

Deep Memory and Narrative Templates

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Levels of Explanation

- Collective memory studies:
 - José Bermúdez on “piecemeal convergences between ‘grains of analysis’ and different methodological tools”
 - Carl Craver on Wimsatt’s “socio-cultural ideological level” of analysis

Group Conflict often Rooted in Collective Memory

- “History wars”: frozen and intractable differences over the past
 - Serbs versus Bosnian Muslims
 - “Remember 1389”
 - Armenians versus Turks
 - “Remember 1915”
- Power of “sealed narratives” in group conflict (de Waal)
- Cognitive and emotional dimensions?

Riot in Tallinn, Estonia

April 26, 2007

- Over moving a statue to the liberation of Estonia in 1944
- 1 fatality
- 100 people injured, including 13 police
- 1000 arrested
- Mostly “Russian speaking” youths involved
- Strong reaction from Russia

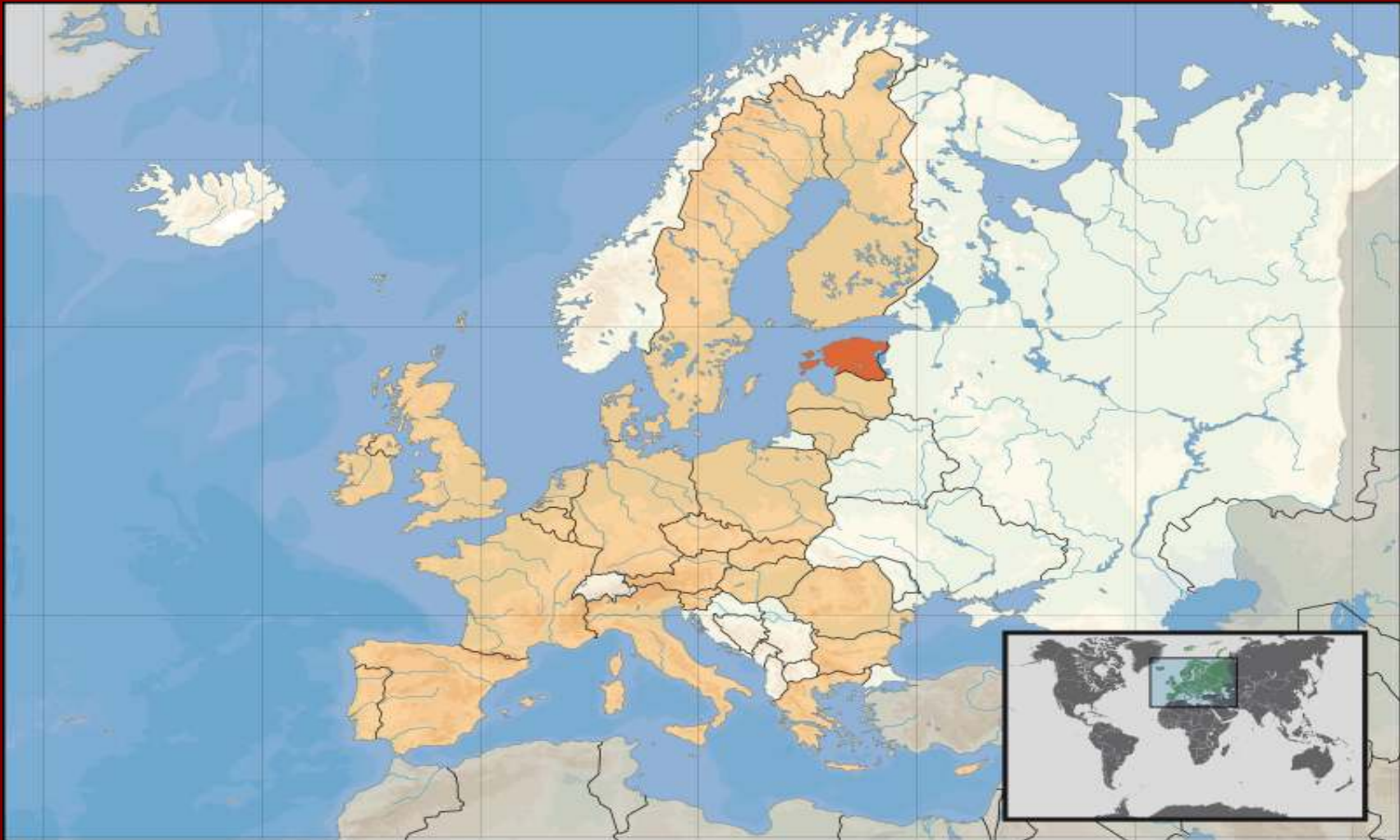
Riot in Tallinn, Estonia

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Estonia vs. Russia

Remember 1944 Liberation/Occupation



Strong Official Russian Reaction to Moving the Memorial Statue

- "Those . . . who desecrate monuments to war heroes, offend their own people and sow discord and new distrust between states and people." (President Putin: speech on "Victory Day," May 9 in Red Square)

Russian Cyber attacks on Estonia

- Began April 27th, hours after riots
- Massive overloading of system using botnets
- Biggest attack: May 9, midnight (Moscow time)
 - 4 million packets of data per second, every second for 24 hours
- Shut-down banks, government websites in “E-stonia”

Youth Rally in Moscow July 8 Memorializing Dmitri Ganin



The Spark for Recent Russian-Estonian Confrontation

- Bronze Soldier statue in center of Tallinn
 - Erected by Soviet authorities in 1947
 - Burial site of 13 Soviet soldiers
 - Eternal flame added in 1964 (extinguished in 1989)
 - Estonian sculptor, statue modeled on Estonian individual
 - Near the new “Museum of Occupation”
 - Moved in April to military cemetery in Estonia

The Bronze Statue



The Bronze Soldier



The Bronze Soldier



“Mnemonic Standoff”

Between Estonia and Russia

- Ethnic Russian versus Ethnic Estonian memory of the past
- Russian narrative:
 - “Monument to the Liberators of Tallinn”
(Монумент освободителям Таллина)
- Estonian narrative:
 - Soviet oppression
 - The “Unknown Rapist”

Mnemonic Standoff

- Each side just tells “what really happened”
 - Liberation vs. Occupation
- Accounts reflect the role of “narrative tools” in collective remembering
 - Tools are not based on independent research
 - Instead: Agent + Narrative tool (“off-the-shelf technology”) provided by others

“Distributed” Version of Collective Memory

- Agent + Cultural Tools
 - Who does the remembering?
- Narrative tools provided by others
 - State (education, holidays)
 - Popular culture
- Contrasts with “strong version” of collective memory: “memory *in* the group but not memory *of* the group” (Bartlett)

Distributed Version of Collective Memory

- Vygotsky, Bakhtin, Luria, Bruner, McAdams
- Remembering as distributed process:
 - Mind/memory “extend beyond the skin”
- Narrative as basic cultural tool in collective memory of nation

Narrative as “Cognitive Instrument” (Mink)

- Introduces particular properties into remembering
 - Temporal organization
 - Plot with “sense of an ending” (not annals or chronicle)
 - “Grasps together” events, actors
 - Has a “moralizing impulse”
 - Transparency: plot presents events and motives as simply “what really happened”

Agents + Different Narrative Tools

- Russians and Estonians:
 - Are equipped with different, opposing narrative tools
 - Are certain of what they say
 - Are unable to recognize alternative as legitimate (“narcissism of collective memory”)
 - Are focused on collective memory, not history

Collective Memory vs. History

- Identity project (usually based on heroism, golden age, victimhood, etc.)
- Impatient with ambiguity
- Ignores counter-evidence in order to preserve established narrative
- Aspires to arrive at accurate account, regardless of consequences
- Recognizes complexity and ambiguity
- May revise existing narrative in light of new evidence (archives, etc.)

Collective Memory vs. History

- Constrained by "schemas," "implicit theories," etc. ignores substantiated findings
- Conservative, resistant to change
- Insider, exceptionalist perspective
- Constrained by archives and substantiated findings
- Can change in response to new information
- Strives for objective, outside perspective

Control of Collective Memory

- “Top-down” accounts in sociology and political science
 - Orwellian view: Control of narrative tools => Control of collective memory
 - Power of state through textbooks, holidays
- But collective memory is incredibly resistant to change
 - Even with new official histories
 - In U.S.: Columbus, Hiroshima

Conservatism of Collective Memory

- “Bottom-up” psychological forces
 - Receptivity to some narratives, but not others
 - Conservatism grounded in “deep memory”
 - Non-conscious, largely inaccessible to reflection
 - Deep emotional commitment (attack on narrative tool = attack on me)

Organization of Deep Memory: “Schematic Narrative Templates”

- Schematic: abstract, generalized structures
 - Propp, Bartlett
- Narrative: temporal sequence and plot (Kermode’s “sense of an ending”)
- Template: applies to multiple episodes
 - Same story with different characters

Schematic Narrative Templates

- Contrasts with “specific narratives”
 - Narratives about events with specific settings, dates, characters—e.g., Great Patriotic War (June 22, 1941- May 9, 1945, Battle of Kursk in 1943, etc.)
- Local, culturally specific “effort after meaning” (but also grounded in facts)
- Derive from extensive exposure to specific narratives

Basic Russian Narrative Template: “Expulsion of Foreign Enemies”

1. An “initial situation” in which Russia is peaceful and not interfering with others
2. “Trouble,” in which a foreign enemy viciously attacks Russia without provocation
3. Russia nearly loses everything in total defeat as it suffers from the enemy’s attempts to destroy it as a civilization
4. Through heroism and exceptionalism, against all odds, and acting alone, Russia triumphs and succeeds in expelling the foreign enemy

Evidence for Russian Narrative Template

- “Hitler the second Napoleon”
- Musatova (2002) on “the lessons of conquests and enslavement by foreigners”
 - “Tatars, Germans, Swedes, Poles, Turks, Germans again”
- Stalin speech, November 7, 1941:
Spoke of “our heroic ancestors” like Nevsky, Kutuzov

Application of Russian Expulsion of Enemies Narrative Template

- Same story, different characters
 - Tatars – 13th century
 - “Germans” (Alexander Nevsky) – 13th
 - Poles in “Time of Troubles” – 17th
 - Swedes (Peter the Great) – 18th
 - French (Napoleonic Wars) – 19th
 - Germans (WW II) – 20th
 - Communism – 20th

Major Source of Narratives Tools in Modern Settings: The State

- History textbooks
 - Official, state-sponsored version of the past
 - Mixture of history and memory
 - “Memory” textbooks?
- All modern states interested in official history/memory

Alternatives Do Exist in the Public Sphere

- Estonian narrative: Russian expansionist tendencies and quest to be a great power
- “Liberation” in 1944 was really traditional Russian expansionism
 - Attempt to re-establish borders of Russian empire

Other Narrative Templates

- American as “Reluctant Hegemon”
 - Robert Kagan’s *Dangerous Nation*
 - Differs from others’ story of America
 - Atomic bombing of Hiroshima: to end war or to dominate postwar world?
- Underlying pattern of a collective’s “effort after meaning”
- Cultural tool for “deep memory”

Conservative Nature of Narrative Templates and Deep Memory

- Especially transparent to users: nonconscious
- Alternative narrative tools are not appreciated
 - Source of disbelief and disagreement
- Deeply embedded in identity commitments
- Not dislodged by factual contradiction
- Very resistant to change

Memory Change

- Change at surface level of specific narratives
- Little change at level of deep memory
 - Mediated by schematic narrative templates
 - Conservative, strongly resistant to change
- Need to distinguish and analyze level of deep memory in memory studies