



The Politics of Memory: Remembering the Baltic Way 20 Years after 1989

Daina S. Eglitis & Laura Ardava

To cite this article: Daina S. Eglitis & Laura Ardava (2012) The Politics of Memory: Remembering the Baltic Way 20 Years after 1989, *Europe-Asia Studies*, 64:6, 1033-1059, DOI: [10.1080/09668136.2012.691721](https://doi.org/10.1080/09668136.2012.691721)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09668136.2012.691721>



Published online: 03 Jul 2012.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 845



View related articles [↗](#)



Citing articles: 4 [View citing articles](#) [↗](#)

The Politics of Memory: Remembering the Baltic Way 20 Years after 1989

DAINA S. EGLITIS & LAURA ARDAVA

Abstract

On 23 August 1989, two million Balts joined hands in a human chain that stretched through Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. How has this phenomenon of solidarity against the Soviet regime and historical remembrance of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact been narrated and commemorated in the 20 years that followed? This article highlights the memory and commemoration of the Baltic Way in Latvia and identifies agents and contesting narratives in memory politics. It introduces the concept of commemoration spectacle, a collective ritual untethered from the burdens of the past or ‘grand narratives’ of history, which subsumes struggles over memory beneath show and spectacle.

In LATE COMMUNIST-ERA LATVIA, OPPOSITIONAL SOCIAL movements arose to challenge the Soviet order and, eventually, pursue full independence from the USSR. In the post-communist state of Latvia, oppositional social movement activities and goals of the 1986–1991 period have been subject to the politics of memory. This article highlights the Baltic Way of August 1989, itself a striking example of contested historical narratives in the period of opposition, and its commemoration in Latvia 20 years after the event. Among the questions raised by this article are the following: what are the competing narratives of the past in the politics of memory in 1989 and in the 20 years that follow? Who are the agents in the field of memory politics in 1989 and who are the key agents in the post-communist period leading up to 2009? How do the politics of memory structure the form and function of anniversary commemorations of the Baltic Way? Finally, what are the implications of contentious memory politics for Latvia’s politics and society?

This article takes history and collective memory as foundational concepts and seeks to contribute to the body of social scientific work on these topics by articulating a new conceptual dimension of commemorations. For the purposes of this work, we define history as a broadly-drawn narrative composed of events significant to the social collective. As Zamponi (2003, p. 50) notes in an examination of Fascist Italy’s

This work has been supported in part by the European Social Fund within the project ‘Support for Doctoral Studies at University of Latvia’.

historical narratives and their tellers, 'History does not merely reproduce facts; rather, it constructs their meaning by framing them within a cultural tradition that is intersubjectively shared'. From the ocean of events that comprise the past of territories and their inhabitants, a dominant national narrative of history is woven that selects the 'mentions' and identifies the 'silences' (Trouillot 1997) of the past. History—or, more precisely, the dominant narrative of history—is a social construction rooted in the needs, interests, beliefs and aspirations of the present, as well as the events of the past.

Access to the power to define the parameters of the dominant narrative of history is clearly uneven. In the Soviet period, the authoritarian state drew the outlines of a politically acceptable historical narrative through texts, political pronouncements, cultural products and commemorative practices that tightly controlled the remembrance (or forgetting) of actors and events of the past. This 'official history' served the needs of Soviet central authority and ideology (Tumarkin 1994). Coercive measures relegated counter-hegemonic narratives of the past to the margins of social remembering and individual memory became the repository of alternative historical stories.

In the post-communist period, Soviet institutions, ideology and dominant narratives of the past have been swept into the dustbin of history, though resistance to the post-communist Baltic narrative of history among minority Russian-speaking communities has caused tensions in domestic and even international politics (Brüggemann & Kasekamp 2008; Smith 2008; Ehala 2009). Commenting on a collection of case studies of collective memory, Olick (2003, p. 8) suggests that societies produce 'ideas of what a normal past should look like, and [use] those images as ideals to strive for or denied rights to long for'. The post-communist Baltic states and societies, building on challenges to Soviet accounts of history that began in the period of opposition, have transformed communist-era historical narratives, creating new historical foundations for claims to power and legitimacy.

Lehti *et al.* (2008, p. 403) offer a useful illustrative case of the way that dominant narratives of history may act as frames for individual memories:

Up to the early 1950s the glorified official version of the [Second World] war was still rather far from the individual memories that dealt with poverty, destruction of normalcy, toil, sorrow, and death. During the 1950s the authorities suppressed this universe of individual experience with a continuous flow of official ritualistic representations of war from mass media, education, art and public ceremonies. In a gigantic project of politics of memory the Soviet authorities undertook the task of ideologically processing the experience of a whole population. As the years and decades passed, people gradually absorbed the official version and adapted their own experiences to it.

Clearly, not all such efforts to catch individual memories in the net of the dominant historical narrative are successful. Arguably, the individual memories of many Baltic inhabitants, who experienced Soviet 'liberation' near the end of World War II as a brutal 'occupation', resisted adaptation to the dominant narrative of Soviet history. In this article, we examine the efforts of post-communist elites in Latvia to set out a dominant historical framework for remembering both events surrounding World War II and the Baltic Way, and the resistance they encounter in this endeavour, to catch individual memories in a unified net.

The concept of collective memory in sociology is grounded in the work of Maurice Halbwachs (1992), who posits that memory is socially determined. That is, memory is the product of social communication and interaction. Collective memory imbues the past with meaning and contributes to the collective identity of social groups: as Olick and Robbins (1998, p. 111) point out in a discussion of Halbwach's (1992) classic work on memory, 'shared memories can be effective markers of social differentiation'. Collective memory, however, is not a 'social fact *sui generis*', as 'actors make claims on behalf of memory, assert what they think it is and what they want to have as parts of it' (Olick 2003, p. 7). This characteristic, we suggest, is shared with history, as defined above, as both represent not the embodiment of primal events so much as a selective telling (to others or by the community to itself) of the past.

In this work, we take history as a dominant narrative of the past, the sociological function of which is (though not exclusively) the legitimization of existing institutions and practices. It is built on the foundation of primal events, but is the product of power, as it is constituted by 'mentions' and 'silences' woven into a coherent and usually linear narrative by agents wielding political, cultural and sometimes economic capital. Collective memory, we suggest, functions as a source of identity, though the sources of that identity are selective, emerging from a confluence of the memories of those who compose the social collective and the dominant narrative of history, which offers a frame for those memories.¹

History and collective memory are constituent parts of the politics of memory. In this article, we envision the politics of memory in the Baltic countries as a field, that is, a system of social positions structured by power relations (Bourdieu 1993). Agents in the field bring differing forms of capital to the field, where the stakes revolve around the power to 'achieve hegemony for their preferred memory' (Langenbacher 2008, p. 53)—that is, to mark the parameters of history, heroes and the social hierarchies that underpin political and social legitimacy and provide a narrative historical frame for the constitution of a collective identity.

By articulating the politics of memory as a field, we seek to recognise the narratives and contests that characterised the twentieth anniversary of the Baltic Way of 1989 and the events that surrounded that period of rapid and dramatic change. We identify agents, as well as the capital they possess and trade for power in the field. We follow Bourdieu (Bourdieu 1984; Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992) in his key assumption that capital, and the power it confers, is not equitably distributed in society. Bourdieu outlines four key forms of capital: economic, cultural, social and symbolic. We follow Bourdieu's usage of the concept of capital as a means of designating something that can be traded in a given field for power or something else of distinguishable value: as he writes, 'a species of capital is what is efficacious in a given field, both as a weapon and as a stake of struggle, that which allows its possessors to wield a power, an influence, and thus to *exist*, in the field under consideration, instead of being considered a negligible quantity' (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992, p. 98, emphasis in original). In this instance, at stake in the field is the power to define and elevate as

¹Scholars, beginning with Halbwachs (1992), have posited a distinction between history and collective memory (Tamm 2008; Olick 2003; Olick & Robbins 1998). However, our distinction diverges somewhat from that of Halbwachs, as our definitions of the concepts are not identical to his.

legitimate a dominant narrative of history. Our use of the concept is expansive, as we seek to identify actors who take advantage of capital conferred by political position, control of media messages, and the like, to generate legitimacy and dominance for their preferred historical narrative. The field of memory, populated by actors who may have different tellings of the past and unequal stores of capital, is contentious and structured by struggles that can cross ethnic, class, ideological or other social locations.

In this article, we highlight in particular the analysis of commemorations, specifically, the Baltic Way of 1989 and the commemoration of that event in the two decades that followed. Anniversaries, a central point of commemorations, ‘thrust the past into the present’ (Burch 2008, p. 452). Commemorations offer a venue for the enactment of memory, a collective ritual of mourning or celebration constructed on the foundation of a community’s or country’s dominant narrative of history. Gillis (1996, p. 5) suggests that, ‘Commemorative activity is by definition social and political, for it involves the coordination of individual and group memories, whose results may appear consensual when they are in fact the product of processes of intense contest, struggle, and, in some instances, annihilation’. Commemorative ritual serves the function of socialisation within a particular community, but in the case of memory conflict it potentially sets communities against one another, problematising social unity and even political development (Ardava 2011, p. 365).

We begin with a discussion of the Baltic Way of 1989, itself a historical commemoration of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Non-Aggression Pact between the Soviet Union and Germany, a secret provision of which consigned the Baltic states and Poland to spheres of great power influence. We then trace the remembrance of the Baltic Way at the anniversaries that follow and pay particular attention to the twentieth-anniversary commemoration. In looking at this latter anniversary, we raise the following additional questions: what are the qualities of a commemoration that takes place in a social context where the embrace of the foundational historical narrative is incomplete or ambivalent, or where it is contested within the commemorating community itself? Can a commemoration unburden itself from the socially atomising weight of historical remembrance? We suggest here that the Baltic Way commemoration of 2009 offers a case of what might be conceptualised as a modern (or even postmodern), media-era form that reproduces historical commemorations of the past in form but not in substance, a ‘commemoration spectacle’.

The commemoration spectacle, we posit, is a collective social ritual untethered from the burdens of the past or ‘grand narratives’ of history (Lyotard 1979). Rather, as in the case at hand, it subsumes ongoing struggles over memory and meaning beneath show and spectacle, engaging the masses and enticing public participation, not through introspection, remembrance and the power of a grand historical narrative, but through entertainment and the transformation of the commemoration into a carrier of ‘mini-narratives’ that can comfortably accommodate a spectrum of historical and modern interests. The commemoration spectacle references a historical time and place, but its orientation is toward the present. It is a cultural vessel released from the weight of historical substance that could be a source of contest or disunity.

The commemoration spectacle, arguably, follows a contemporary trend in the emptying of weighty historical symbols of meaning, a process apparent in the mass

transformation of formerly powerful political or cultural symbols like the hammer and sickle into advertising campaigns and consumables in post-communist capitalism. As Eglitis (2011b, pp. 433–34) writes, the

transformation of the ideology and history of the Soviet empire more generally is apparent in the novelty items for sale across Eastern Europe. Shirts bearing the physiognomies of Lenin and Che Guevara or the Cyrillic letters *СССР* (Russian for USSR) are not uncommon Consumer culture has emptied powerful political symbols of their content, transforming them into what Ritzer (2006) has termed ‘nothing’: ideologically-empty, uncritical (even anti-critical), historically-decontextualized consumables.

Like the cooptation of historical symbols into kitsch, the commemoration spectacle reproduces the past in form but drains it of meaning, creating a signifier without substance, an empty vessel that can carry a multitude of meanings created by agents across societies, politics, media and markets.

This ambiguity of meanings in a cultural form recalls Jean Baudrillard’s (1998, 1981, 1994) postmodern perspective that symbols have become divorced from concrete reality. He posits, for instance, that political polls, statistical research, and even voting have become simulations of ‘the social’, where political and social indicators produce a representation of a social entity that is realised only in its enumeration. For Baudrillard, it is the media that drives the proliferation of symbols and simulations that the mass public increasingly fails to distinguish from reality itself. In the case at hand, the commemoration spectacle, a ‘simulation’ of social unity, the media plays an enabling and a critical function, both reproducing and questioning the fissure between the symbol and the social reality.

We suggest that, in the case of the Baltic Way commemoration of 2009, political elites attempted less to ‘construct meanings of the past’ (Lebow 2006, p. 13), as to imbue the past, specifically the cultural vessel of the Baltic Way, with ambiguity rather than a grand narrative of history. ‘Heartbeats for the Baltics’, the central commemorative event of August 2009, subsumed struggles over memory and meaning in a time of social disunity and economic crisis beneath a glossy, well-planned and executed spectacle that elevated historical form over substance and substituted a ‘show’ or simulation of unity for authentic societal (or Baltic) unity.

The Latvian case offers the opportunity to examine contested historical narratives of both a distant and a recent past in post-communism and, as well, to expand the body of scholarly literature on collective memory and commemorations with the introduction of the concept of the commemoration spectacle, a cultural vessel emptied of the burdens and contests of memory, whose primary function is to substitute ambiguous media-driven ‘historical entertainment’ for an authentic engagement with the past.

The article proceeds as follows. We begin below with an overview of the Latvian case and the materials and methods used in the analysis of that case. Second, we outline the dominant memory narratives surrounding the Baltic Way of 1989. While the events of 1989 are objects of memory politics in the post-communist period, the narratives of World War II-era memory that coloured the contest between supporters and detractors of the Baltic Way are a recurring theme at the twentieth-anniversary mark in 2009. Third, we briefly examine memory politics in 1999 and 2004, the 10- and

15-year anniversaries of the Baltic Way. These points of commemoration offer an opportunity to see a rearticulation of the key memory contest of 1989 with a sharpened ethnic split between Latvians and the Russian-speaking minority population;² at the same time, some of the discussion of the economic consequences of the post-communist transition underpins the formation of narratives of memory that cross ethnic lines and revolve around political power and stratification. Next, we discuss the contours and content of memory politics 20 years after 1989, showing how contemporary memory politics reflect both the concerns of late Soviet-era narratives and a new form of commemoration rooted in deepened socioeconomic and political cleavages in society. Finally, we reiterate our key findings about the contours of memory politics two decades after the Baltic Way of 1989 and consider the implications of the contemporary politics of memory for political and social life in Latvia.

Case and methods

In this section we discuss the specificities of the Latvian case in which this analysis of the Baltic Way and its commemoration is embedded, and the sources and methods that underpin the research. Historian Andrejs Plakans suggests that Latvia is an optimal social laboratory for collective memory research. He points out that the Latvian nation has always been numerically small and historical events that have affected its destiny have almost invariably affected the whole nation. At the same time, the nation is large enough to be the site of a diversity of memories (Plakans 1998, pp. 11–12).

The case of Latvia is a fruitful one for social scientists with an interest in history, collective memory and commemoration. The Latvian case has several notable characteristics. First, in Latvia, which has an ethnically heterogeneous population, there is a conflict of memory narratives between the titular nation, ethnic Latvians and at least a fraction of the Russian-speaking population, which is largely, but not exclusively, ethnically Russian. This memory conflict is centred on narratives of World War II and, in particular, the Soviet ‘occupation’ or ‘liberation’ of Latvia. Historian Vita Zelče posits that commemorative events in Latvia demonstrate that there exists a ‘Latvian’ collective memory that embraces one version of the historical ‘truth’ and a ‘Russian’ collective memory (which draws from the Soviet period and its dominant historical narrative) with its own collective articulation of the past. Zelče argues that from the viewpoint of the Latvian community, the Soviet period is characterised by oppression and despair, but from the viewpoint of the Russian-speaking community, it represents a period of national triumph and pride that embraces victory over fascism in World War II and the status of a military superpower, among others (Zelče 2007, p. 203).

²For the purposes of this work, we use the term ‘Russian-speaking’ or Russophone rather than ‘Russian’. Russian-speaking communities in the Baltic region are composed of populations that migrated from other parts of the USSR during the Soviet period (and their descendents) and are defined primarily by the fact that Russian is their mother tongue and/or preferred language. Not all members are ethnically Russian (although most are).

Second, Latvia is characterised by the existence of two fundamentally different media environments catering to a Latvian-language audience and a Russian-language audience (Rožukalne 2010; Cheskin 2010). This socially and linguistically atomised media space plays, as the article shows, an active role in reproducing and sustaining conflicting memory narratives that have historical roots and powerful contemporary effects in politics and society.

Third, while there is a shared experience of political dissatisfaction and alienation in both Latvian- and Russian-speaking communities, this has, to this point, failed to serve a unifying function. Notably, in Latvian-language media analysed for this work, the Latvian political elite is largely articulated as an ‘inner enemy’ and, consequently, not fully excluded from the Latvian public perception of ‘we’. By contrast, in the Russian-language media in Latvia the political elite is a direct target of rhetorical attacks and mockery. An examination of media accounts in the Russian-language press suggests that, in the two decades since independence, the media has contributed to the construction of what might be termed a narrative of historical farce, challenging the historical character of Latvian independence and its supporters using irony and sarcasm as linguistic strategies. Arguably, both the deeply divergent historical stories of World War II and contemporary barriers, such as a fundamentally segregated media environment, undermine the potential for unity.

In this analysis, we make use of primary and secondary sources available in English, Latvian and Russian. Our primary dataset is a collection of over 200 original press publications from the Latvian- and Russian-language presses, spanning the period from 1989 to 2009, as well as a smaller number of accounts in the English-language press. To draw the contours of memory politics in the case of the Baltic Way, press publications dedicated to the annual commemoration of the historical action were examined in the state-controlled press of the Soviet period, including *Padomju Jaunatne* (*Soviet Youth*); *Sovetskaya molodezh'*, which after independence was transformed into *SM–Segodnya* (*SM–Today*) and later into *Vesti Segodnya* (*Tidings of Today*); *Cīņa* (*The Struggle*); *Sovetskaya Latvia* (*Soviet Latvia*, in Russian), which later became *Panorama Latvii* (*Panorama of Latvia*); *Lauku Avīze* (*The Country Newspaper*, in Latvian), which later became *Latvijas Avīze* (*Newspaper of Latvia*); the newsletter of the Popular Front of Latvia (*Latvijas Tautas Fronte*), *Atmoda* (*Awakening*, in Latvian); the newspaper of the Creative Unions of Latvia (*Latvijas Radošās savienības*), *Literatūra un Māksla* (*Literature and Art*, in Latvian); and the newspaper of the city of Rīga, *Rīgas Balss* (*The Voice of Rīga*, in Latvian). We also use the national daily newspapers of the late opposition period and the subsequent period of independence, including *Diena* (*The Day*); *Neatkarīgā Cīņa* (*Independent Struggle*), which later became *Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze* (*Independent Morning Newspaper*); *Chas* (*The Hour*) and *Telegraf* (*Telegraph*). Our analysis also includes regional newspapers from the Soviet and post-Soviet periods, including *Liesma* (*Flame*); *Padomju Druva* (*Soviet Grainfield*), which later became *Druva* (*Grainfield*); and *Bauskas Dzīve* (*Life of Bauska*). The newspapers represent the full spectrum of national daily papers available to the Latvian- and Russian-speaking public in Latvia in the period under examination. The smaller newspapers were selected because they were the local newspapers of record in key cities through which the Baltic Way stretched along its route in the territory of Latvia.

In the case of each anniversary, three issues of every newspaper were examined in the days surrounding the key date of 23 August, with the intention of gathering information about related events and gauging international, elite and public declarations and reactions to those events. Ethnographic observations for this case study were conducted on the twentieth anniversary of the Baltic Way on 23 August 2009, and on the annual Soviet Victory Day commemorations on 9 May 2010 and 2011, with the intention of '[capturing] their social meanings and ordinary activities' (Brewer 2000, p. 10).

Press accounts, taken together with other general sources, including scholarly literature and ethnographic observations of the events under discussion, are used here to articulate the dimensions of contesting historical narratives across the period beginning in 1989 and ending at the 20-year anniversary mark in 2009. The press was a primary source for public information pertaining to the commemorative dates under study and, as well, it operated as an agent in the construction and dissemination of dominant narratives of history. Thompson (1995, p. 34) argues that the development of communication media has created a 'mediated historicity'. That is, people's sense of the past and the ways in which the past impinges on the present have become increasingly dependent on an expanding reservoir of mediated symbolic forms. He writes that,

Most individuals in Western societies today have derived their sense of the major events of the past, and even the major events of the twentieth century (the two world wars, the Russian Revolution, the Holocaust, etc.), primarily from books, newspapers, films and television programmes. As events recede further and further into the past, it becomes less and less likely that individuals will derive their understanding of these events from personal experience, or from the personal experience from others whose accounts are handed down to them through face-to-face interaction. Oral tradition and face-to-face interaction continue to play important roles in shaping our sense of the past, but they operate increasingly in conjunction with a process of understanding which draws its symbolic content from the products of the media industries.

Highlighting the Latvian case, Rožukalne (2010, pp. 75–76) suggests that the 'media are the main source from which people derive their understanding of history and the current situation. To a large extent the media shape awareness of social reality . . . '. The Russian- and Baltic-language media have had a key role in the dissemination and creation of historical narratives and, importantly, in their contesting articulation in the public arena.

The politics of memory in the period of opposition: the Baltic Way of 1989

The Baltic Way of 1989 was deeply enmeshed in the politics of memory that characterised the Baltic opposition period (1986–1991). In the section that follows, we offer a brief overview of those politics and the key players in the field of memory politics. The dimensions of the memory contests of 1989 prefigure some aspects of the memory politics of later anniversaries of the event, though the post-communist period has added new dimensions to struggles over the meaning of the past.

Vogt (2005, p. 220) writes that ‘what took place when the revolutionary period started was a process of identity construction through the creation of narratives that could make remembering possible’. The counter-hegemonic narrative deployed by the Baltic opposition characterised the dominant Soviet narrative of history as illegitimate. The counter-hegemonic narrative, by contrast, was embraced as legitimate and emancipating (Eglitis 2002). It was articulated as a ‘struggle for the right to history’ (Vogt 2005, p. 220), but also entailed a conscious construction of a story about the Baltic past that would be used to challenge Soviet power. The basic social cleavage in the Baltic republics has long been characterised as ethnic (Laitin 1998); however, while most of those who identified with the pro-Soviet narrative were Russian-speakers, it is not the case that none of those who identified with the pro-independence narrative were Russian-speakers and a substantial number of Russian-speakers supported independence initiatives (Volkovs 1996, p. 55). The key split at this point was pro-independence on the one hand and pro-Soviet on the other.

The Baltic Way was the brainchild of Edgar Savisaar, leader of the Popular Front of Estonia. In an interview in August 1989, he suggested that:

Every schoolchild can see that our countries—Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania—are not on the European map History teaches that Estonians, Latvians, and Lithuanians need to be unified. If we had been that way at that time—in 1939—then maybe such a fate [occupation] would not have befallen us. (Rone 1989, p. 1)

Savisaar’s quote highlights the notion that the Baltic republics were, in 1989, seeking to rectify the historical fate of occupation, positioning the Baltic Way in opposition to the powerful (but weakened) official narrative of history that elevated the Baltic position in the USSR as one of grateful recipients of Soviet liberation from German occupation in 1944.

An announcement by the Popular Front of Latvia was broadly disseminated in the days before the Baltic Way. It spoke to those it sought to mobilise with an appeal to both historical justice and hopes for the future:

Fifty years ago two totalitarian superpowers signed the death-sentence for three peaceful Baltic states and nations. Countries were destroyed. Nations dishonoured, distorted, abused for a half a century But the limit of our suffering and patience has been reached. We want our independence back, our states—free Estonia, free Latvia, free Lithuania Let’s be united for Latvia in the hour of hopes! Justice will prevail! (Latvian People’s Front 1989)

In addition to the international coverage the event received, it was also widely discussed in the local press. In the days that followed the Baltic Way, the mainstream Soviet Latvian newspaper *Cīņa* (*The Struggle*), a former mouthpiece of the regime, carried an opinion piece entitled, ‘The Way of Hope’, that read, in part,

Two similarly frightening, cunning, and merciless political criminals—Stalin and Hitler—baldly ignoring the will of the majority of Baltic people, not recognising international norms and rights, [and] based only on their own personal ambitions, brute force, and the chauvinism they cultivated in their own subservient populations, at that moment [23 August 1939] agreed on these ‘spheres of influence’. (Kondrāts 1989, p. 1)

A commentator in an opposition newspaper added that, ‘There is only the road to freedom, and we don’t wish to travel any other one’ (Veidemane 1989, p. 1).

The symbolic image of a road or way or chain (*ceļš* in Latvian; *kett* in Estonian; *kelias* in Lithuanian) was broadly used in the discourse surrounding the event and was cast variously as ‘the chain of life’, ‘the road [or way] of life’, ‘the chain of freedom’, ‘the road of freedom’ and the ‘chain of resistance’ (Ardava 2009, p. 130). This powerful image would continue to play a role in memories and memory politics in the decades after the event, appearing as a vessel into which the national elite and those who were either embittered by failures of post-communist governance or rejected their legitimacy would pour their interpretations of this signal event.

Significantly, larger political forces converged in that same year not only to give momentum to the Baltic push for independence, but to legitimate the memory narrative that underpinned that effort. Former Lithuanian President Vytautas Landsbergis recalls that,

On 24 December 1989, the Congress of People’s Deputies of the USSR voted to adopt the ‘Resolution on the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact’. The pact, with its protocols, was denounced as an unlawful breach of the international obligations of the then USSR and was declared null and void From the unlawful pact followed unlawful actions—the war against neighbours located between the USSR and Germany, and the occupation and incorporation of the Baltic States into the USSR . . . the resolution was an additional legal basis for us to be independent again. (Landsbergis 2009)

The pro-independence opposition narrative was embraced by a spectrum of actors: the most central and visible were the Baltic opposition movements. The Congress of People’s Deputies also contributed to the political capital that underpinned this narrative. The local press played a dual role: the nascent independent Baltic press disseminated this narrative but also actively contributed to its evolution. The international press, drawn to the powerful oppositional spectacle of the Baltic Way, offered a global stage for the narrative’s articulation.

The challenge to the hegemony of Soviet history was rooted in an elevation of past events like the inclusion of a secret protocol in the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact, which had been omitted from the official Soviet narrative of the past. Zelče (2009, p. 44) has observed that,

newly-gained and renewed/revived historical knowledge fostered [the development of] collective memory, which was translated into an authentic societal force. It was that [force] which unified Latvians, [leading them] to gather at the Freedom Monument, [and] shores of the Daugava, to form the ‘Baltic Way’, to create a [new] holiday and commemoration calendar and national symbols The period from the late 1980s was a period of active critique of ‘Soviet history’, the filling in of ‘blank spots’, and the construction of Latvian history. The writers [of this history] were historians, journalists, writers, politicians, and others.

Brüggemann and Kasekamp (2008, p. 426) add that, ‘[the Baltic’s] own hidden history was a popular and effective weapon, because reconstructing an amputated national memory was meant to mobilize anti-Soviet protest, create solidarity and eventually, after the break-up of the USSR, even [to] gain international support’.

At the same time, the politics of memory in 1989 were deeply contentious and powerful political forces arrayed behind a dominant narrative which rejected the legitimacy of Baltic claims about the past and aspirations for independence. On 29 August 1989 *Padomju Jaunatne (Soviet Youth)*, the main mouthpiece of the Communist Party in Soviet Latvia, wrote that ‘Grabbing the role of vehicle for the realisation of national interests, [the Baltic opposition movements] started to act step by step to foster a split by the Baltic republics from the rest of the country, [and] such that long-standing organic ties with other nations would be broken’ (Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union 1989, p. 1). The allusion to ‘long-standing organic ties’ positioned the Central Committee as representing a natural—and, presumably, therefore legitimate—historical condition that was threatened by the opposition.

In the field of memory politics, central and republic-level Soviet institutions continued to articulate the historical narrative that had been in place since the 1940s, highlighting the story of Baltic ‘liberation’ and ‘national brotherhood’ that formed the foundation of legitimacy claims over this period (Lehti *et al.* 2008, p. 403). However, in a period in which this legitimacy was broadly questioned, Soviet institutional actors’ claims were most apparently capitalised with coercion, which was manifested in the January 1991 killings of civilians by Soviet troops in Rīga, Latvia and Vilnius, Lithuania. Their political capital, while rooted in control of central political institutions, was diminished by the collapse of control of the former Eastern Bloc and challenges to Soviet rule in the Baltic.

The Baltic Way of 1989 set the stage for two contentious years of oppositional politics, which would see strengthened civil societies pursuing the goal of independence, a weakening Soviet centre, and bursts of violence by Soviet forces in Latvia and Lithuania in January 1991. Two years after the Baltic Way of 1989, the goal of independence was on the cusp of being realised: on 24 August 1991, President Boris Yel’tsin signed, on behalf of the Russian Federation, a declaration recognising the Baltic countries as independent entities. Not long after, the Soviet era came to a close as the union dissolved into 15 independent entities. Contested narratives of both the recent and distant past, however, would continue to haunt Baltic societies and politics well into the new era of independence.

The politics of memory: commemoration, discontent, and power before 2009

This section of the article examines dominant historical narratives in the first two decades that followed the Baltic Way. In particular, we highlight the politics of memory at two key anniversaries that preceded the 20-year remembrance of the Baltic Way, showing how contests over commemorative memories both prefigure and differ from those that characterised 2009.

Fractured narratives in the Latvian community

While the memory politics around commemoration of the Baltic Way in the years that followed independence clearly referred to the events of 1989, there was a continuing articulation on the part of many commentators of the pre-war history that precipitated

the original Baltic Way action. Boļeslavs Lācis, a commentator in the Latvian press, put pre-war history at the centre of his 10-year retrospective, writing that,

The Latvian nation was not permitted to determine its own fate. It is important to remember the history of the occupation because it constitutes the greater part of our history in this century. It was a serious [endurance] test, complete with efforts to eradicate nations and their cultural values. Not for nothing is it said that for Latvia the Second World War ended only in 1991 when, with the collapse of the Soviet empire, independence was regained. (Lācis 1999, p. 2)

In this respect, the politics of memory in 1999 was layered; that is, rather than treating 1989 (or the period around it) as the central object of commemoration or contention, it melded the memory politics surrounding the World War II era with those of the opposition era, replaying in part the narrative contest between Baltic and Soviet histories.

The commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the Baltic Way elevated the collective memory of an event that represented both the apex of Baltic cooperation in the face of Soviet power and a key step towards the realisation of independence. The former President of Lithuania, Valdas Adamkus, suggested in a television discussion devoted to the fifteenth anniversary of the Popular Front of Latvia that the 'day of the Baltic Way was the day of our victory'.³ The elite political narrative across the three countries emphasised the Baltic Way as the euphoric and historic commencement of the road to independence and the inevitable linear progression towards Europe and European institutions like the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

Commemoration in the elite political narrative articulated the Baltic Way both as an unqualified moment of unified and unifying triumph for the Baltic peoples and as emblematic of a progressive road ahead. At a conference devoted to the tenth anniversary of the Baltic Way, Latvian Minister of Foreign Affairs Indulis Bērziņš proclaimed that, 'Today the Baltic Way is no more the call for freedom and the demonstration of physical unity. Today the Baltic Way is the road of dynamic advancement, development and the road of cooperation for the Europe's common future' (Bērziņš 1999, p. 60). Where critique was part of the narrative, it was aimed primarily at a public whose patriotism seemed to be flagging. As Prime Minister Andris Šķēle declared:

It might sound naive but at the moment there is a disastrous lack of people with high principles.⁴ We have to learn to believe again and again. To believe in our strength, in our nation, in our future. We have to go back to school and learn to love our state. (Baltijas vienotība gadu tūkstošu mijā 1999, p. 3)

On the occasion of the fifteenth anniversary, the President of Latvia, Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga, emphasised the uniqueness of the Baltic Way with a euphoria that

³Latvian Television (LTV) discussion *Baltijas ceļš šodien* (*The Baltic Way Today*), dedicated to the fifteenth anniversary of the Latvian People's Front, Latvian Television, 23 August 2003.

⁴Šķēle is one of the most publicly discussed politicians in Latvia and while he has not been indicted, he is widely suspected of corruption. His status as one of Latvia's wealthiest individuals has contributed to the shadow of suspicion that follows him.

characterised the elite political narrative of the past: 'The Baltic Way was a unique event; nowhere in the world has anything similar been experienced Let the Baltic Way become an inspiration for living and working in future' (quoted in Cera 2004, p. 1). Echoing her sentiments, Prime Minister Indulis Emsis added that,

August is the fatal month in the history of the Baltic states, when they had to concede, when others decided the destiny of our nations, when we dared to believe and won a victory because of our belief. When joined together in the Baltic Way, people were driven by belief, expectancy, dreams and hope. (Quoted in Cera 2004, p. 4)

Comments by those outside the political elite who organised and participated in the Baltic Way were less euphoric, stepping back from a triumphalist vision of the past to one more circumspect about the direction the Baltic Way and the unity it symbolised had taken in the years that followed. On the tenth anniversary, the weakening of solidarity between the Baltic states was an important theme in press accounts: 'Time has passed, independence has been re-established, but the former feeling of [unity] is considerably diminished. Unity is invoked in speeches; to a lesser extent it is visible in genuine practices . . . [such as the] Baltic wars over herrings, eggs, [and] pigs . . .' (Upleja 1999, p. 2).⁵

A cleavage also opened around the memory of the Baltic Way of 1989, which centred on questions about post-communist developments and, by extension, the significance of the Baltic Way as a signpost on the road to independent governance and positive social, economic, and political change. In Latvia, the early post-communist discourse around the memory of 1989 was characterised in the ethnic Latvian community by both a shared narrative of the Baltic Way as a representation of the opposition's rejection of the Soviet story of World War II and a political narrative that split those who achieved political and economic power after post-communism and those who bore its more dire consequences. The history and memory of victimhood (of which 1939 and the Soviet occupation were emblematic) united, while, perhaps paradoxically, the history and memory of victory (which the Baltic Way represented) divided, as not all of the 'victors' were winners in the contentious (and often corrupt) politics and competitive capitalist markets of post-communism.

This discontent, we suggest, became the foundation of a narrative that could be characterised as a political and economic alienation narrative. In an interview with the Russian-language newspaper *Vesti Segodnya* on the fifteenth anniversary of the Baltic Way, Dainis Ivāns, a leader of the pro-independence movement in the 1980s, noted his deep disappointment with developments in post-communism: 'You know, when the government of Repše [the prime minister] was in power, I even started to think, was it really worth fighting then for the establishment of this state . . .' (Elkin & Fal'kov 2004, p. 4).

This narrative of unfulfilled hopes cast a pall on the memory of the Baltic Way which, while not challenging the historical narrative on which it was founded, projected onto the memory a bitter story of millions standing together in order to realise a transfer of power to a new political elite that was broadly perceived as failing again to represent the needs and wishes of the people. A participant in the Baltic Way

⁵This refers to trade wars over commodities in post-communist Baltic markets.

wrote at the 15-year anniversary that, 'We fought for a more honourable Latvia and hoped that the government would be more responsive and understanding of their people' (Kabuce 2004, p. 1). Letters to the press reflected this bitterness: 'Now there is a little disappointment because the living conditions have not improved; patriotism has the undertone of sadness' (Ivanova 2004, p. 2). A retired history teacher suggested that 'People who joined hands in the Baltic Way expected another Latvia' (Kabuce 2004, p. 1). Articulating the sense that a transfer of power to a new elite rather than to the people had occurred under the cover of the opposition movement, one letter writer offered the following: 'Today I see that society has not changed much, but those who hold the power have' (Kabuce 2004, p. 1). Indeed, this narrative highlighted the more precarious aspects of the road to Europe, which was strewn with the waste of lost economic industries and low living standards for populations like the elderly and rural-dwellers, and characterised by the dominance of a new political elite more disposed to realising its own interests than those of the nation.

It is significant, however, that while discontent simmered in the middle and lower socioeconomic rungs of the Latvian population, as well as among those who were frustrated by the perceived level of corruption in government, there was little significant turnover among political elites, who may have changed parties from one election to another, but often succeeded in maintaining a position in government. This can be linked in some important respects to the politics of memory. The elite political narrative, which continued to iterate an elevated patriotism that glossed over many of the consequences of the transition period, drew from the politics of memory a powerful form of capital we might characterise as existential capital. This can be understood as a form of capital that endows its holders with a claim to hold power over the fate of the indigenous nation. In a retrospective analysis of Latvian politics in the period between 1987 and 2000, Rozenvalds (2000, p. 138) writes that,

The extended humiliation of Latvian national feelings, [and] intensive Russification, which made apparent serious threats to the continued existence of Latvianness, has created its own eschatological (catastrophic) argument, which has been used in the political discourse of the 1990s with great frequency. Essentially, [the discourse] assured us that the consideration of this or that issue in some determined way threatened the survival of the Latvian nation.

This capital was powerful because, in treating the continued dominance of Latvian political elites as an existential question, it marginalised issues like economic stratification and government corruption which, while weighty, appeared trivial by comparison. Arguably, significant forms of capital in post-communist politics, including existential capital, derive from the field of memory politics and the ethnic schisms that are produced and reproduced in divergent narratives of history, identity and legitimacy.

The Latvian political elite was able to elevate a triumphant narrative of 1989 through its obvious access to the levers of political power and associated political capital. Notably as well, it was underpinned by a more globally European triumphalist narrative of 1989 which framed the mainstream historical narrative of that signal year in these terms.

The political and economic alienation narrative found its most potent expression in the media, that is, in the writings of sympathetic journalists, letters to the editor,

and, increasingly, in new media forms such as internet comments. A media voice is, we suggest, a form of capital in the field of historical memory, though it may be less durable and more ephemeral than the capital exercised by those who hold political and economic power. The elite, importantly, also have a media voice, which can be exercised in opposition to competing narratives of the past or the present.

The politics of memory in Latvia's Russian-speaking community

The other key narrative in memory politics in the decades after 1989 can be characterised as an ethnic alienation narrative. The Baltic opposition of the late 1980s was composed of majorities of titular Baltic populations, as well as sympathetic segments of the Baltic Russian-speaking minority and other ethnic minority groups, including the Poles of Lithuania. Just as some Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians were loyal to the ideas of the Soviet Union, a part of the Russian-speaking population actively supported independence, taking part in demonstrations such as the Baltic Way. The failure of many in the Russian-speaking community to gain the expected national citizenship after the re-establishment of independence, together with a realisation of the loss of political power and status, initiated the reorganisation of collective memory on the basis of historical resentment. This drew together Russian-speakers who had thrown in their lot with the pro-independence movements with the segment of the minority Russian-speaking population who rejected the pursuit of independence and did not welcome the re-establishment of sovereign Baltic countries.

One of the unifying aspects of the ethnic alienation narrative has been its broad rejection of Latvian commemorative practices. While scholars have highlighted the function of commemorative practices in forming and reaffirming a collective conscience within communities, in Latvia they underpin a fundamental ethnic divide. Zepa and her colleagues (2008, p. 6) point out that, '[it is clear that] Russian-speakers often view [Latvian] national holidays through a negative prism, seeing those as political holidays that are most likely to contribute to societal cleavages'. Commemorations are, as Evans (2006, p. 323) points out, more than just the marking of historical events: 'At a fundamental level . . . commemoration is about politics and ideology. It is about identity formation . . .'. The rejection of commemorative practices highlights a deeply sceptical perspective on the dominant post-communist narrative of Baltic history.

Commemorations of the particular events of the opposition movement of 1986–1991, such as the Baltic Way, have evoked a negative reaction that both unites the Russian-speaking communities and divides them from Latvian political elites. For instance, some of the most searing public discourse on the Baltic Way appeared in the first decade after the historical action, a period characterised by bitter political battles over issues like citizenship, property rights, the right to education in the Russian language, and, as the quote below suggests, a deepening stratification of the population along economic lines. In an interview with the Russian-language newspaper *SM Segodnja*, a Russian-speaking pensioner in Latvia suggested that 'At the moment, the unemployed persons, homeless persons, [and] pensioners dying of

hunger could create a chain of the same length [as the Baltic Way] This chain would serve as a public rebuke to those in power . . .’ (Elkin 1998, pp. 1, 3).

The image of the Baltic Way was invoked to convey disappointment and bitterness, but also to mock the event and its commemoration as a farce. In a report on the 10-year anniversary commemoration of the Baltic Way, a journalist from *Vesti Segodnya*, a Russian-language paper, wrote that ‘At about seven o’clock p.m. people started to gather at the November 11th Embankment [a road running along the Daugava River in Rīga]. The majority of them, amusingly enough, were not standing next to the wall but more closely to the [alcoholic] drink kiosks’ (Nochnykh 1999, p. 2). The writer added that the President of Latvia, Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga, who came to address the crowd at the commemoration, was there ‘trying to herd the peasants’.

Other Russian-language media outlets also took the commemorations to task, though with less pointedly mocking language. At the 10-year mark, a commentator for the newspaper *Chas*, Leonid Fedosseev, opined that,

At that time they promised ‘prosperity for both the Latvian nation and for all national and ethnic groups inhabiting the territory of Latvia’ (declaration of the Parliament of Latvia on July 28, 1989). But afterwards they divided us into ‘masters’ and ‘colonists’, into citizens and non-citizens And the ideas of the Baltic Way were betrayed again. (Fedosseev 1999, p. 1)

The Russian-speaking alienation narrative was capitalised most apparently by a strong Russian-language media sphere which reflected and reproduced it. Arguably, it could also lay claim to international capital, namely, neighbouring Russia’s ardent embrace of a narrative (and associated policies) that put at its centre a story that shifted the mantle of victimhood to ethnic Russians left after the Soviet collapse in a nationalist ‘near abroad’.

Gross (2002, p. 343) suggests that ‘[history] is everywhere a battleground for rival attachments, a “field” where, by discovering, correcting, elaborating, inventing, and celebrating their histories, competing groups struggle to validate present goals by appealing to continuity with or inheritance from ancestral and other precursors’. Indeed, the politics of memory in Latvia has been a field of struggle over the meaning of the past for the legitimacy and identity claims of actors who have split along ethnic as well as elite and mass public lines.

The Baltic Way 20 years on

In the following section, we revisit the development and manifestation of the narratives noted above at the 20-year anniversary of the Baltic Way. The contentious politics of memory cut across two fundamental axes—ethnicity in the first instance and a political elite–mass public cleavage in the second instance. The twentieth anniversary saw currents of stasis and change in commemorative politics. Interestingly, the Baltic Way of 1989, as a meaning-imbued event in itself, was obscured by, on the one hand, continued attention to the ethnic memory politics of the World War II period and the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact and, on the other hand, the media spectacle of the ‘Heartbeats for the Baltics’ marathon run, which reproduced the Baltic Way in form, but, arguably, substituted a spectacle of mass entertainment for a commemorative engagement with the past.

The past is not past: ethnic alienation and the politics of memory at 20

The ethnic alienation narrative, which plays a key role in Baltic politics of memory, is composed of two key layers of collective memory, both of which are related to events of and around 1989, but encompass a broader historical calendar and set of grievances. First, as discussed in the previous section, ethnic alienation stems from bitterness borne of the perception of unrealised promises relating to independent nationhood, citizenship and prosperity. Second, the foundational level of this memory narrative recreates the narrative tensions around the Baltic Way, which as an event was deeply engaged with the politics of remembering the World War II era, and in particular the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact and its consequences. An important constituent part of this narrative is a position on history that reiterates the Soviet World War II narrative of Baltic ‘liberation’, casting doubt on the post-communist narrative of history that replaced the triumphant communist-era narrative of Red Army victory and heroism with a story of Baltic occupation and suffering.

In 2009, because of the seventieth anniversary of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact, the clash between the mid-twentieth century historical narratives was conspicuous in society and the press. For instance, a discussion devoted to the seventieth anniversary of the pact was organised at the ‘Moscow House’ in Rīga.⁶ The Russian-language newspaper *Vesti Segodnya* offered a lengthy report on this discussion. A historian from Russia, Aleksandr Dyukov, and Latvian historian Kaspars Zellis were invited as ‘expert speakers’. At the discussion, Dyukov declared that the Baltic states and Poland were accessories to the outbreak of World War II and, as such, to the occupation of these states. According to Dyukov, the fact that in 1939 Latvia and Estonia signed non-aggression pacts with Germany convinced Russia that Germany wanted to consolidate its power in the Baltic. As such, the Soviet Union had two possibilities: it could either negotiate or go to war with Germany. The Russian historian asserted that the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact was signed to avoid the outbreak of World War II. A press report on the discussion emphasised that the Latvian historian was representing the ‘contrary ground’: ‘The audience was listening carefully, but if to Dyukov by obvious favour, then to Zellis rather by demonstrative correctness’ (Slyusareva 2009, p. 6).

Dyukov’s position on the historical relationship between the USSR and the Baltic states and, in particular, the unfolding of the process through which the three countries came to be part of the Soviet Union, reflects and reinforces a historical narrative that was not only powerfully hegemonic in the USSR, when alternative narratives were not tolerated and history acted overtly in the service of ideology, but continues to be preminent in current Russian historical writing (Senyavsky & Seniavskaya 2010).⁷ Consider, for instance, a recently published two-volume text, *The History of Latvia from the Russian Empire to the USSR* (Vorob’eva 2009–2010), which offers the following characterisation of mid-1940, when the Baltic states became part of the USSR:

⁶The Moscow House is a cultural centre for Russian-speakers in Latvia. It is owned by the government of the city of Moscow.

⁷Consistent with this historical position, the government of post-communist Russia has not condemned the annexation of the Baltic countries in 1940 (Evans 2006, p. 321).

It would be absolutely unjustified to deny that the events of summer 1940 in Latvia came as a result of moves taken by the Latvian people, the majority of whom actively or passively supported the line of the Latvian Communist Party in favour of a root-and-branch change in the country's internal life and entry into the Soviet Union. (Vorob'eva 2009–2010, Vol. II, p. 91)

This articulation of history is a stark contrast to that which characterises the Latvian narrative of this historical period and highlights the illegality and illegitimacy of Soviet occupation and the broad rejection of the Soviet order by Baltic populations. Consider the words of Latvian President Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga published in a catalogue distributed by the Museum of the Occupation of Latvia in 2002:

Latvia's tragic legacy of occupation under Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia is not well known outside the country. The Museum's testimony of the unspeakable crimes committed by these two regimes must be preserved and passed on to future generations so that nothing of this kind ever occurs again on Latvian soil. (Nollendorfs 2002; Evans 2006, p. 318)

These irreconcilable narratives of mid-century history, which are evoked by 1989 but go beyond it, are significant for social and political life in Latvia today. Brüggemann and Kasekamp (2008, p. 426) point out that,

[in] the case of the post-Soviet Baltic States, the politics of memory created a 'real' history that was based upon a common understanding of collective victimhood under Soviet rule, thus excluding the Russian-speaking minority from the state-building memory community. This selective approach to the past was prone to create borders against those who did not share the alleged common experience.

On the one hand, the official commemorative calendar is entwined with a dominant narrative that elevates a historical story which represents part of Latvia's population, but which may be experienced by others as a 'state-sponsored policy of exclusion' (Onken 2010, p. 278). On the other hand, the contesting narrative of the Russian-speaking community is experienced by many in the ethnic Latvian community as a failure to acknowledge their experience of repression and occupation.

Interestingly, the assistant editor of the Russian-language newspaper *Telegraf*, Aleksandr Vidyakin, commented on the annual discussion on the Molotov–Ribbentrop pact, with a suggestion to table the debate: 'There again, August 23 comes round and from both sides words are articulated from afar which keep disseminating needless enmity. Gentlemen [sic.], maybe the time has come to stop and insert the ellipsis in this issue ...' (Vidyakin 2009, p. 2). The success of such an appeal has yet to be realised.

In the field of memory politics, agents who populate the contest over who will tell the 'legitimate' story of World War II remain locked in an irreconcilable debate. Latvians, while split on the meaning and commemoration of the Baltic Way itself, remain unified behind the ethnic Latvian narrative of World War II history, the reclamation of which was a key goal of the opposition period. The weight of the state, dominant educational institutions, and, importantly, the individual living memories of older generations of Latvians, lend powerful capital to the story of occupation and repression, which is linked, at the point of inception, to the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact of 1939.

More than half a century of Soviet historical writings and teachings underpin the legacy of Latvia's Russophone historical narrative and, notably, are a key aspect of Russian and Baltic Russian identities, which derive from the narrative of the Soviet Army as the 'liberator' of Europe (Ehala 2009). This narrative draws on the capital of individual memory as well, certainly to the degree that Red Army veterans both inside and outside Latvia see themselves as the liberators of Europe and the conquerors of fascism. The Russian state itself offers powerful supporting capital to this narrative, as was apparent in the Bronze Soldier incident in Estonia in 2007.⁸ The tight linkage of identity and memory deepens the intractability of tensions over history's telling and its commemoration. As Lehti *et al.* (2008, p. 411) note, 'the heroes of one story are the villains of the other'. Kattago (2008, p. 442) considers the Bronze Soldier incident to be one of the 'screens onto which many of the blank spots of twentieth-century history were projected'. She notes that 'war memorials are more about how the present society remembers and understands itself' and 'the commemoration of World War II in contemporary Estonia is an example of a "moral trauma" or "negative event" that has conflicting and multiple meanings' (2008, p. 436).

The past is past: 'heartbeats for the Baltics' and commemoration as spectacle

The twentieth anniversary of the Baltic Way was most visibly commemorated in the Baltic states by a mass sporting event.⁹ Adhering to the historical route of the Baltic Way, the grandiose 31-hour-long unity run, completed like a relay in segments, took place on 22–23 August 2009, beginning from the south with an introduction by Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė in Vilnius and commencing from the north with an introduction by Estonian President Toomas Hendrik Ilves in Tallinn and culminating at the Freedom Monument in downtown Rīga with Latvian President Valdis Zatlers' participation in the last kilometre of the run. Perhaps consistent with

⁸The Bronze Soldier statue in Tallinn (known in the Soviet period as the 'Monument to the Liberators of Tallinn' and sometimes referred to by the Russian-speaking population as *Alyosha*) has become the object of intense conflict, which is the product of acutely different understandings of what he represents historically. From the viewpoint of many ethnic Estonians, the Bronze Soldier is a symbol of Soviet occupation and repression, but from the viewpoint of Estonia's Russian-speaking community and the Russian state, it is a symbol of Soviet victory over Nazi Germany in World War II and also, at least recently, a symbol of equal rights in Estonia. In April 2007, the Estonian government undertook preparations for the relocation of the statue from the city centre of Tallinn to the Military Cemetery on the outskirts of the city. Disagreement over this action led to two nights of riots that resulted in one death and many more injuries. The relocation also earned the condemnation of the Russian government. At an emergency meeting the Estonian government chose to relocate the statue immediately because of security concerns. On 30 April, the statue was placed at the Cemetery of the Estonian Defence Forces in Tallinn, where it continues to be the object of commemorations on 9 May, Soviet Victory Day. The *Journal of Baltic Studies* published a special issue in 2008 dedicated to collective memory issues, including the Bronze Soldier incident: among the important contributions to a fuller understanding of the Baltic case are Brüggemann and Kasekamp (2008), Lehti *et al.* (2008), Kattago (2008) and Smith (2008).

⁹Other shared events included the flights of powered paragliders which took to the air and crossed the three countries between 17 and 22 August 2009. The only shared event that was organised exclusively by civil society was the Baltic Chain Run, a two-day motorcycle tour of the route organised by the Estonian Motorcycle Club.

the unity theme, Riga's Mayor, Nils Ušakovs, an ethnic Russian, ran the last kilometre with President Zatlers and addressed the gathering at the Freedom Monument.¹⁰ As the initiative for the unity run came from Latvia's president, the public relations campaign was realised most broadly there. The event assembled more than 60,000 people from the three Baltic states (about 50,000 of those were from Latvia).

The President's Chancery and the Latvian Orienteering Federation commissioned the public relations agency, Deep White, which, collaborating with public relations agencies in Estonia (Alfa–Omega Communications) and Lithuania (KPMS), worked out an appealing and powerful public relations campaign.¹¹ Three weeks before the unity run, preparatory activities were underway, including online registration for the run,¹² a publicity campaign, and the creation and distribution of logo T-shirts. The first participant registered after the press conference was the President of Latvia. He was joined by a group of popular celebrities and 20-year-olds born on the historical day. Similar press conferences and public relations activities took place in Lithuania and Estonia as well.

Arguably, widespread disillusionment in society, which encompassed not only the Russian-speaking minority but an indigenous ethnic population disgruntled with corruption in politics, the deep downturn in the economic fortunes of the middle class, widespread elderly and child poverty and the accelerating loss of population to migration,¹³ contributed to a loss of elite capital in the field of memory. That is, the exercise of political elite power in the definition and legitimation of a particular vision of the past was compromised by their own diminished legitimacy in society. Klumbyte's (2010) research on nostalgia among ethnic Lithuanian 'losers' of transition for the social and economic security of the Soviet period may also be relevant for the Latvian case, particularly in considering why some groups in Latvian society would not be receptive to the triumphant narrative of the opposition period and the Baltic Way. While a comparable study has not been conducted in Latvia, evidence of nostalgia for the quotidian economic predictability and stability of the Soviet period can be found in recent books (Kreituse 2009; Terzens 2007) and press accounts that reflect positively on the rural *kolkhozy* (collective farms) of the Soviet past, which ensured work and basic welfare in the now ravaged countryside.

Social discontent and disunity created a memory climate inimical to an elite-centred articulation of a Baltic Way historical narrative. On the one hand, Latvians shared a fundamentally well-defined narrative of World War II occupation and oppression. On

¹⁰Ušakovs' participation earned a mixed reception from Latvians. On the one hand, his participation and the fact that he laid flowers at the Freedom Monument were positively noted. On the other hand, it was pointed out that his party, *Saskaņas centrs* (Harmony Centre Party), has been among the Russian-oriented political organisations unwilling to recognise and condemn the 1940 occupation of the Baltics.

¹¹In fact, Deep White earned the 'Best international communications campaign for 2009' award for the Heartbeats project at the Baltic PR Awards 2010 (see <http://www.deepwhite.lv/en/news/>, accessed 21 January 2012).

¹²See www.baltijascelam20.lv, accessed 23 August 2009.

¹³The loss of population has been pronounced in Latvia, which has seen the mass migration of the working-age population: in 2007, the Latvian government estimated that about 60,000 Latvians were working abroad; a report by Latvia's SEB Unibanka bank estimated the total to be closer to 100,000 (Collier 2007). Migration accelerated after the economic crisis.

the other hand, there was a broad sense in 2009 that the promises and values of 1989 and the Baltic Way had been undermined by the political elite. As such, we suggest, political elites attempted less to ‘construct meanings of the past’ (Lebow 2006, p. 13), as to imbue the past, specifically the cultural vessel of the Baltic Way, with ambiguity rather than a grand narrative. ‘Heartbeats for the Baltics’ was a commemoration spectacle untethered from the burdens of the past or ‘grand narratives’ of history (Lyotard 1979). Rather, it subsumed struggles over memory and meaning in a time of crisis and disunity beneath a glossy, well-planned and executed event that elevated form over meaning and substituted a ‘show’ of unity for authentic societal (or Baltic) unity.

This is not to say that ‘Heartbeats for the Baltic’ sought no narrative link to the Baltic Way and its aspirations: an editorial published five days ahead of the run in the English-language *Baltic Times* and prepared in cooperation with the Latvian Foreign Ministry, called the run a ‘living history lesson for those who were born after the Baltic Way or do not remember it because they were too young . . .’.¹⁴ If the Baltic Way was, as the website for the run suggested, ‘a historic symbol that is alive in the collective memory, enriching the understanding of the sense and values of solidarity and freedom of expression’, then there was little discussion of those values or the aspirations and hopes that had compelled two million Baltic inhabitants to join the human chain across three countries.¹⁵ The ‘mini-narratives’ around the run, instead, were fragmented, ranging from discussions of running practices and health to modest (or banal) political calls for a ‘new Baltic Way’ that would ‘confirm unity’ (articulated by Zatlers), which was described by Grybauskaite as useful for ‘[reducing] the negative consequences of the recession, undertaking greater responsibilities and [being] more courageous in dealing with the challenges of our age’, although no substantive steps toward such an end were offered.¹⁶

The unity run on the twentieth anniversary of the Baltic Way earned mixed reviews from the press and public. On the one hand, support was voiced for the event and its efforts to revive the unity and hope of 1989. Pauls Raudseps (2009, p. 2), a commentator from the Latvian daily newspaper *Diena*, noted: ‘Sunday demonstrated that irrespective of all difficulties, there still are huge resources of goodness that are being broadened for the formation of a brighter future’. Some newspaper readers and participants also characterised the unity run in glowing terms. An inhabitant of Rīga called the editorial office of the newspaper *Latvijas Avīze* to express her pleasure: ‘I experienced inexpressible gladness and excitement to tears watching the marathon of unity. I was glad that the action was successful, that so many young people, [and] young families with small children took part in it’ (Geida 2009, p. 24). A day before the unity run, in the newspaper of Valmiera, *Liesma*, a supporter of the forthcoming

¹⁴‘Baltics Run for Unity’, *Baltic Times*, 18 August 2009, available at: <http://www.baltictimes.com/news/articles/23359/>, accessed 21 January 2011.

¹⁵The Baltic Way—Human Chain Linking Three States in Their Drive for Freedom’, *Baltic Way Net*, available at: <http://www.balticway.net/index.php?page=baltic-way&hl=en>, accessed 21 January 2011.

¹⁶Baltic Presidents Urge Citizens to Remember “Baltic Way”, *Earth Times*, 17 August 2009, available at: <http://www.earthtimes.org/articles/news/281690,baltic-presidents-urge-citizens-to-remember-baltic-way.html>, accessed 21 January 2011.

action noted that the anniversary of the Baltic Way had stirred memories. She noted that it had even prompted her to look back over issues of the opposition-era newspaper *Atmoda* that she had long treasured (Močs 2009, p. 3).

On the other hand, many people expressed scepticism about the event and its intentions. A commentator from the Latvian national newspaper *Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze*, Viktors Avotiņš (2009, p. 2), characterised the ‘unity run’ as a ‘façade’ of unity:

Of course, patriotic events are needed I am also in favour of unity. Alas—for a unity which is demonstrated not in concert with the appeals and invitations of some ‘ministry of propaganda’, but for [a unity] which does not have to be specially planned, [and] which emanates from current practices (of society, of power structures) In the Soviet period, it was common to demonstrate for that which did not exist. But for that [unity] which at this time is absent, I will not run I see as deceptive such official or semi-official actions that do not represent existing circumstances, but are used as a curtain to obscure those circumstances.

Avotiņš’ comments drew on a bitterness founded not least in his recent observations about the widespread and dramatic out-migration of Latvians, particularly from rural areas, seeking to escape the country’s difficult economic conditions, and he sarcastically added, ‘. . . I have been helpless to influence this scenario . . . but at least I can participate in a unity run. That will definitely help’.

Interestingly, Avotiņš’ observation that in the Soviet period, ‘it was common to demonstrate for that which did not exist’ recalls Burawoy and Lukacs’ (1992, p. 147) observation about socialist ‘painting rituals’ like centrally planned and obligatory workers’ demonstrations in pre-1989 Hungary: ‘Precisely because workers have to act out the virtues of socialism, they become conscious of its failings. In painting socialism as just and rational they become critical of its irrationality and injustice’. While forced participation in Soviet rituals arguably made the juxtaposition of reality and representation particularly acute, Avotiņš’ point that the run—a ‘shell’ of unity, in his words—drew attention to the lack of unity in society, particularly between the goals and interests of the political elite and society, was echoed in other comments as well. His scepticism was broadly reflected in internet news portal comments, which included points like the following:

. . . does [President] Zatlers have no shame[?]. In order to divert attention from the [troubles] that he and other politicians have cooked up, he intends to manipulate people’s emotions with an event to commemorate the Baltic Way. Leave this amazing historical event alone!¹⁷

Kudos to [Mayor Ušakovs] for running and for his speech at the Freedom Monument Maybe this unity will fulfil those dreams from 20 years ago. Yes—unity between Latvians, Russians, Jews, Belarusians, and all ethnic groups in Latvia for the purpose of improving social welfare and culture and not [just] the unity between the oligarchs¹⁸

¹⁷Skolotajs’, 3 August 2009, on the *Diena* news portal, available at: www.diena.lv, accessed 14 January 2011. The comments were taken from the commentary page associated with the following article: ‘Zatlers veic skrējiena pēdējo posmu, piedalījušies 50 000’, *Diena*, 23 August 2009; the comments are, however, no longer accessible.

¹⁸Sandis’, 23 August 2009, on the *Diena* news portal, available at: www.diena.lv, accessed 14 January 2011. This comment is also taken from the commentary page associated with ‘Zatlers veic skrējiena pēdējo posmu, piedalījušies 50 000’, *Diena*, 23 August 2009.

I hurt for my nation, today I cried, I watched TV, remembered how unified we were 20 years ago, but today it seemed to me that the event [Heartbeats for the Baltics] was devoted to burnishing the image of [President] Zatlers, and I wait with trepidation about what tomorrow will bring, what new taxes await us, how many people will be left unemployed, how many hungry children will not be able to go to school on the first of September.¹⁹

Ritualised commemorative practices act in modern societies as vehicles for the development, sustenance and dissemination of collective memory. In 2009, the commemorative ritual of the Baltic Way and, arguably, the articulation of a developed narrative of collective memory around the Baltic Way and its era, was outshone by a striking media event, which substituted public relations-centred unity in form for unity in practice and the gloss of a commemorative spectacle for a reflection on the past. This entailed, arguably, a transference of meaning, with the substitution of new memories for old memories rather than a targeted commemoration of the Baltic Way of 1989. As one press account noted, ‘Just as [people] remembered where they stood in the Baltic Way, now [they] will remember the section which they ran [in the relay]’.²⁰

Interestingly and in striking contrast to the sharp language that continued to be deployed in discussions of the seventieth anniversary of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact, as well as the mocking tone of earlier Baltic Way anniversaries, Russian-language newspapers largely offered a neutral representation of the unity run ‘Heartbeats for the Baltics’. Newspapers offered little discussion of the historical meaning of the Baltic Way or the current political and social situation, which was a contrast to earlier anniversaries, which were marked by a tone of bitterness about the status of Russian-speakers. Only the newspaper *Chas* pointedly remarked on the Latvian president’s participation in the event: ‘Despite the fact that the President of Latvia, Valdis Zatlers, only joined Sunday’s run, “Heartbeats for the Baltics”, at the final kilometre, which is none too correct from the sports viewpoint, his participation became the centre of the whole event’.²¹

Organisers hailed ‘Heartbeats for the Baltics’ as a stunning success, noting that it set a record for the number of participants in comparable marathons in the Baltic countries. Clearly, the international public relations campaign was successful, assembling more than 60,000 active participants—in addition to spectators—for the event dedicated to the twentieth anniversary of the Baltic Way (though there was, notably, a lack of Baltic unity in the unity run, which was apparent in the low Lithuanian and Estonian participation). An examination of the objectives and ideals, however, once embedded in the remarkable chain of two million people, as well as their relationship to the stark realities of the current situation, was left out. As such, the unity run, ‘Heartbeats for the Baltics’, reproduced the Baltic Way in form but drained it of larger meaning, leaving in its place a platform for the articulation of ‘mini-narratives’ that disengaged from the politics of memory of 1989, elevating instead a (successful) commemoration spectacle which may have functioned,

¹⁹Zuze, 23 August 2009, on the *Delfi* news portal, available at: www.delfi.lv, accessed 14 January 2011. This comment comes from a section linked to the following article: ‘Skrējienā “Sirdspuksti Baltijai” kopumā piedalījušies vairāk kā 60 00’, *Delfi*, 23 August 2009.

²⁰‘Sirdspuksti savienojas Rīgā’, *Diena*, 24 August 2009, pp. 1, 3.

²¹‘Begat’ polezno dlya edinstva’, *Chas*, 25 August 2009, p. 3.

paradoxically, to both obscure and illuminate disunity and distrust in contemporary politics, as well as in the articulation of the meaning of the past.

Conclusion

The foundational layer of Latvia's historical narratives is deeply fractured. In this field of play, social actors are split by ethnicity around irreconcilable World War II narratives of 'occupation' and 'liberation'. While there is broad unity in each ethnic (or linguistic) community around the narratives of the World War II era, the memory of the recent past is less unified within the Latvian community, where memories are coloured by different perspectives on the post-communist present. Recent research published by the Advanced Social and Political Institute (ASPRI) of the University of Latvia, for instance, indicates that only 32.2% of all respondents and just 45.7% of Latvians are proud of the period of opposition (including the Baltic Way, the Barricades, etc.) (Ijabs & Rozenvalds 2009, p. 197).²² This 'dissatisfaction' with the past reflects, arguably, a broad discontent with contemporary political, social and economic developments.

What are the implications of memory politics 22 years after the signal event of the Baltic Way and nearly 20 years after the re-establishment of independence? In our conclusion, we consider this question briefly in terms of institutional legitimacy, the party system and party politics, and civic peace. First, while the politics of memory undergird a fractured historical narrative, there is still considerable stability in the institutional framework. Basic legitimacy and authority claims are bolstered by membership in European institutions like the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Notably, institutional legitimacy is supported by the consistency of dominant historical narratives in the Baltic states with Western narratives of World War II, which recognised the illegitimacy of Soviet occupation.

Second, the politics of memory have had a significant effect on the party system and party politics, as well as democratic consolidation more generally. While electoral politics have been characterised by frequent changes in party platforms, composition and names (Eglitis 2011a), they have been relatively consistent in the explicit or implied division of parties by ethnicity, with some parties known as 'Russian parties' and others recognised as 'Latvian' (though some party members, of course, cross ethnic lines) (Auers & Ikstens 2005). Voting across ethnic lines has not been commonplace in national elections.²³

Another important characteristic of the political environment is the persistent theme of existential threat, with fears that accession to power of one group threatens the survival of the language, culture and community of the other. While the politics of memory does not constitute the whole of this problem, the fractured remembrance of the past and the status and legitimacy derived from the narratives lends itself to a

²²Survey respondents included 1,000 inhabitants of Latvia, 623 of whom were Latvians.

²³The pattern of ethnically divided voting shifted somewhat in the 2009 local election of Nils Ušakovs, a member of the Russian-dominated Harmony Centre Party, to the post of Mayor in Rīga. In research done by the Marketing and Public Opinion Centre SKDS in 2011, Ušakovs earned positive ratings from 81.7% of Russian and 58% of Latvian residents of Rīga (Stankēviča 2009). Ethnically split voting, however, remains characteristic of national elections, as the 2011 parliamentary election demonstrated.

political climate that is inimical to compromise and easier for elites to manipulate for their own political purposes. Writing on the Latvian case, Pridham (2009, p. 468) points out that '[democratic] consolidation takes longer to achieve, as it is a deeper process than democratic transition'. No less critically, he notes, 'a basic problem facing Latvian democracy' is 'the conflict and tension between traditional elements and modernising tendencies': among the former he counts 'difficult historical memories, which have continued up to the present day to remain powerful ... and focused on the question of the Soviet experience' (Pridham 2009, p. 487).

Third, contestation over narratives of the past can be linked to individual episodes of civil disorder, as was the case in neighbouring Estonia around the Bronze Soldier incident. However, ethnic tensions around irreconcilable positions on history and memory have, arguably, been balanced by other factors in society, including high rates of intermarriage and other long-standing sites of integration like the workplace, as well as the stability carried by growing prosperity and a rising middle class; the latter two factors were deeply affected by the economic crisis that began in 2008.

The power of cultural objects rests not least in their ambiguity. Indeed, the Baltic Way of 1989 has been in many important respects an ambiguous cultural object in the politics of memory, carrying the burdens of contemporary politics and divided communities. It has been a bridge between historical narratives of World War II and historical narratives of the opposition period, as well as a symbolic vessel for social actors embracing dramatically divergent perspectives on the past and present. Twenty years after the Baltic Way, a fractious political and social climate transformed this vessel into a commemoration spectacle, which retained the form of the Baltic Way, but substituted media-driven entertainment for a societal and political engagement with Latvia's past and its future way forward.

*George Washington University
University of Latvia*

References

- Ardava, L. (2009) "'Mēs"—"Viņi" diskursa konstrukcija 1989. gada 23. augusta akcijai "Baltijas ceļš" vēltītajās publikācijās 1989. un 1999. gadā', *Latvijas Arhīvi*, 4.
- Ardava, L. (2011) 'Etnogrāfu piezīmes: 16. marta un 8./9. maija komemorācijas prakses un rituāli Latvijā (2010–2011)', in Muižnieks, N. & Zelče, V. (eds) (2011) *Karojošā piemiņa: 16. marts un 9. maijs* (Rīga, Zinātne).
- Auers, D. & Ikstens, J. (2005) 'The Democratic Role of Political Parties', in Rozenvalds, J. (ed.) (2005) *Commission of Strategic Analysis, How Democratic is Latvia: Audit of Democracy* (Rīga, LU Akademiskais apgāds).
- Avotiņš, V. (2009) 'Baltijas ceļa čaumala', *Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze*, 22 August.
- Baltijas vienotība gadu tūkstošu mijā (1999) 'Baltijas vienotība gadu tūkstošu mijā. Valsts prezidentes Vairas Viķes-Freibergas un Ministru prezidenta Andra Šķēles runas Latvijas Inteliģences apvienības 29. konferencē 1999. gada 23. augustā', *Lauku Avīze*, 24 August.
- Baudrillard, J. (1981) *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* (St Louis, MO, Telos Press).
- Baudrillard, J. (1994) *Simulacra and Simulation* (Ann Arbor, MI, University of Michigan Press).
- Baudrillard, J. (1998) *Consumer Society: Myths and Structures* (Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage).
- Bērziņš, I. (1999) 'Baltijas ceļš nākotnē', in Kalniņa, A. (ed) (1999) *Baltijas ceļš—pirms desmit gadiem, tagad un nākamajā gadu tūkstoši ieejot* (Rīga, Inteliģencia Association of Latvia).
- Bourdieu, P. (1984) *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press).
- Bourdieu, P. (1993) *The Field of Cultural Production* (New York, NY, Columbia University Press).

- Bourdieu, P. & Wacquant, L. J. D. (1992) *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Chicago, IL, University of Chicago Press).
- Brewer, J. D. (2000) *Ethnography* (Buckingham, Open University Press).
- Brüggemann, K. & Kasekamp, A. (2008) 'The Politics of History and the War of Monuments in Estonia', *Nationalities Papers*, 36, 3.
- Burawoy, M. & Lukacs, J. (1992) *The Radiant Past: Ideology and Reality in Hungary's Road to Capitalism* (Chicago, IL, University of Chicago Press).
- Burch, S. (2008) 'An Unfolding Signifier: London's Baltic Exchange in Tallinn', *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 39, 4.
- Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (1989) 'PSKP CK paziņojums par stāvokli Baltijas padomju republikās', *Padomju Jaunatne*, 29 August.
- Cera, E. (2004) "'Baltijas ceļam" jākļūst par iedvesmu nākotnei', *Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze*, 24 August.
- Cheskin, A. (2010) 'The Discursive Construction of "Russian-Speakers": The Russian-Language Media and Demarcated Political Identities in Latvia', in Golubeva, M. & Gould, R. (eds) (2010).
- Collier, M. (2007) "Plugging the Brain Drain." *Transitions OnLine*, 18 December, available at: <http://www.tol.org/client/article/19246-plugging-the-brain-drain.html>, accessed 10 June 2012.
- Eglitis, D. S. (2002) *Imagining the Nation: History, Modernity, and Revolution in Latvia* (University Park, PA, Pennsylvania State University Press).
- Eglitis, D. S. (2011a) 'The Baltic States: Changes and Challenges in the New Europe', in Wolchik, S. L. & Curry, J. L. (eds) (2011) *Central and East European Politics: From Communism to Democracy* (New York, NY, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.).
- Eglitis, D. S. (2011b) 'Class, Culture, and Consumption: Representations of Stratification in Post-Communist Latvia', *Cultural Sociology*, 5, 3.
- Ehala, M. (2009) 'The Bronze Soldier: Identity Threat and Maintenance in Estonia', *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 40, 1.
- Elkin, A. (1998) 'Barrikady proshlogo i nastoyashchego', *SM-Segodnya*, 20 January.
- Elkin, A. & Fal'kov, V. (2004) 'Dainis Ivans: 12 let—pod oligarkhami', *Vesti segodnya*, 26 August.
- Evans, M. (2006) 'Memories, Monuments, Histories: The Re-thinking of the Second World War since 1989', *National Identities*, 8, 4.
- Fedosseev, L. (1999) 'Na seredine Puti', *Chas*, 23 August.
- Geida, A. (2009) 'Guva prieku un spēku', *Latvijas Avīze*, 26 August.
- Gillis, J. R. (1996) 'Memory and Identity: The History of a Relationship', in Gillis, J. R. (ed.) (1996) *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press).
- Golubeva, M. & Gould, R. (eds) (2010) *Shrinking Citizenship: Discursive Practices that Limit Democratic Participation in Latvian Politics* (New York, NY, Rodopi).
- Gross, T. (2002) 'Anthropology of Collective Memory: Estonian National Awakening Revisited', *Trames*, 6, 4.
- Halbwachs, M. (1992) *On Collective Memory* [edited and translated by L. A. Coser] (Chicago, IL, University of Chicago Press).
- Ijabs, I. & Rozenvalds, J. (eds) (2009) *Latvija. Pārskats par tautas attīstību, 2008/2009: Atbildīgums* (Rīga, University of Latvia, Advanced Social and Political Research Institute).
- Ivanova, I. (2004) "'Baltijas ceļš" vienoja nākotnei', *Latvijas Avīze*, 24 August.
- Kabuce, L. (2004) 'Vienotības ceļš', *Latvijas Avīze*, 24 August.
- Kattago, S. (2008) 'Commemorating Liberation and Occupation: War Memorials along the Road to Narva', *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 39, 4.
- Klumbyte, N. (2010) 'Memory, Identity, and Citizenship in Lithuania', *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 41, 3.
- Kondrats, G. (1989) "'Cerību ceļš"', *Cīņa*, 25 August.
- Kreituse, I. (2009) *Pagājušo gadu Latvija 1945–1990: kā dzīvojam, no kā iztikām, ko apsmējam, par ko priecājamies* (Rīga, Zvaigzne ABC).
- Lācis, B. (1999) 'To nedrīkst aizmirst', *Liesma*, 20 August.
- Laitin, D. (1998) *Identity in Formation: The Russian-Speaking Populations in the Near Abroad* (Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press).
- Landsbergis, V. (2009) 'The Roaring Year', *Mercator net*, 16 October, available at: http://www.mercatornet.com/articles/view/the_roaring_year/, accessed 20 January 2011.
- Langenbacher, E. (2008) 'Twenty-First Century Memory Regimes in Germany and Poland', *German Politics and Society*, 26, 4.
- Latvian People's Front (1989) "'Baltijas ceļš" par brīvību un neatkarību', *Literatūra un Māksla*, 19 August.
- Lebow, R.N. (2006) 'The Memory of Politics in Postwar Europe', in Lebow, R. N., Kansteiner, W. & Fogu, C. (eds) (2006) *The Politics of Memory in Postwar Europe* (Durham, NC, Duke University Press).

- Lehti, M., Jutila, M. & Jokisipila, M. (2008) 'Never-Ending Second World War: Public Performances of National Dignity and the Drama of the Bronze Soldier', *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 39, 4.
- Lyotard, J. F. (1979) *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Minneapolis, MN, Minnesota University Press).
- Močs, Dz. (2009) 'Baltijas ceļš: no sirds uz sirdi, no paaudzēs uz paaudzēm', *Liesma*, 22 August.
- Nochnykh, V. (1999) 'Otkuda byli golosa?', *Vesti segodnya*, 25 August.
- Nollendorfs, V. (2002) *Museum of the Occupation of Latvia* (Rīga, Strelnieku laukums).
- Olick, J. K. (2003) 'Introduction', in Olick, J. (ed.) (2003) *States of Memory: Continuities, Conflicts, and Transformations in National Retrospection* (Durham, NC, Duke University Press).
- Olick, J. K. & Robbins, J. (1998) 'Social Memory Studies: From "Collective Memory" to the Historical Sociology of Mnemonic Practices', *Annual Review of Sociology*, 24.
- Onken, E. (2010) 'Memory and Democratic Pluralism in the Baltic States—Rethinking the Relationship', *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 41, 3.
- Plakans, A. (1998) 'Ievads', in Ķīlis, R. (ed.) (1998) *Atmiņa un vēsture: no antropoloģijas līdz psiholoģijai* (Rīga, N.I.M.S.).
- Pridham, G. (2009) 'Post-Soviet Latvia—A Consolidated or Defective Democracy? The Interaction between Domestic and European Trajectories', *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 40, 4.
- Raudseps, P. (2009) 'Baltijas maratons', *Diena*, 25 August.
- Rone, M. (1989) 'Uz Eiropas sliekšņa', *Liesma*, 26 August.
- Rozenvalds, J. (2000) 'Par intelīģenci un tās lomu Latvijas politiskajos procesos 1987.–2000. gadā', *Latvijas Zinātņu akadēmijas vēstis*, 54, 3/4.
- Rožukalne, A. (2010) 'The Construction of Ethnic Political Identity and the Mechanisms of Exclusion in the Latvian-language Media', in Golubeva, M. & Gould, R. (eds) (2010).
- Senyavsky, A. S. and Senyavskaya, E. S. (2010) 'The Historical Memory of Twentieth-Century Wars as an Arena of Ideological, Political, and Psychological Confrontation', *Russian Studies in History*, 49, 1.
- Slyusareva, E. (2009) 'Istoriya rozhdetsya v sporakh', *Vesti segodnya*, 22 August.
- Smith, D. J. (2008) 'Woe from Stones: Commemoration, Identity Politics and Estonia's "War of Monuments"', *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 39, 4.
- Stankēviča, Z. (2009) 'Ušakovs kļuvis par pozitīvāk vērtēto Rīgas mēru', *LETA*, 18 April, available at: <http://www.leta.lv/lat/arhivs/>, accessed 19 January 2012.
- Tamm, M. (2008) 'History as Cultural Memory: Mnemohistory and the Construction of the Estonian Nation', *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 39, 4.
- Terzens, A. (2007) *Latvijas Kapitalistiskā republika* (Rīga, Apgāds ARTE).
- Thompson, J. B. (1995) *The Media and Modernity: A Social Theory of the Media* (Stanford, CA, Stanford University Press).
- Trouillot, M. R. (1997) *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston, MA, Beacon Press).
- Tumarkin, N. (1994) *The Living and the Dead: The Rise and Fall of the Cult of World War II in Russia* (New York, NY, Basic Books).
- Upleja, S. (1999) 'Baltijas ceļš: kad apritējuši desmit gadi', *Diena*, 23 August.
- Veidemane, E. (1989) 'Akcija "Baltijas ceļš"', *Atmoda*, 28 August.
- Vidyakin, A. (2009) 'Ne pora li postavit' mnogotochie', *Telegraf*, 24 August.
- Vogt, H. (2005) *Between Utopia and Disillusionment: A Narrative of the Political Transformation in Eastern Europe* (New York, NY, Berghan Books).
- Volkovs, V. (1996) *Krievi Rīgā* (Rīga, Latvian Academy of Sciences, Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Ethnic Studies Center).
- Vorob'eva, L. M. (2009–2010) *Istoriya Latvii ot Rossiiskoi imperii k SSSR* (Moscow, Instoricheskaya pamyat' & Rossiiskii institut strategicheskikh issledovanii).
- Zamponi, Simonetta Falasca. (2003) 'Of Storytellers and Master Narratives: Modernity, Memory, and History in Fascist Italy,' in Olick, J. K. (eds) (2003) *States of Memory: Continuities, Conflicts, and Transformations in National Retrospective* (Durham, NC, Duke University Press).
- Zelče, V. (2007) 'Vēsture un vēsture, un 9. Saeimas vēlēšanas', in Briksē, I. & Zelče, V. (eds) (2007) *Latvijas Republikas 9. Saeimas vēlēšanu kampaņa: priekšvēlēšanu publiskā telpa* (Rīga, Zinātne).
- Zelče, V. (2009) 'Vēsture—atbildība—atmiņa: Latvijas pieredze', in Ijabs, I. & Rozenvalds, J. (eds) (2009).
- Zepa, B., Kļave, E., Žabko, O., Krastiņa, L., Bebrīša, I., Jansone, Z., Vaiņode, L. & Beriņa, L. (2008) *Mēs. Svētki. Valsts: Valsts svētku svinēšanas socioloģiska izpēte* (Rīga, Baltic Institute of Social Sciences).