

## Memory and Leverage:

### Russia's history policing and the remembrance of 1956 in Hungary

Katalin Miklóssy

([katalin.miklossy@helsinki.fi](mailto:katalin.miklossy@helsinki.fi)) University of Helsinki, Finland

Paper presented at the 2021 ASN World Convention, 5-8 May 2021

DO NOT CITE WITHOUT THE PERMISSION OF THE AUTHOR

Please, note that this paper is accepted to be published by the Routledge in the volume *Conservatism and Memory Politics in Eastern Europe and Russia* (edited by Katalin Miklóssy and Markku Kangaspuro)

#### *Introduction*

This chapter discusses how *history policing* becomes an instrument and a coded language by which Russia inflicts pressures in its bilateral relations, and how a small country tries to neutralise these pressures by changing mnemonic practices in seeking security. The main argument is that Russia is trying to capitalise on the Soviet legacy in rearticulating the claim on its previous sphere of influence. Moreover, instead of the ardent opposition of an ex-satellite, Russia meets an old, Eastern Bloc-type behaviour pattern of pragmatic conformism as well as an emerging new affinity. Hungary presents an interesting case for two reasons: on the one hand, there is a long and successful historical tradition of balancing between national interest and Russian demands. On the other hand, Russia and Hungary share a common memory, the 1956 Revolution, which is a highly sensitive and identity-stricken remembrance – on both sides. It constitutes a central image of Hungarian national consciousness, the freedom fight against Soviet patronage, and at the same time, 1956 is closely linked to the Russian memory of the Great Patriotic War: the self-less sacrifice and the Soviet war myth. By analysing official state documents, public debates, legal and media sources, this article shows how this ‘sacred’

memory, playing a central role in the national identity construction of both countries, has been reinterpreted and how security considerations affected the process.

Conceptually, this study investigates the link between conservatism and the politics of memory from the perspective of strategic culture, elaborating the inter-relatedness of security, identity and memory.<sup>1</sup> The continuity of national perceptions about the most likely geopolitical threats and the ‘usual suspect’ enemies, in addition to the cross-generational learning of how to deal with security breaches, provide an important starting point for the analysis. I will argue that there are two levels of fluctuating and coexisting manifestations of conservatism. On one level, there is a return of the Soviet-time *behaviour* patterns, reflecting the rigid centre-periphery type of power subordination. On the other level, we can find a deeper, *value-based affinity of governances*, which establishes a profound trust and therefore a more solid sense of security. While the behaviour model indicates an ad hoc, short-term pragmatic strategy, genuine attachment in political solutions represents a long-term development. These two levels can be applied at the same time but often the change takes place first in the behaviour pattern, which can adjust quickly to swift alterations in international contexts that are considered threatening to national security. It can be argued that there is an old and new conservatism, regarding short-term vs. long-term memory strategies.

This article will first discuss how the 1956 case is linked to Hungary’s geopolitical situatedness and strategic culture, creating a special context for memory politics and the discourse between conservatism and liberalism. Then I move on to elaborate the embedded irony of the 1956 memory in the context of domestic power struggles and in Hungary’s relation to Russia. Finally, the change in new memory political practices is analysed.

### *In-between strategic culture and memory politics*

Memory, security, and identity are closely interrelated social constructions that are created and modified in a temporal and spatial context. It can be argued that security policy is identity politics because the survival of the state and the integrity of its political order is its key mission. The sustainability of the collective identity defining the boundaries and values of the political unit is the ultimate security interest of any governance. Security conceptions are dependent on interpretations of threats. Threat perceptions are nationally anchored since they are rooted in common memories of past security failures. Historical threat perceptions play a significant role in strategic decision-making when it comes to choosing whom to trust and whom to fear. Threats, however, need to be translated: what do they mean for the sense of security of the community. History politics provides a means for interpreting security risks for the public, providing a horizon of viable possibilities, i.e., the degree to which a country has leverage in a given situation. Both security and history politics are constructions where the aspects of past-present-future simultaneously dominate decisions and affect collective identities. Threat perceptions, nonetheless, are not monolithic but reveal various diverging interpretations and security prioritisation of different political sub-groups.<sup>2</sup> The prevailing policy line depends on the result of the power struggle at any one time. Memory politics, as a means of securitisation has been discussed in connection to the ontological security theory of international relations. Maria Mälksoo called this phenomenon ‘mnemonical security’. She analysed it from the perspective of the legitimizing needs of the power elite and national policy manoeuvres.<sup>3</sup>

Spatiality is also a highly relevant aspect regarding security and identity formation. The case country, Hungary, is situated in East Central Europe, which can be perceived as a complex ‘in-between’ sphere: an intersection of horizontal, vertical and temporal in-between-ness. *Horizontally*, this area is situated at a crossroads where Eastern (mostly Russian) and Western (mostly German) cultural influences have mixed and great power interests clashed over the centuries.<sup>4</sup> *Vertically*, the geographical position relates to being *in between* divergent ideological, political or economic powers.

This situation creates constant exogenous pressure and normative expectations on domestic decision-making, and therefore, it has an impact on the value-based dilemma between conservatism and liberalism, and hence on identity formation. *Temporal* in-betweenness refers to a cross-generational learning how to come to terms with outside pressure and make the best of it in the modernising endeavour.<sup>5</sup> In-betweenness has a particular weight for the nearby great powers, evoking the idea of a *buffer zone*, which is closely related to the concept of the sphere of influence.<sup>6</sup> The purpose of the sphere of influence is to strengthen and deepen an area's buffer potential by accommodating its values, political system, social and economic structures with the power that exercises the influence.

The bipolar options are reflected in the rich storehouse of 'meaningful' history – used for argumentative purposes of the intended policy. Changing interpretations of the past, however, also provide a mental map of how security and identity are being constructed. The in-between situatedness translates into a complex, *in-between memory politics*. The master narrative of memory, which relates to security perceptions, has to maintain a peculiar balance between simultaneous cross-pressures coming from the international arena and domestic competition. The domestic challenge means different options how to deal with the international threat by offering different interpretations of the past. These also indicate parallelly existing *mnemonic subcultures* questioning the master narrative of the ruling elite. Hence, the dynamics of remembrance based on the concepts of canon and archive, introduced by Aleida Assman,<sup>7</sup> where the canon relates to the currently circulating interpretations and the archive is the warehouse of dormant memory, are – in this context – a too monolithic description. I argue instead that there is a constant struggle amongst mnemonic subcultures for the position to become the 'right' or 'official' memory and this contest is attached to the underlying quest for power. The main question in this study is how the various memory subcultures reveal divergences and convergences in regard to conservatism in their short-term behaviour or long-term value-based affinity.

### **A storehouse of experiences of Russia**

Past experiences of bilateral encounters play a central role in the interaction between unequal state actors. Traditions of balancing between the national interest and security threats established a vital practice for Hungary. Its political culture relied on a cross-generational knowledge: the political elite learned to adjust effectively to changing international circumstances and neutralise threats by bargaining. Accordingly, a small country like Hungary had to rely on a rich storehouse of useful past examples how to come to terms with a great power in a variety of circumstances. Cultivating positive memories of contacts furthered the success of the applied political line, affecting indirectly the leverage of the country.

Russia has acquired a special place in Hungarian sovereignty discourses, producing a versatile image, ranging from a friendly ally to a noble enemy and a serious threat. This fluctuating perception was due to the fact that, until the Second World War, the main enemy came from the west (the Habsburg Empire) or the south (the Ottoman Empire). Thus, there are positive memories of Russia being a strategic ally, as in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, supporting Count Ferenc Rákóczi's fight against Habsburg suzerainty (1703–1711).<sup>8</sup> Resisting Western enemies by exploiting Russia's special needs was the first important lesson of the potential of the in-between position. In the independence war against the Habsburgs (1848–1849), although Russian interference sealed Hungary's destiny, nevertheless the Russians were seen as a noble enemy in comparison to the hated Austrians, and the Hungarian army capitulated to the Russian and not to the Austrian troops.<sup>9</sup> These moments of history all concern freedom fights, and as such, are the most valued chapters in Hungarian historical consciousness.

After WWII, the image of Russia became more complex. Being drawn into the Soviet sphere of influence meant that Russia represented considerable advantages in terms of political and economic

resources, as well as downright threats and tiresome dependencies. The key concern was to safeguard Hungary's development. Economic prosperity was linked to political stability, thus pragmatic advantages overrode worries about military security. Industrial performance was dependent on Soviet energy and raw materials, and the vast Soviet market absorbed inferior products.<sup>10</sup>

The communist period hence taught the Hungarian elites that the Russian need to maintain its sphere of influence can be utilised: loyalty comes with a price. Yet, since the early 1990s onwards, due to the in-between position, the benefits Russia was able to offer were compared with gains from the West. The different strategic subcultures diverged in how they assessed the long-term goals of the country's development and which direction, east or west, would best serve this aim.<sup>11</sup> This underlying contradiction can be seen in the 1956 debate of remembrance.

### **Diverging memory subcultures**

The memory of the 1956 Revolution, a celebrated national day since 1991, does not bring up anti-Russian sentiments, as might be assumed. While on the one hand, this is obviously a national symbol of a 'David and Goliath' type struggle with a disproportionate enemy, nevertheless, this can be seen, first and foremost, as a popular uprising against the communist system and its domestic representatives. In other words, Russia's role, however central in the outcome, has been downplayed in the yearly commemorations. It became a subject of continuous contest concerning 'mnemonic hegemony'<sup>12</sup> because the legitimacy of power requires an interpretation of the past that has the potential to marginalise competing views and surface as the dominant remembrance. Due to the complex in-between position, the mnemonic struggle for hegemony was simultaneously also a discourse and complex entanglement between conservatism and liberalism, regarding values, modus operandi and behaviour patterns.

The memory of 1956 played a significant part in the collapse of the communist rule in 1989: in January 28, Imre Pozsgay, a Minister and Politburo member, in a radio speech renamed the events of 1956 as a *public uprising* rather than the official notion of a *counter-revolution*. The speech launched a chain reaction leading to systemic change because the concept of an uprising challenged the core legitimacy of the post-1956 communist regime, per se. The public reinterpretation in the official media unveiled the inner differences of the communist elite and brought the oppositional forces into the limelight. The festive reburial of 1956 Prime Minister Imre Nagy and his followers, in June 16, 1989, in front of hundreds of thousands of people on the Heroes' Square in Budapest, was a hint of a new era.<sup>13</sup> This was the first mass gathering permitted by the communist authorities, where representatives of the opposition held critical speeches about the regime but since Imre Nagy was a reform communist, the ruling elite aimed to carry out a facelift by exploiting his image.

Strikingly, most opposition figures were careful not to mention Soviet dominance. This conservative attitude was partly due to the memory of Soviet military intervention, hence, extra cautiousness not to provoke the Soviets again was vital. The other reason was Mikhail Gorbachev's reformist politics that both the Hungarian reform communists and opposition supported. Being too outspoken against the Soviets could hurt Gorbachev's project. Systemic change in June 1989 was not yet seen as a viable option.<sup>14</sup> This urge to conserve the geopolitical status quo was ironically to safeguard the regime's gradual liberalisation.

The self-censored conservative conventions were the training grounds of a passionate young politician, Viktor Orbán. He represented a new liberal party of university students, the Fidesz, '*the Alliance of Young Democrats*', established in March 1988. Orbán did not hesitate to criticise the memory of Imre Nagy, referring also to his successors (indicating both the domestic elite and Gorbachev): reform communism or not, they maintained a dictatorship and thus should be forced out

of power. He reminded those assembled that the Russians had dragged Hungary back to the dead-end of Asiatic development and bluntly pointed out that the stationing of Soviet forces limited the integrity of the country – so “the Russians have to go”.<sup>15</sup> Orbán became instantly famous, nationally and internationally; furthermore, the speech made him the unchallenged leader of his party, maintaining his power ever since. He also introduced a new interpretation where the memory of 1956 was used as a discursive means against the left-wing parties, all pictured as communists’ successors.

The 1956 remembrance in 1989 became emblematic for the future because from that time on, various parallel memory subcultures coexisted, interpreting the meaning of 1956 according to their own political values. The first democratically elected Parliament issued, as one of its first legislative acts, the introduction of national day.<sup>16</sup> As a yearly returning national debate, the day became a symbolic fight between interpretations challenging, first and foremost, the master narrative represented by the governing elite.<sup>17</sup> In spite of the constant struggle of the memory sub-cultures about the true interpretation of 1956, a common headache occurred regardless of party background: the 1956 events were closely interlinked with the official Russian history of WWII, and was hence an *inter-national* affair. What became evident was that none of the administrations, left or right, could handle this aspect satisfactorily.

### **Entangled memory: 1956 and the Second World War**

The enactment of remembrance of 1956 became a symbolic language for communicating political warnings in the bilateral relations, and beyond. From the Russian point of view, the 1956 events are closely interlinked with the officially favoured interpretation of the Second World War as a mythical sacrifice. By intervening in the 1956 Revolution, the post-WWII *status quo* was saved, sending a powerful message simultaneously to the Eastern Block and the West. Yet, the consecutive Russian presidents were hesitant about their relations to the Hungarian Revolution. This inconsistency

revealed also the fluctuating Western policy of Russia and Hungary's instrumental value in Russia's endeavours.

Just a few days before the Soviet Union turned into new Russia (6 December 1991), as a token of good will in re-establishing relations with Hungary, the outgoing Mikhail Gorbachev and the incoming Boris Yeltsin both apologised for the Soviet intervention.<sup>18</sup> According to the new bilateral agreement, Russia would overcome the legacy of totalitarianism by condemning the subjugation of the Hungarian freedom fighters in 1956.<sup>19</sup> Boris Yeltsin in November 1992, while visiting Budapest, publicly asked Hungarian people's forgiveness. He also handed over what became known as the *Yeltsin Dossier*, containing historical documents of the Kremlin's decision-making during and after the 1956 crisis. The selection of the documents was made in haste, overriding the Russian archival rules because the collection was meant to be a gift, expressing gratitude for the Hungarian president Árpád Göncz' solidarity visit to Moscow in mid-October, immediately after the attempted coup on the Yeltsin administration. Thus, the symbolic message the Russian leader sent to a small country like Hungary was that service would be rewarded. The history of 1956, however, was becoming a more difficult piece of memory during Vladimir Putin's presidency, reflecting also Russia's worsening EU relations in the 2010s.

For Russia, the symbolism of the WWII overlaps with and is integrated into the memory of the Great Patriotic War. Showing off the military might at the Victory Day Parade is a reminder of a great power, once capable of redrawing the map of Europe. The remembrance of victory is a reminder of the glorious Soviet sphere of influence stretching into East Central Europe – as a consequence of its internationally respected and accepted role. As Katya Haskins argued in this volume, the commemoration of the Great Patriotic War became a state-orchestrated cult, assisted by legislative restrictions on the freedom of interpretation, establishing a cornerstone in the construction of a new

Russian identity. Olga Malinova emphasised that the Great Patriotic War evolved into a national foundation myth during the Putin administration.<sup>20</sup> The other side of this coin is the memory of the Soviet expansion into Europe, indicating the imperial component of the Russian identity.

### **Symbolic memory policing**

The symbolisms of WWII and the 1956 Revolution are also intertwined for the Hungarians. Between 1945 and 1948, the occupying Soviet Command demanded the Hungarian authorities erect 10 monuments in Budapest to remember the Red Army's losses in liberating Hungary from the Nazi-rule. All of them, except one, were destroyed by the uprising in 1956 – as a late response to what *liberation* meant for the Hungarian people.<sup>21</sup> The Monument of the Soviet Heroes, built in March 1945, while the Red Army was still fighting in Western Hungary, was inaugurated on 1<sup>st</sup> of May, on the *Freedom Square* in Budapest.<sup>22</sup> The Square was well chosen: in the interwar period it was a memorial site of Hungarian spatial integrity.<sup>23</sup> After the Russian Army left from Hungary, the new Parliament established an open-air museum, the Memento Park in 1993, where all statues reminiscent of the Soviet era were moved. By this decision the Hungarian officials avoided a public outrage against the sculptures, and introduced a controlled method, which fitted well with the peacefully negotiated regime change in 1989.<sup>24</sup>

Due to ardent Russian objections, the only statue that could not be removed to the Memento Park was the Monument of the Soviet Heroes, and as a consequence it was vandalised several times on the anniversaries of 1956. Ironically, these destructive activities were indirect protests against the ruling elites and their Russia policy, and as such, these were unifying moments for the opposition forces. Since the early 1990s, one thing in common in leftist and right-wing administrations has been the consensus to get rid of the Monument, and the constant failure to do so. In the difficult balancing

between *realpolitik* and domestic outrage, the convenient hiding place for any government was behind legislation and bilateral treaties.

In 1995, an agreement was signed in Moscow about the legal status and treatment of burial sites of soldiers in any war. There was, however, a loophole in the text: should an important state interest occur regarding the usage of the location of the burial site, the remnants could be transferred to another place.<sup>25</sup> Shortly after the agreement entered the Hungarian legal corpus in 1996, the right-wing opposition demanded to move the monument but the leftist-liberal government referred to the bilateral treaty and refused to act. Between 2000 and 2002, while the national-conservative Fidesz was in power (1998–2002), the liberal city administration's needs to build an underground garage were used to exploit the above-mentioned loophole. By claiming that the construction work could damage the foundation of the monument, and since the remains of soldiers under the monument were now reburied in the main National Cemetery, the government saw an opportunity to move the statue as well. The Russian ambassador, Valerii Musatov, reacted immediately, demanding that the Monument should stay, otherwise bilateral relations would be jeopardised.<sup>26</sup>

The Monument symbolised Russian imperial power at the heart of Hungary's political and administrative centre, banking sector and media life, close to the Parliament and some Ministries, and is located in front of the US Embassy. While this has been a consistent Russian policy, unlike in the case of the Estonian Bronze Soldier affair<sup>27</sup> (in 2007) or the removal of the WWII Marshall Ivan Konev's statute in Prague<sup>28</sup> (in 2020) – the Hungarian officials never seriously challenged the Russian stand in this matter. However, the Hungarian public have continued to deface the Monument and various NGOs have kept organising mass demonstrations on 1956 anniversaries.<sup>29</sup> Due to pressure from below, the consecutive leftist and right-wing administrations' common solution was to build a

protective fence to avoid the Russians' discontent, but the barricading represented a humiliating confession of how ineffective top-down memory policing was.

The affair was particularly annoying for the Fidesz administration because of its origins in 1989 as an anti-Russian '*heroic*' party, with young Viktor Orbán at its front. The second Fidesz government (2010–2014) tried to neutralise the embarrassment and public emotions in 2011, and a smiling statue of Ronald Reagan was erected, facing the Russian monument.<sup>30</sup> At the same time, the government launched the 'Eastern Drive' with the aim of diversifying Hungarian foreign trade, and finding new sources to compensate EU support, with special attention given to Russian relations.<sup>31</sup> The Foreign Office now declared that it was Hungary's primary interest not to bring up the Monument issue anymore in the bilateral relations because it could cause "*unforeseeable consequences*": as Russia was a vitally important energy supplier, Russian memory sensitivity should be taken into consideration.<sup>32</sup> The political elite had to balance between conserving its freedom fighter image for the domestic arena, and long-term economic interests. Hence, government officials established a Gulag Committee and declared 2015 to be the anniversary of Hungarians transported to Soviet camps during 1944–45.<sup>33</sup> The Committee suggested a Gulag obelisk in front of the Soviet Monument, and while the Parliament unanimously approved the proposal, the government authorities did not dare to erect it, fearing Putin's reactions.

The Monument became a symbol of growing Russian influence in Hungary and was renamed by the public as the *Monument of Soviet Occupation*.<sup>34</sup> When in 2017 civil activists, once again, ridiculed the Monument by painting it, the Russian Foreign Office protested severely, demanding that the Hungarian authorities would take all necessary measures.<sup>35</sup> The Orbán administration did not hesitate to act swiftly and the culprits were caught, faced trial and convicted – all within two days. According to the reasoning of the unusually speedy legal procedure, "*it was a crime against the community of*

*Hungarians because it attacked the symbol of the victims of fascism*".<sup>36</sup> This argumentation represented a watershed in the official rhetoric since this was the first time when a national-conservative administration adopted the Soviet-time 'ideological' phrasing.

### **Conservative strategies: 1956 and national interest**

The continuing debate about the Soviet WWII monument revealed how the Russian leaders perceived the significance of 1956. For the Hungarians, apart from the domestic power struggle, 1956 was a symbol of independent polity – and as a national day, the people were reminded of it in a yearly cycle. The main problem for the government was how to navigate between the sensitivity of Russians and Hungarians.

#### *Changing codes of mnemonic subcultures*

The leftist administrations had warmed up relations with Russia since the mid-1990s but with Vladimir Putin in power, this became increasingly challenging. The socialist administration was criticised in the domestic media that too friendly relations with Putin could jeopardise Hungary's EU relations and curb the country's Western leverage. PM Ferenc Gyurcsány, who met Putin twice in 2006, which was the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1956 Revolution, stated in a joint press conference that *"I do not think that the Russia of today bears responsibility for the decisions that President Yeltsin condemned in the name of Russian leadership back in 1992"* by which he indicated that Putin was not expected to feel remorse over 1956 as Yeltsin did. Gyurcsány also stated that *"There is a moral responsibility, but we cannot let this moral responsibility bind us hand and foot"* – in other words, while his government acknowledged the importance of 1956 for the Hungarian people, nevertheless, he would not politicise the past if it might forestall good relations with Russia.<sup>37</sup>

This tiptoeing in front of Putin revealed that from the left-wing's perspectives economic interests and strategic goals were worth overriding the national sentiment of 1956, in line with the mnemonic traditions of the left-wing parties' sub-culture since state socialism. The socialists were a post-communist successor party, which looked back to persevering the practice of walking a tightrope between national interests and the Kremlin. The PM Gyurcsány, as an ex-leader of the Communist Youth, had first-hand experience of pragmatic flexibility. He returned to a well-tryed Soviet-time behaviour pattern, making the best out of what reminded one once again of a restrictive centre-periphery structure. And the old know-how worked again. As a token of good relations, Putin showed respect for the *Monument of Hungarian 1956 Revolution* during his visit in 2006 and returned 134 valuable medieval books out of 170 looted by the Red Army during WWII.<sup>38</sup> Yet, at the same time, the left-wing administrations cultivated good relations with the EU and maintained Western values in their political practice. Hence, the conservative *modus operandi*, playing out the subordinated part in the asymmetrical bilateral relation, served liberal ideas of development. This coherent effort of blending conservative and liberal discursive elements in driving complex national interest is a typical in-between strategy.

A decisive conservative turn in the mnemonic code took place in the right-wing subculture due to a gradually growing emphasis on national-conservative values after 2010. Conservatism became the sole ethos, getting rid of the last liberal characteristics in the *in-between-situatedness*. Due to frequent clashes, the regime revisited Hungary's Western orientation and searched for new options counterbalancing the EU. The magnetism of Russian governance could be detected in the applied political practice and the novel era was manifested by the dramatic weakening of the rule of law and the centralisation of power by the ruling Fidesz. Despite the strong affinity of governance models, bilateral relations were difficult to improve. The nearly 20-year-long, consistent anti-Russian rhetoric and policies of the Fidesz elite were features that the Russian president would not overlook easily –

particularly after the Russian-friendly Socialist-governments (1994–1998, 2002–2010). It took four years for PM Orbán to amend personal relations with Vladimir Putin. While in 2007 the then opposition leader Orbán worried about the ex-colonial power's growing influence due to the left-wing government's policy and declared that “we [the Fidesz] *opened the door for the West and closed it for the Russians, the Soviet Union and communism*”,<sup>39</sup> nevertheless, a gradual change in public speeches started to be evident. In a 2014 documentary, Viktor Orbán gave retrospective credit for the Russians not intervening in the reburial of Imre Nagy back in 1989 – an event, which boosted Orbán's personal career. He recalled that his party's participation in the occasion was odd because the Fidesz stood for Western values.<sup>40</sup> The irony of this 2014 statement was that within a month Orbán announced a new illiberal path for the Hungarian development and rigorously criticised the Western way of life.

In July 2014, the European Union adopted a new set of restricted measures that broadened sanctions on Russia due to the annexation of the Crimea and its involvement in the war in Eastern Ukraine.<sup>41</sup> In the same month, PM Orbán announced his admiration for the progress of Russia. He declared that his country would take a similar direction towards illiberalism since the Western human rights-centred individualism was outdated and the idea of the nation should come first.<sup>42</sup> Seven months later in a *Kommersant* interview he rebutted completely his earlier anti-Russian policy between 1998–2002. He argued that he realised that the real change for Russia came with Putin's leadership.<sup>43</sup> The Putinist strong-hand policy was tempting because it represented a unique stability of power for one party and an alternative political-societal system for the West.<sup>44</sup>

Orbán's demonstrations of loyalty paid off and bilateral relations improved accordingly. But these two countries needed each other. Hungary was highly dependent on Russian energy and it forced the country into an underdog position because the Russian pipeline could easily bypass Hungary in

reaching Russia's ultimate aim, the Western markets. On the other hand, the Hungarian leadership was constantly criticised in the EU concerning the deteriorating rule of law, which was frequently compared in the global media to *Putinism*.<sup>45</sup> Russia also needed friends in the EU, facing ever-expanding restrictions. Due to troubled EU relations, Russia turned to cultivate bilateral connections, and the Russian president has taken up the habit of yearly visits to EU member Hungary.<sup>46</sup> In 2015, Putin came to discuss trade and energy relations, in continuance of the 2014 treaty of an extension of the Hungarian nuclear power plant in Paks, built by Rosatom and on Russian loans, and financially binding Hungary to Russia for 30 years. And yet, in spite of interdependent relations and regardless of the Hungarian administration's repeated expressions of friendship, Putin made an extra effort in 2015 to emphasise Russia's supremacy by a symbolic attack on the precious Hungarian memory of the 1956 Revolution.

*The watershed year 2015: Adjusting to Russian pressure*

2015 was the anniversary of the Second World War, a vital year in the Russian commemoration process. Putin, arrived in mid-February (17 February) in Budapest. Choosing February as a month for yearly visits carries extra memory weight because the Hungarian capital was liberated by the Red Army in February 13, 1945. Thus, according to the habitual choreography of every visit, Putin always laid wreaths on WWII war memorials. In 2015, however, he changed the pattern and paid his respects to the obelisk of the Russian soldiers who had died while putting down the 1956 Revolution.<sup>47</sup> The obelisk sited in the National Cemetery where the most respected figures of Hungarian history are buried, including Imre Nagy.

At the heart of the story was the fact that the obelisk and its surroundings were recently renovated by a Russian foundation, and contained an inscription in Hungarian: "*Gratitude and honour for the Soviet heroes who gave their lives in the 1956 counter-revolution for the freedom of the Hungarian*

people".<sup>48</sup> The restoration of the Soviet parts of the graveyard was conducted by the Generation (Pokolnyije) Foundation, whose owner, Andrej Skots, a billionaire and an MP in Putin's United Russia party, introduced the project in April 2012 in the Russian Cultural Centre in Budapest. The Hungarian representative of the Foundation, Imre Gyalai, confirmed that the Orbán administration had strongly supported the project, which was consistent with Putin's initiative in 2007 of reconstructing all Soviet war monuments around the world.<sup>49</sup> The reparation of the graveyard section took 2 years and when the inscriptions on the main obelisk became obvious, it raised vibrant discussions in the Hungarian Parliament.<sup>50</sup> Minister of Defence, Csaba Hende, who was responsible for bilateral negotiations of war memorials, stated already in 2013, that mentioning 'counter-revolution' and 'liberation' was an offence against the Constitution. The Minister admitted that he had brought up the issue with the Russians twice already and had even suggested an alternative script "*Honouring the memory of the fallen Soviet soldiers who died during the events of 1956*", neutralizing the mnemonic edge.<sup>51</sup> Yet, against all the objections of the Hungarian government, the original inflammatory inscription remained.

The event was timed just a few days before the Hungarian commemoration day (25 February) of the victims of communism, which emphasised the deliberate insult against the official mnemonic code. It demonstrated Hungary's subordinated position in the Russian mnemonical hegemony, rearticulating the old Soviet centre-periphery asymmetry. Putin's act irritated particularly PM Orbán, whose career was based on criticising the Soviet intervention and had repeatedly underlined the freedom fighter image of his government over the years. It is hardly surprising that while the official media generally followed every move of the Russian president in his yearly visits – this embarrassment was carefully concealed from the Hungarian public. No one from the government or the Russian-Hungarian intergovernmental war-grave committee participated; nevertheless, massive police presence secured Putin's commemoration act, accompanied by the Kremlin's guard of honour

and the Russian press.<sup>52</sup> Still, some opposition media reported about the event and mass protests were organised in Budapest against Putin, much to the annoyance of the government.<sup>53</sup>

While symbolically the Russian president brought back old Soviet memories of the Eastern Bloc Order, the Hungarian PM declared that he firmly opposed the EU sanctions on Russia because “*he did not want to live in a Europe that is drawn into a new Cold War turning the Europeans into enemies of Russia*”.<sup>54</sup> Orbán pretended that Putin’s move had no relevance for Hungary, and he was pleased with the visit because it sent a powerful message to the EU concerning bilateral relations.<sup>55</sup> The image of the freedom fighter government was increasingly cultivated during the year, due to the refugee crisis in late summer 2015, and the stubborn refusal of the Hungarian leadership to participate in sharing the EU burden.

The freedom fighter symbolism was capitalised on particularly in the 1956 celebrations. In the dramatic year of 2015, PM Orbán was abroad dealing with EU pressure on a summit about migration, hence he did not attend the commemoration, yet his message was heard. The Minister of Defence, István Simicskó on behalf of the Government, held a watershed speech where he moved the responsibility of the failed revolution from the Soviet Union to the West. He underlined that 1956 was needed because after WWII

*“the victorious world powers had already agreed that Hungary would become part of the Soviet sphere of interest, and the Hungarians were not consulted, the decision was made over their heads, the country was handed over to a dictatorial system...”*.

In addition, he stated that

*“The world sent many statements and promises of solidarity in 1956, yet the country was left to fend for itself and the revolution was left to fight alone, because although gestures were made, no help arrived from abroad.”*<sup>56</sup>

The role of the Russians in the suppression was not even mentioned. The same message was repeated in 2016, which was declared officially as a commemorative year with significant funds channelled into the festivities, emphasizing the country's freedom fighter image.<sup>57</sup> While the confrontation with the EU was escalating, in his speech at the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Revolution, Viktor Orbán reminded his listeners that the Hungarians fought against Soviet-type communism and the Soviet empire, and the Revolution showed the West that the Soviet Union can be wounded. The memory of this freedom fight obliges the Hungarians “*to save Brussels from Sovietisation and the European Union turning into a new empire*”.<sup>58</sup> With these statements, PM Orbán intended to underline two things: on the one hand, threats for Hungarian integrity came from the West, and secondly, he did not identify the Soviet past with contemporary Russia. His words were obviously differently interpreted in Moscow and too many mentions of the Soviet yoke were irritating. Hence, the Kremlin signalled its displeasure encrypted in covert warnings.

The memory of 1956 was a very effective reminder for the Hungarians about retorsions. *Russia 1* (Rossija 1) TV channel in its evening news on 26 October 2016 had a lengthy report on the Hungarian 1956 history, which was titled ‘uprising’. The commentator explained that the events were launched and carried out by ex-Nazis and the happenings were mainly ‘pogroms against Jews’ and the 1956 fighters were nothing more than anti-Semites. The uprising was represented as ‘the first of the so-called colour revolutions’, which sent a coded message to the audience that behind the scenes the CIA had arranged all the actions.<sup>59</sup> Mentioning colour revolutions was also an indirect reference to the ongoing Ukrainian crisis, where Russian troops were involved. The TV channel is owned by the Russian Government and the news programmes have been very popular, followed by 98.5 % of the Russian population.<sup>60</sup> The broadcast on the one hand reinforced the old, Soviet-time mnemonic patterns but also reflected the well-ingrained public's attitudes. In an opinion poll published a few

days earlier by the Levada Center, 50% of the respondents considered that the suppression of 1956 by the Soviet forces was right; and the Revolution was an anti-Soviet or anti-socialist bloc sabotage/counter-rebellion according to 71%.<sup>61</sup>

This was an insult that the Hungarian government could not overlook in the jubilee year – particularly because the news received widespread publicity thanks to the opposition media. The administration published an announcement that the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Péter Szijjártó summoned the Russian Ambassador V.N.Sergejev, because “*Hungary will not tolerate talking ‘in a humiliating manner about the Revolution and its heroes’*”.<sup>62</sup> The conflict seemed to be soon over and the government concentrated on nurturing bilateral relations. The growing number of economic ventures and Russian investments in Hungary showed that PM Orbán was able to exploit the anti-Russian Western atmosphere.<sup>63</sup>

The balance of power, however, changed considerably and Putin’s yearly visits made it clear that there would be benefits. From 2017 on, the Russian president presented ‘wishes’ as parts of the negotiated energy deals and lucrative loans – and these requests aimed to expand the leverage of Russian memory politics in Hungary. Hence, the Hungarian government had to agree to renovate all Russian Orthodox churches in Hungary, at its own expenses, and to rename a square in Budapest Tolstoy Square – all as integral parts of the economic accord. Similarly, from 2017 on, the administration made sure that the ‘right’ message about 1956 was heard in Moscow. PM Orbán took to the habit of emphasizing that the dangers that threatened the Hungarian way of life came from Western liberal circles that relied on the global media empire.<sup>64</sup> At the same time, the use of double language became strongly ingrained into the rhetorical practice, sending simultaneously messages to the domestic audience and foreign powers in both the West and the East. This also proved that the

remembrance of 1956 indeed represented a rich storehouse of varying interpretations. As PM Orbán stated, *“for us, 1956 is not a memory neither is it history, it is our heart and backbone”*.<sup>65</sup>

## **Conclusion**

This study discussed how the memory of 1956 became a substitute in communicating political sentiments, intentions and warnings in the bilateral relations of Hungary and Russia. 1956 was closely interlinked with the memory of World War II, which was embedded in the Russian remembrance of the Great Patriotic War. Thus, since these pieces of memory represented key elements of national consciousness for both nations, the mnemonic codes collided. The clash launched a process where the top actors on both sides returned to old behaviour patterns rooted in Soviet-time practices that accentuated asymmetric power relations.

This chapter introduced the concept of mnemonic subcultures, referring to a continuous domestic competition of political groups for the leading position of their interpretation of memory. The prevailing hegemonic discourse, however, had to be adjusted to Russian mnemonic pressures. The analysis showed that in the Hungarian context the main, left-wing vs. right-wing subcultures displayed significant convergences and decisive divergences, both manifestations of conservatism. The convergence, rooted in shared perceptions of the country's insecurities in the in-between geopolitical space, concerned a gradual shift in the Hungarian memory politics. It reflected the continuities of strategic behaviour, bringing back well-tested patterns and cross-generational learning of the Eastern Block experience, by which Hungary learned to neutralise Soviet pressure. Conservatism can be seen in the hierarchical rigidity of Soviet-time centre-periphery settings that the aggressive Russian memory policing recalled in the context of the Putinist foreign policy. This involved creating flashbacks for the Hungarian elites reminding them how to come to terms with a threatening power.

Divergences, on the other hand, appeared at the heart of the applied strategy. The leftist mnemonic changes implemented ad hoc reactions to demands of Russian memory politics. In addition, the leftist interpretation of 1956 was never strongly embedded in the *freedom fighter* image either, and as such, pragmatic pro-Russian calibrations were not surprising for the Hungarian public. While the leftist parties are still considered post-communist successor parties, nevertheless, they implemented conservative behavioural patterns aimed at safeguarding their liberal values. In contrast, similar transformations were much more difficult to carry out for the right-wing because it exploited an anti-Russian discursive strategy in its political foundation. The fact that the Orbán leadership was willing to adjust to the Russian interpretation of the past was a sign of the changing political atmosphere, displaying a profound affinity in values of governance and overall worldview with the Putinist model, a normative power for Orbán's Hungary.

From the Russian angle, the series of events can be grasped within the domestic context of Russian memory policing and its inevitable consequences in the international arena. It seems that Hungary's significance for Russia has been growing since the current Hungarian government declared its 'illiberal democracy' turn and consequently launched the 'Eastern Drive' approaching like-minded regimes such as Russia. Expanding mnemonic hegemony to an ex-Eastern Bloc country was the re-articulation of being a normative power, once again in the buffer zone of East Central Europe.

---

<sup>1</sup> Katalin Miklóssy and Hanna Smith, "Introduction: Reviewing Strategic Culture in the Russian Neighborhood," in *Strategic Culture in Russia's Neighborhood*, eds. Katalin Miklóssy and Hanna Smith (Lanham: Lexington, 2019), ix–xxiii.

<sup>2</sup> Alan Bloomfield, "Time to Move on: Reconceptualizing the Strategic Culture Debate," *Contemporary Security Policy* 30, no. 3 (2012): 437–61.

- 
- <sup>3</sup> Maria Mälksoo, “Memory must be defended: Beyond the politics of mnemonic security,” *Security Dialogue* 46, no. 3 (2015): 221-37.
- <sup>4</sup> Balázs Trencsényi, ‘Central Europe’, in *European Regions and Boundaries: A Conceptual History*, eds. Diana Mishkova and Balázs Trencsényi (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2017), 166–87.
- <sup>5</sup> Katalin Miklóssy, “Subregional Integration in East Central Europe: Strategies in the In-Between Sphere,” in *European Integration Beyond Brussels*, eds. Matthew Broad and Suvi Kansikas (Palgrave-Macmillan, 2020), 269–90.
- <sup>6</sup> Sami Moisiu, “Competing Geographies of Sovereignty, Regionality and Globalisation,” *Geopolitics* 11, no. 3 (2006): 439–64; Michael C. Desch, “Culture Clash: Assessing the Importance of Ideas in Security Studies,” *International Security* 23, no. 1 (Summer 1998): 141–70; Harold Mackinder, “The Geographical Pivot of History,” *Geographical Journal* 13, no. 3 (1904): 421–37.
- <sup>7</sup> Aleida Assmann, “Canon and Archive,” in *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies*, ed. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (New York-Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008), 100–4.
- <sup>8</sup> Rákóczi’s campaign coexisted with the Nordic War (1700–1721) fought between Sweden and Russia, and the Spanish Succession War (1701–1714) fought between France and Austria. Peter the Great needed Rákóczi’s connection to the French court in his own war. Béla Köpeczi, “II. Rákóczi Ferenc külpolitikája,” *Magyar Tudomány* 6, (2003). <http://www.matud.iif.hu/03jun.html>
- <sup>9</sup> Nikolai I came to rescue a fellow absolute ruler, Franz Joseph, to regain dominance over Hungary. Róbert Hermann, *1848–1849: A szabadságharc hadtörténete* (Budapest: Korona, 2001).
- <sup>10</sup> Katalin Miklóssy and Justyna Pierzyska, “Regional strategic culture in the Visegrad countries: Poland and Hungary,” in *Strategic Culture in Russia’s Neighborhood*, eds. Katalin Miklóssy and Hanna Smith (Lanham: Lexington, 2019), 83–114.
- <sup>11</sup> Miklóssy and Pierzyska, 98–100.
- <sup>12</sup> Berthold Molden, “Resistant pasts versus mnemonic hegemony: on the power relations of collective memory,” *Memory Studies* 9, no. 1 (2016), 125-42.
- <sup>13</sup> Heino Nyssönen, *Presence of the Past in Politics: ‘1956’ after 1956 in Hungary* (Jyväskylä: SoPhi, 1999), 173–88.
- <sup>14</sup> The party-leader Károly Grósz estimated that the first free elections could be held perhaps in 1995.
- <sup>15</sup> “Viktor Orbán’s speech at the reburial of Imre Nagy June 16, 1989,” accessed October 26, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4YybjROUMu0>
- <sup>16</sup> Törvények és Országgyűlési határozatok: *1990. évi XXVIII. törvény az 1956 októberi forradalom és szabadságharc törvénybe iktatásáról*, May 8, 1990, Jogtár, accessed 17.7.2020, <https://mkogy.jogtar.hu/jogszabaly?docid=99000028.TV>
- <sup>17</sup> Zoltán Csipke, “The Changing Significance of the 1956 Revolution in Post-Communist Hungary,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 63, no.1 (2011): 99–128.
- <sup>18</sup> CNN perspectives, *Cold War Chat: Interview with Géza Jeszenszky, Hungarian Ambassador*, November 8, 1998, accessed 17.7.2020,

<https://web.archive.org/web/20010511072116/http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/cold.war/guides/debate/chats/jeszensky/>

<sup>19</sup> The agreement was introduced into the Hungarian legal corpus only in 1997: 1997/XLII tv.

<sup>20</sup> Olga Malinova, “Constructing the ‘Usable Past’: The Evolution of the Official Narrative in Post-Soviet Russia,” in *Cultural and Political Imaginaries in Putin’s Russia*, eds. Niklas Bernsand and Barbara Törnquist-Plewa (Brill 2018), 96–7.

<sup>21</sup> János Potó, *Az emlékezés helyei. Emlékművek és politika* (Budapest: Osiris 2003); “A Szabadság téri szovjet emlékművet langpisztollyal bontják, a Molotov térit (vajon meddig hívják még annak?) már lebontották,” *Magyar Függelenség* (Szerkesztőségi közlemény) 1, no. 4. (1956 november 1): 3.

<sup>22</sup> “Félmillió tömeg ünnepelte a szabad vörös májúst – Malinovszkij marsall beszélt a Szabadságtéren,” *Népszava* 73, no. 81. (1945. Május 3); *1945/IX. Törvény* Budapest Főváros felszabadításánál elesett szovjet katonák emlékének megörökítéséről.

<sup>23</sup> Zetényi Zsolt, “A Szabadság téri szovjet hősi emlékmű ügye,” *Rendvédelem-történeti Füzetek (Acta Historiae Praesidii Ordinis)* XXIX., no. 57 (2019), 87–98.

<sup>24</sup> Kovács, Éva, “A terek és a szobrok emlékezete (1988-1990),” *Regio: Kisebbség, politika, társadalom* 11, 2001: 1, 68–91; Frazon, Zsófia, *Múzeum és kiállítás: az újrarájzolás terei*, (PhD. diss. Pécsi Tudományegyetem Bölcsészettudományi Kar, 2009), available at

[https://nydi.btk.pte.hu/sites/nydi.btk.pte.hu/files/pdf/FrazonZsofia2010\\_disszertacio.pdf](https://nydi.btk.pte.hu/sites/nydi.btk.pte.hu/files/pdf/FrazonZsofia2010_disszertacio.pdf)

“A Memento Park Közéleti útja 1992-2005,” *Memento Park official website*, accessed 12.9.2020, available at <http://www.mementopark.hu/pages/conception/?lang=hu>

<sup>25</sup> 104/1996 (VII.16) Kormányrendelet a Magyar Köztársaság Kormánya és az Oroszországi Föderáció Kormánya között a hábouban elesett katonák és polgári áldozatok emlékének megörökítéséről, valamint sirjaik jogi helyzetéről szóló, Moszkvában 1995 márc.6-an aláírt megállapodás kihirdetéséről.

<sup>26</sup> “Apró szúrásokat kaptunk: Interjú Oroszország budapesti nagykövetével,” *Népszabadság* LIX, no. 85. (2001): 7.

<sup>27</sup> Damien McGuiness, “How a cyber attack transformed Estonia.” *BBC News* 27 April 2017, accessed 12.5.2020, website: <https://www.bbc.com/news/39655415>

<sup>28</sup> “News: Russia asks Prague for dismantled statue of Soviet General Konev,” *Deutsche Welle* 10.4.2020, accessed 12.5.2020, website: <https://www.dw.com/en/russia-asks-prague-for-dismantled-statue-of-soviet-general-konev/a-53089585> (accessed 12.5.2020).

<sup>29</sup> Tamara Süle, “A kitüntetett tér: Jogi, politikai és szimbólikus küzdelmek a budapesti Szabadságtéri szovjet emlékmű körül,” *Új Forrás* 43, no. 6 (2011), 24–36.

<sup>30</sup> “Felavatták Ronald Reagan, egykori amerikai elnök szobrát,” *Origo* 29.10.2010, accessed 28.6.2020, website: <https://www.origo.hu/itthon/20110629-felavattak-ronald-reagan-egykori-amerikai-elnok-szobor-budapest.html>

<sup>31</sup> Péter Szijjártó, “Folytatni kell a keleti nyitás politikáját,” *Website of the Hungarian Government*, last modified June 13, 2013. <http://2010-2014.kormany.hu/hu/miniszterelnokseg/hirek/szijjarto-folytatni-kell-a-keleti-nyitas-politikajat->

<sup>32</sup> “Martonyi: Marad a Szabadságtéri szovjet emlékmű,” *Mandiner* 26.6.2012, accessed 4.7.2020 [https://mandiner.hu/cikk/20120626\\_martonyi\\_marad\\_a\\_szabadsag\\_teri\\_szovjet\\_emlekmu](https://mandiner.hu/cikk/20120626_martonyi_marad_a_szabadsag_teri_szovjet_emlekmu) ;”Martonyi: Nincs napirenden a szovjet emlékmű áthelyezése,” *ATV* 2012.6.26, accessed 4.7.2020 [http://www.atv.hu/belfold/20120626\\_martonyi\\_nincs\\_napirenden\\_a\\_szovjet\\_emlekmuevek\\_athelyezese](http://www.atv.hu/belfold/20120626_martonyi_nincs_napirenden_a_szovjet_emlekmuevek_athelyezese)

<sup>33</sup> 1009/2015. (I. 20.) Korm. Határozata, “Szovjetunióba hurcolt politikai foglyok és kényszermunkások emlékévé meghirdetéséről,” accessed 4.7.2020, [https://archiv.beszedesmult.hu/sites/default/files/1009\\_2015\\_korm.rend\\_.pdf](https://archiv.beszedesmult.hu/sites/default/files/1009_2015_korm.rend_.pdf)

<sup>34</sup> Czene Gábor, “Elsumákkolt belvárosi szovjet megszállás,” *Népszava* 2017.06.08, accessed 4.7.2020, [https://nepszava.hu/1131460\\_elsumakolt-belvarosi-szovjet-megszallas](https://nepszava.hu/1131460_elsumakolt-belvarosi-szovjet-megszallas)

<sup>35</sup> “Az megvan, hogy mit üzentek az oroszok az emlékműgyalázás után?” *Pesti Srácok* 20 4.2017, [https://pestisraccok.hu/az-meg-van-hogy-mit-uzentek-az-oroszok-az-emlekmu-gyalazas-utan/?fb\\_comment\\_id=1294361223974388\\_1295071867236657](https://pestisraccok.hu/az-meg-van-hogy-mit-uzentek-az-oroszok-az-emlekmu-gyalazas-utan/?fb_comment_id=1294361223974388_1295071867236657)

<sup>36</sup> Balázs Hídvégi, Fidesz’s leader of communication stated that stupid children should not desecrate the Soviet Monument: “Fidesz: Semmilyen hülye gyerek ne dobálja meg, ne gyalázza meg a szovjet emlékművet!” *Mandiner* 23 April 2017.

<sup>37</sup> Joint Press Conference Following Talks with Prime Minister of Hungary Ferenc Gyurcsany, February 28, 2006, Budapest, website of the President of Russia, accessed 25.7.2020, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/23461>

<sup>38</sup> “Vladimir Putin laid flowers on the monument to the victims of events in 1956, the eternal flame of the revolution,” February 28, 2006, website of the President of Russia, accessed October 26, 2020, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/35131> ; Joób Sándor, “Putyin hozza vissza a sárospataki könyveket?” *Index* January 26, 2006, accessed October 26, 2020, at <https://index.hu/belfold/patak4529/>

<sup>39</sup> David Chance, “Hungarians divided over fate of Soviet monument,” *Reuters* April 3, 2007, accessed October 26, 2020, <https://de.reuters.com/article/us-hungary-russia/hungarians-divided-over-fate-of-soviet-monument-idUSL3020538420070403>

<sup>40</sup> See Viktor Orbán’s remembering in the documentary ‘Szabadságtér ’89 – 24 rész’ in the documentary’s YouTube footage at 27:54 – 59:30, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SP1beMItoAM>

<sup>41</sup> “Timeline – EU restrictive measures in response to the crisis in Ukraine,” *website of the European Council of the EU*, accessed October 26, 2020, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/sanctions/ukraine-crisis/history-ukraine-crisis/>

<sup>42</sup> Viktor Orbán, “Speech at the 25th Bálványos Summer Free University and Student Camp,” *Hungarian Spectrum*, <https://hungarianspectrum.org/2014/07/31/viktor-orbans-speech-at-the-xxv-balvanyos-free-summer-university-and-youth-camp-july-26-2014-baile-tusnad-tusnadfurdo/>

<sup>43</sup> “Orbán Viktor interjúja a Kommerszant című orosz napilapnak,” *Website of the Hungarian Government, Prime Minister’s Office*, last modified February 20, 2015, <https://2015-2019.kormany.hu/hu/a-miniszterelnok/beszedek-publikaciok-interjuk/a-minszki-megallapodas-alapjan-rendezni-lehet-az-eu-es-oroszorszag-kapcsolatait>

<sup>44</sup> Alexander Libman and Anastassia V. Obydenkova, “Understanding Authoritarian Regionalism,” *Journal of Democracy* 29, no. 4 (October 2018): 157-58.

<sup>45</sup> Jan Werner Müller, “Moscow’s Trojan Horse: in Europe’s Ideological War, Hungary Picks Putinism,” *Foreign Affairs*, August 6, 2014, accessed 6.8.2020, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/central-europe/2014-08-06/moscows-trojan-horse>; *RT News*, February 17, 2015, <https://www.rt.com/bulletin-board/233011-rtnews-february-17-12msk/>

<sup>46</sup> Russia Today, “Hungarian rhapsody: Will Putin’s visit to Viktor Orban give Russia a way into Europe?” *Russia Today News*, 17 February 2015, accessed 6.8.2020, <https://www.rt.com/news/232631-putin-hungary-turkish-stream/>

<sup>47</sup> “Putin Lays Wreath to Soviets Killed in 1956: Hungary’s law prohibits communist crimes justifying,” February 18, 2015, accessed October 26, 2020, at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qU5iPUJ11w>

<sup>48</sup> Text in Hungarian: “Hála és dicsőség a szovjet hősöknek, akik az 1956-os ellenforradalomban életüket áldozták a Magyar nép szabadságáért.” See also,

<https://index.hu/belfold/2015/02/16/tele-van-terfigyelokkal-a-megujult-szovjet-parcella/>

<sup>49</sup> <https://index.indavideo.hu/video/Kozel-allunk-az-orosz-milliardosok-szivehez>

<sup>50</sup> <https://www.parlament.hu/irom39/12861/12861.pdf>

<sup>51</sup> <https://www.parlament.hu/irom39/12861/12861-0001.pdf> also <https://hir.ma/belfold/ogy-a-fiumei-uti-szovjet-hadisir-feliratanak-modositasat-kerte-a-kormany/162804>

<sup>52</sup> This was aired only by the opposition media: “Megszereztük Putyin programját,” *Index*, 2015.2.16, [https://index.hu/belfold/2015/02/16/a-repulo-rol-koszoruzni-siet-putyin/?utm\\_source=mandiner&utm\\_medium=link&utm\\_campaign=mandiner\\_202007](https://index.hu/belfold/2015/02/16/a-repulo-rol-koszoruzni-siet-putyin/?utm_source=mandiner&utm_medium=link&utm_campaign=mandiner_202007)

<sup>53</sup> Boda, András, “‘Orbán elárulja 1956-ot’ – percről percre a tüntetésről,” *NOL* 16.2.2015. Available at <http://nol.hu/belfold/nemmel-varjak-putyint-1516495>

<sup>54</sup> “Orbán Viktor interjúja a Kommerszant című orosz napilapnak,” *Website of the Hungarian Government, Prime Minister’s Office*, last modified February 20, 2015, <https://2015-2019.kormany.hu/hu/a-miniszterelnok/beszedek-publikaciok-interjuk/a-minszki-megallapodas-alapjan-rendezni-lehet-az-eu-es-oroszorszag-kapcsolatait>

<sup>55</sup> Viktor Orbán, “Megerősítettük az együttműködést Oroszországgal,” *Website of the Hungarian Government, Prime Minister’s Office*, February 17, 2015 <https://2015-2019.kormany.hu/hu/a-miniszterelnok/beszedek-publikaciok-interjuk/megerositettuk-az-egyuttmukodest-oroszorszaggal>

<sup>56</sup> “The Hungarian character is determined by courage and the desire for freedom,” *Website of the Hungarian Government, Minister of Defence*, October 23, 2015, accessed October 26, 2020, <https://2015-2019.kormany.hu/en/ministry-of-defence/news/the-hungarian-character-is-determined-by-courage-and-the-desire-for-freedom>

<sup>57</sup> A Kormány 1728/2015. (X.8.) Korm. Határozata az 1956-os forradalom és szabadságharc emlékére meghirdetéséről. *Magyar Közlöny* 2015. évi 146. szám. IX. Határozatok Tára.

<sup>58</sup> “Orbán Viktor ünnepi beszéde az 1956-os forradalom 60. Évfordulóján,” *Website of the Hungarian Government, Prime Minister’s Office*, 23 October 2016, accessed October 26, 2020, <http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/orban-viktor-unnepi-beszede-az-1956-os-forradalom-60-evfordulojan/>

<sup>59</sup> “Венгрия вспоминает восстание 1956 года,” *Россия 1- Вести*, October 26, 2016, accessed 19.8.2020, <https://naviny.belsat.eu/en/news/kisyalyou-nazvau-vugorskae-paustanne-kalyarovaj-revalyutsyyaj-rasejskaga-ambasadara-vyklkali-na-dyvan/>

<sup>60</sup> “О телеканале,” *Новости*, accessed 24.9.2020, [https://russia.tv/article/show/article\\_id/7481/](https://russia.tv/article/show/article_id/7481/)

<sup>61</sup> “Венгерское восстание 1956 года,” *Levada Centr*, October 20, 2016, accessed Sept. 26, 2020. <https://www.levada.ru/2016/10/20/vengerskoe-vosstanie-1956-goda/>

<sup>62</sup> About Hungary, News in Brief, “Russian Ambassador summoned over comments about '56 Revolution and CIA role,” *Hungarian Government website*, October 26, 2016, accessed 4.7.2020, <http://abouthungary.hu/news-in-brief/russian-ambassador-summoned-over-comments-about-56-revolution-and-cia-role/>

<sup>63</sup> “Joint news conference with Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán,” *Website of the President of Russia*, last modified February 2, 2017, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/53806> ; “Interview with Péter Szijjártó: V konflikte mezhdru Zapadom i Rossijej Centralnaja Jevropa vseгда v proigrishe,” *Kommersant*, last modified January 24, 2017. <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/3200325>

<sup>64</sup> Orbán Viktor, “A magyarok szabadságvágyát nem lehet megfojtani,” *Website of A Magyar Forradalom éve 1956–2016*, October 23, 2017, accessed 4.7.2020, <https://www.magyarforradalom1956.hu/v/orban-viktor-a-magyarok-szabadsagvagyat-nem-lehet-megfojtani/>

<sup>65</sup> Viktor Orbán: “1956 nekünk nem emlék és nem történelem, hanem a szívünk és a gerincünk,” Orbán Viktor ünnepi beszéde az 1956.évi forradalom és szabadságharc 62. Évfordulóján, Budapest, October 23, 2018, *Website of the Hungarian Government, Prime Minister’s Office*, website at: <http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/orban-viktor-unnepi-beszede-az-1956-evi-forradalom-es-szabadsagharc-62-evfordulojan/>