REPORT

THE BRONZE SOLDIER CRISIS OF 2007
REVISITING AN EARLY CASE OF HYBRID CONFLICT

Ivo Juurvee | Mariita Mattiisen

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Cover page photo: A street looter in Tallinn, during the protests on 26 April 2007 (photo credit: Liis Treimann / Scanpix)

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>BBC</td>
<td>British Broadcasting Corporation</td>
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<tr>
<td>BNS</td>
<td>Baltic News Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>Covid-19</td>
<td>Coronavirus disease 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>DDoS</td>
<td>Distributed Denial of Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>DIME</td>
<td>Diplomacy, Information, Military, Economy</td>
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<tr>
<td>DIMEFIL</td>
<td>Diplomacy, Information, Military, Economy, Finance, Intelligence, Law [Enforcement]</td>
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<tr>
<td>DNS</td>
<td>Domain Name Server</td>
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<td>DoS</td>
<td>Denial of Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECHR</td>
<td>European Court of Human Rights</td>
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<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<td>FSB</td>
<td>Federal'naya Sluzhba Bezopasnosti [Federal Security Service]</td>
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<tr>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
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<tr>
<td>GDR</td>
<td>German Democratic Republic</td>
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<tr>
<td>GONGO</td>
<td>Government-Organised Non-Governmental Organisation</td>
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<td>ICDS</td>
<td>International Centre for Defence and Security</td>
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<tr>
<td>IP</td>
<td>Internet Protocol</td>
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<tr>
<td>IT</td>
<td>Information Technology</td>
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<td>KGB</td>
<td>Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti [Committee for State Security]</td>
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<tr>
<td>MFA</td>
<td>Ministry of Foreign Affairs</td>
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<td>MoD</td>
<td>Ministry of Defence</td>
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<td>NATO</td>
<td>North Atlantic Treaty Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>OSCE</td>
<td>Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe</td>
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<tr>
<td>PBK</td>
<td>Pervyy Baltiyskiy Kanal [First Baltic Channel]</td>
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<tr>
<td>POW</td>
<td>Prisoner of War</td>
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<tr>
<td>PPP</td>
<td>Purchasing Power Parity</td>
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<tr>
<td>RF</td>
<td>Russian Federation</td>
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<tr>
<td>RSFSR</td>
<td>Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic</td>
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<tr>
<td>RTR</td>
<td>Rossiyskoye Televideniye i Radiyo [Russian Television and Radio]</td>
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<tr>
<td>SMS</td>
<td>Short Message Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>SSR</td>
<td>Soviet Socialist Republic</td>
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<tr>
<td>SVR</td>
<td>Sluzhba Vneshney Razvedki [Foreign Intelligence Service]</td>
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<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>United States</td>
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<td>USSR</td>
<td>Union of Soviet Socialist Republics</td>
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<td>WWII</td>
<td>World War Two</td>
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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 (воин-освободитель’ 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. 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. 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. Academic interest in the subject has also been present from the very beginning, although, due to differing publication cycles, it took some time for more studies to appear. 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. The events are also covered in publications meant for wider audiences interested in riots more generally or political struggle in Estonia. Last, but not least, the Bronze Soldier crisis inspired several films and art projects.

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

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6 Mart Laar and Toomas Hio, Eesti riigi 100 aastat. Il oso: Rahvusvaheline õiguselõigu sajand eestimaa Euroopa Liidu eesistumised) [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 Juurvere, 100 aastat Luuret ja vastuluuret Eestis [100 years of intelligence and counterintelligence in Estonia] (Tallinn: Post Factum, 2018), 165-168.
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 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, 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.

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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 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.

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 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 Diplomaticheskiy 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

13 A. A. Fabrichnikov and I. A. Ovchinnikov, Izpol’zovaniye vozmozhnostey Sovetskogo komiteta po kul’turnym svyazam s sootechestvennikami za rubежom v razvedyvatel’nyiy 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.
The Bronze Soldier Crisis
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.’

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 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.’

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).

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.’ 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).

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2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO THE 2007 EVENTS

History matters when dealing with issues concerning Russia, and this is true in this case too. 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.

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

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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.

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 / Õhtuleht / Scanpix)
up fighting in the Soviet or German armed forces—about one-third on the Soviet side and two-thirds on the German.\textsuperscript{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 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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.’\textsuperscript{24}

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

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


\textsuperscript{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).

\textsuperscript{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 2006, https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#{%22itemid%22:[%22001-72404%22]}.

\textsuperscript{25} Eesti Mälu Instituut (Estonian Institute of Historical Memory), Toimik “Priboi”: Artikleid ja dokumente 1949. aasta märtsiküüditamisest [Eesti Mälu Instituudi toimetised aastal 1949. aasta märtsiküüditamisest] (Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli Kirjastus, 2020), 36, 534.

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. The first post-occupation GDP 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 Finland’s 311%, meaning that in comparison with these countries Estonia was over twice as poor as in 1938. 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...
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=IwAR0LK3Ms5IAX-0Y4wQxsxumujS9mzoTr4qPylUBFSm6gtWplbuvv810. 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.


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

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 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, Monumentid ja võim, 11-13, 130.
35 Riigikantselei (Government Office of Estonia), “Peeaminister Mart Laar Tallinna linnavoorgu esimehele Tiit Vähile ja linnapea Jaak Tammelle” [Prime Minister Mart Laar to Tallinn City Council Chairman Tiit Vahi 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 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”.’ 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.”

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.

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.

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.

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

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

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39 “Teleauditooriumi ülevaade märtsikuus” [Television viewing audience overview for March], TNS Emor, 18 April 2007, accessed 15 June 2020, https://web.archive.org/web/20070624234011/http://www.emor.ee/arkiv.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.
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

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41 Authors went through Estonian language newspapers Postimees, Eesti Päevaleht and Õhtuleht and Russian language newspapers published in Estonia, Molodezhestonial and VestDnya.
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!’ 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

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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.’ 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.

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. 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 Solider and the bodies of the Red Army soldiers. On 10 January 2007, the Estonian parliament (Rigikogu) 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 Rigikogu 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 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.

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

Figure 4. The Bronze Soldier appeared on front pages in Russia for the first time on 17 January 2007.

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

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The Bronze Soldier Crisis

programmes were widely viewed by Russian-speakers in Estonia.

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]

On 21 January 2007, president Putin criticised Estonia in a press conference. 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. NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer described the speech as ‘disappointing and not helpful’ and there were other similar reactions.

As the BBC summed it up: ‘Afterwards in the corridors there were dark mutterings by some about a new Cold War.’ According to Kaljurand, ‘Putin’s speech has afterwards been considered an important milestone in the cooling of relations. At that time,

Figure 5. Number of Interfax news items covering the Bronze Soldier, by month, 2005–10


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

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

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.
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. 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 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.

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.

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. 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. 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.

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.’

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.’

65 Rägi kantselei, “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).
69 Vahter and Ideon, “Vana kuld.”
70 Vahter and Ideon, “Vana kuld.”
71 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.
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.’

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.’ 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.

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 Dmitry Linter was on the air several times during the day, claiming inter alia that Estonia was on the verge of civil war.

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. 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

75 Martin Arpo, “Teie jäänud Moskva soomusrongid” [Moscow’s armoured trains on their way], in Mäss: Detsembrimäss/Aprillimäss, ed. Tiit Pruuli (Tallinn: Eestiüksus, 2008), 192.
76 Chart by Ivo Juurves using data obtained from the BNS/Interfax database.

Figure 6. Interfax coverage of the Bronze Soldier, 16–26 April 2007 (number of items)
Figure 7. Looting and arson in central Tallinn on the night of 26 April 2007\textsuperscript{2}
accurate figure. 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.

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.)

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.

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 online comments, following the example of the French media during rioting in Paris two years earlier. 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

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81 Vahter and Ideon, “Vana küld.”

82 Captions made by Ivo Juurvee.

83 Vahter and Ideon, “Vana küld.”

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:

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

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

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.

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%).

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85 I.e. omitting those detained in the same period for other offences in other places.
87 Chart by Ivo Juurvee based on the information from the Estonian Internal Security Service.
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.
Of the total, 218 (including four females) had previously committed a total of 1,470 crimes or other offences. 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.

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.

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). 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.

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

97 Raan, “Oise Vahtkonna liidrid.”

In Estonia in 2007, the ‘protest potential’ was indeed used to the fullest extent possible
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 Anatoly 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 Russian Security Council,igor Ivanov; foreign minister Sergey Lavrov; interior minister Rashid Nurgaliyev; defence minister Anatoly 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 residential 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 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

Kovalev told the press that he would demand the resignation of Andrus Ansip’s government—a somewhat rude interference in Estonia’s internal affairs.
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.\(^{110}\)

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, Yuri 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

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\(^{108}\) Rahvusvaheline Kaitseuruingute Keskus, “Moskva käsi.”


\(^{113}\) “Euroopa rikide lidrid toetavad Eestit,” Postimees.

\(^{114}\) Rahvusvaheline Kaitseuruingute Keskus, “Moskva käsi.”
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these, foreign minister Sergey Lavrov said that Russia ‘must react without hysteria, but it must take serious steps.’ 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’; 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. 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 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. 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.

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

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The Bronze Soldier Crisis 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.’

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. 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 by Sergey Ivanov to discuss the situation concerning events in Tallinn and Russia’s responses. 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.

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

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.

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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.

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

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 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,

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


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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 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 Dmitry 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 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

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 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 DIMEFIIL, and no longer uses the concept of soft power.137

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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.’

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

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.

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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,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poland</th>
<th>Number of burial sites/monuments</th>
<th>Number of soldiers buried</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belarus</td>
<td>4,110</td>
<td>1,224,622</td>
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<td>Germany</td>
<td>3,500</td>
<td>779,908</td>
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<td>Latvia</td>
<td>338</td>
<td>411,368</td>
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<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>7,673</td>
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<td>US (Alaska)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
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<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
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Table 1. Number of Soviet/Russian soldiers buried and burial sites and monuments outside Russia. (Some numbers are possibly inflated)
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. 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 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 (Omevemcma, i.e. Russia or the Soviet Union), both within and outside Russia’s borders.

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. If relations with Russia are difficult, such monuments may appear 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. The most elaborate provocation against a Soviet memorial took place in Gdansk, Poland, on 12 October 2013, when the well-known artist Jerzy Szymczyk installed, next to the Great Patriotic War memorial tank, his statue ‘Komm Frau’ depicting a Soviet soldier raping a pregnant woman (see Picture 7).

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.

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 preserved. In the new strategy, the so-called “security of the nation” takes the place of “national security” in the existing laws. The strategy was presented by the text “for today” and, as the president himself beforehand stated, it was a document for the future. The new strategy almost completely repeats the provisions of the national strategy for the period 2010-2020, which was adopted at the beginning of the current decade. A new state order was signed by Medvedev on 26 March 2008, which specifies the measures to be taken to implement the new strategy. Medvedev also signed a law “On amendments to the Penal code of the Russian Federation” on 13 May 2008, which includes the introduction of a new article 245.8, which criminalises ‘destruction or damage’ of/to all kinds of memorial to those who fell in defence of the Fatherland (Omevemcma, i.e. Russia or the Soviet Union), both within and outside Russia’s borders.

Under Russian law, the new article states that the offender must be sentenced to up to 20 years in prison, with an increased maximum of up to 30 years for the dead, disabled, or in a coma. The punishment may also include an additional fine of up to 20,000 rubles (about $300) for the dead, disabled, or in a coma. The new article is applicable to both Russian and foreign citizens who commit the offense in Russia or elsewhere.

The new strategy was announced by Medvedev on 13 May 2008, and on 15 August 2018, he signed a Decree ‘On awarding with the decorations of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation’. Two people die during the explosion at the Memorial of the Russian Federation of the servicemen of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation [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.


`“Prezident podpisyal Ukaz ‘O nagrazhdenii gosudarstvennymi nagradami Rossiskoy Federatsii voyennosluzhashchikh Vooruzheennykh Sil Rossiskoy 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.'
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.’

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 historians. Despite its impressive composition, the commission was not a success and it was quietly disbanded in 2012.

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,


President of Russia, ‘Ukaz Prezidenta Rossiyskoy Federatsii ‘Ob utverzhdenii sostava Komissii pri Prezidente Rossiyskoy Federatsii po formirovaniyu i podgotovke rezerva upravlencheskih kadrov, izmenenii i priznanii utrativshih 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.
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.\footnote{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.}

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).

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.\footnote{“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.}

While veterans have been an essential part of 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

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

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 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.

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

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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.
LIST OF REFERENCES


“Fotod: Tõnismäel meenutati pronksiööd” [Photos: Bronze night was remembered on Tõnismägi]. ERR, 26 April 2018.


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’ (sootechestvenniki), 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 Nashi (‘Ours’) is formed

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  Nachnoy Dazor (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 (Riigikogu) 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 Nashi 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 Russkiy Mir 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’

2057  Classification of most documents concerning 2007 expires in Estonia
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