



Kent Academic Repository

Malksoo, Maria (2021) *Militant Memocracy in International Relations: Mnemonical Status Anxiety and Memory Laws in Eastern Europe*. Review of International Studies, TBD (TBD). ISSN 0260-2105.

Downloaded from

<https://kar.kent.ac.uk/87056/> The University of Kent's Academic Repository KAR

The version of record is available from

<https://doi.org/TBC>

This document version

Author's Accepted Manuscript

DOI for this version

Licence for this version

CC BY-NC-ND (Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives)

Additional information

Versions of research works

Versions of Record

If this version is the version of record, it is the same as the published version available on the publisher's web site. Cite as the published version.

Author Accepted Manuscripts

If this document is identified as the Author Accepted Manuscript it is the version after peer review but before type setting, copy editing or publisher branding. Cite as Surname, Initial. (Year) 'Title of article'. To be published in *Title of Journal*, Volume and issue numbers [peer-reviewed accepted version]. Available at: DOI or URL (Accessed: date).

Enquiries

If you have questions about this document contact ResearchSupport@kent.ac.uk. Please include the URL of the record in KAR. If you believe that your, or a third party's rights have been compromised through this document please see our [Take Down policy](https://www.kent.ac.uk/guides/kar-the-kent-academic-repository#policies) (available from <https://www.kent.ac.uk/guides/kar-the-kent-academic-repository#policies>).

**Militant Democracy in International Relations:
Mnemonic Status Anxiety and Memory Laws in Eastern Europe**

Abstract. This article theorises the nexus between mnemonic status anxiety and militant memory laws. Extending the understanding of status-seeking in international relations to the realm of historical memory, I argue that the quest for mnemonic recognition is a status struggle in an international social hierarchy of remembering constitutive events of the past. A typology of mnemopolitical status-seeking is presented on the example of Russia (*mnemonic positionalism*), Poland (*mnemonic revisionism*), and Ukraine (*mnemonic self-emancipation*). Memory laws provide a common instance of securing and/or improving a state's mnemonic standing in the relevant memory order. Drawing on the conceptual analogy of militant democracy, the article develops the notion *militant democracy*, or the governance of historical memory through a dense network of prescribing and proscribing memory laws and policies. Alike its militant democracy counterpart, militant democracy is in danger of self-inflicted harm to the object of defence in the very effort to defend it: its precautionary and punitive measures resound rather than fix the state's mnemonic anxiety problem.

Keywords: mnemonic status anxiety, memory laws, militant democracy, Russia, Poland, Ukraine

Author Information

Dr Maria Mälksoo (<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7110-2050>) is Senior Lecturer in International Security at the University of Kent, Brussels School of International Studies. She is the author of *The Politics of Becoming European: A Study of Polish and Baltic Post-Cold War Security Imaginaries* (Routledge, 2010), and a co-author of *Remembering Katyn* (Polity, 2012). Her most recent articles are published in the *European Journal of International Relations*, *Critical Studies on Security* and *International Studies Review*.

Institutional Address:

Brussels School of International Studies

University of Kent

Espace Rolin

Boulevard Louis Schmidt 2A/Louis Schmidtlaan 2A

Brussels 1040

Belgium

Email: m.malksoo@kent.ac.uk

Introduction

‘Events happen, facts are established,’ Hayden White reminds us.¹ In a notable ‘history lecture’, Russian President Vladimir Putin admitted being ‘hurt’ by the European Parliament (EP) resolution of September 2019 which had stated the Soviet Union’s co-responsibility for starting the Second World War (WWII) with signing the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact on 23 August 1939.² Contrariwise, Putin pushed back by blaming Poland for having signed a comparable non-aggression pact with Hitler in 1934 and its participation in the partitioning of Czechoslovakia in 1938. Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki issued a four-page statement in his turn, accusing the Russian president of ‘repeated lies’ over the history of the war, calling for Poland to ‘stand up for the truth...[n]ot for its own interest, but for the sake of what Europe means.’³

The reheated conflict over the rightful remembrance of WWII and the Soviet communist legacy between Russia and its former East European dependents prompts to revisit how facts come to speak, or to be silenced, through their embeddedness in the narrative histories of states. Such official accounts, ‘a state’s characterization of an event,

¹ Hayden White, ‘The Historical Event’, *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, 19:2 (2008), pp. 9-34, on p. 13.

² Vladimir Putin, ‘Speech at the informal CIS summit’, St Petersburg, 20 December 2019.

³ Mateusz Morawiecki, ‘Statement by the Prime Minister of Poland Mateusz Morawiecki’, Warsaw, 29 December 2019.

including the nature and scope of the event, and the state's characterization of the role and responsibility of government officials and institutions in the event'⁴ home in on the intricate relationship between fiction and fact in the stories states tell about themselves. The diverging national narratives of WWII inform contemporary diplomatic relations with significant material repercussions, as illustrated by the recent amendments to the Constitution of the Russian Federation, including a clause on the protection of 'the historical truth';⁵ Russia's opening of a criminal investigation after the Czech authorities dismantled the statue of a Soviet military commander in Prague in 2020,⁶ and an intensified (social) media campaign on the Baltic states' arguably voluntary joining of the USSR back in 1940 on the 75th anniversary year of the end of WWII.⁷ Besides distinct bilateral theatres of clashing state narratives on specific chapters of WWII, the unfolding 'memory war' entails a discrete regional dynamic as the respective national

⁴ Jennifer M. Dixon, *Dark Pasts: Changing the State's Story in Turkey and Japan* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2018), p. 15. Dixon's notion of 'official narrative' enables us to avoid entering the rabbit hole of whether and how the state or its representatives might affectively 'remember' or 'forget' an historical event in a particular way.

⁵ The State Duma, 'What changes will be in the Constitution of the Russian Federation?', available at: <http://duma.gov.ru/en/news/48039/>, accessed 11 January 2021.

⁶ 'Russia Opens Criminal Case After Czech Officials Remove Soviet Statue', *The Guardian*, 10 April 2020.

⁷ See Vladimir Putin, 'The Real Lessons of the 75th Anniversary of World War II', *The National Interest*, 18 June 2020.

memories of victimhood and common historical experience of having been at the receiving end of the Soviet wrongs serves as a source of solidarity in countering the revisionist Russian narrative of WWII in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE).

The international stakes of this collusion over ‘the past that refuses to pass’ remain scattered in disciplinary silos and undertheorised in International Relations (IR). Hitherto, the mnemopolitical contestations and their attempted resolution with the tools of law have given rise to a rich literature, untangling the respective ‘memory knots’ with the empirical opulence of area studies,⁸ the normative frameworks of legal scholars,⁹ and various conceptual tools of IR (e.g., ontological security and postcolonial memory).¹⁰ What is still missing is a systematically rounded appraisal of how memory laws are related to states’ status concerns in international politics.

⁸ Uilleam Blacker, Alexander Etkind, and Julie Fedor (eds), *Memory and Theory in Eastern Europe* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Julie Fedor, Markku Kangaspuro, Jussi Lassila, and Tatiana Zhurzhenko (eds), *War and Memory in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017); Dina Khapaeva, ‘Triumphant memory of the perpetrators: Putin’s politics of re-Stalinization’, *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 49:1 (2016), pp. 61-73; Nikolay Kaposov, *Memory Laws, Memory Wars. The Politics of Memory in Europe and Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

⁹ See, in particular, Uladzislau Belavusau and Aleksandra Gliszczynska-Grabias (eds), *Law and Memory: Towards Legal Governance of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

¹⁰ Maria Mälksoo, ‘The Memory Politics of Becoming European: The East European Subalterns and the Collective Memory of Europe’, *European Journal of International Relations*, 15:4 (2009), pp. 653-80; ‘Criminalizing Communism: Transnational Mnemopolitics in Europe’, *International Political Sociology*, 8:1

This article provides a theoretical outline of the nexus and offers a diagnosis of the politics resulting from it. The aim is to contribute a mnemopolitical perspective to advance a more nuanced understanding of social status-seeking struggles in international relations on the example of the central instigators of mnemonic legislation in the region at the heart of contemporary European memory wars. By bringing state-endorsed mnemonical recognition quests in conversation with the existing takes on status-seeking in IR, my contribution opens up a broader theoretical horizon for both status and memory politics. My argument amounts to three key claims. First, the processes of recognition and misrecognition should be taken seriously to understand the memory wars and the proliferation of memory laws in CEE as a struggle over preferred state identities and a legitimate memory order of WWII. Second, the mnemopolitical confrontation in the CEE region concerns the status of each state's historical memory narrative in an international social hierarchy of remembrance as perceived to be in place

(2014), pp. 82-99; "Memory Must Be Defended": Beyond the Politics of Mnemonical Security', *Security Dialogue*, 46:3 (2015), pp. 221-37; 'A Baltic Struggle for a "European Memory": The Militant Mnemopolitics of *The Soviet Story*, *Journal of Genocide Research*, 20:4 (2018), pp. 530-44; 'The Transitional Justice and Foreign Policy Nexus: The Inefficient Causation of State Ontological Security-Seeking', *International Studies Review*, 21:3 (2019), pp. 373-97; Jelena Subotic, *Yellow Star, Red Star: Holocaust Remembrance after Communism* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2019); Barbara Törnquist-Plewa and Yuliya Yurchuk, 'Memory politics in contemporary Ukraine: Reflections from the postcolonial perspective', *Memory Studies*, 12:6 (2019), pp. 699-720.

by the state actors in question.¹¹ Third, states' grievances about their standing in the relevant memory order produce what I call 'militant memocracy' – the mobilisation of state power behind its sanctioned past narrative with an inclination to criminalise accounts of the past challenging a state's preferred self-identity. Militant memocracy is problematic insofar as it perpetuates the very issue it purports to resolve.

The analysis proceeds in three moves. First, I conceptualise the notion of mnemonical status anxiety against the backdrop of a succinct overview of status-seeking IR scholarship. Mnemonical status anxiety opens up new ways of understanding the incentives for and dynamics of legalising states' stories of the past. The second section presents a typology of mnemopolitical status-seeking on the example of Russia (*mnemonical positionalism*), Poland (*mnemonical revisionism*), and Ukraine (*mnemonical self-emancipation*). Memory laws provide a primary instance of 'recognition grievance' management regarding a state's mnemonical standing in the relevant memory order, understood here as a systematic configuration of organising the collective remembrance

¹¹ My self-consciously statist framework does not mean to contend that mnemonical recognition-seeking dynamic is limited to states; nor is the impetus behind the legalisation of historical memory exclusively oriented towards the international realm. The chosen analytical focus on states as mnemopolitical actors simply reflects their prerogative to legalise particular narratives of the past compared to societal interest groups and non-governmental organisations. The decision to foreground the international aspirations of memory laws at the expense of detailing the domestic and transnational dynamics animating them is motivated by the limitations of space, not their irrelevance.

of significant historical events at societal, state, regional and/or international level.¹² Drawing on the conceptual analogy of militant democracy, originally conceived in response to the rise of fascist and Nazi parties in Europe,¹³ the third section develops the notion of militant democracy, or the governance of historical memory through a dense network of prescribing and proscribing memory laws and policies, followed by a short conclusion. Whereas an effective self-defence against anti-democratic political parties, extremist movements and sentiments is at the heart of militant democracy, militant democracy applies the corresponding militantly defensive stance for the sake of a specifically defined understanding of the national biography/state identity. Projecting an imaginary ‘wholeness’ onto an idealised past, militant memory laws underpin claims to maintain national unity in the present, frequently reflecting discontent with liberalism and helping to mobilise politics and transnational allegiances aimed at undoing its core features.¹⁴

¹² Compare Rebecca Adler-Nissen and Ayse Zarakol, ‘Struggles for Recognition: The Liberal International Order and the Merger of its Discontents’, *International Organization* (2020), doi:10.1017/S0020818320000454, pp. 1-24.

¹³ Karl Loewenstein, ‘Militant democracy and fundamental rights I-II’, *American Political Science Review*, 31:3-4 (1937), pp. 417-432, 638-658.

¹⁴ Compare George Soroka and Félix Krawatzek, ‘Nationalism, Democracy, and Memory Laws’, *Journal of Democracy*, 30:2 (2019), pp. 157-71.

1 Conceptualising Mnemonical Status Anxiety

Status as a source of authority deepens the materialist and force-centric understanding of power. Yet, the IR cottage industry on status and status-seeking still leans towards a predominantly materialist understanding of states' desired standing in orders and hierarchies of effectively pre-organised inequality. In the neo(classical)realist tradition of IR, status is generally regarded as a symbolic accompaniment to the materially measurable power. Status-seeking is accordingly read through the general predictions of power transition and hegemonic war theories. As a delimited positional good,¹⁵ status inevitably becomes a subject of international rivalry, albeit scholars diverge about how exactly this happens.

¹⁵ William Wohlforth, 'Unipolarity, Status Competition, and Great Power War', *World Politics*, 61:1 (2009), pp. 28–57, maintains that all actors cannot simultaneously increase their status since 'competitions for status tend to be zero sum' (p. 30). Compare Deborah Welch Larson and Alexei Shevchenko, 'Status Seekers: Chinese and Russian Responses to US Primacy', *International Security*, 34:4 (2010), pp. 63–95, who acknowledge the positionality of status, yet admit the possibility to attain positive status for distinct social groups at the same time so long as there are multiple criteria/more than one way to attain status. Further, Silviya Lechner and Mervyn Frost, *Practice Theory and International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018) argue that '[t]he jurisdiction of rights and identities is indivisible (we either have rights or identities or we do not), and it extends over the persona as a whole. It is misconstrued to treat them as if they were bundles of divisible goods that have price tags attached to them' (p. 109).

By and large, status-seeking dynamic in inter-state relations boils down to either attempts to pass into a higher-status group, competition with the dominant group, or aspiration to achieve pre-eminence in a different domain.¹⁶ Some assume that dominant actors enter rivalries over status against similar rivals in their immediate social vicinity (e.g., other great powers).¹⁷ Other scholars presume that actors with superior material positions become more sensitive and socially more competitive vis-à-vis others with inferior material positions, yet a higher status rank.¹⁸ Yet others make a reverse point, claiming that social hierarchies are much more relevant for influencing the behaviour of those who are positioned *lower down* on a material hierarchy (for instance, those falling just short of great power standing).¹⁹ Taken together, there is an emerging consensus in the mushrooming IR literature on social status in international politics according to

¹⁶ Larson and Shevchenko, 'Status Seekers', p. 70.

¹⁷ Tudor A. Onea, 'Between dominance and decline: status anxiety and great power rivalry', *Review of International Studies*, 40:1 (2014), pp. 125-52, on p. 135.

¹⁸ Wohlforth, 'Unipolarity, Status Competition, and Great Power War'; Larson and Shevchenko, 'Status Seekers'; Jonathan Renshon, *Fighting for Status: Hierarchy and Conflict in World Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017).

¹⁹ Thomas J. Volgy, Renato Corbetta, Keith A. Grant, and Ryan G. Baird, *Major Power and the Quest for Status in International Politics: Global and Regional Perspectives* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011). See further Ayse Zarakol (ed), *Hierarchies in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 11.

which not just ‘rising’ or ‘declining’ powers are susceptible to status concerns for states generally care about their status position or rank. Consequently, the widespread term ‘status-seeking’ is actually somewhat of a misnomer as it fails to capture actions seeking to preserve one’s current position or stall one’s decline.²⁰

Constructivist authors understand status as an embedded element of an identity narrative.²¹ Constructivist meta-theorising on status hence manages to bring more successfully together social theories of action (identity and common sense) and social theories of order (status and its potentially contested legitimacy).²² Status is deemed to be deeply social,²³ relational, perceptual and positional, meaning that it refers to a relative position or ranking of a unit in a particular group of limited membership.²⁴

²⁰ Jonathan Renshon, ‘Status Deficits and War’, *International Organization*, 70:3 (2016), pp. 513-50.

²¹ Steven Ward, ‘Status, Stratified Rights, and Accommodation in International Relations’, *Journal of Global Security Studies*, 5:1 (2020), pp. 160-78, on p. 160. See also Richard Ned Lebow, *A Cultural Theory of International Relations* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008); ‘The Past and Future of War’, *International Relations*, 24:3 (2010), pp. 243-70.

²² See, e.g., William C. Wohlforth, Benjamin de Carvalho, Halvard Leira, and Iver B. Neumann, ‘Moral authority and status in International Relations: Good states and the social dimension of status seeking’, *Review of International Studies*, 44:3 (2017), pp. 526-46.

²³ That is, intersubjectively determined, or ‘a function of the community’, as argued by Allan Dafoe, Jonathan Renshon, and Paul Huth, ‘Reputation and Status as Motives for War’, *Annual Review of Political Science*, 17 (2014), pp. 371-93.

²⁴ Renshon, ‘Status Deficits and War’, p. 520.

Resting largely in the eye of the beholder and contingent on the recognition of the other members of that community, status is distinct from honour and prestige for specifically connoting ranking in a hierarchy.²⁵ Status concerns become urgent when triggered by 'status deficits', namely 'a disjuncture between status an actor is accorded and what they believe themselves to deserve'.²⁶ A sense of falling below a level set by pertinent expectations through the prism of 'local' comparisons to some salient reference group is bound to kick in particularly severe status concerns.²⁷ National status dissatisfaction is anxiety-inducing to the members of a said community.²⁸ Status anxiety occurs when an actor feels deprived of the status it deems itself to be entitled to, or when an actor is unwilling to compromise in face of the perceived inflated status claims of an upstart.²⁹ Yet, albeit influencing how members of community feel about themselves, status has a practically palpable dimension as well: concrete rights and privileges must accompany

²⁵ Deborah Welch Larson, T.V. Paul, and William C. Wohlforth, 'Status and World Order', in T.V. Paul, Deborah Welch Larson, and William C. Wohlforth (eds), *Status in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 3-32, on p. 16.

²⁶ Renshon, 'Status Deficits and War', p. 544.

²⁷ Renshon, 'Status Deficits and War', p. 523.

²⁸ Steven Ward, 'Logics of stratified identity management in world politics', *International Theory*, 11:2 (2019), pp. 211-38.

²⁹ Onea, 'Between dominance and decline'; Jörg Friedrichs, 'An intercultural theory of international relations: how self-worth underlies politics among nations', *International Theory*, 8:1 (2016), pp. 63-96, on p. 66.

any desired status within a hierarchy for the said stratified position to be actually occupied by an actor in question.³⁰ To sustain status, elements of the cherished title (e.g., major/great/righteous/victorious power; historically wronged/violated state) need to be performed every now and then to stabilise the order of which the said status is deemed an integral part. Status anxiety may lead to intense rivalry and conflict,³¹ but can be kept in check in case states share an understanding of international status hierarchy.³²

If status is an ingrained element of an actor's identity narrative, memory politics appears as an important terrain for international recognition pursuits. I contend that social status quests can be exercised via mnemopolitical means: either by claiming a place in a relevant memory order or seeking to shape its normative content in authoritative ways. By memory order,³³ I refer to the configuration of hegemonic

³⁰ Ward, 'Logic of stratified identity management', pp. 213-16.

³¹ Lebow, 'The Past and Future of War'; Renshon, 'Status Deficits and War', *Fighting for Status*; Larson and Shevchenko, 'Status Seekers'; 'Managing Rising Powers: The Role of Status Concerns', in T.V. Paul, Deborah Welch Larson, and William C. Wohlforth (eds), *Status in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 33-57; Steven Michael Ward, 'Race, Status, and Japanese Revisionism in the Early 1930s', *Security Studies*, 22:4 (2013), pp. 607-39; 'Lost in Translation: Social Identity Theory and the Study of Status in World Politics', *International Studies Quarterly*, 61:4 (2017), pp. 821-34; 'Logics of stratified identity management'.

³² Wohlforth, 'Unipolarity, Status Competition'.

³³ Compare Susannah Radstone and Katharine Hodgkin, *Regimes of Memory* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003).

narratives of critical past events that constitute and organise identities and values in a given political community (be it national, regional, or international) alongside the governing arrangements among the subunits of this order, including the fundamental norms, rules, principles, and institutions.³⁴ As hierarchically organised ‘orders of power and glory’,³⁵ memory orders define historical roles of individual and collective actors together with their relationship to present entitlements, social recognition and status in particular ways.³⁶ Memory orders can be juridified, and their legitimacy intersubjectively internalised to varying degrees. As any order, memory orders are not absolute and come accompanied with ‘anomie, deviance, resistance, and protest’.³⁷ To illustrate the point, the well-set Western (European) memory order of the twentieth century with a central aggressor (Nazi Germany) and foundational crime (the Holocaust), became disturbed with the eastern enlargement of the European Union (EU)

³⁴ I build on Shiping Tang, ‘Order: A Conceptual Analysis’, *Chinese Political Science Review*, 1 (2016), pp. 30-46, and Mathias Albert, *A Theory of World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016). Compare G. John Ikenberry’s definition of political order in *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 23.

³⁵ See Ian Clark, *The Hierarchy of States: Reform and Resistance in the International Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 2.

³⁶ Compare Albert, *A Theory of World Politics*, p. 152.

³⁷ Compare Tang, ‘Order’, p. 34.

due to the post-communist entrants' distinct emphases on communist crimes and their own national sufferings in the context of WWII and its aftermath.³⁸

Mnemonic Status Anxiety

I argue that mnemonic status anxiety can be observed when a state is concerned about the international recognition and validation of its official national biographical narrative by a relevant memory order.³⁹ Mnemonic recognition-seeking is an instance of an existential struggle for recognition (as distinct from legal acknowledgement).⁴⁰ Generally driven by an idealised vision of a past self, mnemonic recognition-seeking manifests as a quest for an affirmation of a particular state identity. Full mnemonic recognition is never attainable, as a measure of misrecognition is part of the human

³⁸ Mälksoo, 'Criminalizing Communism'.

³⁹ Felix Berenskoetter, 'Parameters of a national biography', *European Journal of International Relations*, 20:1 (2014), pp. 262-88; Jelena Subotic, 'Narrative, Ontological Security, and Foreign Policy Change', *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 12:4 (2016), pp. 610-27.

⁴⁰ For a systematic distinction between legal and existential recognition, see Ayse Zarakol, 'Sovereign equality as misrecognition', *Review of International Studies*, 44:5 (2018), pp. 848-62, on p. 850. For thin/legal and thick/identity-based recognition, see further Lisa Strömbom, 'Thick recognition: Advancing theory on identity change in intractable conflicts', *European Journal of International Relations*, 20:1 (2014), pp. 168-91.

condition.⁴¹ Thus understood, misrecognition is, in fact, ‘the normal, of the subject’s experience, and of international politics’.⁴² Nevertheless, subjects continue to strive for recognition, defying its theoretical unattainability along with the practical political imperative for a more nuanced acknowledgement of their own past selves, and that of the others’, for advancing peaceful relations between historical antagonists.⁴³

Mnemonic status grievances share a family resemblance with misrecognition in a more bounded sense, referring to a moral injury to the self that occurs when the recognition fails to obtain and thereby impairs an actor’s self-respect.⁴⁴ A mnemonic status concern is accordingly a perceptual category in the eye of the beholder. The depth

⁴¹ See RIS Special Issue on ‘Misrecognition in World Politics: Revisiting Hegel’, *Review of International Studies*, 44:5 (2018), pp. 787-943.

⁴² Charlotte Epstein, ‘The productive force of the negative and the desire for recognition: Lessons from Hegel and Lacan’, *Review of International Studies*, 44:5 (2018), pp. 805-28, on p. 815. Compare Rebecca Adler-Nissen and Alexei Tsinoi, ‘International misrecognition: the politics of humour and national identity in Israel’s public diplomacy’, *European Journal of International Relations*, 25:1 (2019), pp. 3-29, who offer a more interactionist take on misrecognition, signifying a gap between the dominant narrative of a desired identity (i.e. a national self) and how that actor experiences being seen by others in the ‘international mirror’.

⁴³ Strömbom, ‘Thick recognition’.

⁴⁴ Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, trans. Joel Anderson (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995), pp. 133-134.

of the grievance is affectively felt,⁴⁵ and not uniformly understood within the society or across different sides of the debate. Yet, a felt injustice can have palpable material effects on guiding the actor's behaviour. The denial of recognition or the perceived misrecognition of the state's historical 'self' can destabilise one's established systems of meaning, bring about a general sense of disorientation and potentially damage the self's ability to provide a satisfactory self-articulation (agency).⁴⁶

A modicum of care, interest and desire to protect and defend a self-vision is presumably a universal element of social interaction. To appear on the radar of IR as a variation of international status-seeking behaviour, mnemonical status anxiety needs to become empirically palpable as a positional rivalry over the capacity of various state actors to set the tone in the international memory orders of value.⁴⁷ While all visions of self are positioned vis-à-vis external environments, and hence collectively constitutive

⁴⁵ Compare Christian Reus-Smit, 'Cultural diversity and international order', *International Organization*, 71:4 (2017), pp.- 851-85, on p. 879, pointing at certain grievances being 'rooted in unequal recognition'.

⁴⁶ Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), pp. 43-45. See further Bahar Rumelili, 'Breaking with Europe's pasts: memory, reconciliation, and ontological (in)security', *European Security*, 27:3 (2018), pp. 280-95.

⁴⁷ See also Larson and Shevchenko, 'Status Seekers', pp. 71-72.

of the international realm,⁴⁸ the actors' desire and ability to generate and challenge visions of international order (or to claim political authority beyond the state) varies in practice. Whereas all international actors are presumed to seek not just the coherence and stability of their particular selves, but rather of their broader social context,⁴⁹ mnemonical recognition-seeking struggles are designated contestations over 'who is able to create, control, challenge, and change' anxiety controlling mechanisms⁵⁰ and shape mnemonical orders beyond the national level. When observing intensified mnemonical recognition-seeking in international bilateral and multilateral diplomacy, as well as other public performances of the state, we can presume mnemonical status to be of concern to an actor in question.

A societally sensitive operationalisation of the concept of mnemonical status anxiety entails a back-and-forth movement between the inductive and deductive levels of analysis. We would need to establish first, how consensually is mnemonical recognition valued for the international status of the societies and states under scrutiny. Secondly, in which circumstances is mnemonical status anxiety translated into distinct

⁴⁸ Andrew R. Hom and Brent J. Steele, 'Anxiety, time, and ontological security's third-image potential', *International Theory*, 12:2 (2020), pp. 322-36.

⁴⁹ Simon Frankel Pratt, 'A Relational View of Ontological Security in International Relations', *International Studies Quarterly*, 61:1 (2017), pp. 78-85, on p. 78.

⁵⁰ Felix Berenskötter, 'Anxiety, time, and agency', *International Theory*, 12:2 (2020), pp. 273-90, on p. 274.

international status ambitions of the state? How does mnemonical status anxiety find its expression and what are its social and symbolic markers? When does the (mere) defence of one's story of the past become militant – and according to whom? What is the domestic politics behind transnational mnemopolitical agendas? A further empirical distinction needs to be made between mnemonical status anxiety as either an expressed concern over the lack of international recognition, or as trepidation stemming from perceived misrecognition of the actor as a particular kind of actor with an arguably legitimate right to a specific social title.⁵¹ Whereas status claims 'are most visibly demands for stratified rights – privileges restricted to actors with high enough standing',⁵² active international recognition-seeking to one's mnemonical self-narrative can be taken to be their mnemopolitical equivalents. If recognition-seeking is the logical objective of settling a status concern, the upshot of this is the need to stretch the understanding of hierarchies and orders as currently discussed in IR literature on status-seeking to the realm of historical memory.

⁵¹ See further Erik Ringmar, 'Recognition and the origins of international society', *Global Discourse: A Developmental Journal of Research in Politics and International Relations*, 4:4 (2014), pp. 446-58.

⁵² Ward, 'Status, Stratified Rights, and Accommodation', p. 160.

2 Modes of Mnemonical Status-Seeking

I propose a framework for delineating and comparing strategies (pertaining to agents' behaviour), mechanisms of institutionalisation (relating to forms of legalisation and constitutionalisation), and outcomes of mnemonical status-seeking for the international memory order in question. My typology of mnemonical status-seeking draws on Cooley, Nexon and Ward's proposed distinction between the actors' desire to alter the balance of military power and their desire targeted at changing other elements of international order. Accordingly, I build on the three of their generated four ideal types: namely, *positionalist actors*, who see no reason to alter the international order but aim to shift the distribution of power; *reformist actors*, who are satisfied with the current distribution of power but seek to change elements of order; and *revolutionary actors*, who want to overturn both international order and the distribution of capabilities.⁵³ *Status-quo* actors, who are satisfied with both the nature of the international order and the distribution of

⁵³ Alexander Cooley, Daniel Nexon, and Steven Ward, 'Revising order or challenging the balance of military power? An alternative typology of revisionist and status-quo states', *Review of International Studies*, 45:4 (2019), pp. 689-708, on pp. 689-90. Compare with Friedrichs, 'An intercultural theory', providing a discussion of honour, face, and dignity cultures, demarcating different ways of 'craving for recognition of self-worth' (p. 64). Status as the position in a social hierarchy is deemed to play a greater role in honour and face cultures than in dignity cultures (p. 71), with Russia providing a paradigmatic case of an honour culture troubled by status anxiety, thus generating particularly difficult relations with others in the international society of states.

power, remain out of the purview of the current endeavour to typify mnemonical status-seeking as an actively change-oriented phenomenon in international relations. Besides *mnemonical positionalism*, where an actor is, in principle, satisfied with the international (memory) order but aims to shift the actors' positions in the hierarchy of that order, and *mnemonical revisionism*, where an actor is seeking to change elements of the current international memory order, including its internal stratification, I suggest a further category of mnemonical status-seeking: *mnemonical self-emancipation* where an actor is seeking to enter the international memory order as a sovereign actor in the first instance in order to improve its international standing.

Three examples illustrate the distinct types of mnemonical status-seeking in international relations: Russia (mnemonical positionalism), Poland (mnemonical revisionism), and Ukraine (mnemonical self-emancipation). These cases have been chosen because their ways of mnemonical status-seeking correspond roughly to the delineated three types. Albeit brief illustrations cannot do justice to the complex histories, mnemopolitical strategies and trajectories of the three states (which further have changed over the post-Soviet period), their official narratives of WWII and the pertinent memory laws constitute good cases for understanding mnemonic status anxiety as a driver of state behaviour in the international realm for various reasons. All three cases provide ample illustration about how status is a social, psychological and

cultural phenomenon,⁵⁴ the seeking and maintenance of which requires considerable political effort and generally relies on symbolic action. Status concerns are not alien to 'lesser powers': they might just be different, and need different lenses to make sense of them.⁵⁵ The Polish state-level struggle for restoring its 'national honour' and Ukraine's restitution of its 'national heroes' demonstrate that status is important for states in general, not just for 'rising powers' as the majority of the neo(classical) realist literature on status-seeking in IR maintains. The juxtapositioning of Polish and Ukrainian narratives and memory laws vis-à-vis the Russian state-endorsed mnemopolitical line and actions provides a promising comparative perspective for mapping the mnemonical status anxieties and the consequent political strategies pursued by 'middle' and 'great' powers (in neorealist parlance), or states with historically ascribed and/or assumed identities as 'victims' or 'agents' in war (in constructivist lingo).

International recognition of respective national biographical narratives (as opposed to the denied recognition or perceived misrecognition) emerges as a positional good in this competitive struggle with distinctly perceived structural injustice in contemporary international politics.⁵⁶ In Polish and Ukrainian cases, this structural injustice pertains to the perceived misrecognition or the lack of recognition by the

⁵⁴ Wohlforth, "Unipolarity, Status Competition", p. 38.

⁵⁵ Renshon, 'Status Deficits and War', p. 521.

⁵⁶ For the distinction between interactional and structural justice and reconciliation, see Catherine Lu, *Justice and Reconciliation in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

‘established’ of the post-WWII mnemonical hierarchies in the West. In case of Russia, the perceived structural wrong in need of correction is of a different kind: it relates to the angst over potentially losing Russia’s established position among the ‘trendsetters’ of the hegemonic past narratives in the present due to the systemic newcomers’ (such as Poland, the Baltic states, and more recently, Ukraine’s) successes in tweaking the normative hierarchies and institutionalised social practices in the European and global mnemonical order of WWII to their advantage (and to Russia’s self-perceived detriment). As such, the structural injustice is intertwined with the interactional harm emanating from CEE states that are of lower league than the main status title the Russian leaders have historically cared about – namely, ‘great power’.⁵⁷ Whereas in Russia’s state discourse, the status of Russia as the major victorious power over Nazism in WWII should go universally recognised and appraised without saying, the disrespect and revisionism of Russia’s earned place in the international memory order of WWII is particularly aggravating when coming from its supposed inferiors.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Iver B. Neumann, ‘Russia’s Europe, 1991-2016: inferiority to superiority’, *International Affairs*, 02:6 (2016), pp. 1381-99; Anatoly Reshetnikov, *The Evolution of Russia’s Great Power Discourse: A Conceptual History of Velikaya Derzhava* (Central European University: PhD Dissertation, 2018).

⁵⁸ See Joint Statement by U.S. Secretary of State and the Foreign Ministers of Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia, 7 May 2020; available at: <https://vm.ee/en/statement-foreign-ministers-bulgaria-czech-republic-estonia-hungary-latvia-lithuania-poland-romania>}, accessed 5 August 2020.

The following empirical sections provide a condensed overview of Russia's, Poland's and Ukraine's respective mnemonical status claims. Methodologically, the research process combines discourse analysis with process tracing, drawing on a range of primary and secondary sources. The official documentation (speeches, articles, resolutions, relevant legislations) is examined alongside the performative actions of the representatives of the states under examination (i.e. the specific choreographies of spoken and written interventions).⁵⁹

Mnemonical Positionalism: Russia

Russia provides a quintessential case of mnemonical positionalism with its militant stance towards the historical remembrance of WWII in congruence with a victorious power's alleged right to define the legitimate frames of remembrance for the rest of the world. While normatively satisfied with, and highly protective of, the international order that emerged post-WWII with the privileged institutionalisation of Russia's position in it, its leadership has been increasingly concerned about Russia's material status slippage along with the unravelling of the accompanying memory order and Russia's deteriorating position in the internal stratification of that order throughout

⁵⁹ E.g., Estonia organised a virtually held high-level meeting on the 75th anniversary of the end of the World War II in Europe during its first presidency of the UN Security Council during the height of the global COVID-19 crisis. Available at: {<https://vm.ee/en/high-level-meeting-75th-anniversary-end-world-war-ii-europe>}, accessed 4 August 2020.

2000s.⁶⁰ Since the Putin regime sees no reason to alter the post-1945 Western mnemonical canon focused on Nazi German aggression and international crimes, it vehemently opposes any downplaying of the USSR's role in ending WWII.

The victory of WWII has emerged as the sacred place in the political, public and institutional memory of post-Soviet Russia, justifying constant political policing and defence of the state's spotless heroic victor-narrative in the international arena.⁶¹ Hence the top-level admittance of being 'hurt'⁶² by the EP 2019 resolution which maintained

⁶⁰ Putin, 'The Real Lessons'.

⁶¹ Consider a recent statement by the Permanent Representative of Russia to the United Nations: '...this memory is sacred to us and is part of our DNA. Today some are trying to politically modify our DNA telling us they discovered a better DNA strain. We don't think so. 75 years ago, the Soviet Red Army together with its allies liberated the world from Nazism. This Victory is the common heritage of mankind and a monument to the unity of peoples and states who faced unprecedented evil. The Soviet Union was the main victim in that war and at the same time it made the biggest sacrifice and contribution to our common victory. This cannot be disputed. Attempts to challenge this, to present the Soviet Union as allegedly "equally responsible" for starting the war, that surface today and circulate, propagated by some modern politicians and sly historians, are not only immoral, but disgusting and sacrilegious to the truth and to our historical memory.' – Statement by Vassily Nebenzia, Permanent Representative of Russia to the UN at the UNSC Member States Virtual Conference "75 Years since the End of the Second World War in Europe", 8 May 2020; available at: {https://vm.ee/sites/default/files/Estonia_for_UN/russiaun_arria_meeting.pdf}, accessed 5 August 2020.

⁶² Putin, 'Speech at the informal CIS summit'.

that the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of 23 August 1939 between the communist Soviet Union and Nazi Germany (otherwise known as a Treaty of Non-Aggression) ‘paved the way for the outbreak of the Second World War’.⁶³ The EP resolution called for ‘a common culture of remembrance that rejects the crimes of fascist, Stalinist, and other totalitarian and authoritarian regimes of the past as a way of fostering resilience against modern threats to democracy’, and explicitly on Russian society ‘to come to terms with its tragic past’.⁶⁴ It further expressed deep concern about ‘the efforts of the current Russian leadership to distort historical facts and whitewash crimes committed by the Soviet totalitarian regime’, identifying them as ‘a dangerous component of the information war waged against democratic Europe that aims to divide Europe’.⁶⁵ Russia’s pained reaction to the resolution, motioned originally by a group of predominantly CEE MEPs, acknowledged a straightforward continuity between the USSR and contemporary Russian Federation,⁶⁶ summarily captured in Putin’s

⁶³ European Parliament, ‘Resolution on the importance of European remembrance for the future of Europe’ 2019/2819 (RSP), 19 September 2019; available at: {https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2019-0021_EN.html}, accessed 5 August 2020.

⁶⁴ European Parliament, ‘Resolution’, p. 10, 15.

⁶⁵ European Parliament, ‘Resolution’, p. 16.

⁶⁶ ‘Motion for a resolution to wind up the debate on the statements by the Council and the Commission pursuant to Rule 132(2) of the Rules of Procedure on the 80th anniversary of the start of the Second World

admittance that '[w]hen they talk about the Soviet Union, they talk about us'.⁶⁷ In Putin's words, this resolution 'reveals a deliberate policy aimed at destroying the post-war world order...the conclusions of the Nuremberg Tribunal and the efforts of the international community to create after the victorious 1945 universal international institutions...the foundations of the entire post-war Europe...posing a threat to the fundamental principles of world order'.⁶⁸

The war myth⁶⁹ (or 'the cult of war') praises Russia as the 'continuator state' of the USSR and the world's saviour from Nazism/fascism on the premise that without the Red Army eventually crushing the Nazi onslaught on the Eastern Front, the Western Allied forces would not have defeated Germany. The USSR's role in the outbreak of the war via the secret protocols of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact is relativised by appealing on the exclusively peaceful goals of the Soviet foreign policy, whereas chasing the Nazis out of Eastern Europe is celebrated solely as liberation, unacknowledging the *de facto*

War and the importance of European remembrance for the future of Europe (2019/2819(RSP)); available at: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/B-9-2019-0097_EN.html}, accessed 5 August 2020.

⁶⁷ Putin, 'Speech at the informal CIS summit'.

⁶⁸ Putin, 'The Real Lessons'.

⁶⁹ See further Dina Khapaeva, 'Historical Memory in Post-Soviet Gothic Society', *Social Research*, 76:1(2009), pp. 359-94; Kuposov, *Memory Wars, Memory Laws*.

beginning of another phase of political occupation in the region.⁷⁰ Against this backdrop, the removal of Soviet WWII commemorative monuments across the former Soviet-dominated space, the memory laws of Poland, Ukraine and the Baltic states insisting on their independent political subjectivity violated by the Soviets, and their transnational ‘soft law’ counterparts of the EU and the Council of Europe have invariably resulted in wounded and militant reactions on Russia’s part, and intense accusations of historical revisionism thereof.⁷¹

Since the 2008 *Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation*, Russia has publicly refuted ‘historical revisionism’, a tendency exclusively reserved for its former Soviet

⁷⁰ And correspondingly refuted by the ‘liberated’ states in CEE, e.g., ‘Baltic States protest against Moscow’s plans to celebrate Baltics’ “liberation” with fireworks’, *BNN*, 11 July 2019; available at: <https://bnn-news.com/baltic-states-protest-against-moscow-s-plans-to-celebrate-baltics-liberation-with-fireworks-2028883>}, accessed 5 August 2020.

⁷¹ For representative examples, see The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, ‘Comment by the Information and Press Department on the OSCE conference dedicated to the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II’, 7 September 2015; available at: http://www.mid.ru/en/web/guest/kommentarii_predstavatelya/-/asset_publisher/MCZ7HQUMdqBY/content/id/1737765}, accessed 5 August 2020; The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, ‘Russian approaches to human rights at the UN’; available at: <http://www.mid.ru/en/web/guest/rossia-i-problematika-obespecenia-prav-celoveka-v-gosudarstvah-mira>}, accessed 5 August 2020.

dependent states and the West at large.⁷² The legal apex of Russia's mnemopolitical struggle for sustaining its status as a victorious great power was reached with the law of 2014 which introduced criminal liability for 'infringements on historical memory with regard to the events of the Second World War'. Stipulating concrete penalties in case of its violation, Art. 354.1. on the Rehabilitation of Nazism of the Russian Criminal Code bans dissemination of 'knowingly false information' on the activities of the USSR during WWII, alongside information expressing 'obvious disrespect to the society' concerning days of military glory and Russia's memorial dates, and publicly insulting the symbols of Russia's military achievements (Art. 354.1(3)). By criminalising denial of the official Soviet/Russian narrative of the war, the pertinent amendment to the Russian Penal Code thus 'protects the memory of Stalinism from that of its victims' and arguably represents 'an extreme case' of the tendency of 'shift[ing] the blame for historical injustices entirely to others and whitewash[ing] national romances glorifying their respective nation-states'.⁷³ This trend is further continued by the recently approved amendments to the Constitution of the Russian Federation, including a clause on the

⁷² 'To firmly counter manifestations of neofascism, any forms of racial discrimination, aggressive nationalism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia, attempts to rewrite the history, use it for instigating confrontation and revanchism in the world politics, and revise the outcome of the World War II.' - 'The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation', 12 January 2008; available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/supplement/4116>}, accessed 5 August 2020.

⁷³ Kopusov, *Memory Wars, Memory Laws*, p. 309.

constitutional protection of ‘the historical truth’.⁷⁴ In substantive terms then, Russia’s mnemopolitical positionalism under the banner of fighting historical revisionism entails a fair amount of the latter in its own right.⁷⁵

The viciousness of Russia’s contestations of CEE mnemonical accounts derives from the perceived subordination of this group of states to Russia’s alleged position in the international hierarchy of remembering WWII. The wound here is particularly painfully perceived due to its being stricken by the supposedly lower ranking-powers via their active undermining of Russia’s own sense of importance and worth, its perceived sense of ‘rightful’ and ‘just’ mnemonic preponderance (as established with the heroic and sacrificial victory of WWII). Russia’s contemporary mnemonical status anxieties are exacerbated by its former subordinates raising their voice at the international level, effectively dishonouring the post-war distribution of power and thereby actively undermining an established identity narrative of Russia along with its status in the consolidated mnemonical order that is deemed legitimate and instrumental for the place of Russia at the top of the WWII-generated international power hierarchy. Victory in WWII was a major status boost for the USSR as it also marked the country’s

⁷⁴ ‘The Russian Federation honors the memory of defenders of the Fatherland and protects historical truth. Diminishing the significance of the people’s heroism in defending the Fatherland is not permitted,’ says the text of the respective constitutional amendment. See The State Duma, ‘What Changes’.

⁷⁵ Sergey Radchenko, ‘Vladimir Putin Wants to Rewrite the History of World War II’, *Foreign Policy*, 21 January 2020.

decisive entrance into the top league in the international system of states, allocating it the status, prestige and international position among the P5 of the United Nations. Due to the intertwined nature of Russia's national self-narrative as *primus inter pares* among the victors of WWII and its 'earned' international status as a great power as of consequence, Russia's sense of self is tied to the 'right' recognition of Russia's historical predecessor's role in the war. The international recognition game is thus intrinsically loaded with the dynamics of respect/disrespect for Russia with respectful behaviour being experienced as 'an appropriate confirmation of one's rightful position', and 'acts of disrespect are seen as disregard for it'.⁷⁶ What is at issue here is not just the act of usurping Russia's mnemonic status internationally, but importantly also who is doing the disrespecting.

Mnemonic Revisionism: Poland

Poland offers an instance of a latecomer in a post-WWII established memory order of remembering the key culprits and victims of the war. Its anticommunist mnemopolitics throughout the 2000s has been oriented to change the hegemonic narrative of the war with an eye on including the USSR as the main aggressor next to Nazi Germany from the outset. Accordingly, Poland has sought to revise the normative conclusions drawn from WWII for the present and correct the mnemonic structural injustice which has

⁷⁶ Reinhard Wolf, 'Respect and Disrespect in International Politics: The Significance of Status Recognition', *International Theory*, 3:1 (2011), pp. 105-42, on p. 107.

placed the country in an unjust and objectionable social position thereof.⁷⁷ As for various CEE states generally, the historical problem of legal recognition has been intertwined with the existential recognition issue for contemporary Poland. The historically interrupted recognition of Poland's sovereignty converges with, and accentuates, its contemporary existential recognition struggles and status-seeking as a particular kind of state. Poland's recent mnemopolitical efforts to challenge its supposed misrecognition in international society have consequently focused on contesting the twofold structural injustice perceived to undermine its rightful position in the global memory order of WWII: the historical Western acquiescence with Russia's victorious liberator-narrative which does not conform with Poland's post-WWII historical experience, on the one hand; and the Holocaust's central place in the Western public memory of the twentieth century,⁷⁸ on the other, leaving Poland's national tragedy to a perennial back seat in the Western mnemonic canon, and worse yet, pointing to local perpetrators of the Holocaust besides the Nazis.

Poland is keen to be recognised as a gravely victimised state whose pertinent status in the context of WWII is accordingly put in the service of securing the country's position in Europe (*inter alia* through claiming a special position for Poland as the

⁷⁷ Compare Lu, *Justice and Reconciliation*, p. 35.

⁷⁸ Jeffrey Alexander, 'On the Social Construction of Moral Universals: The "Holocaust" from War Crime to Trauma Drama', *European Journal of Social Theory*, 5:1 (2002), pp. 5-85.

European ‘debt’ for the Polish wartime suffering). Albeit substantively spearheaded in a different direction compared to Russia’s memory politics, the flair of the Polish politics of memory under the government of the Law and Justice Party has similarly focused on securing international recognition of national heroism and sacrifice in WWII. Downplaying the problematic chapters, such as crimes against Jews committed by Poles which would relativise the martyrdom and purity of the victimised Polish nation against the backdrop of WWII,⁷⁹ has accordingly been an important part of Polish state-endorsed politics of memory, and the related status struggles throughout the post-Cold War era. Regardless of their evident contradictions and clashes, Russian and Polish state-peddled official narratives both struggle with anxiety over international misrecognition of their state identities.

Polish efforts to legalise a positive national narrative culminated with an amendment introduced to the Institute of National Remembrance Act (*Ustawa o Instytucie Pamięci Narodowej*) in January 2018. This novel addendum to an already existing memory law, immediately dubbed ‘the Holocaust-law’ in public discourse,

⁷⁹ E.g., the 1941 Jedwabne and 1946 Kielce pogroms. For discussion, see Jan Tomasz Gross, *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Anna Bikont, *The Crime and the Silence: Confronting the Massacre of Jews in Wartime Jedwabne*, trans. Alissa Valles (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2016); Sara Bender, *In Enemy Land: The Jews of Kielce and the Region, 1939–1946*, trans. Naftali Greenwood and Saadya Sternberg (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2018).

penalised defamation of the Polish state and nation by claiming their (co)-responsibility for Nazi crimes committed by the Third German Reich in occupied Poland during WWII.⁸⁰ Initially introduced as a targeted measure to outlaw the misnomer ‘Polish death camps’ (as a reference to Nazi death camps on the territory of occupied Poland during the war), the legislation turned out as a considerably more expansive disciplining tool (and notably without an explicit reference to the trope ‘Polish death camps’ therein). After a prolonged legal and diplomatic debacle, the INRA law was further amended in June 2018, whereby the offence was made civil, and not criminal.⁸¹ Either way, in its blunt attempt to put a lid on the part of the nation’s past deemed unsuitable for the politically preferable contemporary self-vision, Poland’s Holocaust complicity negation legislation is a noteworthy instance of what Jelena Subotic has called the contemporary CEE Holocaust memory appropriation, namely ‘Holocaust remembrance turned inward,

⁸⁰ The proposed article 55a(1) stipulated that ‘Whoever claims, publicly and contrary to the facts, that the Polish Nation or the Republic of Poland is responsible or co-responsible for Nazi crimes committed by the Third Reich [...], or for other felonies that constitute crimes against peace, crimes against humanity or war crimes, or whoever otherwise grossly diminishes the responsibility of the true perpetrators of said crimes – shall be liable to a fine or imprisonment for up to 3 years.’

⁸¹ For a detailed backstory of the legislation and the related legal debate and diplomatic upheaval, see Aleksandra Gliszczynska-Grabias, ‘Deployments of Memory with the Tools of Law – the Case of Poland’, *Review of Central and East European Law*, 44 (2019), pp. 464-92.

away from the actual victims of the Holocaust or the Holocaust itself.⁸² A simple zero-sum logic behind the 2018 bill sought to shift the international focus to the Polish national suffering in WWII instead.

While scholars have widely criticised the Polish misremembering of Polish wartime participation in crimes against Jews,⁸³ representatives of the Polish government have praised the law for its protecting of the dignity of the Polish nation and setting the historical record straight. In the words of the Polish Minister of Justice, Zbigniew Ziobro, the INRA amendment was about ‘allowing us to defend our rights, to defend the historical truth, and defend Poland’s good name anywhere in the world’.⁸⁴ Since Poland was ‘the first country that fought to defend free Europe’⁸⁵ by resisting the German aggression, fighting on all European fronts throughout the whole war, yet

⁸² Subotic, *Yellow Star, Red Star*, p. 9.

⁸³ E.g., Volha Charnysh and Evgeny Finkel, ‘Rewriting History in Eastern Europe’, *Foreign Affairs*, 14 August 2018; Gliszczyńska-Grabias, ‘Deployments of Memory’; Subotic, *Yellow Star, Red Star*.

⁸⁴ Cited in Tomasz Tadeusz Koncewicz, ‘Remembering as Pacting Between Past, Present and Future’, *Verfassungsblog: On Matters Constitutional*, Special Blog on Memory Laws, 13 January 2018; available at: {<https://verfassungsblog.de/remembering-as-pacting-between-past-present-and-future/>}, accessed 5 August 2020.

⁸⁵ Morawiecki, ‘Statement’. Compare also with his earlier statement that ‘Poland was the first victim of the Third Reich during the war’. – Mateusz Morawiecki, #German death camps, {<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fIptwgoCAY&t=15s/>}, accessed 5 August 2020.

‘denied the fruits of victory as the result of the Yalta conference’, its spotless victim status in the context of WWII is elevated to an issue of fundamental national importance in the contemporary context, and subsequently sought to be resolved with the help of legislative tools.⁸⁶ Such a legislative ‘fixing’ of the past by securitising a whitewashed national narrative to evade the acknowledgement of the complicity in historical atrocities against the others is a rather symptomatic pattern of mnemonical security-seeking in CEE.⁸⁷ The function of legalising officially preferred narratives of the past is far from purely psychological, however. What is at stake is a pristine victim status of the Polish state and the nation, rid from the ‘alleged subservience and subjugation...to the dominant European narrative’.⁸⁸ Yet, the contestation of the historically subaltern status of the Polish/CEE state narratives only highlights the respective status anxieties over continuing to be perceived as somehow lesser than the Western ‘core’.

⁸⁶ See further Aleksandra Gliszczyńska-Grabias and Anna Śledzińska-Simon, ‘Victimhood of the Nation as a Legally Protected Value in Transitional States – Poland as a Case Study’, *Wrocław Review of Law, Administration & Economics*, 6:2 (2018), pp. 46–51.

⁸⁷ Mälksoo, ‘Memory Must Be Defended’.

⁸⁸ Jan Grabowski, ‘The Holocaust and Poland’s “History Policy”’, *Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs*, 10:3 (2016), pp. 481-86, on p. 483.

Mnemonical Self-Emancipation: Ukraine

Ukraine's mnemonic status anxieties have resonated with the broader vacillations of the country's self-definition in between the EU and Russia. Compared to its Russian and Polish counterparts, the Ukrainian post-Soviet mnemopolitical status-seeking struggles have had a late start and a notably fluctuating trajectory. The first, 'toponymic stage' of post-Soviet decommunisation took place in the early 1990s in the western regions of the country (e.g., Lviv), followed by the broadening and state-wide systematisation of the decommunisation initiatives by the 'Orange President' Viktor Yuschenko,⁸⁹ central to which was the national and international campaign to seek recognition to Holodomor, man-made famine in Soviet Ukraine in 1932-33 as an act of genocide against the Ukrainian people. The era of Viktor Yanukovich's presidency was marked by a partial halting of the state initiatives on decommunisation, as the Ukrainian narrative was kept close to the Russian one in line with Yanukovich's political alliance with Putin. Next

⁸⁹ This entailed the founding of the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory in 2006, with an aim to raise public awareness of Ukrainian history, the preservation of the historical memory of the Ukrainian people, study of the struggle for Ukrainian independence in the twentieth century, and preservation of the memory of the victims of the famines (i.e. the 1921-22 famine, the 1932-33 *Holodomor*, and the 1946-47 famine), of political repression, and of participants in the national liberation struggle; introducing the first national legal act on decommunisation (by the presidential decree 'On measures in connection with the 75th anniversary of the Holodomor 1932-1933 in Ukraine'); and the formation of the national Decommunisation Committee in 2009.

came the Euromaidan of 2013-14, accompanied by a spontaneous surge of the new wave of removing communist monuments (i.e. ‘Leninopad’ or ‘Lenin fall’) and the legal ‘decommunisation package’.

The decommunisation laws symbolise an explicit political choice for the European memory order of WWII, while taking a definitive stance against the Soviet narrative at the time of Russia’s invasion of Crimea and the unfolding ‘hybrid’ war in Donbas. Prepared by the Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance,⁹⁰ adopted by the Ukrainian parliament Verkhovna Rada in April 2015, and signed into effect by President Poroshenko soon thereafter, the decommunisation laws were designed to decisively settle the scores with the Soviet legacy against the backdrop of Ukraine’s notably perfunctory politics of memory in the post-Soviet era.

The package of four laws contains a legislation condemning the Communist and National-Socialist (Nazi) totalitarian regimes in Ukraine and criminalising the production and dissemination of their symbols and propaganda; two laws commemorating, respectively, fighters for Ukraine’s independence in the twentieth century and the victory over Nazism in the Second World War, and a law guaranteeing

⁹⁰ Ukrainian Institute of National Memory, or Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance (UINR) was originally founded in 2006, and re-organised in its current form as subordinate to the Ukrainian Cabinet of Ministers in November 2014.

access to archives of repressive Soviet-era organs.⁹¹ The most militant one, ‘On the condemnation of the Communist and National Socialist (Nazi) regimes, and prohibition of propaganda of their symbols’ condemns ‘[c]ommunist totalitarian regime of 1917-1991 of Ukraine’ as ‘criminal’ (Art. 2.1.) along with the Nazi totalitarian regime (Art. 2.2.); prohibits propaganda and the use of symbols of the respective regimes by the threat of punishment ‘by restraint of liberty for a term up to five years or imprisonment for the same term’ (Art. 6.1.), and ‘if committed by a person holding a public office, or repeated,

⁹¹ Law 317-VIII ‘On the condemnation of the Communist and National Socialist (Nazi) regimes, and prohibition of propaganda of their symbols’; available at: {<https://old.uinp.gov.ua/laws/law-ukraine-condemnation-communist-and-national-socialist-nazi-regimes-and-prohibition-propagan?q=laws/law-ukraine-condemnation-communist-and-national-socialist-nazi-regimes-and-prohibition-propagan>}, accessed 5 August 2020; Law 314-VIII ‘On the legal status and honoring the memory of fighters for Ukraine’s independence in the twentieth century’; available at: {<https://old.uinp.gov.ua/laws/law-ukraine-legal-status-and-honoring-memory-fighters-ukraines-independence-twentieth-century?q=laws/law-ukraine-legal-status-and-honoring-memory-fighters-ukraines-independence-twentieth-century>}, accessed 5 August 2020; Law 315-VIII ‘On the perpetuation of the victory over Nazism in the Second World War of 1939-1945’; available at: {<https://old.uinp.gov.ua/laws/law-ukraine-perpetuation-victory-over-nazism-world-war-ii-1939-1945?q=laws/law-ukraine-perpetuation-victory-over-nazism-world-war-ii-1939-1945>}, accessed 5 August 2020; Law 316-VIII ‘On access to archives of repressive bodies of the totalitarian communist regime, 1917-1991’; available at: {<https://old.uinp.gov.ua/laws/law-ukraine-access-archives-repressive-agencies-totalitarian-communist-regime-1917-1991?q=laws/law-ukraine-access-archives-repressive-agencies-totalitarian-communist-regime-1917-1991>}, accessed 5 August 2020.

or committed by an organized group of persons, or using mass media, by imprisonment for the term of five to ten years' (Art. 6.2.); outlaws communist and Nazi(-inspired) political parties (Art. 3); promulgates that the state will investigate and raise awareness of the most serious international crimes committed by the two totalitarian regimes in Ukraine (Art. 5); and stipulates procedures and timeframes for the related toponymic changes across the country.⁹² All four decommunisation laws fall into a broadly

⁹² The other three decommunisation laws are of declaratory and/or prescriptive character. The law 'On the legal status and honouring the memory of fighters for Ukraine's independence in the twentieth century' lists the names of fighters for the independence of Ukraine in the twentieth century, recognises their contribution by providing them legal status and honouring their memory, deeming the public denial of the legitimacy of Ukraine's historical struggle for independence an 'insult' to the respective memory, 'disparagement of the Ukrainian people', and thus unlawful (Art. 6). The law 'On perpetuation of the victory over Nazism in the Second World War of 1939-1945' enshrines legally the co-culpability of the Nazi Germany and the USSR for the outbreak of the Second World War, and establishes the Memorial and Reconciliation Day on May 8 (Art 1.2.) in an attempt to connect the contemporary Ukrainian remembrance of the war publicly to the European commemorative calendar. The law furthermore seeks to prevent 'falsification' of the history of the Second World War of 1939-1945 in research, literature, textbooks, mass media and the political discourse of public officials and strives to facilitate 'objective and comprehensive research of history' thereof (Art 2.3., Art. 2.4.). Although 'responsibility under law' is foreseen for the desecration, destruction, or demolition of the Second World War monuments (Art 4.7.), the law does not stipulate concrete sanctions for such violations. The law 'On access to archives of repressive agencies of totalitarian communist regime of 1917-1991' ensures 'the right of everyone on access to archival information of repressive agencies of the communist totalitarian regime of 1917-1991'

regulatory category,⁹³ whereas only the law on condemnation of the Communist and Nazi regimes is specifically punitive, stipulating concrete limits on freedom of speech and association along with the penalties in case of violating the law. What the decommunisation laws seek to do *en masse* is to emphatically add ‘expressive weight’ to the history as understood from the national Ukrainian perspective, to consolidate Ukraine’s status as a sovereign actor in international politics.⁹⁴ The decommunisation laws hence seek to explicitly ‘prescribe and proscribe’ certain views of historical regimes, figures, dates, symbols and events.⁹⁵ As the explanations provided by Volodymyr Viatrovykh, the key architect of the Ukraine’s decommunisation laws underscore, an authoritative version of the ‘true’ Ukrainian history was thus sought to be legally enshrined and promoted while intentionally sidelining certain views and political actors deemed endangering for the contemporary Ukrainian polity.

(Art 1.1.) and stipulates the specific conditions of such general and free access.

⁹³ See Eric Heinze, ‘Epilogue: beyond “memory laws”: towards a general theory of law and historical discourse’, in Uladzislau Belavusau and Aleksandra Gliszczyńska-Grabias (eds), *Law and Memory: Towards Legal Governance of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 413-33).

⁹⁴ Heinze, ‘Epilogue’, p. 415.

⁹⁵ Compare Antoon De Baets, ‘The United Nations Human Rights Committee’s view of the past’, in Uladzislau Belavusau and Aleksandra Gliszczyńska-Grabias (eds), *Law and Memory: Towards Legal Governance of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 29-47.

In all, Ukraine's decommunisation laws seek to buttress a particular national narrative of the country by bracketing off the unsavoury elements of Ukraine's encounters with the twentieth-century totalitarian regimes, and by fixing the legal frames of politically preferable 'national memory'. Notably, the law 'On the condemnation of the Communist and National Socialist (Nazi) regimes and prohibition of propaganda of their symbols' emphasises the development and strengthening of 'the independent, democratic, constitutional state'; 'binding the state to facilitate the consolidation and development of the Ukrainian nation' and 'its historical consciousness', and 'restor[ing] historical and social justice, eliminat[ing] the threat to independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and national security of Ukraine'. The heavily state- and nation-building-centric framing of this mechanism of mnemonic self-emancipation has been further amplified by the context and manner of the adoption of the decommunisation laws.⁹⁶ The timing of the decommunisation package in response to Russia's annexation of Crimea and later involvement in the conflict in eastern Ukraine is suggestive of the laws' main purpose being a strategic measure of mnemonic security in the context of the ongoing hybrid hostilities conducted by Ukraine's eastern

⁹⁶ The decommunisation laws were adopted a few days after having been tabled in the parliament with minimal discussion and according to accelerated procedure, without the possibility of making amendments to the draft bills. All four laws entered into force on 21 May 2015.

neighbour.⁹⁷ The decommunisation laws sought to patch a perceived key vulnerability in the post-Soviet emancipation of the Ukrainian nation and state,⁹⁸ by streamlining and redressing the historical narrative of the infamously divided country's experiences with the twentieth-century totalitarianisms and WWII.⁹⁹ Decommunisation has accordingly been framed as 'a matter of national security',¹⁰⁰ and deemed 'essential to Ukraine's integration into the civilized world'.¹⁰¹ Yet, by glorifying the anti-Soviet heroes without

⁹⁷ Ilya Nuzov, 'The dynamics of collective memory in the Ukraine crisis: a transitional justice perspective', *International Journal of Transitional Justice*, 11:1 (2017), pp. 132-53, on p. 140.

⁹⁸ Compare the trope of 'cutting the umbilical cord between Ukraine and Moscow', as expressed by Ivan Krulko, a member of parliament from the All-Ukrainian Union 'Fatherland'. See Lina Klymenko, 'Cutting the umbilical cord: the narrative of the national past and future in Ukrainian de-communization policy,' in Uladzislau Belavusau and Aleksandra Gliszczyńska-Grabias (eds), *Law and Memory: Towards Legal Governance of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 310-28.

⁹⁹ Alexander Motyl, 'Facing the past: in defense of Ukraine's new laws', *World Affairs*, 178:3 (2015), pp. 58-66; Karina V. Korostelina, 'Mapping national identity narratives in Ukraine', *Nationalities Papers: The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity*, 41:2 (2013), pp. 293-315, on pp. 312-13.

¹⁰⁰ 'Poroshenko: We must complete decommunization, it is a matter of national security', *112 Ukraine*, 15 May 2016; available at: {<https://112.international/politics/poroshenko-we-must-complete-decommunization-it-is-a-matter-of-national-security-4877.html>}, accessed 5 August 2020.

¹⁰¹ Motyl, 'Facing the past'; Askold S. Lozynskij, 'We need a discussion on OUN and UPA without labeling and stereotypes', *Krytyka: Thinking Ukraine*, 30 April 2015; available at: {<https://krytyka.com/en/community/blogs/we-need-discussion-oun-and-upa-without-labeling-and-stereotypes>}, accessed 5 August 2020.

acknowledging their implication in the Holocaust of Ukrainian Jews,¹⁰² Ukraine's mnemonical self-emancipation immediately opens itself to criticism by Russia and beyond for whitewashing Ukrainian conduct in WWII.

3 From Mnemonical Status-Seeking to Militant Memocracy

Distinct aims and trajectories aside, the three delineated types of mnemonical status-seeking display notable similarities in their thrust for legal institutionalisation and, at times, constitutionalisation of their respective official memory narratives. The memory laws of Russia, Poland, and Ukraine all seek to defend a sanitised and exclusionary national self-vision, presenting binary and simplistic narratives of the past where titular nations are either portrayed exclusively as victims or heroes for the purposes of securing contemporary state identities. The so-called Holocaust law of Poland, originally conceived to settle a legitimate political grievance over the misnomer 'Polish death camps' in the global public discourse, turned into an explicitly free speech policing endeavour in defence of a flawless Polish autobiography, in an attempt to effectively edit out the instances of the participation of Poles in crimes against Jews during the wartime Nazi occupation of the country. In a similar vein, Ukraine's post-Maidan

¹⁰² See 'Special Section: Issues in the History and Memory of the OUN III', *Journal of Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society*, 6:1 (2020), pp. 181-306.

decommunisation laws function as explicit mnemonical status anxiety control mechanisms at a time of outright conflict with Russia, yet in a curious mirror image of Russia's own memory law of 2014, defending an unblemished heroic image of the USSR in WWII.

I propose *militant democracy* as a common denominator for the governance of historical memory through a dense network of declarative and regulatory memory laws, policies and state-funded actors (such as various historical commissions and Institutes of National Remembrance in the region).¹⁰³ Militant democracy offers a novel twist on the historically German concept 'militant democracy', stretching the original term in manifold ways. By and large, militant democracy concerns 'restricting the rights of those who threaten to overthrow the very democracy that guarantees these rights' or 'the defence of democracy by disarming its opponents'.¹⁰⁴ Militant democracy explains 'how democracy can protect its structures from attempts to harm or overturn it by abusing or misusing democratic institutions and procedures such as free elections,

¹⁰³ Theoretically, domestic governance of memory (e.g., through school curricula, museums, and memorials) could also be non-militant, suggesting a neutral twin to the concept developed here (i.e. democracy).

¹⁰⁴ Ulrich Wagrandl, 'Transnational militant democracy', *Global Constitutionalism*, 7:2 (2018), pp. 143-72, on p. 143.

freedom of speech and freedom of association'.¹⁰⁵ The 'extremism' to be curbed in case of militant democracy pertains to the diverging understandings of the difficult past, nationally and internationally, via policing the only legitimate version of the state's biographical narrative as defined by the very state. Alike militant democracy, militant democracy is ready to compromise certain democratic standards for the sake of thus defending the system's feasibility – only that its prevailing political concern is defending a state-endorsed version of the past to sustain a national/state identity in the present rather than the protection of core democratic values as the foremost normative criteria.

Militant democracy is about defending historical memory by restrictive memory laws to ensure the legal protection of a state-endorsed official narrative of the past. It is the institutionalised apex of managing pertinent mnemonical status anxieties in its attempted identity-fixing for the said polity in international relations.¹⁰⁶ Unlike its

¹⁰⁵ Svetlana Tyulkina, 'Militant Democracy as an Inherent Democratic Quality', in Anthoula Malkopoulou and Alexander S. Kirshner (eds), *Militant Democracy and Its Critics: Populism, Parties, Extremism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019), pp. 207-25; on p. 222.

¹⁰⁶ Compare with 'mnemonic constitutionalism', referring to the elevation of the legal governance of historical memory to the constitutional level (if not necessarily changing the constitutional text *per se*). Such 'mnemocracy' encompasses and transcends standard measures against genocide denialism, putting a particular historical narrative into the use of justifying the new regime. See Uladzislau Belavusau and Aleksandra Gliszczyńska-Grabias, 'Introduction: Academic Legacy of Wojciech Sadurski, Rule of Law, and Mnemonic Constitutionalism in Central and Eastern Europe', in Uladzislau Belavusau and

militant democracy counterpart, militant memocracy is definitively not about defending the liberal core of democracy (such as fundamental rights, the rule of law, pluralism and the protection of minorities) in the first place. Quite the opposite: seeking to protect a *national* historical memory/mnemonic narrative from alternative accounts contesting it, militant memocracy can go to great lengths about restricting liberal rights (including freedom of speech, press, and assembly) and the pertinent political ethos rather than merely compromising with some procedural features of democracy for the sake of thus saving the system from its antithetical contestants. Whereas democratic militancy arguably has first and foremost *liberal* democracy at stake as ‘not just a formal attribute of...government, but part of its identity’,¹⁰⁷ militant memocracy has the status of state’s official narrative, its national honour, good name and standing in contemporary international relations at its core. Mnemonical practices which could be considered militant by name or by proxy – such as the UK Poppy Appeal – are distinct from the gist of militant memocracy, aimed at self-exculpation. Militant memocracy seeks to create and control a heroic or victimised fantasy of an entire nation via memory laws designed to discipline and punish anyone endangering such idealised self-image.

Aleksandra Gliszczyńska-Grabias (eds), *Constitutionalism under Stress* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), pp. 1-17.

¹⁰⁷ Wagrاندl, ‘Transnational militant democracy’, p. 144.

In a normative sense, the legal regulation of the legitimate frames of remembrance, particularly in cases of concrete stipulations about the repression of free expression and political association in a given society remains vulnerable to the common concerns about practices of militant democracy. The precautionary measures adopted to politically exclude the ‘enemies’ of the system are prone to abuses and hence the undermining of the very object of defence in the longer term.¹⁰⁸ Political theorists often

¹⁰⁸ For a debate on the normative justifiability and problematic repercussions of militant democracy in political theory and constitutional law, see András Sajó, *Militant democracy* (Utrecht: Eleven, 2004); Svetlana Tyulkina, *Militant Democracy: Undemocratic Political Parties and Beyond* (Abingdon, UK and New York: Routledge, 2015); Peter Niesen, ‘Anti-Extremism, Negative Republicanism, Civic Society: Three Paradigms for Banning Political Parties – Part I’, *German Law Journal*, 3:7 (2002), pp. 1-46; Stefan Rummens and Koen Abts, ‘Defending Democracy: The Concentric Containment of Political Extremism’, *Political Studies*, 58:4 (2010), pp. 649-65; Alexander S. Kirshner, *A Theory of Militant Democracy: The Ethics of Combatting Political Extremism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014); Jan-Werner Müller, ‘Protecting popular self-government from the people? New normative perspectives on militant democracy’, *Annual Review of Political Science*, 19:1 (2016), pp. 249-65; Carlo Invernizzi Accetti and Ian Zuckerman, ‘What’s Wrong with Militant Democracy?’, *Political Studies*, 65:IS (2017), pp. 182-99; Anthoula Malkopoulou and Ludvig Norman, ‘Three Models of Democratic Self-Defence: Militant Democracy and Its Alternatives’, *Political Studies*, 66:2 (2018), pp. 442-58; Anthoula Malkopoulou and Alexander S. Kirshner (eds), *Militant Democracy and Its Critics: Populism, Parties, Extremism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019). For a richly packed discussion on the pros and cons of memory laws, see Kopolosov, *Memory Wars, Memory Laws*, pp. 14-24, and Ilya Nuzov, ‘Freedom of Symbolic Speech in the Context of Memory Wars in Eastern Europe’, *Human Rights Law Review*, 19 (2019), pp. 231-53.

criticise the argument for militant democracy because of the framework's alleged incompetence for 'addressing the problem it is meant to solve,' maintaining that 'the decision as to what constitutes an enemy of democracy touches upon the boundaries of the political entity itself and therefore cannot be subsumed under any prior democratic norm'.¹⁰⁹ Militant democracy effectively functions as a preventive legislation against the potential contestants of the state-endorsed autobiographical narrative. As a status anxiety-induced governance reflex, it is revealing rather than healing: instead of the sought ironing out of the wrinkles from one's inevitably non-linear past experience, restrictive and punitive memory laws expose and reproduce rather than settle a state's mnemonical anxiety problem. Alike its militant democracy counterpart then, militant democracy is in danger of self-inflicted harm to the object of defence in the very effort to defend it.

Conclusion

This article suggests a novel opening for IR research agendas on status-seeking and militant democracy. My aim has been to develop a theoretical framework for understanding persistent conflicts over historical memory and the widespread attempts to settle them by means of law. To that end, I have shown how mnemonical status

¹⁰⁹ Invernizzi Accetti and Zuckerman, 'What's Wrong with Militant Democracy?', pp. 182-4. Compare Wagrandl, 'Transnational militant democracy'.

anxiety and status-seeking work in international politics, conceptually and empirically. Notably, distinct strategies of mnemonical status-seeking, ranging from positionalism and revisionism to self-emancipation, are accompanied by comparable mechanisms of institutionalisation: more or less punitive and/or corrective memory laws with a broadly regulatory zest. Such memory laws serve as mnemonical status anxiety control mechanisms domestically and important diplomatic tools internationally, signalling actor's discontent with and the ambitions towards revising the core features and/or the internal stratification within an international memory order deemed important.

I illustrated the distinct types of mnemonical status-seeking with Russia's, Ukraine's and Poland's recent legislations on the issues of the past, set against the backdrop of their freshly heightened advances and rebuttals in international memory politics. To grasp the competitive mnemonical recognition-seeking dynamic in the region, I developed the notion 'militant memocracy'. Reading Russian, Polish, and Ukrainian recent memory laws and controversies through the analytical lens of the conceptual predecessor of this original heuristic (i.e. militant democracy) allows to push the debate on democratic self-defence to the new empirical and conceptual ground. Re-assessing the democratic paradox in the mnemopolitical context of an authoritative regime (Russia), a growingly illiberal democracy (Poland), and yet an emerging one (Ukraine) further enables weighing the supposedly 'Frankensteinian' features compared to the standard Western militant democracy template. To be sure, the question whether the militantly self-defensive memory laws that have emerged in CEE in the 2010s

provide yet another instance of ingeniously stitched-together mutant imitations of Western liberalism (only this time of its militant democracy variant)¹¹⁰ is also symptomatically reflective of the very normative hierarchies between the ‘established’ and the ‘newcomers’ in the mnemonical order of Europe/the West in the first place.

A focus on mnemonical status-seeking has broader implications for IR theory. It sheds light on the relationship between national memory narratives of WWII, transnational mnemonic canons, and distinct meanings attributed to post-1945 international order. Future studies could examine the way in which domestic politics influences mnemonical status-seeking in the international realm. Militant democracy invites a deeper reflection on the interrelationship between state identities and mnemonical status anxieties, their nationally envisioned moral orders, and the international order. Further research could empirically pursue this nexus in other regions (e.g., East Asia) and significant cases (e.g., China, which has, similarly to Russia, increasingly come to link support for its narrative about WWII and the war against Japan with support for the post-war international order).¹¹¹ A systematic understanding of how states’ self-visions feed on certain mnemonic narratives, reflecting and

¹¹⁰ Compare Ivan Krastev and Stephen Holmes, ‘Explaining Europe: Imitation, and Its Discontents’, *Journal of Democracy*, 29:3 (2018), pp. 117-28.

¹¹¹ I am grateful to Karl Gustafsson for this point.

reproducing particular normative and institutional outlines of an international order remains crucial for IR.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Karl Gustafsson, Bahar Rumelili, and the participants of the EWIS2020 workshop ‘Anxiety in International Relations’, in which this article was first presented and received supportive feedback. I am grateful to Uladzislau Belavusau, Aleksandra Gliszczyńska-Grabias and Angelika Nußberger for many inspiring conversations, and to Lauri Mälksoo, Jelena Subotic and Iver B. Neumann for their constructive comments on earlier drafts. The anonymous reviewers of the article and the editors of RIS have helped to hone the piece with their generous engagement.