvennikami za rubezhom v razvedyatel'noy rabote* [The use of possibilities of the Soviet committee for the relations with the compatriots abroad in intelligence work] (Moscow: NIO KGB, 1968), 16, 87-88.

¹⁴ S. A. Karaganov, "Problemy zashchity Rossiysko orientirovannogo naseleniya v 'blizhnem' zarubezhye" [Problems of protection of Russia-oriented population in the 'near' abroad], *Diplomaticheskii Vestnik*, No. 21-22, 15-30 November 1992, 43-45.

Stockholm and the West in general by describing the territory of the former Soviet Union as ‘a post-imperial space where Russia has to defend its interests by all available means, including military and economic ones.’¹⁵

The card of ‘protecting the Russian minority’ against the countries that had become independent of the USSR, or the ‘near abroad’ as Russian diplomacy now referred to them, was repeatedly played in the 1990s. This reached a new level in the spring of 1999 when—with

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former KGB officer and FSB director-general Vladimir Putin by then Secretary of the Russian Security Council—on 24 May president Yeltsin approved the law ‘On the state policy of the Russian Federation regarding compatriots abroad.’¹⁶ Article 1 of the law gave a rather blurred definition of ‘compatriots’:

Compatriots abroad (hereinafter ‘compatriots’) are citizens of the Russian Federation permanently residing for the territory of the Russian Federation; Compatriots are also recognised as individuals and their descendants, living outside the territory of the Russian Federation and relating, as a rule, to peoples historically residing on territories of the Russian Federation, as well as those who made a free choice in favour of spiritual, cultural and legal ties with the Russian Federation of persons whose relatives are in a direct ascending line lived on the territory of the Russian Federation, including: persons who were citizens of the USSR, living in the states that were part of the USSR, who received the citizenship of these States

or stateless persons; immigrants from the Russian state, Russian republics, the RSFSR, the USSR and the Russian Federation, which had appropriate citizenship and become citizens foreign state or stateless persons.

Major strategy documents concerning Russia’s activities abroad had already been adopted at the beginning of Putin’s first term as president in 2000, and were still in force in 2007. The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation of 2000 does not refer to mixing different types of leverage, although it already underlined the importance of ‘protecting the rights and interests of Russian citizens and compatriots abroad’ (Article III-4) and stated that ‘Accelerated development of its own effective means of informational influence on public opinion abroad becomes relevant for the Russian Federation’ (Article III-5).¹⁷

The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation of 2000, in force in 2007, also mentions discrimination against Russian citizens as among external threats. While describing Russia’s actions in dealing with threats in Article 7, it ‘prefers political, diplomatic and other non-military means of preventing, localising and neutralising military threats at the regional and global levels.’¹⁸ Some elements of DIME are there, but only in a military context. The document does not mention ‘compatriots,’ but it does see ‘discrimination, suppression of the rights, freedoms and legitimate interests of citizens of the Russian Federation in foreign states’ (Article 5) as an external threat.

To conclude, the use of hybrid means was almost absent from Russia’s public doctrinal and policy documents until 2007 when the Bronze Soldier crisis occurred in Estonia. In the wake of this crisis, however, the situation has changed considerably (see Chapter 6).

¹⁵ “Diplomats shocked by Kozyrev ploy,” *Independent*, 15 December 1992, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/diplomats-shocked-by-kozyrev-ploy-1563641.html>.

¹⁶ State Duma and Federal Council, “Federal’nyy zakon o gosudarstvennoy politiki Rossiyskoy Federatsii v otnoshenii sootchestvennikov za rabuzhem” [Federal law on state policy of the Russian Federation regarding compatriots abroad], No. 99-F3, 24 May 1999, <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/13875>.

¹⁷ “Kontseptsiya vneshney politiki Rossiyskoy Federatsii,” *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 11 July 2000, http://www.ng.ru/world/2000-07-11/1_concept.html.

¹⁸ President of Russia, “Ukaz Prezidenta RF ‘Ob utverzhdenii Voennoy doktriny Rossiyskoy Federatsii’” [Decree of the President of the RF ‘On the approval of the Military doctrine of the Russian Federation’], Decree No. 706, 21 April 2000, <http://kremlin.ru/acts/bank/15386>.

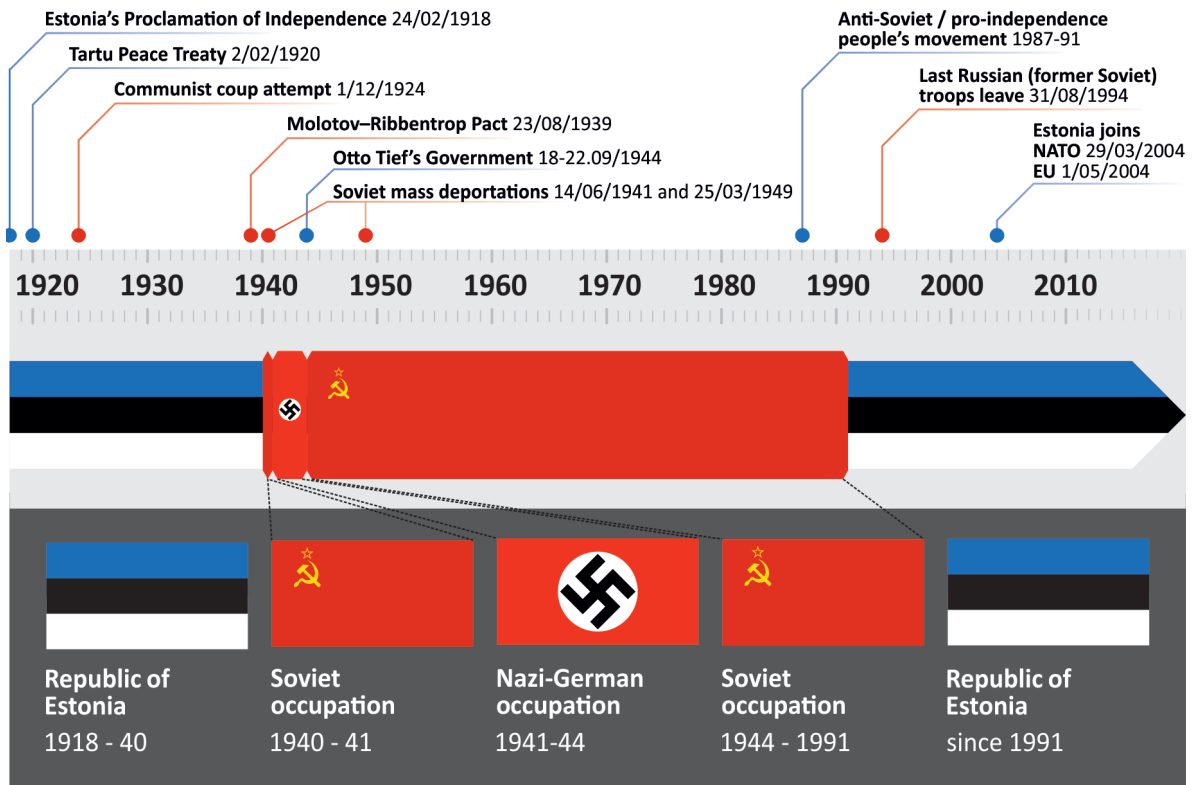


Figure 1. Timeline of *de facto* rulers of Estonia over the last hundred years and some other relevant historical events in addition to changes of power (Chart by Ivo Juurvee)

2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO THE 2007 EVENTS

History matters when dealing with issues concerning Russia, and this is true in this case too.¹⁹ In 2007 the interpretation of history was one of the central enablers of the riots and in order to understand why it was such an emotional topic for so many—both in Estonia and in Russia—a short excursion into history is needed.

2.1. OCCUPATIONS OF ESTONIA AND THEIR HUMAN COST

In the 20th century Estonia saw many drastic changes of governing regime and, with the exception of regaining independence in 1991, all have included violence—the worst of them

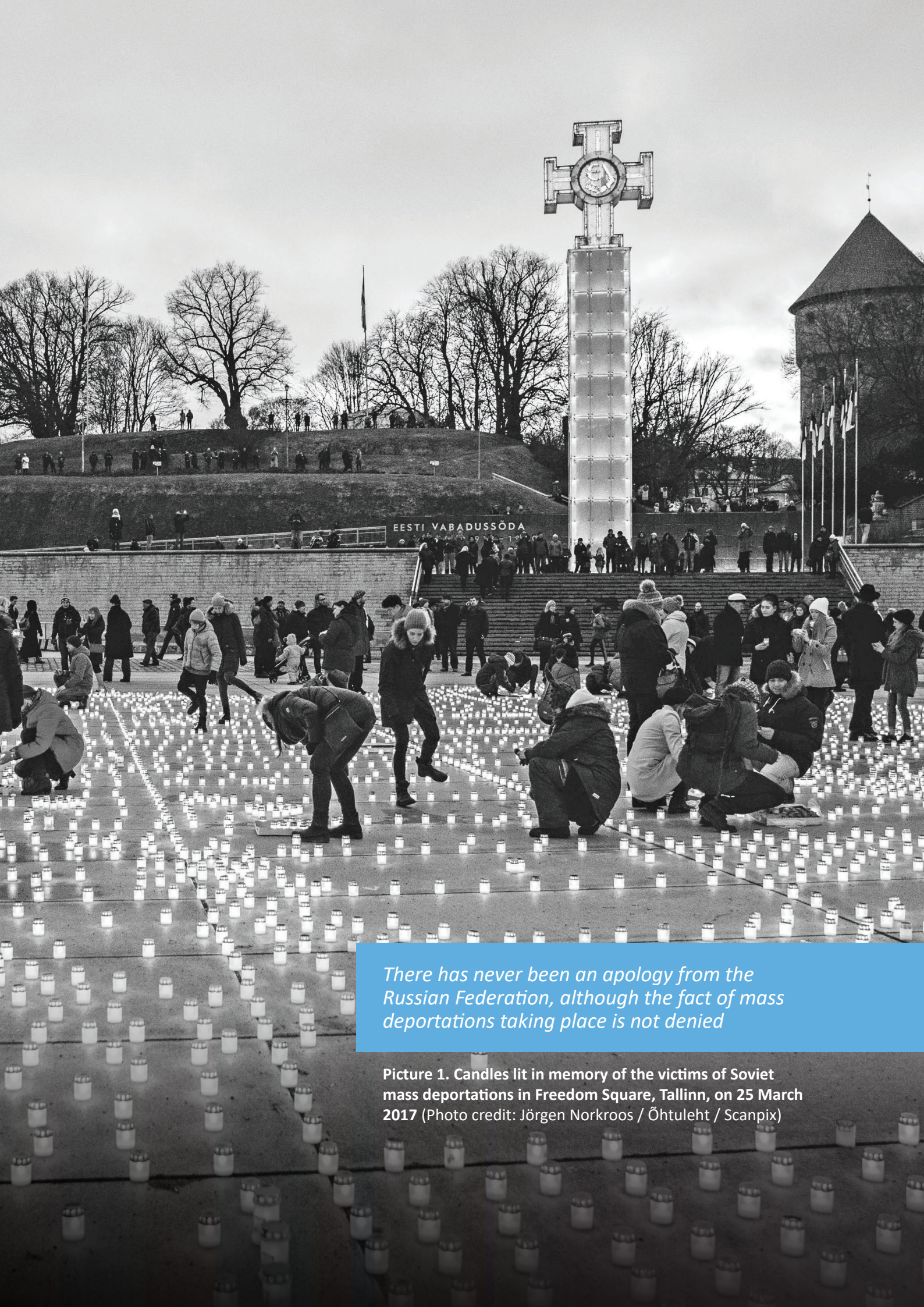
the Soviet and Nazi occupations that included mass repressions.

Estonia gained its *de facto* independence at the end of World War I after 200 years of being part of the Russian Empire and one year of occupation by the German Empire. This was followed by the War of Independence (1918–20) against the invading Red Army and, for a short time, against German forces stationed in Latvia. Over 6,000 Estonian military personnel died in this war.²⁰

The hard-won independence was lost in 1940 as a result of the partition of Eastern Europe between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany foreseen in the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact, signed in Moscow on 23 August 1939. Thus, Estonia did not take part in WWII as a political entity; however, both occupying powers carried out mobilisations (although their legality was at least questionable under international law at the time) and some 100,000 Estonian men out of a total population of 1.1 million ended

¹⁹ In his recent book, Keir Giles has a chapter dedicated to history under title 'History matters.' See Keir Giles, *Moscow Rules: What Drives Russia to Confront the West* (London: Chatham House, 2019), 117-126.

²⁰ Peeter Kaasik et al, *Eesti Vabadussõja ajalugu II: Kaitseõda piiride taga ja lõpuvõitlused* [History of the Estonian War of Independence. Part II: Defensive war beyond the border and the end of hostilities] (Tallinn: Varrak, 2020), 488.



There has never been an apology from the Russian Federation, although the fact of mass deportations taking place is not denied

Picture 1. Candles lit in memory of the victims of Soviet mass deportations in Freedom Square, Tallinn, on 25 March 2017 (Photo credit: Jörgen Norkroos / Öhtuleht / Scanpix)

up fighting in the Soviet or German armed forces—about one-third on the Soviet side and two-thirds on the German.²¹

When German rule was collapsing in the autumn of 1944, an attempt was made to re-establish Estonian independence. On 18 September 1944, a government headed by Otto

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Tief was nominated in accordance with the 1937 Constitution of the Republic of Estonia, and three days later the Estonian national flag was hoisted on the most important flagpole in the country at the Castle Hill in Tallinn atop the pre-war parliament building. However, the Red Army arrived on 22 September 1944, replaced it with the red flag of the Soviet Union, and arrested the members of the government.²²

Estonia and Russia disagree on how to refer to what was going on in Estonia in 1940–41 and 1944–91. Whether in 1944 it was an occupation or a liberation remains a somewhat emotional issue or, on the other hand, a matter for specific study in international law.²³ However, also available is an opinion of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR). In 2006, it stated: ‘After the German occupation in 1941–44, Estonia remained occupied by the Soviet Union until the restoration of its independence in 1991.’²⁴

Although Estonia was liberated from the Nazis, Soviet troops were to stay for 50 more years.

²¹ Toomas Hiio, “Eesti mehed Nõukogude ja Saksa väes” [Estonian men in the Soviet and German forces], *Eesti Päevaleht*, 21 June 2007, <https://epl.delfi.ee/meelelahutus/eesti-mehed-noukogude-ja-saksa-vaes?id=51091892>.

²² “Attempt to restore Estonian independence in 1944,” *Estonica*, accessed 15 June 2020, http://www.estonica.org/en/Attempt_to_restore_Estonian_independence_in_1944/.

²³ For the latter, see: Lauri Mälksoo, *Illegal Annexation and State Continuity: The case of the incorporation of the Baltic States by the USSR—a study of the tension between normativity and power in international law* (Leiden/Boston: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2003).

²⁴ See: European Court of Human Rights, “Fourth Section Decision as to the Admissibility of Application No. 23052/04 by August Kolk and application No. 24018/04 by Petr Kislyiy against Estonia on 17 January 2006,” 17 January 2007, <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#%7B%22itemid%22:%7B%22001-72404%22%7D%7D>.

Soviet rule brought with it three important things that are still vividly remembered in Estonia: mass repressions, poverty and changes in the country’s ethnic composition.

The first mass deportation on Estonian soil since the beginning of the 18th century and before the horrors of the Holocaust yet to come was carried out by the Soviet authorities in the early hours of 14 June 1941, when over 10,000 Estonian citizens were deported to Siberia by train. Even worse was to come after the end of WWII, starting on 25 March 1949 when over 20,000 people—mainly women (50%) and children (28%)—were deported to distant parts of the Soviet Union. Altogether some 33,000 people were deported from Estonia during Stalin’s reign and of these 9,000 died, mostly in Siberia.²⁵ Although these actions happened very quickly, they instilled fear for decades to come. The victims of these crimes are still remembered in Estonia, and on 25 March every year thousands of candles are lit in the main square of Tallinn and other places around Estonia. Although not on a mass scale

Estonia and Russia disagree on how to refer to what was going on in Estonia in 1940–41 and 1944–91. Whether in 1944 it was an occupation or a liberation remains a somewhat emotional issue

following Stalin’s death, the imprisonment or detention in psychiatric hospitals of dissidents carried on well into the 1980s.²⁶

There has never been an apology from the Russian Federation, although the fact of mass deportations taking place is not denied. This may make it emotionally more difficult for Estonians to ‘turn the page’ or ‘leave history behind’ when the Soviet occupation is discussed.

²⁵ Eesti Mälu Instituut (Estonian Institute of Historical Memory), *Toimik „Priboi“: Artikleid ja dokumente 1949. aasta märtsiküüditamisest* (Eesti Mälu Instituudi toimetised 2/2019) [Dossier ‘Priboi’: Articles and documents from the deportations of March 1949 (Proceedings of the Estonian Institute of Historical Memory 2/2019)] (Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli Kirjastus, 2020), 36, 534.

²⁶ See: Arvo Pesti, *Dissidentlik liikumine eestis aastatel 1972–1987: Dokumentide kogumik* [Movements of the Estonian dissidents in 1972–1987: Collection of documents] (Tallinn: Rahvusarhiiv, 2009).

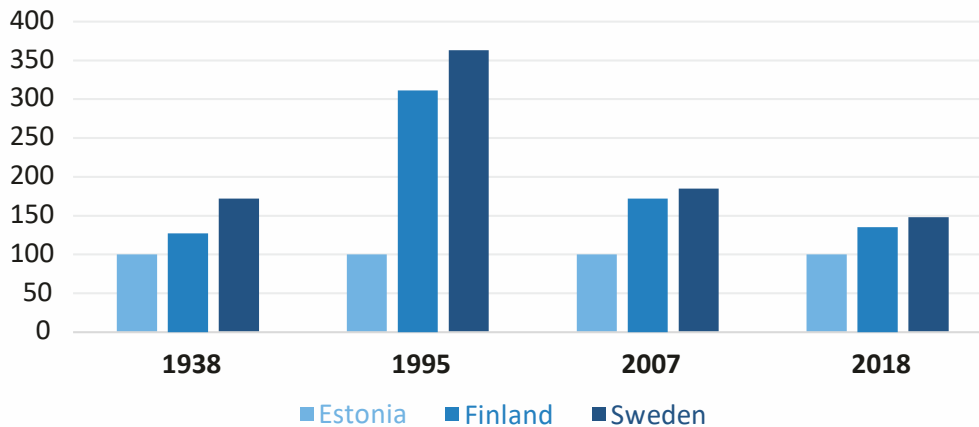


Figure 2. Estonia’s GDP per capita (PPP) compared to Finland and Sweden in 1938, 1995, 2007 and 2018 (Estonia = 100) (Data sources: Jaak Valge & World Bank)

2.2. ECONOMIC OUTCOME OF SOVIET OCCUPATION

Soviet rule began implementing its ideologically based economic model, which foresaw the nationalisation of all businesses, real estate and farms—depriving the owners of their property and causing great suffering, not to mention the injustice involved. Of course, this put the economy in disarray and resulted in poverty. It is not easy to quantify the results, but the comparison of annual per capita GDP (PPP) with near neighbours Sweden and Finland may give some insight. In 1938, the year before the start of WWII, Sweden’s GDP per capita (PPP) was the equivalent of 172% of Estonia’s; Finland’s was 27% larger.²⁷ The first post-occupation GDP

Soviet rule began implementing its ideologically based economic model depriving the owners of their property and causing great suffering, not to mention the injustice involved

figures available in the World Bank Database are from 1995, when the economic situation had stabilised somewhat and it was again methodologically possible to calculate Estonia’s GDP. In 1995, Swedish GDP per capita (PPP) was the equivalent of 363% of Estonia’s and

²⁷ Calculated Geary-Khamis dollars based on data: Jaak Valge, “Uue majanduse lähteil: Eesti sisemajanduse kogutoodang 1923-1938” [On the sources of new economy: Estonia’s gross domestic product 1923-1938], *Akadeemia*, 12, 2003, 2722-2723.

Finland’s 311%, meaning that in comparison with these countries Estonia was over twice as poor as in 1938.²⁸ Since independence Estonia has done its best to catch up and is now where it was in 1938 compared to Sweden and Finland in terms of GDP per capita (PPP), although there was still a noticeable difference in 2007 (see Figure 2).

2.3. IMPACT OF THE SOVIET OCCUPATION ON THE ETHNIC COMPOSITION OF ESTONIA’S POPULATION

The longest-lasting impact of the Soviet occupation is the change in the country’s ethnic composition. The last pre-war census in Estonia was held in 1934, when 88.1% of inhabitants were ethnic Estonians. The final census during the Cold War was held in 1989, when only 61.5% were Estonian. (Taking into account the Soviet military personnel stationed in Estonia, the proportion of Estonians would be

²⁸ Calculations based on World Bank Database: “GDP per capita, PPP (current international \$) – Finland,” World Development Indicators database, World Bank, accessed 15 June 2020, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.PP.CD?locations=FI>; “GDP per capita, PPP (current international \$) – Estonia,” Development Indicators database, World Bank, accessed 15 June 2020, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.PP.CD?locations=EE>; “GDP per capita, PPP (current international \$) – Sweden,” Development Indicators database, World Bank, accessed 15 June 2020, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.PP.CD?locations=SE>.

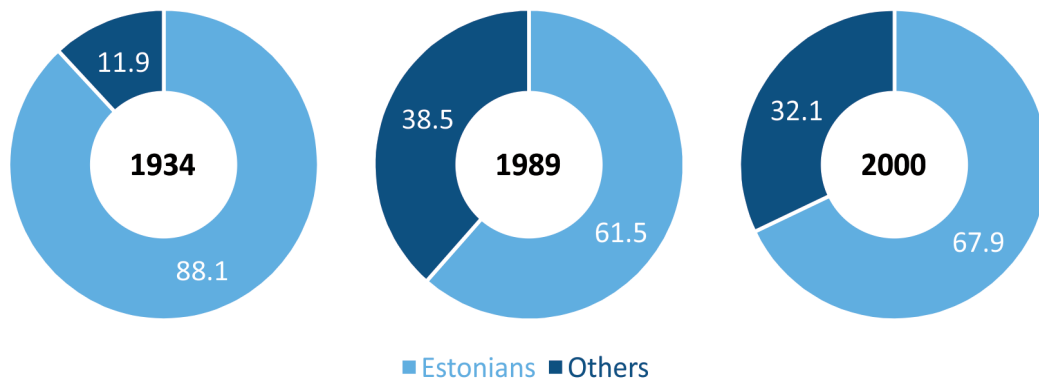


Figure 3: Ethnic Estonians as a proportion of total inhabitants of Estonia according to censuses of 1934, 1989 and 2000³¹

smaller still.²⁹) The last census held before 2007 was in 2000, when ethnic Estonians accounted for 67.9% of the total (see Figure 3).³⁰ As we will see later, the ethnic composition caused by occupation had a lot to do with the outbreak of the riots in 2007.

2.4. REFLECTION OF HISTORY IN MONUMENTS

The country's turbulent history was of course reflected in monuments in Estonia in the 20th century. In the years following the War of Independence, a large number were erected, mostly in cemeteries, to commemorate the fallen. Many of these structures were destroyed during the Soviet occupation of 1940–41 and

almost total destruction followed the end of WWII. Some monuments to Stalin had even shorter life spans and were removed by the same powers that had erected them. Longer lasting were statues of Lenin and some local communist figures, most of which were removed at the end of the Cold War. The record for the shortest tenure is held by the statue of Estonian communist Viktor Kingissepp near his birthplace, which was erected on 26 March 1988 and removed on 18 April 1989. The longest-surviving were monuments to the Great Patriotic War (as the Nazi–Soviet war of 1941–45 is known in Russia), most of which (with the exception of ‘commemoration tanks’) are still in their original location.³²

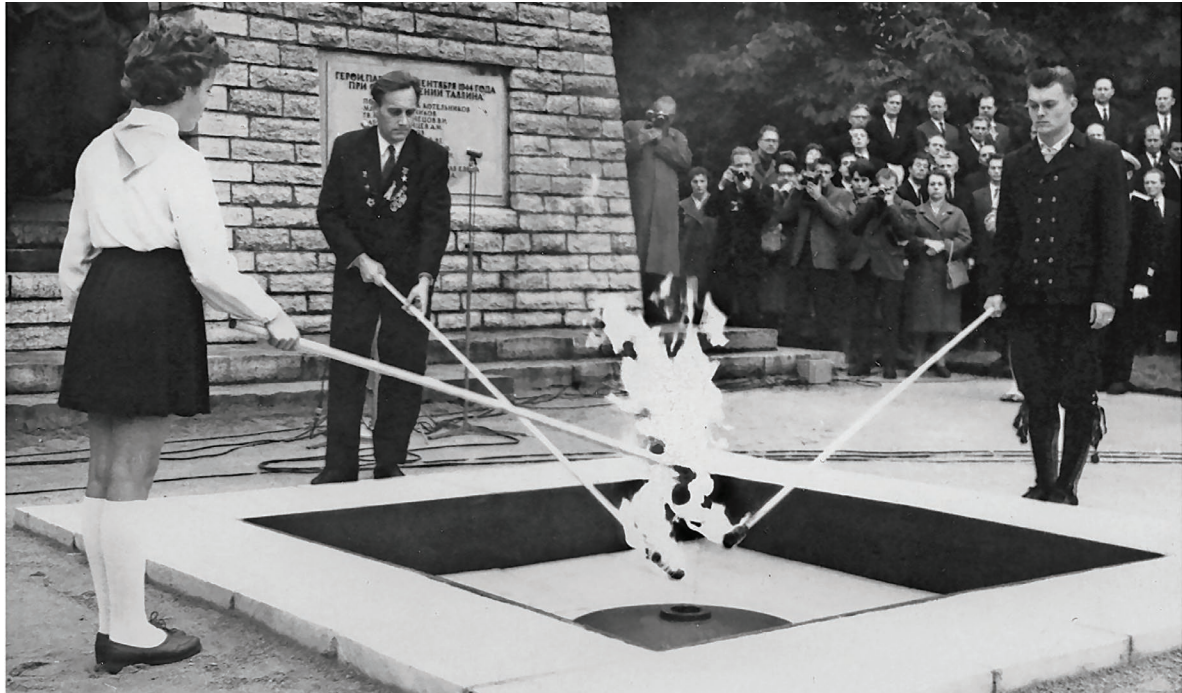
Although there was fierce fighting in eastern Estonia in 1944, the Germans evacuated Tallinn without resistance. This meant there were almost no Soviet casualties. Since somewhere was needed to commemorate them, in April 1945 a decision was taken to rebury about a dozen Red Army soldiers on Tõnismägi (St Anthony's Hill) in Tallinn and after the ceremony a temporary wooden obelisk was erected there on 12 June 1945. On the night of 8 May 1946, two schoolgirls (aged 14 and 15) blew the monument up. It was replaced without delay, but similar monuments were later blown up in Rakvere and Tartu. In 1947 a new monument—a mourning soldier in Red Army uniform backed by a limestone wall—

²⁹ The Soviet Union implemented compulsory military service, and men served away from their home soviet socialist republics (SSR). According to the methodology of the census, officers, contracted personnel and their family members were counted into the population of the SSR where they were stationed. However, other ranks were counted into the population of their home SSRs. In the case of Estonia, this means that about 16,000 young men counted as being drafted here (some 10,000 of them ethnic Estonians) were, in reality, in other parts of the Soviet Union and Soviet garrisons in Eastern Europe. On the other hand, at least twice as many non-Estonians were serving in the Soviet Armed Forces on Estonian territory. Taking these figures into account, the real proportion of Estonians in the inhabitants of the Estonian SSR would be 60.3%. However, given the possible falsification of military numbers, this should be taken as an estimate. See: Regina Hansen, “Rahvaloendus nõukogude moodi” [Soviet style census of population], *Eesti Päevaleht*, 18 March 2000, <https://epl.delfi.ee/meelelahutus/rahvaloendus-noukogude-moodi?id=50784962&fbclid=IwAR0LK3Ms7AIX-0Y4wQsxsumujS9mzLOEAlh4kPyKUBFbZm6gtWplbuxv810>. For methodology, see: Statistical Office of Estonia, *Population of Estonia by Population Censuses* (Tallinn: Statistical Office of Estonia, 1997), 7, www.stat.ee/dokumendid/20409.

³⁰ Ene-Margit Tiit, *Eesti rahvastiku 100 aastat* [100 Years of Estonia's Population] (Tallinn: PostFactum, 2018), 80, 154–155, 158–159, 198–199.

³¹ Based on: Tiit, *Eesti rahvastiku 100 aastat*, 80, 154.

³² For Soviet era monuments in Estonia see: Marek Tamm, Jaak Valge and Rita Valge, *Monumendid ja võim: Eesti Ajaloomuuseumi kogutud nõukogudeaegsete monumentide väliekspositsiooni kataloog* [Monuments and power: Catalogue of the outdoor exhibition of Soviet-era monuments collected by the Estonian History Museum] (Tallinn: Ajaloomuuseum, 2020).



Picture 2. Lighting of the ‘eternal flame’ in front of the Bronze Soldier on 22 September 1964. (Second from left is Hero of the Soviet Union Arnold Meri. Only 15 years earlier he had been in charge of conducting mass deportations from Hiiumaa island) (Photo credit: National Archives of Estonia)

was opened on Tõnismägi, remaining there for 60 years. After the 1940s acts against Soviet monuments were rare. There were some, however; for example, in December 1984 a canister of gasoline was burnt in front of the monument recalling the Soviet-organised attempted *coup d'état* of 1924.³³

Commemoration of the Great Patriotic War gained momentum in the USSR with the rise to power of Leonid Brezhnev. On 9 May 1965, for the first time since 1945, a military parade was held in Moscow’s Red Square commemorating the event. It was repeated only three times before the end of Soviet rule, in 1975, 1985 and 1990. Although never completely ignored, 9 May was never as important as the commemoration of 7 November, the anniversary of the October Revolution, for which a military parade was held in Red Square every year.³⁴

As analysis of newspapers shows, commemorations in front of the Bronze Soldier took place every year, even after the restoration

of Estonia’s independence. Military units of the Former Soviet Union stayed in Estonia until 1994 and Russian Federation soldiers armed with assault rifles were sometimes present as a guard of honour. Unfortunately, press reports do not provide enough information to estimate the number of people present at the commemorations in the 1990s. Bearing in mind the damage caused by the Soviet occupation, not everybody was happy with the monument remaining in the city centre. In 1994, prime

Commemoration of the Great Patriotic War gained momentum in the USSR with the rise to power of Leonid Brezhnev

minister Mart Laar proposed to the Tallinn municipal authorities that the Bronze Soldier be removed, pointing out historical reasons including ‘the meaning of the monument for forces hostile to the Republic of Estonia and the possibility of endless provocations.’³⁵

³³ Tamm, Valge, and Valge, *Monumendid ja võim*, 11–13, 130.
³⁴ Vladimir Juškin, “Vladimir Juškin: võiduudu kudumine” [Vladimir Juškin: Knitting the fog of victory], *Postimees*, 9 May 2020, <https://leht.postimees.ee/6967618/vladimir-justin-voiduudu-kudumine>.

³⁵ Riigikantselei (Government Office of Estonia), “Peaminister Mart Laar Tallinna linnavolikogu esimehele Tiit Vähile ja linnapea Jaak Tammele” [Prime Minister Mart Laar to Tallinn City Council Chairman Tiit Vähi and Mayor Jaak Tamm], No 1-1/63, 8 September 1994. (Obtained by the authors with Request for Information from the Government Office).

However, due to political reality and the large number of Russian-speakers voting in Tallinn, the initiative came to nothing and the statue stayed in place. Meanwhile, in Russia the commemoration of the Great Patriotic War gained momentum. In December 1994, Russian forces had started action in Chechnya and the initial results were quite devastating for the Russian Army. At the same time, president Boris

The mass repression, poverty and changes in Estonia's ethnic composition during the Soviet occupation means the Estonians have mixed feelings towards ostentatious celebrations of 9 May

Yeltsin found more and more time to deal with the glorious military past. On 22 March 1995, he signed a decree 'On awarding the jubilee medal "50 years of Victory in the Great Patriotic War of 1941–1945"'.³⁶ On 9 May 1995, the first military parade in Red Square since November 1990 was held, only the sixth such parade ever held. On 19 May, Yeltsin signed the law 'On perpetuating the Victory of the Soviet people in the Great Patriotic War of 1941–1945'.³⁷

The seeds of the commemorations we now see had been planted. Since 1995 the military parade on 9 May has been held in Red Square every year, until 2020, when it was postponed for six weeks due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Since a large number of the Russian-speaking community in Estonia follows Russian media, this has influenced popularity of these commemorations among them. At the same time, the mass repression, poverty and changes in Estonia's ethnic composition during the Soviet occupation means the Estonians have mixed feelings towards ostentatious celebrations of 9 May.

Although two-thirds of mobilised Estonians in WWII were mobilised by Germany and these forces took heavy casualties, there were few places to commemorate them, while Estonia was covered with memorials to the Soviet side

3. EVENTS LEADING TO THE CRISIS UP TO 25 APRIL 2007

Historical memory had a big influence on Estonia regaining its independence. The human chain from Tallinn to Riga and Vilnius on 23 August 1989 marking the 50th anniversary of the signature of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact was probably the event best known in the West for drawing attention to the fate of the Baltic states. By the beginning of the 2000s, history was much less on the public agenda than a decade earlier. The issues over Russian-speakers seemed to have been resolved, with the closure of the OSCE Mission to Estonia at the end of 2001 seen as recognition of this.³⁸

Television broadcasts from Russia were easily available in Estonia and local Russian-speakers were watching them, including news reports. In March 2007, the average non-Estonian speaker spent 4 hours 49 minutes a day in front of the TV set, and among the three most popular channels were two produced in Russia, *Pervyy Baltiyskiy Kanal* (PBK) and *RTR Planeta*, with viewing-time shares of 28.9% and 9.6% respectively.³⁹

At the beginning of the 2000s this did not seem to have any influence on public life in Estonia. There were few signs of possible trouble and not

much attention was paid to an event that might have caused concern about the integration of

³⁶ President of Russia, "Ukaz Prezidenta Rossiyskoy Federatsii 'O nagrazhdenii yubileynoy medal'yu '50 let Pobedy v Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyne 1941-1945 gg.'" [Decree of the President of the Russian Federation 'On awarding the jubilee medal "50 years of victory in Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945"'], Decree No. 296, 22 March 1995, <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/7665>.

³⁷ State Duma, "Federal'nyy zakon ob uvekovechenii Pobedy sovetского naroda v Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyne 1941-1945 godov" [Federal law on perpetuating victory of the Soviet people in the Great Patriotic war of 1941-1945], No 80-F3, 19 May 1995, <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/7872>.

³⁸ "OSCE Mission to Estonia (closed)," Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, accessed 15 June 2020, <https://www.osce.org/estonia-closed>.

³⁹ "Teleauditooriumi ülevaade märtsikuus" [Television viewing audience overview for March], TNS Emori, 18 April 2007, accessed 15 June 2020, <https://web.archive.org/web/20070624234011/http://www.emor.ee/arhiiv.html?id=1756>. Although PBK was formally registered as a TV channel owned by a media company based in Riga, Latvia, most of its content consisted of re-broadcasting programmes from the First Channel (*Pervyy Kanal*)—one of Russia's main TV channels.



Figure 3. Police investigators examine the car with diplomatic number plates destroyed in riot outside the US Embassy, 30 April 2003 (Photo credit: Priit Simson/Ekspress Media/Scanpix)

Russian-speakers in Estonia. On 30 April 2003, there was a demonstration against the war in Iraq outside the US Embassy in Tallinn, involving mainly younger non-Estonian speakers, which turned violent. The embassy was damaged and the small-scale riot led to criminal charges against 17 young people.⁴⁰

Celebrations of 9 May and of 22 September (the day Soviet forces entered Tallinn in 1944) were mentioned in the media, but were rather modest and did not receive much coverage.⁴¹ Although two-thirds of mobilised Estonians in WWII were mobilised by Germany and these forces took heavy casualties, there were few places to commemorate them, while Estonia was covered with memorials to the Soviet side. Tiit Madisson was a man who decided to change this. He had been imprisoned and exiled in the 1980s for being a dissident, and since 2002 had served as mayor of the small municipality of Lihula in western Estonia. On 20 August 2004, a ceremony took place in Lihula to unveil a

monument with a relief of an Estonian soldier in German uniform holding an MP 40 submachine gun (popularly known as the *Schmeisser*) and the inscription, 'To the Estonian men who fought in 1940–1945 against Bolshevism and for the restoration of Estonian independence.' The monument had been erected in Pärnu two years earlier, but quickly removed using pretext that it did not have a permission from municipal authorities. Although state officials were invited, none attended. Two Russian television channels

While avoiding problems internationally by removing the monument in Lihula, the Estonian government had created a problem domestically

sent camera teams to cover the event, eager to show the 'revival of fascism' in Estonia, and the news made its way into the international media.⁴²

The Estonian government clearly saw a problem here. Estonia had become a member of NATO and the EU only a few months before, and defiantly erecting such memorials—even as a

⁴⁰ Estonian Internal Security Service, *Annual Review 2003* (Tallinn: Kaitsepolitseiamet, 2004), 14-15, https://www.kapo.ee/sites/default/files/public/content_page/Annual%20Review%202003.pdf.

⁴¹ Authors went through Estonian language newspapers *Postimees*, *Eesti Päevaleht* and *Õhtuleht* and Russian language newspapers published in Estonia, *Molodezh Estonii* and *Vesti Dnya*.

⁴² Karsten Brüggemann and Andres Kasekamp, "The Politics of History and the 'War of Monuments' in Estonia," *Nationalities Papers*, 36:3, 2008, 431-432.

private initiative—would be hard to understand for Estonia’s allies. The decision was taken to remove the statue and this happened on 2 September, but things did not proceed without complications. After Estonian Public Broadcasting announced the removal in its main news programme starting at 9.00 pm, people started to gather at the cemetery in Lihula, and soon there were 400 of them. (The population of Lihula was 1,600.) They began to throw stones and, in order to get the monument out of the cemetery, police in riot gear had to use force.⁴³

While avoiding problems internationally by removing the monument in Lihula, the Estonian government had created a problem domestically since the use of force against protestors by the police was a rare exception in Estonia, and the media criticised the government. In the immediate aftermath, several Red Army monuments were defaced with paint. These events were reported in the Russian media and the term ‘war of monuments’ was coined.⁴⁴

In the spring of 2005, Russia celebrated the 60th anniversary of victory on a larger scale. Under the aegis of the news agency RIA Novosti and the student organisation *Studencheskaya Obshchina* (‘Student Community’), a campaign was initiated of wearing Ribbons of St George around 9 May, and four million were distributed in 900 towns around Russia.⁴⁵ In 1995, Yeltsin’s position needed bolstering among the Russian population, and Putin was in the same situation in 2005. In the previous two years there had been two ‘colour’ revolutions in countries that the Kremlin had considered its backyard—the Rose Revolution in Georgia and the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, in 2003 and 2004 respectively—taking these countries to a Western orientation. Although Yeltsin’s period in office was considered a failure, even during his time Russia had not suffered such a drift away of its former allies. 2004 was also the year the Baltic states became full members of NATO and

the EU. There was a chance these events would bring out democratic tendencies in Russia, too, and in such situation a patriotic boost was handy for Putin’s regime.

Around the same time Putin also bolstered his regime by creating a new mass youth organisation. On 15 April 2005, an organisation called *Nashi* (‘Ours’) was established. The ‘Manifesto’ published on its website read in part:

Today, before our very eyes, an unnatural union of liberals and fascists, Westerners and ultranationalists, international foundations and international terrorists is forming. Only one thing holds them together—hatred of Putin. ... [T]he impulse generated by Putin meets fierce resistance from internal and external opponents. ... In this situation, the ‘Nashi’ movement will support Putin. This will not be support for Putin’s personality, but support for his political course ...⁴⁶

The lavish commemoration of victory in Russia also drew more people to the Bronze Soldier in Tallinn for 9 May 2005, and history was back on the public agenda. The following year on 9 May, Estonian nationalist Jüri Böhm carried an Estonian flag and a placard stating ‘This soldier occupied our country and deported our people!’

The lavish commemoration of victory in Russia also drew more people to the Bronze Soldier in Tallinn for 9 May, and history was back on the public agenda

to the Bronze Soldier and the police had to rescue him from an angry crowd of Russian-speakers laying flowers at the statue. The fact that the Estonian flag was taken away from the monument while Soviet flags were tolerated by the police infuriated the Estonian public. From then on, tension escalated rapidly around the statue. On 10 May, another Estonian nationalist, Jüri Liim, threatened to blow up the Bronze Soldier should it be still standing a year later, and, on 21 May, Tiit Madisson held a meeting

⁴³ Henrik Roonemaa, “Kas see on nüüd Eesti, Lihula aastal 2004 või hoopis Afganistan?” [Is this now Estonia, Lihula in 2004, or Afghanistan instead?], *Postimees*, 4 September 2004, <https://www.postimees.ee/1431937/kas-see-on-nuud-eesti-lihula-aastal-2004-voi-hoopis-afganistan>.

⁴⁴ “‘Voyna pamyatnikov’ v Estonii prodolzhaetsya: pervye itogi” [‘The war of monuments’ in Estonia continues: first outcomes], *Regnum*, 29 October 2004, <https://regnum.ru/news/polit/351323.html>.

⁴⁵ “‘Georgiyevskaya lentochka’: istoriya aktsii” [‘St. George’s ribbon’: campaign’s history], RIA Novosti, 24 April 2007, <https://ria.ru/20070424/64257206.html>.

⁴⁶ “Manifest molodezhnogo dvizheniya ‘Nashi’” [Manifesto of the youth movement ‘Nashi’], *Nashi*, 2 February 2006, accessed 15 June 2020, <https://web.archive.org/web/20060202024918/http://nashi.su/pravda/83974709>.

attended by some 200 people demanding its removal. The next night the statue was daubed with paint. In response, an organisation called *Nochnoy Dozor* ('Night Watch') was set up by some Russian-speaking activists to 'protect' the monument. It is possible to agree with the view of the Estonian Internal Security Service that '[a] spontaneously flared up dispute gave both Russian-speaking and Estonian-speaking extremists a good opportunity to spread their ideas that have not found output so far.'⁴⁷ It was at this time that the statue was the subject of a statement by the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) for the first time.⁴⁸

In order to avoid possible clashes, the police cordoned off the Bronze Soldier statue on 26 May. The situation gained even more attention from the Russian media, fuelling it further and starting a spiral of escalation. It was no longer a matter of a few 'extremists' but gained political importance, especially in the light of upcoming parliamentary elections in Estonia, due in March 2007. The Estonian MFA commissioned a professional historian to undertake a review of the history of the monument itself and the burial of soldiers next to it; this was completed in one month and published on the internet in June 2006.⁴⁹ There seemed to be no good way out of the situation and the coalition government began to prepare the legal framework for the possible removal of the Bronze Soldier and the bodies of the Red Army soldiers. On 10 January 2007, the Estonian parliament (*Riigikogu*) passed the Protection of War Graves Act, the preamble of which states:

... [O]n the basis of Article 34 of the Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol 1) adopted on 8 June 1977, according to which the Estonian state is obliged to guarantee the respect of the remains and gravesites of persons who died due to acts of war in the territory of Estonia, and the marking thereof, and in pursuance of which the Estonian state is entitled to rebury the remains on the basis of the public interest, the Riigikogu passes this Act.

Crucial was Article 8(1):

On the basis of this Act the remains are subject to reburial if a war grave is located in an unsuitable place. In particular, parks, other green areas

In order to avoid possible clashes, the police cordoned off the Bronze Soldier statue on 26 May. The situation gained even more attention from the Russian media, fuelling it further and starting a spiral of escalation

and buildings within densely populated areas outside cemeteries as well as places in which mass events are organised or the constructions not related to the graves are located and other places which preclude dignified treatment of a war grave are unsuitable places for a war grave.⁵⁰

Passing this act resulted in action by Russia—public, semi-public and, allegedly, clandestine. The public reaction from Moscow came a week later, on 17 January, when the State Duma made a statement 'On situation in Estonia' including the sentence 'The law is aimed at destroying the memory of the victims of the struggle against fascism, [and] testifies to the intention of the Estonian authorities to continue the course towards the glorification of Nazism,' which was

⁴⁷ Estonian Internal Security Service, *Annual Review 2006* (Tallinn: Kaitsepolitseiamet, 2007), 11, https://www.kapo.ee/sites/default/files/public/content_page/Annual%20Review%202006.pdf.

⁴⁸ "Zayavlenie Ministerstva inostrannykh del Rossii v svyazi s oskvernением v Estonii pamyatnika sovetским voenam, pavshim v gody Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyny" [Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia in connection with defacement of a monument in Estonia to the soviet soldiers, fallen in the Great Patriotic War], Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia, 23 May 2006, https://www.mid.ru/ru/press_service/spokesman/official_statement/-/asset_publisher/t2GCdmD8RNlr/content/id/403238.

⁴⁹ Eda Post, "Peeter Kaasik uuris tõde pronkssõduri kohta" [Peeter Kaasik investigated the truth about the Bronze Soldier], *Eesti Päevaleht*, 29 July 2006, <https://epl.delfi.ee/kultuur/peeter-kaasik-uuris-tode-pronkssoduri-kohta?id=51045691&url=%2Fnews%2Fkultuur%2Farticle.php>. The original website with this text is no longer available, but it was later published in an academic journal. See: Peeter Kaasik, "Tallinnas Tõnismäel asuv punaarmeeelaste ühishaud ja mälestusmärk" [Mass grave and memorial of Red Army on Tallinn's Tõnismägi], *Akadeemia*, 9, 2006, 1891–1918.

⁵⁰ Riigikogu (Parliament of Estonia), "Protection of War Graves Act," *Riigi Teataja*, RT I 2007, 4, 21, entry into force 20 January 2007, translation as of 8 April 2019, <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/ee/Riigikogu/act/508042019007/consolide>.



ИЗВЕСТИЯ

EESTI

18.01.2007

RAHVUSRAAMATUKOGU



Боже́на Ры́нска
обозревателъ
светской хроники

*«Васки смешались с коньяком
Martell. А чтобы пельмени, туда
добавили шампунь и зубную пасту»*

Страница 6

Среда 17 января 2007

ЫШОВЕЦ:
в будем проверять

спорт 11

ЛУЧШИЕ ФИЛЬМЫ-2007:
от Клинта Иствуда
до Вонга Кар-ва

культура 09

ФИДЕЛЮ КАСТРО
не помогли даже
три операции?

новости 03

ГАЗЕТА ВЫХОДИТ С МАРТА 1917. 90-й ГОД ИЗДАНИЯ

ИНТЕРНЕТ-ВЕРСИЯ WWW.IZVESTIA.RU

Эстония объявила войну истории

Сегодня Госдума выступит с заявлением «О ситуации в Эстонии», которое станет ответом на принятый 10 января эстонским парламентом закон «О защите воинских захоронений». Закон этот позволяет сносить памятники советским солдатам. А также перезахоронить останки советских солдат из братской могилы у памятника Воину-освободителю в центре Таллина, более известному как Бронзовый солдат.



Россия будет всеми силами добиваться неприкосновенности Бронзового солдата

Александр Латышев

Родственников павших — из России, Эстонии и других бывших советских республик — никто, похоже, спрашивать не собирается.

Одним заявлением Госдумы дело может не ограничиться. Если эстонские власти действительно возьмутся за демонтаж монумента, Москва может пустить в ход экономические санкции, опробовав таким об-

разом на Эстонии вступивший совсем недавно в силу закон «О специальных экономических мерах в условиях международной чрезвычайной ситуации».

— Мы должны ответить своевременно и жестко, — пообещал вчера журналистам спикер Госдумы Борис Грызлов.

В том, что жесткое заявление будет поддержано всеми фракциями, сомнений нет: действия эстонских властей вызвали единодушное возмущение депутатов.

Член комитета Госдумы РФ по делам СНГ Константин Затулин рассказал «Известиям», что в заявлении «наряду с осуждением этого акта грубокопательства» содержится ряд конкретных предложений. Речь идет, к примеру, о том, чтобы прекратить контакты с политическими силами, поддерживавшими в эстонском парламенте закон «О защите воинских захоронений», изучить вопрос о введении экономических санкций и проработать возможность перезахоронения советских воинов на территории России.

Последний вариант, по словам Затулина, рассматривается в качестве «последней меры». Но пока Россия всеми силами будет добиваться неприкосновенности советских монументов. Глава МИД России Сергей Лавров, общаясь вчера с прессой, сказал предельно ясно: «Необходимо добиваться сохранения этих монументов там, где они были возведены». → стр. 5

Да будет снег! С божьей помощью

Середина зимы — а снега все нет. Некоторые верующие воспринимают аномальную погоду как наказание свыше. Даже началось обсуждение необходимости проведения специальных молебнов — «о ниспослании снега». Однако у религиозных деятелей единой позиции о возможности и необходимости таких богослужений нет.

Борис Кли

Один из православных священников сказал «Известиям», что хотя и специального чина «о ниспослании снега» нет, но есть молитва о ниспослании дождя — и она очень действенна. «У нас принято не выходить служить молебен о даровании дождя, не взяв с собой зонтика», — отметил он. По его мнению, приходские батюшки по просьбам прихожан могут слегка модифицировать молебен о даровании

и просить у Господа снега. Он также отметил, что подобные молебны, называемые требами, служатся «по потребности» прихожан. Но потребность эта должна быть серьезно аргументирована.

Однако заместитель председателя отдела внешних церковных связей Московского патриархата протоиерей Всеволод Чаплин заявил «Известиям», что молебен о даровании снега не планируется: «Такого чина нет, и принятие его — дело не быстрое».

Вместе с тем отец Всеволод призвал православных не усматривать в отсутствии снега особых мистических знаков, но задуматься о том, что это предупреждение всем людям, своими действиями разрушающими богоданную гармонию мира. «Церковь каждый день молится о хорошей погоде — «о благораспорении воздуха», — напомнил отец Всеволод, но это не отменяет нашего долга заботиться об окружающем мире. → стр. 3



МОЛИТВА о даровании дождя есть, а о ниспослании снега — нет

Figure 4. The Bronze Soldier appeared on front pages in Russia for the first time on 17 January 2007⁵²

widely cited in the Russian media.⁵¹ This was the day the Bronze Soldier first made it onto the front pages of large Russian newspapers (see Figure 4).

⁵¹ State Duma, “Postanovleniye Gosudarstvennoy Dumy Federal’nogo Sobraniya Rossiyskoy Federatsii ‘V svyazi s prinyatiyem parlamentom Estonskoy Respubliki zakona ob okhrane voinskikh zakhoroneniyy’ [Resolution of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation ‘In connection with the adoption by the parliament of the Republic of Estonia of a law on the protection of war graves], No 4063-4 GD, 17 January 2007, <http://www.pravo.gov.ru/proxy/ips/?docbody=&prevDoc=102111154&backlink=1&nd=102111349&rdk=>.

Analysing how often the Bronze Soldier is mentioned by the Interfax news agency clearly shows that January 2007 was a turning point. Although the issue had been widely covered since May 2006, it now received constant wide coverage (see Figure 5). Although recordings of TV news bulletins of the time are not available, the themes in Interfax stories reflect the interest of the Russian media in general; as already mentioned, Russian TV news

⁵² This example is from *Izvestiya*, under title ‘Estonia Declares War on History’

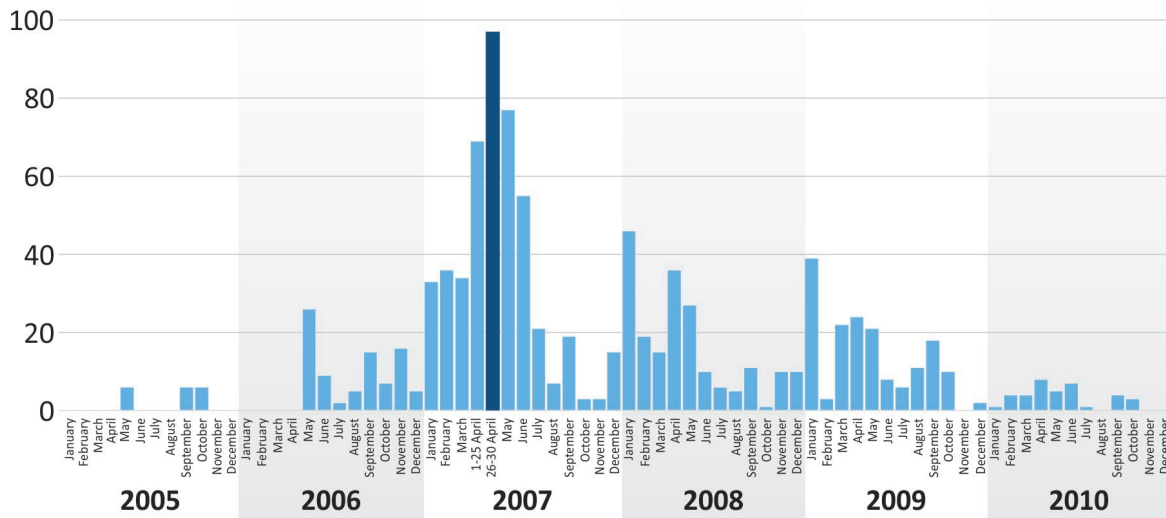


Figure 5. Number of Interfax news items covering the Bronze Soldier, by month, 2005–10⁵⁴

programmes were widely viewed by Russian-speakers in Estonia.⁵³

The media coverage was in line with views expressed by Russian diplomats. Although bilateral relations were never cordial after the beginning of the 1990s, there had been cooperation on many issues. Marina Kaljurand, Estonian ambassador to Russia from February 2006 to October 2007, recalls:

*A significant turnaround took place in January 2007. The Protection of War Graves Act was passed in Estonia, the parliamentary elections approached and it was anticipated that the 9 May gatherings at the Bronze Soldier would become more and more extreme. All this gave the Russians a reason to believe that Estonia had serious intentions to do something with the Tõnismägi monument. In early 2007, they spoke quite directly and threateningly at meetings at the Russian Foreign Ministry and the Duma. They mentioned that if the Estonian side were to start dismantling the Bronze Soldier, Russia would use **diplomatic, economic and political levers** [authors' emphasis]*

*to protect the honour of Soviet soldiers in Estonia. Some meetings with various Estonian delegations were postponed and excuses were found for cancelling others. For example, a meeting concerning the construction of a new bridge in Narva, which had been agreed and prepared for a long time, was cancelled.*⁵⁵

On 21 January 2007, president Putin criticised Estonia in a press conference.⁵⁶ This coincided almost exactly with a wider cooling of Russia's relations with the West. On 10 February, Putin gave his now famous speech at the Munich Security Conference in which he called for the entire existing global security architecture to be reconsidered.⁵⁷ NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer described the speech as 'disappointing and not helpful' and there were other similar reactions.⁵⁸ As the BBC summed it up: 'Afterwards in the corridors there were dark mutterings by some about a new Cold War.'⁵⁹ According to Kaljurand, 'Putin's speech has afterwards been considered an important milestone in the cooling of relations. At that time,

⁵³ Peeter Vihalemm and Ragne Kõuts, "Meediakasutuse muutumine: internetiajastu saabumine" [Change in media consumption: Arrival of the internet age], in *Eesti ühiskond kiirenevas ajas. Uuringu „Mina. Maailm. Meedia“ 2002–2014 tulemused* [Estonian society during times of fast change. Results of research 'Me. World. Media' 2002-2014], ed. Peeter Vihalemm et al (Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli Kirjastus, 2017), 254-258.

⁵⁴ Chart by Ivo Juurvee, using data obtained from the BNS/Interfax database.

⁵⁵ Kaljurand, phone interview.

⁵⁶ "Putin обвинил Estoniyu v namerennom ukhudshenii otnosheniy s Rossiey" [Putin accused Estonia of intentional worsening of relations with Russia], Lenta.ru, 21 January 2007, <https://web.archive.org/web/20070428031723/http://lenta.ru/news/2007/01/21/monuments/>.

⁵⁷ President of Russia, "Speech and the Following Discussion at the Munich Conference on Security Policy," Munich, 10 February 2007, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/24034>.

⁵⁸ Rob Watson, "Putin's speech: Back to cold war?," BBC News, 10 February 2007, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6350847.stm>.

⁵⁹ Watson, "Putin's speech."



Picture 4. Putin speaking at the FSB Collegium on 31 January 2007. The head of the FSB, Nikolay Patrushev, is listening (far right). The slide reads: ‘Main results of FSB operational activities for 2006 and priority tasks for 2007’ (Photo credit: Administration of the President of Russia / Kremlin.ru)

it was not possible to draw such far-reaching conclusions; there was a belief that there were problems, but they could be overcome.⁶⁰

Information on Russia’s clandestine activities is scarce. According to information received by the Estonian Internal Security Service and published in April 2008:

[The] FSB central administration worked out several action plans at the beginning of 2007, about how to react to the events connected with the ‘Bronze Soldier.’ Among planned measures were proposals to influence [the] Estonian Government both economically and politically. Lieutenant Colonel Andrei Olegovich Lobanov from the FSB St. Petersburg Central Administrative Board stood out with a number of failed recruitment attempts among Estonian citizens.⁶¹

This information cannot be verified by any other source and the Estonian Internal Security Service did not provide details of any further events to the authors, but it seems plausible that at the

beginning of the year the FSB was tasked to look into the Bronze Soldier issue.

As would become known between 2008 and 2014, Russia’s Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) and Federal Security Service (FSB) had at least four high-value human assets in Estonia in 2007, one at the Estonian Ministry of Defence (MoD) and three in the Estonian Internal Security Service.⁶² Whether they had access to information concerning the Bronze Soldier is not known, but it is at least possible. Scarce information in the public domain on their handling procedures would tend to suggest that handing over the collected information was a rather time-consuming process and, in the rapidly evolving situation, it would probably not arrive quickly enough to influence Russia’s operational decision-making. Hermann Simm, exposed as a Russian spy in 2008, was working in the Estonian MoD in 2007, but was not directly involved with work on war graves, and colleagues remember his curiosity on the topic was limited.⁶³ According to the press,

⁶⁰ Kaljurand, phone interview.

⁶¹ Estonian Internal Security Service, *Annual Review 2007*, 11.

⁶² Ivo Jurvee and Lavly Perling, “Russia’s Espionage in Estonia. A Quantitative Analysis of Convictions,” ICDS Analysis, November 2019, https://icds.ee/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/ICDS_Analysis_Russias_Espionage_in_Estonia_Juurvee_Perling_November_2019.pdf.

⁶³ Oidsalu, interview; Mikko, interview.

mole inside the Estonian Internal Security Service exposed in 2012, Aleksey Dressen, was working on both Estonian- and Russian-speaking extremists in 2007, i.e. in possession of much information valuable to Russia, and details of his activities remain unknown to the public.⁶⁴ It is also possible that Russia had restrictions on using all the intelligence in its possession due to need to protect its assets.

On 4 March, parliamentary elections were duly held in Estonia. The head of the pro-Kremlin Constitution Party, Andrey Zarenkov—who had supported Night Watch from its formation and exploited the Bronze Soldier issue as much as possible—received only 0.9% of the vote, well below the 5% threshold needed to get into

In March and April, the senior adviser at the Russian Embassy in Tallinn, Sergey Overchenko, on several occasions went for walks lasting between an hour and 90 minutes with Dmitriy Linter, the best-known ‘defender’ of the Bronze Soldier and one of the leading figures in Night Watch

parliament. Talks on forming a coalition took some time and a new government under the previous prime minister, Andrus Ansip, was sworn in on 5 April 2007. Ansip won 22,540 votes, a record at the time. He gave instructions to start preparations for the removal of the statue.⁶⁵

Preparations for reburial of the Soviet soldiers and relocation of the statue had been going on for a while under the Estonian MoD in line with the Protection of War Graves Act. Meelis Oidsalu, who led the ministry’s working group at the time, recalls that under new minister Jaak Aaviksoo the speed of work increased. That was the main reason why detailed written plans were never produced.⁶⁶

The juridical analysis of the process of reburying Red Army soldiers and removal of the grave marker (i.e. the Bronze Soldier) to the Estonian Defence Forces Cemetery is dated 13 April

2007.⁶⁷ Based on the Protection of War Graves Act, on 19 April, the minister of defence signed a regulation titled ‘Requirements for the Reburial of War Victims’ Remains,’ which was due to enter into force on 26 April.⁶⁸ The possible time frame for the beginning of excavations on Tõnismägi thus became public, and work could start on 26 April at the earliest and most probably before 9 May.

According to press reports, in March and April, the senior adviser at the Russian Embassy in Tallinn, Sergey Overchenko, on several occasions went for walks lasting between an hour and 90 minutes with Dmitriy Linter, the best-known ‘defender’ of the Bronze Soldier and one of the leading figures in Night Watch, in the Tallinn Botanic Garden. On 18 April, Andrey Zarenkov of the Constitution Party met embassy’s first secretary Vadim Vassilyev, and one hour later Zarenkov informed news agency BNS that his party had decided to start sending agitators to Estonian military units.⁶⁹

This confirmed the contacts between Russian diplomats and Russian-speaking extremists. However, the exact nature of their influence can only be a matter of speculation. On the involvement of Russian intelligence in the impending riots, the Estonian Internal Security Service stated that: ‘As for the April riots we can say that despite preceding visits of several Russian intelligence officers into Estonia the role of Russian special services (both, the FSB and the SVR) during April 26–27, was to observe the course of events.’⁷⁰

The then minister of the interior, Jüri Pihl, later said: ‘The threat forecast of the security authorities was more or less as it turned out.’⁷¹

⁶⁴ Tarmo Vahter and Argo Ideon, “Vana kuld: Peaministri salasõda” [Old gold: Prime minister’s secret war], *Eesti Ekspress*, 26 April 2017, <https://ekspress.delfi.ee/lisalood/vana-kuld-peaministri-salasoda?id=69110829>.

⁶⁵ Vahter and Ideon, “Vana kuld.”

⁶⁶ Oidsalu, interview.

⁶⁷ Riigikantselei, “Kaarli pst 13 kaevamiste läbiviimine” [Conducting of excavations at 13 Karli boulevard], Tallinn, n.d. (For official use only until 12 April 2012 and obtained by the authors with Request for Information from the Government Office).

⁶⁸ Kaitseminister (Minister of Defence of Estonia), “Sõjaohvrite säilmete ümbermatmise nõuded” [Requirements for the reburial of war victims’ remains], *Riigi Teataja*, RTL 2007, 32, 561, 26 April 2007, <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/akt/12820930>.

⁶⁹ Rasmus Kagge, “Äärmuslaste aktsioonide tagant paistab Vene diplomaatide vari” [Behind the actions of extremists, there is a shadow of Russian diplomats], *Postimees*, 25 April 2007, <https://www.postimees.ee/1653973/aarmuslaste-aktsioonide-tagant-paistab-vene-diplomaatide-vari>.

⁷⁰ Estonian Internal Security Service, *Annual Review 2007*, 9.

⁷¹ Vahter and Ideon, “Vana kuld.”

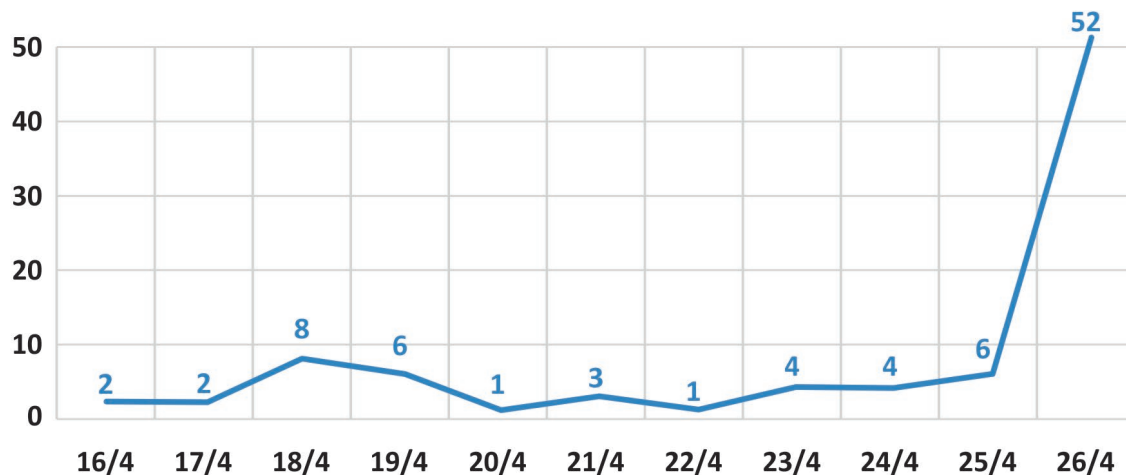


Figure 6. Interfax coverage of the Bronze Soldier, 16–26 April 2007 (number of items)⁷⁶

The high value of the forecast by the Estonian Internal Security Service is shared by the MoD’s Meelis Oidsalu, according to whom ‘the only thing that was not foreseen was the cyber-attacks.’⁷²

On 25 April, a Night Watch activist, Mark Siryk, began sending SMS messages to Russian-speaking activists with the text: ‘Are you ready to stand guard at the soldier from the 26th for 2–3 hours a day in a special uniform. [sic] Additional questions and suggestions in this issue. Standing, I repeat, is not for free, it will be paid 80 kroons [€5.11] per hour.’⁷³ The sum offered was not large by today’s standards, but in 2007 it was a considerable amount for a teenager for one hour’s work.

4. THE RIOTS AND RIOTERS

Preparatory work to identify and relocate the war graves started on Thursday, 26 April 2007, at 4.30 am. A fence was put up to surround the area and a large tent erected to protect the excavation of the buried soldiers from the weather and curious passers-by. The police had made preparations including bringing additional officers to the capital from other regions of Estonia, but they were under orders to maintain a low profile.⁷⁴

Media interest rocketed, both in Estonia and Russia; for example, Interfax issued 52 news items that day compared to an average of four a day during the previous week (see Figure 6). The Russian media was well represented and Dmitriy Linter was on the air several times during the day, claiming *inter alia* that Estonia was on the verge of civil war.⁷⁵

Soon a crowd of people, mostly Russian-speaking and among them some Night Watch activists, began gathering around the fence and on the steps of the nearby National Library. As the working day came to an end, there were even more people. There is no ‘official’ number for the size of the crowd in Tallinn on the night of 26 April, but most media reports estimated the number of rioters at 1,500.⁷⁷ It is not possible to check this now or give an exact number, but analysis of press photos and aerial TV footage of the events using crowd-estimation software shows that 1,500 is rather

⁷² Oidsalu, interview.

⁷³ “Vene noori palgatakse Tõnismäele valvama” [Russian youth are hired to guard Tõnismägi], *Postimees*, 26 April 2007, <https://www.postimees.ee/1654351/vene-noori-palgatakse-tonismaele-valvama>.

⁷⁴ Oidsalu, interview.

⁷⁵ Martin Arpo, “Teele jäänud Moskva soomusrongid” [Moscow’s armoured trains on their way], in *Mäss: Detsembrimäss/Aprillimäss*, ed. Tiit Pruuli (Tallinn: Eetriüksus, 2008), 192.

⁷⁶ Chart by Ivo Juurvee using data obtained from the BNS/Interfax database.

⁷⁷ See e.g. Ave Lepik, “Pronksiöö ninamehed haihtusid Venemaale” [Leaders of the bronze night disappeared to Russia], *Äripäev*, 26 April 2016, <https://www.aripaev.ee/uudised/2016/04/26/pronksioo-ninamehed-haihtusid-venemaale>; “Fotod: Tõnismäel meenutati pronksiööd” [Photos: Bronze night was remembered on Tõnismägi], ERR, 26 April 2018, <https://www.err.ee/826631/fotod-tonismael-meenutati-pronksiood>; “Meenuta, kus olid sina 5 aastat tagasi pronksiöö ajal?” [Remember, where were you 5 years ago during the bronze night?], Delfi.ee, 25 April 2012, <https://www.delfi.ee/news/paevauudised/rahvahaal/meenuta-kus-olid-sina-5-aastat-tagasi-pronksioo-ajal?id=64307687>.

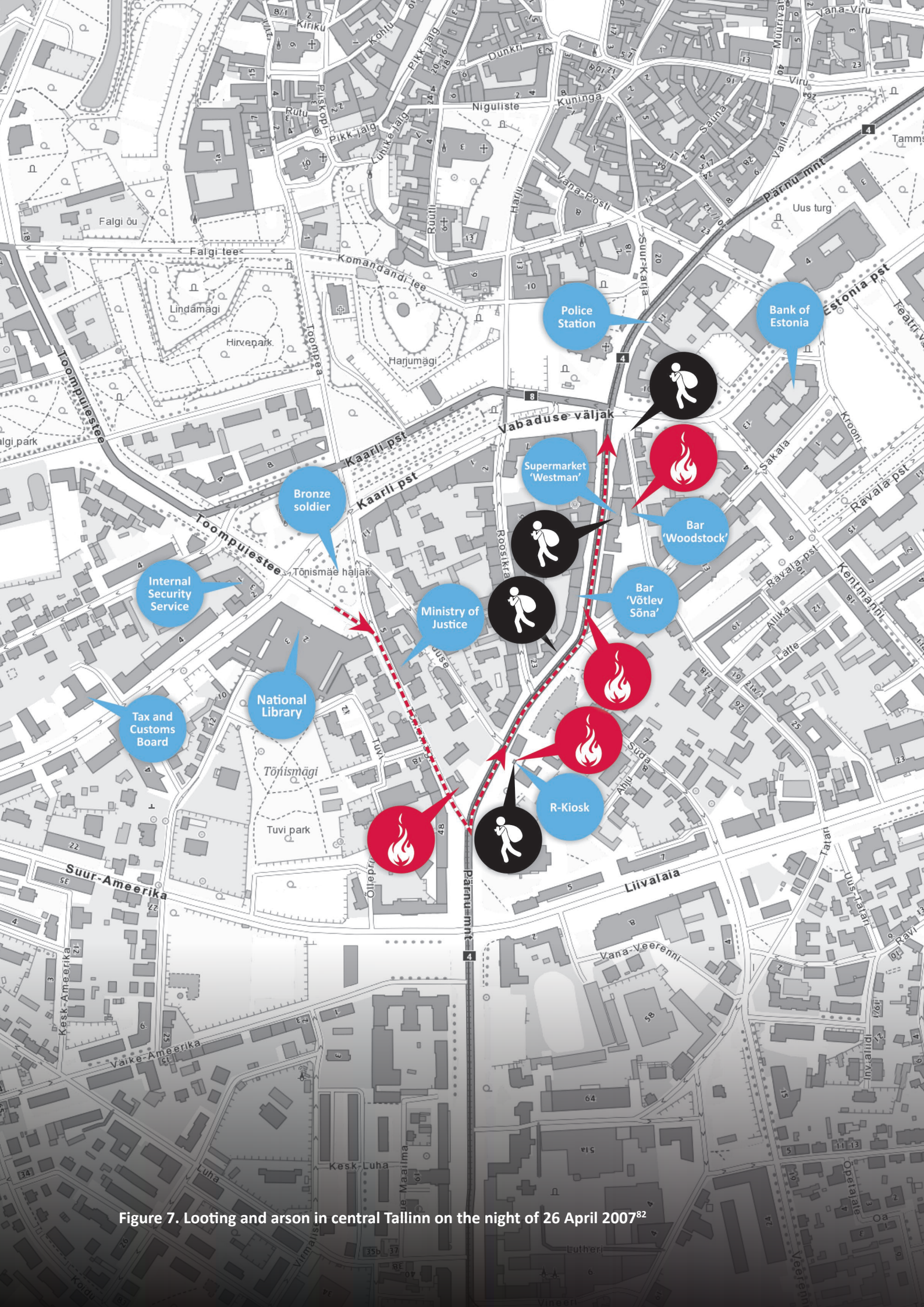


Figure 7. Looting and arson in central Tallinn on the night of 26 April 2007⁸²

accurate figure.⁷⁸ However, the figure is still well below 0.5% of the overall population of Tallinn—which, according to the 2000 census, was slightly over 400,000, of whom about 45% were Russian-speakers.⁷⁹

As darkness fell the crowd turned violent and started attacking the police. After 9.00 pm the crowd around the monument was dispersed by the police, but it moved to other parts of the city, where—periodically shouting ‘Rossiya, Rossiya’—rioters committed arson and looting (see Figure 7), inflicting substantial material damage as well as injuring a number of persons, including police officers. A Russian citizen, Dmitriy Ganin, was stabbed to death next to the Woodstock bar, within a short walking distance from the statue. (His death and its investigation by Estonian authorities became a topic frequently cultivated by the Russian media and was used by the Kremlin in its propaganda efforts to discredit Estonia’s justice system and construct a narrative of martyrdom.)⁸⁰

As the situation escalated, the government’s Crisis Committee took the decision to remove the statue immediately in the early hours of 27 April. However, the following night, disturbances continued in central Tallinn and, to a smaller extent, in some towns in Ida-Virumaa county, mostly inhabited by Russian-speakers.⁸¹

During the crisis, the internet was actively used to fuel tension. In those pre-Facebook days, most commenting took place in the online commentaries of news outlets, especially Delfi.ee, both Estonian and Russian editions. On 27 April, some outlets, including Delfi, banned

⁷⁸ “Mapchecking – Crowd Size Estimation,” Mapchecking, accessed 16 June 2020, <https://www.mapchecking.com/#59.4309003,24.7386470;59.4310231,24.7382769;59.4309604,24.7381213;59.4308376,24.7385022;59.4310695,24.7389957;59.4305784,24.7405461;59.4305170,24.7405005;59.4308922,24.7394463;59.4308963,24.7392693;2.5;59.4306425,24.7386149,18>.

⁷⁹ “RL222: Rahvastik elukoha ja rahvuse järg” [Population by place of residence and ethnicity], Eesti Statistika (Statistics Estonia), accessed 16 June 2020, http://pub.stat.ee/px-web.2001/Dialog/varval.asp?ma=RL222&tj=RAHVASTIK+ELUKOHA+JA+RAHVUSE+J%C4RGI&path=.../Database/Rahvaloendus/REL2000/15Rahvus_Emakeel_Veerkeelte_oskus/&lang=2.

⁸⁰ Mihkel Kärmas, “Ganinite advokaadi sõnul kasutab Venemaa juhtumit poliitilistel eesmärkidel” [According to the lawyer of the Ganins, Russia is using the case for political purposes], ERR, 19 April 2017, <https://www.err.ee/590769/ganinite-advokaadi-sonul-kasutab-venemaa-juhtumit-poliitilistel-eesmarkidel>.

⁸¹ Vahter and Ideon, “Vana kuld.”

⁸² Captions made by Ivo Juurvee.



Figure 8. A still from the news programme of a channel TV Tsentr-International – an early example of online fake news that was circulating in April 2007 and found its way onto Russian TV news—published by Delfi.ee in 2017⁸⁴

online comments, following the example of the French media during rioting in Paris two years earlier.⁸³ The topic was also discussed on nascent social media such as various forums and the dating portal rate.ee. However, precise data on the issue is no longer available.

After news of the Bronze Soldier’s removal became known, rumours started to circulate that the statue had been cut into pieces; such allegations were illustrated with a doctored image showing only the boots of the soldier remaining in front of the wall. This picture, shocking for Russian-speakers, made it onto Russian TV news (see Figure 8).

Who the rioters were has been a question ever since. Thus far, the only information has come from TV footage. It shows mostly young-looking people speaking or chanting in Russian, although the usual slogans such as ‘Russia, Russia, Russia’ and ‘shame, shame, shame’ are so easy to repeat that this does not require any

⁸³ Vahter and Ideon, “Vana kuld.”

⁸⁴ Source: Mihkel Tamm et al, “Pronksiöö & propaganda: Kuidas õhutati pingeid ja kuidas tehakse seda nüüd?” [Bronze night & propaganda: How the tensions were fuelled and how it is done now?], Delfi.ee, 26 April 2017, <https://longread.delfi.ee/artiklid/pronksioo-ja-propaganda?id=77921888>.

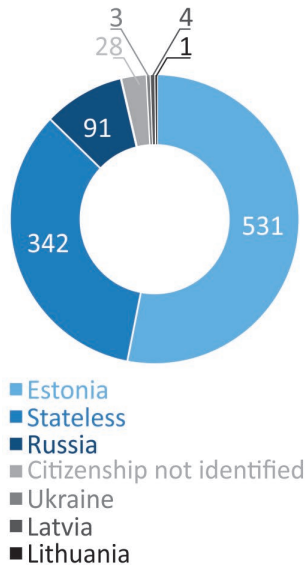


Figure 9. Citizenship of detainees⁸⁷

knowledge of the language. Since there have been rumours that a large number of rioters— one-third or even half—were ethnic Estonians, this question is worthy of closer examination.

Units of the Estonian Police Board detained the following numbers of people for rioting or looting in connection with the riots:⁸⁵

- Northern Police Prefecture – 919 persons
- Eastern Police Prefecture – 76 persons
- Central Criminal Police – 5 persons.⁸⁶

Altogether 1,000 individuals were detained. The majority were males; only 6% were female. Figure 13 shows the citizenship of the detainees.

This does not give much insight on the ethnicity of the detainees. Ethnicity is difficult to determine, as in Estonia it is not recorded at birth and for Russian-speakers (especially for people born from mixed marriages) it mostly has to do with personal identity and choice.

Although not an exact science, a person’s name contains some information. Only 157 people had no clearly identifiable Slavic first name and/or surname—less than 16% of all detained participants. The list of detainees shows that

⁸⁵ I.e. omitting those detained in the same period for other offences in other places.

⁸⁶ Estonian Internal Security Service, official letter to Ivo Juurvee, 9 August 2019.

⁸⁷ Chart by Ivo Juurvee based on the information from the Estonian Internal Security Service.

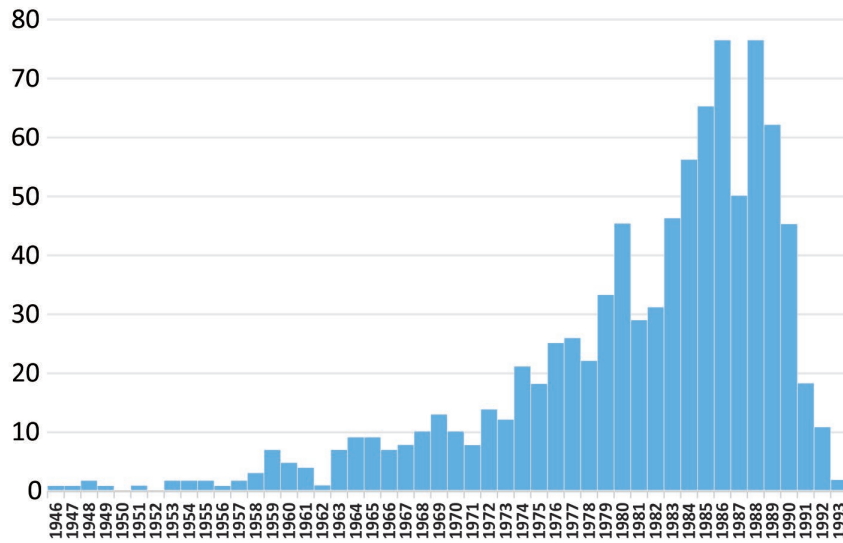


Figure 10. Age distribution of detained rioters (n=899)⁸⁹

most participants in the Bronze Soldier riots were Russian-speaking inhabitants of Estonia.⁸⁸

An interesting and measurable parameter of detainees is their age. Although the oldest was born in 1946, i.e. 60–61 years old at the time, most were under 30 years of age, with the 17–24 age group making up the majority.

Using previously available data, it can be determined that young Russian-speaking males were the most numerous participants in the riots (see Figure 10). Given the overall composition of the population, participants were much more likely to be Estonian citizens than people without citizenship, and a person without citizenship was much more likely to participate than one with Russian citizenship.⁹⁰

What about previous criminal record? There is no complete data for all detainees, but 294 individuals were suspected of crimes or other offences, and on these there is more information. Eleven of the 294 (about 4%) were female, 175 were Estonian citizens (60%), 101 stateless (34%) and 32 Russian citizens (11%).

⁸⁸ Estonian Internal Security Service, official letter.

⁸⁹ People born in 1986–88 were 19–21 years old in 2007. Source of data in the figure: Estonian Internal Security Service, official letter.

⁹⁰ Especially given their overall numbers. According to Ministry of the Interior data from November 2007, of a total of 1,362,146 inhabitants in Estonia, 113,203 (8.3%) were stateless and there were 91,928 citizens of the Russian Federation (6.7%). See: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Estonia, “Estoniya Segodnya: Grazhdanstvo” [Estonia Today: Citizenship], Department of Press and Information, November 2007, https://vm.ee/sites/default/files/content-editors/web-static/118/Kodakondsus_nov.07.pdf.



Picture 5. Detainees in front of the Estonian Internal Security Service HQ, 100 metres from the Bronze Soldier, in the early hours of 27 April 2007 (Photo credit: Estonian Internal Security Service)

Of the total, 218 (including four females) had previously committed a total of 1,470 crimes or other offences.⁹¹ This figure might seem more impressive than it really is, since speeding violations are included in statistics for ‘other offence.’ However, it is possible to determine that people suspected of crimes or other offences during the riots had probably (74% of cases) committed some before.

Such a large number of offenders detained in a short period of time was unprecedented in Estonia and put prosecutors under unexpected pressure, but they managed to resolve the situation according to the law.⁹² Ninety-two of the offenders were later prosecuted, of whom 91 were convicted. The penalties were as follows:

- Six individuals were sentenced to actual imprisonment, the longest term being two years and four months.
- 13 persons were partially sentenced to probation (on average one to two years’ imprisonment with a probationary period of 18 months to two years). The period of imprisonment actually served ranged from one to nine months.

- 54 individuals were put on probation. Their average term of imprisonment was one year and their probationary period ranged from 18 months to three years.
- 12 persons were fined, with penalties ranging from 2,000 to 9,600 kroons (€122–575).
- Three people were sentenced to community service.
- Three minors were subjected to behavioural control for one year.⁹³

Four individuals were put on trial for organising the riots: Dmitriy Linter, Maksim Reva and Mark Siryk (arrested on the first night of rioting and taken into custody a day later; Siryk spent 47 days behind bars, Linter and Reva 204 each), and Dimitriy Klenskiy (who had not been taken into custody).⁹⁴ The four were tried under article 238 of the Penal Code which, in 2007, read: ‘Organising a disorder involving a large number of persons, if such disorder results in desecration, destruction, arson

⁹¹ Estonian Internal Security Service, official letter.

⁹² Lavly Perling (former leading prosecutor of Northern District Prosecutor’s Office, 2005-07), interview by Ivo Juurvee, Tallinn, 25 March 2020.

⁹³ Lavly Perling, e-mail to Ivo Juurvee, 29 April 2020.

⁹⁴ Alo Raun, “Õise Vahtkonna liidrid jäid kohtus taas õigeks” [Leaders of the Night Watch were found not guilty in the court], *Postimees*, 12 May 2009, <https://www.postimees.ee/118044/oise-vahtkonna-liidrid-jaid-kohtus-taas-oi-geks>.

or other similar acts.⁹⁵ The court materials document a number of interesting aspects of their activities, e.g. Night Watch made a first announcement of ‘mobilisation’ for the defence of the monument as early as 14 January and different calls and threats were repeated on the Night Watch (now-defunct) website www.pomnim.com, in the media, and on flyers. Siryk received an order from a Russian mobile phone number to organise a permanent crew to watch the monument on the evening of 24 April. In the early hours of 26 April, a call to gather on Tõnismägi at 6pm was posted on the Night Watch website. Linter gave a telephone interview to Russian media on the morning of 26 April describing the situation in Tallinn stating that ‘old women are being beaten up, police are provoking dogs to attack people, there are already tens of victims and killed’. The court found this to be ‘a total fantasy’—in other words, disinformation. However, the court found that the four lacked sufficient influence to bring large crowds to Tõnismägi on 26 April—the earlier events organised by Night Watch had typically attracted only 20–30 and never more than 100 participants. On the evening of the riots, only Reva was present on Tõnismägi and, as evident from video footage, he tried to organise a human chain of 10–15 people but lacked authority to succeed even in

In Estonia in 2007, the ‘protest potential’ was indeed used to the fullest extent possible

that, becoming hysterical as a result. According to the court, it was the state of mass psychosis that was to be blamed for the outcome, not the defendants.⁹⁶ All four were found not guilty by the court of first instance on 5 January 2009 and by the regional court on 12 May 2009.⁹⁷

Six years later, in 2013, the head of the Russian General Staff, Valeriy Gerasimov, wrote in a now notorious article: ‘The focus of applied

methods of conflict has altered in the direction of the broad use of political, economic, informational, humanitarian, and other non-military measures—applied in coordination with the protest potential of the population.’⁹⁸ In Estonia in 2007, the ‘protest potential’ was indeed used to the fullest extent possible.

5. REACTIONS: DIPLOMACY, THE ECONOMY AND CYBER-ATTACKS

5.1. INTERNATIONAL REACTION AND THE SIEGE OF THE ESTONIAN EMBASSY IN MOSCOW

As mentioned earlier, Russian media attention peaked around the removal of the monument from Tõnismägi. On 27 April, a day after the outbreak of rioting, there were a number of statements from Russia, the most senior by minister of foreign affairs Sergey Lavrov, who called it ‘disgusting.’⁹⁹ The only other country to join the bandwagon that day was Belarus, whose MFA made a statement in more diplomatic

language, expressing ‘serious concern.’¹⁰⁰ Ironically, on 18 April 2007, only a week before preparations for exhumations started in Tallinn, in the town

of Khimki, a few kilometres north-west of Moscow, a memorial to the Great Patriotic War at the grave of six Red Army soldiers and airman who fell in 1941–43 was demolished and their bodies exhumed in order to make way for new

⁹⁵ Riigikogu, “Karistusseadustik” [Penal code], *Riigi Teataja*, version valid 15 March–19 July 2007, https://www.riigiteataja.ee/redaktsioonide_vordlus.html?grupid=162500&vasakAktId=12792390&paremAktId=128022020005.

⁹⁶ Eesti Vabariik (Republic of Estonia) vs Dmitri Linter, Dimitri Klenski, Maksim Reva and Mark Sirök, Kohtuotsus kohtuasjas nr. 1-07-13025/2 [Court decision in the court case No 1-07-13025/2] (Harju Maakohus, 5 January 2009), *Riigi Teataja*, 6, 11, 41, 39-40, 42, <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/kohtulahendid/fail.html?id=10892162>.

⁹⁷ Raun, “Õise Vahtkonna liidrid.”

⁹⁸ Generally accepted English translation (by Robert Coalson). Valery Gerasimov, “The Value of Science is in the Foresight: New Challenges Demand Rethinking the Forms and Methods of Carrying out Combat Operations,” *Military Review*, January-February 2016, https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Portals/7/military-review/Archives/English/MilitaryReview_20160228_art008.pdf.

⁹⁹ Steven Lee Meyers, “Russia Rebukes Estonia for Moving Soviet Statue,” *The New York Times*, 27 April 2007, <https://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/27/world/europe/27cnd-estonia.html>.

¹⁰⁰ “Otvét nachal’nika upravleniya informatsii – press-sekretarya MID A. Popova na vopros informatsionnogo agenstva BelTa v svyazi s sobytiyami v Estonii” [Response by the chief of the information management – press secretary of the MFA A. Popov to the question of the information agency BelTa in connection with the events in Estonia], Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belarus, 27 April 2007, http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/b7d15c86a1c2f92e.html.

construction, and this did not raise any concern from authorities in Moscow or abroad.¹⁰¹

A meeting possibly called to make decisions on the situation in Estonia took place on the morning of Saturday, 28 April, when the Russian Security Council gathered at the official presidential residence in Novo-Ogaryovo.¹⁰² In addition to Putin, the following took part: prime minister Mikhail Fradkov; head of the Presidential Administration Sergey Sobyanin; two first deputy prime ministers, Dmitriy Medvedev and Sergey Ivanov; the secretary of the Security Council, Igor Ivanov; foreign minister Sergey Lavrov; interior minister Rashid Nurgaliyev; defence minister Anatoliy Serdyukov; FSB director Nikolay Patrushev; SVR director Sergey Lebedev; the head of the Federation Council, Sergey Mironov; and the chair of the State Duma, Boris Gryzlov. According to the press coverage of the time, quoting a press release on the website of the presidential administration, there seem to have been no urgent political matters other than the Bronze Soldier for the meeting to ‘discuss various issues of internal and foreign policy.’¹⁰³ It is not known what was discussed at the meeting, but it is logical to assume that there was some coordination of measures implemented against Estonia—including the cyber-attacks and economic measures discussed later in this paper. On the same day, Putin discussed the situation in Tallinn with the German chancellor, Angela Merkel.¹⁰⁴

Russia’s next diplomatic move was to send a delegation from the State Duma to Tallinn, headed by Nikolay Kovalev, the former director of the FSB, on 30 April. At the airport in Moscow, Kovalev told the press that he would

demand the resignation of Andrus Ansip’s government—a somewhat rude interference in Estonia’s internal affairs. In Tallinn, the delegation refused to participate in the agreed programme and the members of the Duma did not appear at a planned meeting at the Estonian MFA. While examining the statue during a visit to its new location in the Estonian Defence Forces Cemetery, Kovalev stated that it had earlier been cut into pieces.¹⁰⁵ This was, of course, not the case, but it remains unclear whether the statement was planned beforehand or Kovalev and his entourage were influenced by the fake news discussed earlier in this report. The visit to the cemetery had one unintended consequence: the State Duma delegation laid flowers at the monument, legitimising the new location of the Bronze Soldier among the Estonian Russian-speakers who had been against its removal.¹⁰⁶

Foreign aid to the Estonian police had started to arrive immediately. Most noticeable on the streets was a modern water cannon from

Kovalev told the press that he would demand the resignation of Andrus Ansip’s government—a somewhat rude interference in Estonia’s internal affairs

Latvia. (The Estonian police did not have a water cannon and the one on loan from the prison service broke down.) Political backing took a day or two longer. Among the first countries to show support for Estonia were Ukraine, Latvia, Sweden and Finland, and on the EU level the High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy, Javier Solana, made a statement—all by 28 April. Poland and the FYR of Macedonia followed.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰¹ “Pamyatnik sovetskikh voinov v Khimkakh. Spravka” [Monument of the soviet soldiers in Khimki. Reference], RIA Novosti, 20 April 2007, last updated 7 June 2008, <https://ria.ru/20070420/64026220.html>.

¹⁰² Holding meetings of this high-ranking body on a Saturday was standard procedure; in the first half of 2007, it took place on twenty Saturdays and one Friday.

¹⁰³ “Vladimir Putin provel soveshchanie s postoyannymi chlenami Soveta Bezpasnosti” [Vladimir Putin held a meeting with the permanent members of the Security Council], Administration of the President of Russia, 28 April 2007, <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/39030>.

¹⁰⁴ “Sostoyalsya telefonnyy razgovor Vladimira Putina s Predsedatelem Soveta Yevropeyskogo soyuza Angeloy Merkel” [Took place a phone conversation of Vladimir Putin with the Chair of the Council of the European Union Angela Merkel], Administration of the President of Russia, 28 April 2007, <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/38908>.

¹⁰⁵ “Kaitseministeerium: pronkssõdur on terve” [Defence ministry: the bronze soldier is intact], Delfi.ee, 1 May 2007, <https://www.delfi.ee/news/paevauudised/eesti/kaitseministeerium-pronkssodur-on-terve?id=15744650>.

¹⁰⁶ Mikko, interview.

¹⁰⁷ “Vanhanen avaldas Eestile toetust” [Vanhanen declared support to Estonia], *Postimees*, 28 April 2007, <https://www.postimees.ee/1655353/vanhanen-avaldas-eestile-toetust>; “Eestit toetanud välisriigid pronkssõduri küsimuses” [Foreign countries support Estonia on the question of the bronze soldier], *Postimees*, 4 May 2007, <https://www.postimees.ee/1656775/eestit-toetanud-valisriigid-pronkssoduri-kusimuses>; “Euroopa riikide liidrid toetavad Eestit” [Leaders of the European countries support Estonia], *Postimees*, 30 April 2007, <https://maailm.postimees.ee/1655609/euroopa-riikide-liidrid-toetavad-eestit>.

Meanwhile, the Estonian Embassy in Moscow was blockaded by members of *Nashi* from 27 April to 4 May. The authorities' sanction of and support for the pickets can be seen in a number of details that do not characterise spontaneous pickets: the besiegers had a mobile food kitchen, more than 30 identical tents, modern water appliances, proper sound equipment and good-quality posters that changed every day. Moscow City council workers kept the street free of litter and buses brought protesters from more distant Russian regions. On several occasions when protestors blocked the way for Estonian diplomats into or out of the embassy, the police did not intervene. On 2 May, ambassador Marina Kaljurand was attacked by *Nashi* members during a press conference and the following night some windows in the embassy were shot at.¹⁰⁸

International pressure for the Kremlin to respect the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations and use its numerous police force to protect the embassy finally bore fruit. The blockade was dismantled on 4 May, but at least two further attacks were carried out when bottles containing flammable liquid were thrown at the embassy. It caught fire, but the only damage was several broken windows.¹⁰⁹ Germany, which held the presidency of the Council of the European Union in the first half of 2007, made a statement on 2 May supporting Estonia over the situation in front of the embassy. A number of countries followed suit, and the European Parliament passed a resolution supporting Estonia on 24 May.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Rahvusvaheline Kaitseuringute Keskus, "Moskva käsi."

¹⁰⁹ "Eesti saatkond vabanes blokaadist" [Estonian embassy is freed from the blockade], *Postimees*, 5 May 2007, <https://www.postimees.ee/1657471/eesti-saatkond-vabanes-blokaadist>; "Moskvas rünnati Eesti saatkonnahoone" [Building of the Estonian embassy attacked in Moscow], *Delfi.ee/BNS*, 6 May 2000, <https://www.delfi.ee/news/paevauudised/eesti/moskvas-runnati-eesti-saatkonnahoone?id=372333>; Viktoria Korpan, "Eesti saatkond Moskvas avaldab protesti seoses saatkonnahoone rünnakuga" [Estonian embassy in Moscow expressed protest in connection with the attack on the embassy's building], *Äripäev*, 13 May 2002, <https://www.aripaev.ee/uudised/2002/05/13/eesti-saatkond-moskvas-avaldab-protesti-seoses-saatkonnahoone-runnakuga>.

¹¹⁰ Mari Kamps, "Moskvas rünnati Rootsi suursaadiku autot" [Swedish ambassador's vehicle attacked in Moscow], *Postimees*, 2 May 2007, <https://maailm.postimees.ee/1656335/moskvas-runnati-rootsi-suursaadiku-autot>; "Moskvas rünnati Eesti suursaadikut" [Estonian ambassador attacked in Moscow], *Postimees*, 2 May 2007, <https://www.postimees.ee/1656245/moskvas-runnati-eesti-suursaadikut>; European Parliament, "European Parliament resolution of 24 May 2007 on Estonia," P6_TA(2007)0215, 24 May 2007, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P6-2007-0215+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>.

There was strong backing also from the other side of the Atlantic. The US Senate passed a resolution supporting Estonia on 3 May, as did the House of Representatives on 5 June.¹¹¹ On 5 May, it was announced that the Estonian president, Toomas Hendrik Ilves, would visit Washington on 25 June, and the eventual meeting with president George W. Bush was seen as the highest support for Estonia in the crisis.¹¹²

There were also some critics outside Russia, most notably former German chancellor (1998–2005) Gerhard Schröder, who issued a statement echoing the Kremlin's views (at the time he was working for Nord Stream AG, the company planning a gas pipeline from Russia to Germany), and Efraim Zuroff of the Simon Wiesenthal Centre, connecting the removal of the statue to the Holocaust, which had not been raised earlier.¹¹³

5.2. RUSSIA'S REACTION IN THE ECONOMIC FIELD

Certain politically motivated economic and diplomatic action by Russia during and after the dispute should also be pointed out. Sanctions were imposed against many Estonian companies targeted mostly at transit and transport companies. Estonian confectionery company *Kalev* also suddenly lost its contracts in Russia. The mayor of Moscow, Yuriy Luzhkov, agitated to end all economic cooperation with Estonia. By the beginning of May, transit via Estonia of goods from Russia had decreased by around 60%.¹¹⁴ Queues at the Estonian-Russian border were extremely long and people had to wait for days to get to the other side.

Following the riots, there were calls in Russia for sanctions and even severing economic relations with Estonia, including from Federation Council chairman Sergey Mironov. Commenting on

¹¹¹ "US congress passes resolution supporting Estonia," *The Baltic Times*, 6 June 2007, <https://www.baltictimes.com/news/articles/18002/>.

¹¹² "Eesti president kohtub juunis USA presidendiga" [Estonian president will meet the US president in June], *Postimees*, 5 May 2007, <https://www.postimees.ee/1657503/eesti-president-kohtub-juunis-usa-presidendiga>; "Toetusavaldis kõige kõrgemal tasemel" [Support at the highest level], *Postimees*, 31 December 2007, <https://www.postimees.ee/1742983/toetusavaldis-koige-korgemal-tasemel>.

¹¹³ "Euroopa riikide liidrid toetavad Eestit," *Postimees*.

¹¹⁴ Rahvusvaheline Kaitseuringute Keskus, "Moskva käsi."

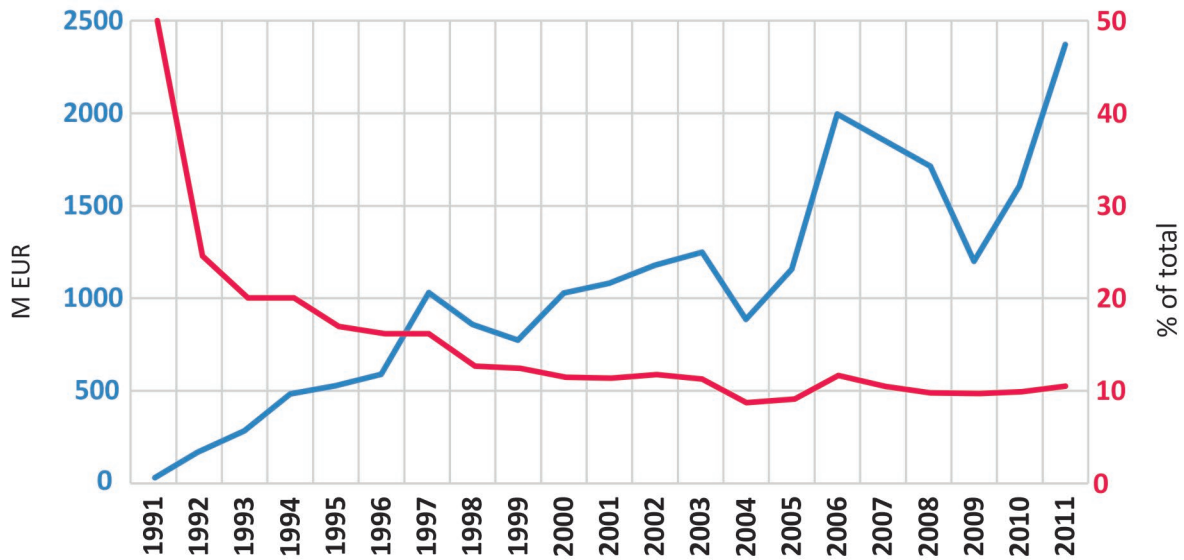


Figure 11. Estonian trade with Russia: turnover (blue) and share of total (red)¹¹⁸

these, foreign minister Sergey Lavrov said that Russia ‘must react without hysteria, but it must take serious steps.’¹¹⁵ Looking back from a distance of 13 years, it can be seen that this is exactly what Russia did. Although the media continued to stoke public anger, practical actions were pragmatic and not driven by emotions.

There was some short-term use of administrative measures for political purposes, like closing the highway bridge over the Narva River—the main border crossing between Estonia and Russia – to vehicles over 3.5 tons for ‘security reasons’;

Following the riots, there were calls in Russia for sanctions and even severing economic relations with Estonia

the limit was raised several days later to 13 tons (thus allowing buses to cross, but not loaded trucks) and only for vehicles coming from the Estonian side. The result of this temporary measure was that trucks had to take a 460-km detour to get to St Petersburg from Narva—a real nuisance, but hardly anything that would result in a change of policy.¹¹⁶ An overview compiled by the Estonian Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications on 6 June 2007 found there

had been a serious hit on the transit sector; in May 2007 the transit of Russian goods (mainly

Although the media continued to stoke public anger, practical actions were pragmatic and not driven by emotions

coal) on Estonian railways (influencing also the ports) had fallen 29% compared to the previous month and 23% compared to May 2006. For Estonian exports, however, there were almost no problems to report. Out of 3,500 members of the Estonian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, only six had reported problems (or possible future problems) connected to sales in the Russian market.¹¹⁷ The data in Figures 11 and 12 shows that the ministry’s analysis of the

short-term effects continued to be true over the longer term.

Omitting data for the 1990s, which reflects extreme poverty in Russia and the closely connected economy inherited from the Soviet Union, the graphs in Figure 11 show that Estonia’s trade with Russia stabilised at around 10% of total imports and exports in about 2000. The sharp increase in absolute terms after 2004 followed Estonia joining the EU. Some of the fall

¹¹⁵ “Russia to take ‘serious steps’ following Estonia monument demolition – minister,” BBC Monitoring Service, 27 April 2007.

¹¹⁶ Ilja Smirnov, “Venemaa takistab otsitud ettekäändel liiklust piirisillal” [Russia is obstructing traffic on the border bridge on the made-up excuse], *Postimees*, 17 May 2007, <https://www.postimees.ee/1661881/venemaa-takistab-otsitud-ettekaandel-liiklust-piirisillal>.

¹¹⁷ Majandus- ja Kommunikatsiooniministeerium (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications of Estonia), “Venemaa seotud probleemide mõju Eesti ettevõtetele (seisuga 8.06.2007)” [Influence of problems connected with Russia to Estonian enterprises (as of 08/7/2007)], Tallinn, 2007. (Obtained by the authors with Request for Information from the Government Office).

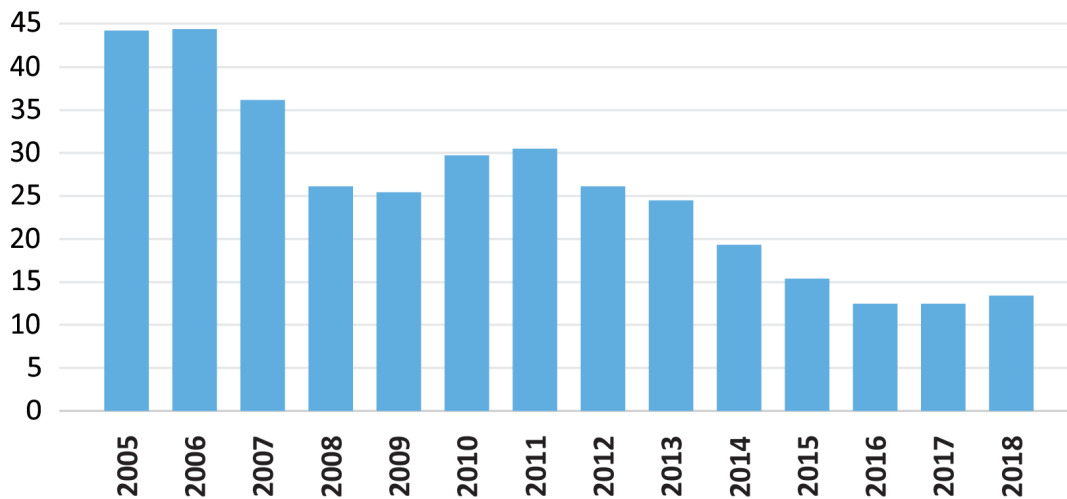


Figure 12. Cargo traffic on Estonian railways, 2005–18, millions of tons¹²⁰

may be attributed to the global financial crisis following the collapse of Lehman Brothers in 2008, which affected both Estonia and Russia much more than the Bronze Soldier crisis, since the relative number remains more or less the same. For transit, the numbers look different (see Figure 12). However, here too the effects are caused more by economic realities than the Bronze Soldier crisis.

In the last two decades Russia has been developing port facilities in Ust-Luga (on the southern shore of the Gulf of Finland between the Estonian border and St Petersburg) and, as president Putin has noted, ‘The port at Ust-Luga is one of the largest infrastructural projects of European scale in Russia.’¹¹⁹ Of course the project makes economic sense in the long run: why spend money on docking ships abroad, if it can be done in Russia?

According to Raivo Vare, by 2007, Putin’s favourite project had become sufficiently

operational to compete with Estonian ports, but could not provide the same quality.¹²¹ There was therefore a need to push Russian clients from Estonian ports to Russian ones, mainly Ust-Luga. There had previously been no political excuse for issuing such an order (there had been suggestions, but these were not enough to lose a considerable amount of revenue). The Bronze Soldier crisis provided a convenient opportunity for the political momentum to push ahead with the task. According to Vare, another meeting was called

A large part of transit through Estonian ports was diverted to Ust-Luga. In the long run this was a win-win situation: Russia became less dependent on Estonia’s ports and Estonia became less dependent on revenues from Russian transit, so the potential for coercive leverage was reduced

by Sergey Ivanov to discuss the situation concerning events in Tallinn and Russia’s responses.¹²² With or without the meeting, the reality was that a large part of transit through Estonian ports was diverted to Ust-Luga. In the long run this was a win-win situation: Russia became less dependent on Estonia’s ports and Estonia became less dependent on revenues from Russian transit, so the potential for coercive leverage was reduced. Another strategic advantage for Estonia is that, now able to handle its own trade, Russia has no imminent interest in controlling port facilities

¹¹⁸ Charts by Ivo Juurvee, based on data from Karmo Tüür and Raivo Vare, “Estonia – Russia – Belarus: The Political Implications of Economic Relations,” in *The Economic Presence of Russia and Belarus in the Baltic States: Risks and Opportunities*, ed. Andris Sprūds (Riga: Centre for East European Policy Studies, Latvian Institute of International Affairs, Centre for Geopolitical Studies, Academic Center for Baltic and Russian Studies, 2012), 249-284, https://liia.lv/site/docs/The_Economic_Presence_for_WEB_atverums_2.1.pdf.

¹¹⁹ “Kompaniya Ust’-Luga” [Company of Ust-Luga], Novotrans, accessed 16 June 2020, <https://novotrans.com/морские-порты/ust-luga-comp/>.

¹²⁰ Data source: Eesti Raudtee AS [Estonian Railways Ltd.], e-mail to Ivo Juurvee, 14 October 2019.

¹²¹ Raivo Vare (transit expert and former member of the Executive Board of Eesti Raudtee AS [Estonian Railways Ltd.], 2005-07), interview by Ivo Juurvee, Tallinn, 11 October 2019.

¹²² Vare, interview.

on Estonian territory. However, as mentioned earlier, the same processes were taking place anyway; the Bronze Soldier just provided a political excuse.

The intended outcome of the sanctions was to destabilise Estonia's economy and limit its success. In reality, these sanctions did not work as much as Russia expected, but they led Estonia to look to the West more than before and to start selling in new markets. It is noteworthy that, even if the sanctions mainly affected the transit and transport sectors, overall Estonian exports to Russia in 2007 and 2008 actually grew.

All in all, the sanctions had a positive effect on the Estonian economy: the infrastructure for goods transport improved, and transport and transit to the West grew significantly. The spectrum of goods also became wider.¹²³

5.3. CYBER-ATTACKS

The cyber-attacks against Estonia started on 27 April and lasted with varying intensity for 22 days. In the initial phase, from 27 to 29 April, the attacks were carried out by relatively simple means, even earning the label 'cyber riots.' The main plank of cyber-attacks was coordinated and involved employment of resources normally unavailable to ordinary citizens, and came in four waves causing some disruption to Estonian IT systems. The botnets used in the attacks employed computers in 178 countries. It was the first-ever cyber-attack against a country. Critical infrastructure including systems used for transport and the energy sector were not attacked, but local media outlets and the Estonian government's online briefing room were among the first targets. During the first wave, various Russian-language internet forums presented calls and instructions for launching ping commands with certain parameters (see Figure 13). This resulted in simple denial of service (DoS) attacks that, as they were coordinated, were effective in disrupting their targets. Pinging was followed by malformed web queries, which were used mainly against government and media websites;

¹²³ Maris Lauri, "Eesti majandus võitis pronksiööst ootamatult" [Estonian economy unexpectedly won from the bronze night], *Eesti Päevaleht*, 25 April 2012, <http://epl.delfi.ee/news/arvamus/maris-lauri-est-est-majandus-voitis-pronksioost-ootamatult?id=64302799>.

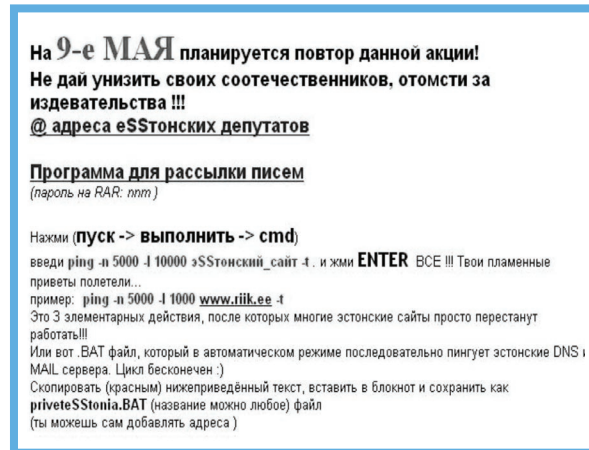


Figure 13. An example of instructions for a cyber-attack on the internet¹²⁵

this implied the use of more specific means designed for attack.¹²⁴

The main attack, which began on 30 April, benefited from more sophisticated coordination, although the initial model of using internet forums to distribute instructions and lists of targets to attack was still employed. The instructions were mostly kept simple, thus not requiring advanced technical knowledge; all that was needed was a computer with an internet connection. Calls were issued to schedule attacks at specific times in order to generate a higher simultaneous volume of queries for greater effect against targets. In the first wave on 4 May, DDoS (distributed denial of service) intensified against websites and domain name

Although cyber-attacks have received the most attention abroad, these were only part of Russia's reaction to the Bronze Soldier affair

servers (DNS). The attackers covered their tracks by using global botnets, routing attacks through proxy servers in other countries and probably by faking their IP addresses. The second wave,

¹²⁴ Eneken Tikk, Kadri Kaska, and Liis Vihul, *International Cyber Incidents: Legal Considerations* (Tallinn: Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence, 2010), 18-19, https://ccdcoc.org/uploads/2018/10/legalconsiderations_0.pdf; Tarmo Randel, "CERT Eesti tegevuse aastakokkuvõte 2007" [Annual activity report of CERT Estonia for 2007], CERT Eesti, n.d., https://www.ria.ee/sites/default/files/content-editors/CERT/cert_2007_aastakokkuvõte.pdf.

¹²⁵ Rain Ottis, "Analysis of the 2007 Cyber Attacks Against Estonia from the Information Warfare Perspective," Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence, n.d., https://ccdcoc.org/uploads/2018/10/Ottis2008_AnalysisOf2007FromTheInformationWarfarePerspective.pdf.

consisting of intensified DDoS attacks, started at 11.00 pm Estonian time on 8 May (i.e. early on 9 May in Moscow) and lasted until 10 May, when it ended abruptly. At their peak, the attacks

The events in Tallinn demonstrated to Russia that diplomacy, propaganda, economic retaliation and cyber-attacks used intensively and simultaneously may not be enough to bring down a government or change the political direction of even a small neighbouring country

shut down 58 websites, the most noteworthy being that of Estonia's largest bank, Hansapank, whose website was unavailable to costumers for 90 minutes on 9 May and another two hours the next day. The third wave, using about 85,000 hijacked computers to carry out DDoS attacks mainly against Estonian government websites, took place from noon to midnight on 15 May, and also the web portal of Estonia's second-largest bank, SEB Eesti Ühispank, was down for 90 minutes. The final strong DDoS attack came on 18 May, again targeting government websites, while banks continued to experience a reduced level of interruptions even after that date.¹²⁶

Among the targets were the Government Office, the offices of the prime minister (and his Reform Party), the president and Parliament, the State Audit Office, all ministries except culture, and state agencies such as the Police Board. In addition to banks, commercial services affected included internet service providers, all three mobile phone service providers, and the six largest news organisations and news portals.¹²⁷ Although the variety of targets was wide, not all of them went down and not at the same time; interruptions to online banking of between 90 minutes and two hours were the most serious incidents. Since government and media websites were under attack, Estonia faced significant problems in sharing information with the rest of the world in the tense political situation, but most of the population was not affected; there were no interruptions in transport or energy supply, and shops and entertainment establishments were functioning normally.

The Russian state authorities denied any involvement in the attacks. Two years later, in

March 2009, Sergey Markov, a deputy in the State Duma, stated publicly: 'About the cyber-attack on Estonia ... don't worry, that attack was carried out by my assistant. I won't tell you his

name, because then he might not be able to get visas.'¹²⁸ At the same time, *Nashi* member Konstantin Goloskokov claimed that he and his associates were behind the attack.¹²⁹ However, according to specialists, Markov's statement 'confirms earlier information of *Nashi* activists

having been part of the attacks, even though the description of methods that were claimed by Markov and Goloskokov only matches part of the attacks experienced.'¹³⁰

The investigation of cyber-attacks against Estonia has not provided any conclusive results, with the exception of 20-year-old Dmitriy Galushkevich, who was fined 17,500 kroons (€1,118) in January 2008 for attacking the website of the Reform Party.¹³¹

As can be seen from the above, although cyber-attacks have received the most attention abroad, these were only part of Russia's reaction to the Bronze Soldier affair. Although there was some emotion from the Russian side, the economic reaction was very pragmatic and was used to play into Putin's hand for one of his favourite project, the port at Ust-Luga. Diplomacy, protests backed by the authorities, economic sanctions and cyber-attacks were used simultaneously—a mixture that can be called hybrid.

6. WHAT HAS RUSSIA LEARNED?

The events in Tallinn in the first half of 2007 demonstrated to Russia that diplomacy, propaganda, economic retaliation and cyber-

¹²⁸ John Leyden, "Russian politician: 'My assistant started Estonian cyberwar,'" *The Register*, 10 March 2009, https://www.theregister.co.uk/2009/03/10/estonia_cyberwarfare_twist/.

¹²⁹ Noah Shachtman, "Kremlin Kids: We Launched the Estonian Cyber War," *Wired*, 11 March 2009, <https://www.wired.com/2009/03/pro-kremlin-gro/>.

¹³⁰ Tikk, Kaska and Vihul, *International Cyber Incidents*, 23-24.

¹³¹ Martii Kass, "Rahutuste ajal Reformierakonna kodulehte rünnanud noormees sai trahvi" [Young man who attacked the Reform Party website during the riots received a fine], *Postimees*, 23 January 2008, <https://www.postimees.ee/1751045/rahutuste-ajal-reformierakonna-kodulehte-runnanud-noormees-sai-trahvi>.

¹²⁶ Tikk, Kaska, and Vihul, *International Cyber Incidents*, 19-20.

¹²⁷ Tikk, Kaska, and Vihul, *International Cyber Incidents*, 22.

attacks used intensively and simultaneously—hybrid means, if you will—may not be enough to bring down a government (the aim stated by Kovalev) or change the political direction of even a small neighbouring country.

During the crisis in Estonian-Russian relations, military force or even the threat of its use was never employed by the Kremlin. (One of the best units in the Russian Armed Forces, the 76th Guard Airborne Attack Division—parts of which were successfully deployed in both Chechen Wars and later saw action in Georgia and Ukraine—is stationed in Pskov, only 28 kilometres from the Estonian border, and its presence and possible threat is well known to everybody in Estonia, including decision-makers.) In Georgia (2008) and Ukraine (2014), military means were added to the mix. It is, of course, worth noting that, unlike Estonia, Georgia and Ukraine were not members of NATO and the EU.

The emphasis on using its ‘compatriots’ abroad gained even more momentum when, on 21 June 2007, Putin signed a decree on the creation of the *Russkiy Mir* Foundation.¹³² According to its website, the foundation’s *raison d’être* was:

*The phenomenon of the Russian world has come to the center of attention in both academic circles and the public arena. The stability achieved only recently in Russia itself has allowed for a refocusing of attention on the importance and value of the Russian world, and not only to those who consider themselves participants of this world but also to modern civilisation at large. It has become clear that serious steps need to be taking [sic] to both preserve and promote Russian language and culture in today’s world. These discussions came to a culmination in Russian President Vladimir Putin’s Address to the Federal Assembly in April 2007.*¹³³

Later, in addition to various cultural events to boost Russian identity, in the most extreme

¹³² President of Russia, “Ukaz Prezidenta Rossiyskoy Federatsii ‘O sozdanii fonda “Russkiy Mir”” [Decree of the President of the Russian Federation ‘On the establishment of the “Russkiy Mir” Foundation’], Decree No. 796, 21 June 2007, <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/25689>.

¹³³ “About Russkiy Mir Foundation,” Russkiy Mir Foundation, 2016, accessed 16 June 2020, <https://russkiymir.ru/en/fund/index.php>.

cases the Kremlin even created a large number of new Russian citizens by handing out passports on a massive scale.¹³⁴

The coordinated use of different means made its way into Russia’s strategy documents. Article II of the July 2008 version of the Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation reads:

*Strengthening Russia’s international positions, as well as solving problems related to the establishment of equal, mutually beneficial, partnerships with all countries, the successful promotion of its foreign economic interests, ensuring political, economic, informational and cultural influence abroad [authors’ emphasis] require the involvement of all financial and economic resources at the state’s disposal leverage and adequate resource support of the foreign policy of the Russian Federation.*¹³⁵

The next iteration of the Foreign Policy Concept, covering 2013 to 2016, introduces the concept of soft power, but not in the sense intended by Joseph Nye. According to Article 20 of the document, *myagkaya sila* (мягкая сила; the direct translation would be ‘soft force’) is ‘a comprehensive toolkit for solving foreign policy problems based on the capabilities of civil society, information and communication, humanitarian and other methods and technologies alternative to classical diplomacy.’¹³⁶ And, finally, the Foreign Policy Concept in force since 2016 is again much less implicit on the question of what one might call hybrid action or using DIMEFIL, and no longer uses the concept of soft power.¹³⁷

¹³⁴ Vladimir Socor, “Russia Launches ‘Passportization’ in Occupied Ukrainian Donbas (Part One),” Eurasia Daily Monitor, Vol. 16, Issue 63, <https://jamestown.org/program/russia-launches-passportization-in-occupied-ukrainian-donbas-part-one/>.

¹³⁵ President of Russia, *Kontseptsiya vneshney politiki Rossiyskoy Federatsii* [Foreign policy concept of the Russian Federation] (Moscow: Administration of the President of Russia, 2008), <http://kremlin.ru/acts/news/785>.

¹³⁶ President of Russia, *Kontseptsiya vneshney politiki Rossiyskoy Federatsii* [Foreign policy concept of the Russian Federation] (Moscow: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2013), https://www.mid.ru/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptlCk6B6Z29/content/id/122186.

¹³⁷ President of Russia, “Ukaz Prezidenta Rossiyskoy Federatsii ‘Ob utverzhdenii Kontseptsii vneshney politiki Rossiyskoy Federatsii’” [Decree of the President of the Russian Federation ‘On the Approval of the Concept of foreign policy of the Russian Federation’], Decree No. 640, 30 November 2016, <http://kremlin.ru/acts/bank/41451>.

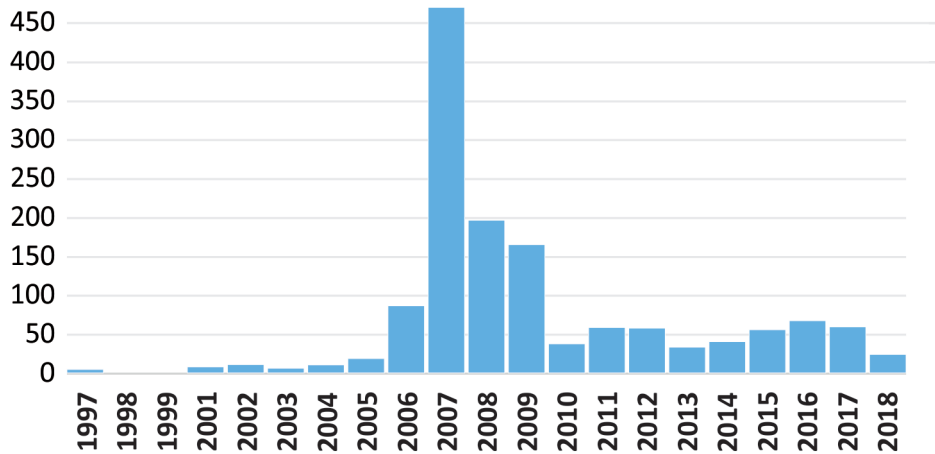


Figure 14. Number of Interfax news items covering the Bronze Soldier from 1997 (when the first two pieces appear) to 2018¹⁴⁰

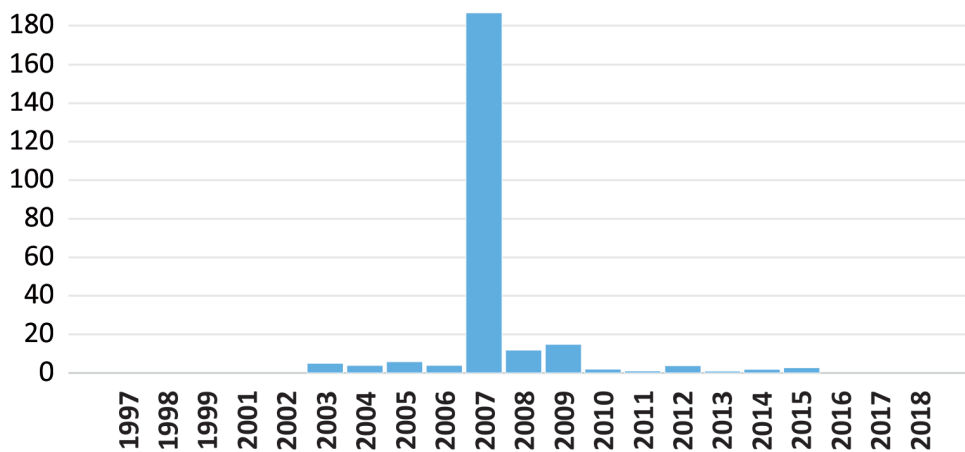


Figure 15. Coverage of Bronze Soldier in the Russian media, 2003–18¹⁴¹

Turning to the version of the Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation currently in force (from 2018), Article 5 reads: ‘[The] Military Doctrine reflects Russia’s commitment to use military measures to protect national interests and the interests of its allies only after exhausting the possibilities of applying political, diplomatic, legal, economic, informational and other non-violent instruments.’¹³⁸ (Oddly enough, while most amendments made in the 2014 and 2018 versions of the Military Doctrine are more hawkish than those in the previous version from 2010, this paragraph was an exception.

Article 4 of the 2010 version reads: ‘The Military Doctrine reflects the commitment of the Russian Federation to the **use of political, diplomatic, legal, economic, environmental,**

Although 2007 saw tension as never before in bilateral relations with Russia because of the military and historical past, Estonia is by no means the only country with graves of and monuments to Soviet and Russian soldiers

information, military and other instruments [authors’ emphasis] to protect the national interests of the Russian Federation and the interests of its allies.’¹³⁹

¹³⁸ President of Russia, *Voyennaya doktrina Rossiyskoy Federatsii* [Military doctrine of the Russian Federation] (Moscow: Administration of the President of Russia, n.d.), 2, <http://static.kremlin.ru/media/events/files/41d527556bec8deb3530.pdf>.

¹³⁹ President of Russia, *Voyennaya doktrina Rossiyskoy Federatsii* [Military doctrine of the Russian Federation] (Moscow: Administration of the President of Russia, 2010), <http://www.kremlin.ru/supplement/461>.

The situation in Estonia calmed down, the Bronze Soldier was in its new and prominent location in the Military Cemetery, and the Red Army soldiers from Tõnismägi were buried there. (The following year, the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence was opened in a renovated century-old barracks less than 200 metres from the monument’s new position.) During 2007, the *Nashi* sometimes organised ‘memorial guard’ events, sending its members from Russia one-by-one to stand on Tõnismägi in Red Army uniform. Although harmless, such events helped to keep the Bronze Soldier in the headlines, where it has been for more than a decade and seems likely to stay for the foreseeable future (see Figure 14).

However, its importance seems to have declined as, since 2009, the monument has made it only rarely into BBC Monitoring’s reports of the Russian media (see Figure 15).

Although 2007 saw tension as never before in bilateral relations with Russia because of the military and historical past, Estonia is by no means the only country with graves of and monuments to Soviet and Russian soldiers. According to 2007 data from the Russian MoD, well over five million Russian and Soviet soldiers are buried outside Russia’s current borders, at 22,000 burial sites and monuments (see Table 1). (The Russian MoD did not have exact data on Georgia, and there was none on Afghanistan, despite more than 14,000 Soviet soldiers dying there in 1979–89, or on Vietnam and the various African countries where Soviet military advisers were present during the Cold War.) Some of the wide dispersal is down to the Nazis abusing Soviet POWs as forced labour all over German-occupied territory. Moreover, not all of the soldiers fell in WWII; some are probably losses in Soviet garrisons during peacetime due to accidents and health issues.

Given the huge numbers, it is natural that there is occasionally a need to move a monument for various reasons. As illustrated by the Khimki example mentioned earlier, this is also the practice within Russia. In cases abroad,

	Number of burial sites/monuments	Number of soldiers buried
Poland	660	1,769,283
Belarus	4,110	1,224,622
Germany	3,500	779,908
Latvia	338	411,368
Ukraine	7,673	385,714
Estonia	265	168,855
Hungary	1,029	112,625
Austria	209	86,562
Lithuania	176	74,121
Slovakia	22	69,250
Romania	166	54,415
Czech Republic	672	53,142
Moldova	420	50,445
Finland	88	14,377
China	32	13,000
Norway	63	12,370
France	49	6,388
Serbia	14	5,257
Kazakhstan	468	3,243
Slovenia	2	2,605
Croatia	7	2,440
Mongolia	15	2,260
Azerbaijan	9	2,059
Uzbekistan	1,047	1,754
Sweden	11	1,627
North Korea	9	1,597
Netherlands	3	1,355
Bulgaria	165	1,090
Italy	214	788
Armenia	9	620
Japan	30	465
UK	343	348
Turkmenistan	218	300
Belgium	29	267
Tajikistan	243	243
Denmark	93	193
Spain	93	188
Egypt	4	130
Tunisia	2	100
Cuba	1	63
Kyrgyzstan	52	57
Luxembourg	1	56
Iran	1	48
Switzerland	1	23
US (Alaska)	11	11
Malaysia	1	9
Iraq	1	5

Table 1. Number of Soviet/Russian soldiers buried and burial sites and monuments outside Russia. (Some numbers are possibly inflated)¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ Chart by Ivo Juurvee using data obtained from the BNS/Interfax database.

¹⁴¹ Chart by Ivo Juurvee produced using BBC Monitoring data.

¹⁴² Table by Ivo Juurvee, compiled according to data of the Russian MoD / *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* in: Konstantin Mikhaylov, “Posledniy boy ‘Bronzovogo soldata’” [The last battle of the ‘Bronze Soldier’], *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 27 April 2007, <https://rg.ru/2007/04/27/soldat.html>.

Russia's approach in exploiting the issue of war memorials differs widely depending on the size of the country and Russia's current relations with it. In September 1999, a monument was moved from the city centre of Dalian in China (where there had been a Russian and Soviet base during the Russo-Japanese War and the Cold War) to the town's military cemetery, and there was no angry reaction from Russia.¹⁴³ However, when a statue of Field Marshal Ivan Konev (a 'liberator' in WWII who was in charge of Soviet and Warsaw Pact troops during the bloody suppression of the Hungarian freedom movement in Budapest in 1956, and at least as controversial a figure during the quashing of the Prague Spring in 1968) was removed in

Russia's approach in exploiting the issue of war memorials differs widely depending on the size of the country and Russia's current relations with it

Prague in April 2020, Russia reacted strongly. In addition to diplomatic action and alleged covert activities, Russia amended its Penal Code immediately (on 7 April 2020) to criminalise 'destruction or damage' of/to all kinds of memorial to those who fell in defence of the Fatherland (*Отечества*, i.e. Russia or the Soviet Union), both within and outside Russia's borders.¹⁴⁴

There has also been tension in other countries in Eastern Europe that were liberated from the Nazis by the Red Army, but where Soviet forces stayed as oppressors during the following decades.¹⁴⁵ If relations with Russia are difficult, such monuments may appear

¹⁴³ Chzhan Chzholin', "Zastyvshiy v bronzе: Kitayskiye memorialy v chest' sovetskikh voinov" [Frozen in bronze: Chinese monuments to the honour of the soviet soldiers], *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 6 May 2015, <https://rg.ru/2015/05/06/kitay.html>.

¹⁴⁴ Rob Cameron, "Mystery 'poison plot' sends Czech mayors into hiding," BBC News, 3 May 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-52500865>; State Duma and Federal Council, "Federal'nyy Zakon 'O vnesenii izmeneniy v Ugolovnyy kodeks Rossiyskoy Federatsii i Ugolovno-protsessual'nyy kodeks Rossiyskoy Federatsii" [Federal law 'On amendments to the Penal code of the Russian Federation and the Penal process code of the Russian Federation], No. 112-F3, 7 April 2020, <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001202004070023>.

¹⁴⁵ Antony Kalashnikov, "Soviet war memorials in Eastern Europe continue to strain relations with Russia," *The Conversation*, 20 August 2018, <https://theconversation.com/soviet-war-memorials-in-eastern-europe-continue-to-strain-relations-with-russia-101687>.

under attack. The most serious case took place in the aftermath of Russia's 2008 aggression in Georgia, where a bomb exploded in Kutaisi, damaging a monument to the Great Patriotic War in December 2009.¹⁴⁶ The most elaborate provocation against a Soviet memorial took place in Gdansk, Poland, on 12 October 2013, when the well-known artist Jerzy Szumczyk installed, next to the Great Patriotic War memorial tank, his statue 'Komm Frau' depicting a Soviet soldier raping a pregnant woman (see Picture 7).¹⁴⁷

In celebrating the victory in the Great Patriotic War, Putin has been eager to use the modus operandi of Boris Yeltsin, who in 1995 started large-scale commemorations and playing the card of Russian patriotism. On 9 May 2008 the tank columns were back on parade in Red Square, following the aggression against Georgia. Then-president Dmitriy Medvedev awarded the first 11 new crosses of the recreated Order of St George to Russian soldiers who had fought there, thus conflating Imperial Russian military might with victory in the 21st century.¹⁴⁸

Two interesting history-related initiatives under Dmitriy Medvedev took place on the eve of the 70th anniversary of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact in 2009.

On 13 May Medvedev signed the Russian National Security Strategy for the period to 2020. Article 1 of the document stated: 'The state policy is being implemented in the field of national defence, state and public security, sustainable development of Russia, adequate to internal and external conditions. ... The original Russian ideals, spirituality, and worthy attitude to historical memory are being

¹⁴⁶ "Pri vzryve Memoriala slavy v Kutaisi pogibli dva cheloveka" [Two people die during the explosion at the Memorial of Fame in Kutaisi], *Lenta.ru*, 19 December 2009, <https://lenta.ru/news/2009/12/19/blast/>.

¹⁴⁷ Tara Brady, "Polish town tears down statue marking the rape of millions of German women by Russian soldiers," *The Daily Mail*, 14 October 2014, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2458778/Komm-Frau-Gdansk-tears-statue-marking-rape-millions-German-women-Russian-soldiers.html>.

¹⁴⁸ "Prezident podpisal Ukaz 'O nagrazhdenii gosudarstvennymi nagradami Rossiyskoy Federatsii voyennosluzhashchikh Vooruzhennykh Sil Rossiyskoy Federatsii'" [The president signed a Decree 'On awarding with the decorations of the Russian Federation of the servicemen of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation'], Administration of the President of Russia, 15 August 2018, <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/1097>.



Picture 7. The sculpture ‘Komm Frau.’ This photo was made available by Polish artist Jerzy Bohdan Szumczyk on 16 October 2016 and shows the sculpture he made featuring a Soviet soldier raping a pregnant woman in Gdansk, Poland. The life-size sculpture was installed without authorisation near a monument dedicated to the liberation of Gdansk and was removed by the police within a few hours (Photo credit: Jerzy Bohdan Szumczyk / AFP / Scanpix)

revived.’ Article 81 is more precise, stating: ‘Attempts to revise views on the history of Russia, its role and place in world history [authors’ emphasis], propaganda of a lifestyle based on permissiveness and violence, racial, national and religious intolerance reinforce the negative impact on the state of national security in the sphere of culture.’¹⁴⁹ Two days later, practical implementation of the strategy began.

On 15 May 2009, the president signed a decree creating a ‘Commission under the President of the Russian Federation on countering attempts to falsify history to the detriment of Russia’s interests.’ This was a high-level commission, including the head of the Presidential Administration, the chief of the General Staff, the permanent secretary of the Joint Commission for Protecting State Secrets, and representatives of the SVR and FSB. Of 28 members, 24 represented executive power, two were from the State Duma and

two were historians.¹⁵⁰ Despite its impressive composition, the commission was not a success and it was quietly disbanded in 2012.¹⁵¹

In 2012, when Putin was not only *de facto* but also *de jure* head of state again, he said in a speech at the Valdai Club:

It’s time to stop only taking note of the bad in our history, and berating ourselves more than even our opponents would do. [Self-]criticism is necessary, but without a sense of self-worth, or love for our Fatherland,

¹⁴⁹ President of Russia, *Strategiya natsional’noy bezopasnosti Rossiyskoy Federatsii do 2020 goda* [National security strategy of the Russian Federation until year 2020] (Moscow: Administration of the President of Russia, 2009), <http://kremlin.ru/supplement/424>.

¹⁵⁰ President of Russia, “Ukaz Prezidenta Rossiyskoy Federatsii ‘O Komissii pri Prezidente Rossiyskoy Federatsii po protivodeystviyu popytkam fal’sifikatsii istorii v ushcherb interesam Rossii’” [Decree of the President of the Russian Federation ‘On the Commission under the President of the Russian Federation on countering the attempts to falsify history to the detriment of Russia’s interests], Decree No. 549, 15 May 2009, <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/29288>.

¹⁵¹ President of Russia, “Ukaz Prezidenta Rossiyskoy Federatsii ‘Ob utverzhdenii sostava Komissii pri Prezidente Rossiyskoy Federatsii po formirovaniyu i podgotovke rezerva upravlencheskikh kadrov, izmenenii i priznanii utrativshim silu nekotorykh aktov Prezidenta Rossiyskoy Federatsii’” [Decree of the President of the Russian Federation ‘On the approval of the composition of the Commission under the President of the Russian Federation on the formation and preparation of the reserve of the managerial cadre, change and acknowledgment as invalid of some previous legal acts of the President of the Russian Federation’], Decree No. 183, 14 February 2012, <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/34810>.



Figure 16. SVR director Sergey Naryshkin giving an interview in his capacity as head of the Russian Historical Association and head of the Organising Committee for the Support of Literature, Book Publishing and Reading in Russia, in June 2020¹⁵³

such criticism becomes humiliating and counterproductive. We must be proud of our history, and we have things to be proud of. Our entire, uncensored history must be a part of Russian identity. Without recognising this it is impossible to establish mutual trust and allow society to move forward.¹⁵²

In addition to internal political implications there are also international ones. There has been no official Russian apology concerning Soviet actions in Eastern Europe (repressions, imposing Soviet rule and decades of economic devastation). Putin's words make it clear that there will be no such apology during his mandate. In the same year, Sergey Naryshkin, chairman of the State Duma at the time and, like Putin, a former KGB officer from St Petersburg, was appointed to lead the Russian Historical Association. In 2016, he became head of the SVR; he is still the head of the historical association (see Figure 16).

¹⁵² Gudrun Persson, "Controlling the Past: History and National Security in Russia," Frivärld, n.d., <https://frivarld.se/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/gudrun-persson-controlling-the-past.pdf>.

¹⁵³ "Vypusk novostey v 12:00" [News edition at 12:00], Pervyy Kanal, 7 June 2020, <https://www.1tv.ru/news/issue/2020-06-07/12:00#1>.

When Crimea was illegally occupied by and annexed to Russia in 2014, the Ribbon of St George became a symbol of Russian victory and also an unofficial sign of recognition for pro-Russian militants in Ukraine. Mixing together past and present, as had taken place after the invasion of Georgia, was bolstered. In 2015, when the 70th anniversary of victory was celebrated, Russian officials joined the 'Immortal Regiment' event—a procession on 9 May of veterans carrying pictures of relatives who had participated in the war. Since then, these processions have grown ever larger.¹⁵⁴ While veterans have been an essential part of

The tensions caused by Russia's revival of the glorification of the Soviet past are here to stay for years or decades to come

commemorations since the Soviet era, their number inevitably decreases over time. The Immortal Regiment should help to overcome the problem that would sooner or later be posed by future celebrations being held without veterans. The celebrations for the 75th anniversary of victory in the Great Patriotic War were planned to be more impressive than

¹⁵⁴ Svetlana Prokopenko, "Russia's Immortal Regiment: From Grassroots To 'Quasi-Religious Cult'," RFE/RL, 12 May 2017, <https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-immortal-regiment-grassroots-to-quasi-religious-cult/28482905.html>.

ever and to coincide with changing the Russian Constitution to allow Putin to remain president as long as he wants. However, the global Covid-19 pandemic intervened, and these plans were delayed.

Many things can be changed, but past is not one of them. In a democratic country, even perception of past would be difficult to change—especially recent history still vividly remembered by many of the living. The tensions caused by Russia’s revival of the glorification of the Soviet past are here to stay for years or decades to come.

CONCLUSIONS

The crisis in Estonia has been dealt with widely but with a lack of empirical data. This study for the first time presents quantitative data on the involvement of Russian media and on the profile of people rioting on the streets of Tallinn in late April 2007. The study cannot be fully exhaustive since not all the material is available yet for researchers. Hopefully the subject will be revisited, if not earlier then at least in 2057, when the classification of much of the material in Estonia expires.

The crisis has passed into not only the history of Estonia’s internal policy but also world history as the first time one country used cyber-attacks against another. It was also one of the first wake-up calls for Russia’s aggressive actions abroad after the end of the Cold War, unfortunately with many others to follow. Although it was softer by far than aggressions against Georgia in 2008 or Ukraine 2014, the outcome in physical space—on the streets—was much more obvious than in the case of some other Russian influence activities, such as meddling in the 2016 US presidential elections, that gained notoriety later.

It should be pointed out that tensions already existed and Russia took the opportunity to use them. The main division in society to be deepened and abused was the different understanding of history by Estonians and by Russian-speakers in Estonia.

Today the term ‘hybrid threats’ has gained popularity in both academic and public discourse and it is logical to ask if what happened in Estonia in 2007 could be called a hybrid conflict or a materialisation of hybrid threats.

First, it is clear that no military action took place, not even in the form of a show of force. On the other hand, it is also clear that there was intensive propaganda and diplomatic pressure, accompanied by cyber-attacks and economic pressure in which many of Russia’s state institutions, state and private businesses, and parts of Russian society took part. The question of how well or from what stage these various measures were coordinated remains open. They were closely coordinated by Russia from late April although, based on the material available, it is impossible to prove what the level of coordination was before then. In

Tensions already existed and Russia took the opportunity to use them. The main division in society to be deepened and abused was the different understanding of history by Estonians and by Russian-speakers in Estonia

general, it seems there was no firm plan with a clearly defined desired end-state other than to cause disruption, but things started to happen simultaneously from January 2007.

Thus, in the Bronze Soldier case, only one of the methods in the European Commission’s definition—diplomatic, military, economic, technological—and the types of leverage in the DIME model (diplomatic, information, military, economic) was missing: the military dimension.

What can be learned from these events, 13 years later? Indeed, is there still something to learn?

Sowing discord in other countries’ societies has also been noted in later Russian influence activities. What the Bronze Soldier case demonstrates and should be kept in mind is Russian opportunism: if an opportunity arises to destabilise a country Russia considers an adversary, including NATO countries, there is a high probability that it will be exploited. The factors used in Estonia were historical,

and Eastern Europe is probably most suitable for this agenda; in other parts of the world, different and more suitable factors would probably be used.

If an opportunity arises to destabilise a country Russia considers an adversary, including NATO countries, there is a high probability that it will be used

Second, although the actions initially seemed motivated by politics and emotion, a longer perspective showed that the situation was used in order to push pragmatic economic goals, in this case one of Putin's favourite projects, the port at Ust-Luga. Since it is hardly likely that advancing this project was the primary objective when triggering the conflict in the first place, the fact further demonstrates Russia's opportunism.

Third, informational activities can lead to kinetic action, in this case riots on the streets of Tallinn. As this study has shown, the segment of society most willing to go and riot in Russia's interest were young Russian-speaking males, i.e. people relying at the time to a great extent on Russian news media for information on their country of residence and, perhaps even more important, who were old enough to be physically strong but young enough not to worry much about the consequences.

Finally, what should be done about it? To answer this, the first thing to ask would be: is there a way to change Russia's behaviour? Given that for more than a decade Russia's aggression has only increased, it is not going to change in the foreseeable future. So, should the West change its own values? This is not to be recommended and will not happen in the foreseeable future. Thus, there is obviously a need to live with the possibility of Russia using its influence activities for destabilising action abroad. There is no silver bullet to deal with the problem.

Certainly from a short-term perspective, there is a need for as much warning as possible based

on media (including social media) monitoring and some measures from the security services, such as effective surveillance of extremists and counterintelligence to ferret out their possible ties with Russia's intelligence services. Once such warnings have been received, they should be shared with international partners. Since the world's awareness of and knowledge about Russia's actions in the information field have grown—especially following the downing of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 in 2014 and Russia's attempted meddling in the 2016 US presidential elections—the international climate is favourable.¹⁵⁵

However, the Estonian case has shown that timely forewarning is not enough. The Estonian security establishment could foresee most of the things that happened with the exception of cyber-attacks, which had not taken place in such a manner before. In the longer term, societies outside Russia should become more resilient to external manipulation, so that extremists cannot find a space. This is much easier said than done, but constantly increasing decision-makers' and societies' media literacy and awareness of the modus operandi of meddling will work in the long run. More resilient IT systems and international cooperation, including in the legal sphere, can reduce the effectiveness of cyber-attacks. History has to be researched and the results made widely known to avoid the possibility of people being caught out due to their lack of knowledge; and this should be done systematically and in schools, not (only) in the cinema or on social media. Last but not least, law-

There is a need for as much warning as possible based on media (including social media) monitoring and some measures from the security services, such as effective surveillance of extremists and counterintelligence to ferret out their possible ties with Russia's intelligence services

enforcement institutions must be bolstered in case the escalation of a crisis cannot be avoided.

¹⁵⁵ "NATO's response to hybrid threats," North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), last updated 8 August 2019, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_156338.htm.

When preparing to deal with hybrid threats, however, one should not overlook the military instrument. Although it had not been used by Russia in the 2007 crisis, it was employed later, in Georgia and Ukraine. Both Russia's practice and doctrine leave the door open for deliberate escalation of hybrid conflict to war. In 2007, Russia was not ready to confront the Alliance militarily, but the Kremlin's calculus may well be different in another hybrid conflict with a NATO Ally and in the very different global strategic context of the 2020s. Therefore, preparing the armed forces to deter or—if necessary—defeat Russia's use of military power remains an essential part in being ready to counter hybrid threats by NATO Allies and non-NATO countries alike.

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ANNEX

TIMELINE OF BACKGROUND AND EVENTS

23 August 1939	Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact is signed, carving out ‘spheres of influence’ in Eastern Europe between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany
June 1940	Red Army occupies Estonia; it is annexed to the Soviet Union in August
14 June 1941	Deportation of more than 10,000 Estonian citizens to Siberia by Soviet authorities
22 June 1941	Nazi Germany attacks the Soviet Union; in July and August Estonian territory is occupied by German forces
18 September 1944	In a desperate attempt to restore independence, a government headed by Otto Tief is nominated in line with the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia as the Germans are evacuating
22 September 1944	Red Army enters Tallinn; by the end of November all Estonian territory is under Soviet control
April 1945	Decision to rebury 12 Red Army soldiers on Tõnismägi (St Anthony’s Hill) in Tallinn
12 June 1945	Temporary wooden monument opened on Tõnismägi
8 May 1946	Two Estonian schoolgirls, aged 14 and 15, blow up the wooden monument on Tõnismägi
22 September 1947	Opening ceremony of permanent monument on Tõnismägi: The Bronze Soldier
25 March 1949	Start of the largest mass deportation from Estonia; the following day, more than 20,000 Estonians are deported to distant regions of the Soviet Union
Early 1960ies	The KGB uses the term ‘compatriots’ (<i>sootestvenniki</i>), meaning the diaspora to be used in Soviet interests
22 September 1964	‘Eternal flame’ lit next to the Bronze Soldier by Hero of the Soviet Union Arnold Meri, a perpetrator of 1949 Soviet mass deportation on Hiiumaa island
9 May 1965	Military parade held in Red Square for the first time in honour of victory in Great Patriotic War on that date
9 May 1975	Second military parade held in Red Square for the same purpose
9 May 1985	Third such military parade in Red Square
23 August 1989	Human chain from Tallinn to Riga and Vilnius to draw attention to the 50th anniversary of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact
9 May 1990	Military parade held in Red Square for the fourth and last time during the existence of the Soviet Union to mark victory in Great Patriotic War
20 August 1991	Estonia restores its independence
31 August 1994	The last Soviet (renamed Russian in 1992) troops leave Estonian territory
9 May 1995	First military parade in Red Square following the fall of the Soviet Union; since then parades have been held annually on that date (until 2020, when it was postponed due to Covid-19)
19 May 1995	Russian president Boris Yeltsin approves a law ‘On perpetuating the Victory of the Soviet people in the Great Patriotic War of 1941–1945’
24 May 1999	Yeltsin approves a law ‘On the state policy of the Russian Federation regarding compatriots abroad’
30 April 2003	Demonstration against the war in Iraq in front of the US Embassy in Tallinn, mainly consisting of non-Estonian youths, turns violent
Spring 2004	Estonia becomes a member of NATO and the EU
20 August 2004	Controversial monument to Estonians who fought on the German side in WWII is opened in Lihula, a small town in western Estonia
2 September 2004	The monument is removed from Lihula; police in riot gear use force against the crowd. The defacement of some Red Army monuments follows shortly after that
Spring 2005	Russia launches ‘Ribbon of St George’ campaign prior to the celebration of the 60th anniversary of victory in the Great Patriotic War; the pro-Putin youth organisation <i>Nashi</i> (‘Ours’) is formed
9 May 2006	Estonian nationalist Jüri Böhm carries an Estonian flag and a placard stating ‘This soldier occupied our country and deported our people!’ to the Bronze Soldier; police rescue him from an angry crowd of Russian-speakers laying flowers at the statue

10 May 2006	Another Estonian nationalist, Jüri Liim, threatens to blow up the Bronze Soldier should it still be in place a year later. The situation starts to attract the attention of Russia's media
Mid-May 2006	<i>Nochnoy Dozor</i> ('Night Watch') is established by Russian-speaking activists to 'protect' the monument
21 May 2006	Tiit Madisson holds meeting with about 200 people demanding removal of the Bronze Soldier; the following night the statue is daubed with paint
22 May 2006	The Estonian prime minister states for the first time publicly that the statue should be removed
26 May 2006	The park in which the Bronze Soldier stands is cordoned off by Estonian police to avoid any further provocations
10 January 2007	The Estonian Parliament (<i>Riigikogu</i>) passes the Protection of War Graves Act setting out the legal framework for reburial of war graves from the park in the city centre to the Estonian Defence Forces Cemetery
15 January 2007	A statement by Night Watch calling for 'overall mobilisation' of the defenders of the monument is published in the media
17 January 2007	The Russian State Duma makes a statement 'On the situation in Estonia'; the same day the Bronze Soldier appears on the front pages of the Russian media; coverage of the topic remains high over following months
21 January 2007	President Putin criticises Estonia in a press conference
January 2007	While talking to Estonian diplomats, Russian foreign ministry officials and Duma deputies threaten that Russia will use diplomatic, economic and political levers to protect the honour of Soviet soldiers in Estonia; the FSB starts work on planning how to react to different scenarios around the Bronze Soldier
10 February 2007	Putin delivers his notorious speech at the Munich Security Conference, later seen as a sign of Russia's cooling relations with the West
4 March 2007	Parliamentary elections in Estonia
March–April 2007	Semi-clandestine meetings detected between Night Watch leaders and diplomats from the Russian Embassy in Tallinn
18 April 2007	In the town of Khimki (Moscow Oblast), a Great Patriotic War memorial on the grave of six Red Army soldiers and airman who died in 1941–3 is demolished and the bodies exhumed in order to make way for new construction; this does not raise any concern from the authorities in Moscow
25 April 2007	Night Watch activist Mark Siryk starts sending SMS messages to Russian-speaking activists with the text: 'Are you ready to stand guard at the soldier from the 26th for 2–3 hours a day in a special uniform. Additional questions and suggestions in this issue. Standing, I repeat, is not for free, it will be paid 80 kroons [€5.11] per hour'
26 April 2007	Preparations for work to identify and relocate the war graves starts on Tõnismägi at 4.30 am with the erection of a fence around the park. A crowd of mostly Russian-speaking people gathers during the day; as darkness fell they turn violent. Police disperse the crowd after 9.00 pm, but some looting and arson follows in other parts of the city
27 April 2007	Much greater interest by the Russian media; foreign minister Sergey Lavrov makes a statement calling events 'disgusting'; there is continuous activity on social media, including fake news with a doctored image showing the Bronze Soldier cut down; start of cyber-attacks against Estonia
27 April–4 May 2007	The pro-Putin youth organisation <i>Nashi</i> blockades the Estonian Embassy in Moscow and attacks the ambassador at a press conference on 2 May; Russian police does not intervene
30 April–1 May 2007	Visit to Estonia of State Duma delegation headed by Nikolay Kovalev who, before boarding the plane to Tallinn, demands the resignation of the Estonian government; Kovalev visits the Bronze Soldier monument in its new location at the military cemetery
Late April–early May 2007	Russian first deputy prime minister Sergey Ivanov calls a meeting to discuss the economic consequences of events in Tallinn
30 April 2007	Cyber-attacks become more sophisticated
4 May 2007	First wave of well-coordinated cyber-attacks
8 May 2007	At 11.00 pm Tallinn time (i.e. midnight of 9 May in Moscow), the second coordinated wave of cyber-attacks begins
15 and 18 May 2007	Third and fourth wave of well-coordinated cyber-attacks; some sporadic attacks occur even after this
Since May 2007	Some Estonian businesses have difficulty exporting to Russia, but these are temporary. Russian railway transit to Estonian ports falls and never returns to pre-crisis levels
21 June 2007	Putin signs a decree creating the <i>Russkiy Mir</i> Foundation
9 May 2008	Tanks are back in the military parade held in Red Square for the first time since the fall of the Soviet Union
15 May 2009	Putin signs a decree creating a 'Commission under the President of the Russian Federation on countering attempts to falsify history to the detriment of Russia's interests'
2017	Classification of most documents concerning 2007 expires in Estonia

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