



VICTORY MONUMENT

Riga, Latvia

56.93715, 24.08575



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Executive Summary

The 'Victory Monument' in Riga, imbued with the historical memory of World War II and the legacy of Soviet rule, has been the subject of a long-standing contestation in Latvian society. While some view it as a symbol of Soviet victory against Germany in World War II, others regard it as a symbol of Soviet re-occupation of Latvia. This case study contends that the meaning of historical reconciliation can be perceived differently by all parties involved, exploring how national memory often brings forth conflicting narratives. Further, this case examines how memory contestation can change due to newly arisen contextual determinators.

Introduction

'A Symbol of Victory or Occupation?' is the question posed by a History and Philosophy Professor at the University of Latvia, Mārtiņš Mintauris, concerning 'The Monument to the Soldiers of the Soviet Army - The Monument to the Liberators of Soviet Latvia and Riga from the German Fascist Invaders' (more widely known as the 'Victory Monument').¹ The question is at the core of Riga's contested nature of the 'Victory Monument.'

Since the restoration of independence in 1991, the monument has been subject to continuous proposals for its removal, transformation and even attempted demolition in 1997. While the debate was always sporadic, the last decade saw two popular petitions for its removal reaching Saeima (parliament). Focusing on the latter of the petitions, this case study highlights the latest developments as of June 2022 and sets them in the broader context of the contestation.

Background

The Monument

The monument to the Soldiers of the Soviet Army, also known as 'The Monument to the Liberators of Soviet Latvia and Riga from the German Fascist Invaders' or the 'Victory Monument', was unveiled on November 5, 1985. The monument was a product of two separate proposals submitted to a competition held by the federal government in 1976, intending to commission a memorial to commemorate the Soviet Army's victory over Nazi Germany and its allies in the Second World War (1939-1945). The monument was designed by Latvian sculptors Ļevs Bukovskis and Aivars Gulbis, and the construction work commenced in 1983.² At the centre of the composition is a 79-metre obelisk, adorned with five gold-plated stars in reference to the five years of the 'Great Patriotic War' (1941-1945), as the eastern theatre of the Second World War was known and commemorated in the Soviet Union.³ Three bronze figures of soldiers (the Liberators) are on one side of the obelisk, with a bronze figure of a woman (the Motherland) on the other. Each is situated on a granite plate-covered base. Behind the monument, the composition was supplemented with a reflecting pool. The memorial was one of the newest in the Soviet Union and, equally, the last Soviet war monument of its kind built in (Soviet) Latvia.⁴ It remains the largest, the most central, and the most contested of a few surviving Soviet War Monuments in Riga and its

¹ Mārtiņš Mintauris, "A Symbol of Victory or Occupation? The Soviet Victory Monument in Riga," *Museum of the Occupation of Latvia*.

² Ivars Strautmanis and Gunārs Asaris, *Padomju Latvijas memoriālie ansambļi* (Riga: Zinātne, 1986), 119.

³ It should be noted that the 'Great Patriotic War' omits the years 1939 and 1940 when the Soviet Union allied itself with Nazi Germany.

⁴ Olga Procevska, "The silent giant: space, memories and practices of the May 9th celebration in Riga," in *New Heroes – The Old Victims: Politics of Memory in Russia and the Baltics*, eds. Igors Gubenko, Deniss Hanovs and Vladislavs Malahovskis (Riga: Zinātne, 2016), 110; Sergejs Kruks, *Ārtelpas skulptūras semiotika, ekonomika un politika: pieminēkļu celtniecība un demontāža Latvijā, 1945-2010* (Riga: Neputns, 2011), 434-435.

vicinity.⁵

The park which houses the monument, Uzvaras Park, was created and opened in 1909 by Tsar Nicholas II as Latvia was then part of the Russian Empire. In 1919, the Latvian armed forces defeated the army of P. Bermont-Avalov, who was not subordinate to the command of the Western Volunteer Army under the command of General Yudenich. Latvia was recognised as an independent state by the Soviet government in 1920. In honour of this defeat and liberation, the park was renamed Victory Park in 1923.⁶ As the listing on the website of the Riga Municipal Monument Agency, which looks after monuments and decorative sculptures in the city, indicates, the monument retains its Soviet-era designation.⁷ Despite that, the monument is rarely referred to by its official name and the 'Victory Monument' remains a much more widespread reference.⁸ Connotations behind the 'victory,' however, remain polarised. While the monument's name alludes to the moment the Red Army entered Riga in October 1944 and thereby put an end to Nazi occupation, it similarly marked the return of Soviet authority or a second Soviet occupation (1940-1941 and 1944/5-1991). As a reflection of this mnemonic stance, on the 50th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, the Saeima (parliament) adjusted the commemorative calendar by moving the commemorative anchor from the Soviet-inherited to May 9 (colloquially known as the 'Victory Day') and towards a more western European May 8 (officially, the 'Defeat of Nazism and Second World War Victims Remembrance Day').

Communities of Memory

While no longer officially recognised as a commemorative day, 'Victory Day' continues to be marked by a significant portion of the Russian-speaking minority, which makes up almost half of Riga's population.⁹ Since the 1990s, the commemoration has evolved from a 'silent remembrance' to a large-scale, festival-like celebration.¹⁰ This evolution of 'Victory Day' went hand-in-hand with the transformation of commemorative culture in Russia in the 2000s and its local appropriation under the patronage of political parties in Latvia, most prominently the Social Democratic Party – 'Harmony,' and an associated non-governmental organisation 'May 9.lv.' Another important party is the Russian Union of Latvia, supported by ethnic Russians

⁵ Kristīne Čakstiņa and Rihards Pētersons, *Latvija un tās iedzīvotāji cīņā par savu valsti un pretestība okupāciju varām, 1918–1991: piemiņas vietu ceļvedis pa Rīgu un Rīgas apkārtni/Latvia and Its Citizens in The Struggle for Freedom, and Their Resistance against The Occupying Powers, 1918–1991: A Guide to Memorial Sites in Riga and Vicinity* (Riga: Occupation Museum Association of Latvia, 2018), 335–340.

⁶ UrbexHub, "Victory Memorial To Soviet Army," *UrbexHub*, n.d.

⁷ "Pieminekļis Padomju karavīriem – Padomju Latvijas un Rīgas atbrīvotājiem no vācu fašistiskajiem iebrucējiem," *Rīgas pieminēkļu aģentūra*.

⁸ For example, Ojārs Spārītis, *Riga's Monuments and Decorative Sculptures*. Second edition (Riga: Nacionālais apgāds, 2007), 41; Čakstiņa and Pētersons, *Latvija un tās iedzīvotāji cīņā par savu valsti un pretestība okupāciju varām, 1918–1991*, 335–336.

⁹ That is, 47.1% are Latvians, 36.4 % Russian, 3.7% Belarussian, 3.4% Ukrainian (the last three groups are often subsumed under the category of "Russian-speakers," as many primarily use Russian in their everyday communication). For full population statistics see "Rīga 2020: Rīgas pilsētas ekonomikas profils," *Rīgas domes Pilsētas attīstības departaments*, accessed 13 July 2021.

¹⁰ Vita Zelče, "The Transformation of 'Holiday' in Post-Soviet Space: Celebrating Soviet Victory Day in Latvia," *Europe-Asia Studies* 70, no. 3 (2018): 409–415.

and other Russian-speaking minorities. In many ways, 'Victory Day' and 'Victory Monument' became a point of identity convergence for many members of the Russian-speaking community. According to the results of a 2017 survey, while 61.2% of Russian speakers marked 'Victory Day,' only 5.4% of Latvians did the same.¹¹ However, the Russian-speaking community is far from homogeneous. While there is a correlation between the positive assessment of the Soviet period and the propensity to mark May 9 as 'Victory Day,' the results of a survey conducted by Ammon Cheskin further suggest a noticeable generational difference among the 'Russian speakers.' Younger generations are much more likely to engage with simultaneous, hybrid memories of both 'liberation' and 'occupation' (for example, via the narrative of 'forced annexation').¹² The 'liberation' narrative is similarly maintained and supported in Latvia by the Russian Federation through gestures such as embassy staff participation on May 9.¹³ With these various factors to account for, pronounced ethnolinguistic memory divisions persist among 'Latvians' and 'Russian-speakers,' with the former much more likely to support the occupation narrative at the core of the Latvian state-supported memory regime.¹⁴

The 'Victory Monument' remains at the commemorative and visual identity centre of 'Victory Day' in Riga. However, a small-scale study led by Olga Procevska from the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Latvia suggests the monument can be understood as 'the silent giant' – 'it remains silent for most of the year and is important (solely) as the basis for the festive infrastructure.'¹⁵ Nevertheless, while there might be limited knowledge of or interest in the 'Victory Monument' outside its function during 'Victory Day,' 85.1% of the Russian-speaking respondents in the 2017 survey indicated a positive attitude towards the monument, and only 2.5% expressed a negative view.¹⁶ In contrast, 52.8% of Latvian-speaking respondents viewed the monument positively, and more significantly, 33.2% viewed it negatively.¹⁷ While the polarisation of attitudes towards the 'Victory Monument' is not as pronounced as towards the 'Victory Day,' the former's inherent connection to the latter and the importance of the two for the Russian-speaking community make contestations of the 'Victory Monument' a proxy for the broader debates on the collective memory and identity in contemporary Latvia.

¹¹ Andris Saulītis and Mārtiņš Kaprāns, "Latvijas sociālās atmiņas monitorings. Ziņojums Nr.2 (2017)," *Sociālās atmiņas pētniecības centrs/ Latvijas Universitāte*.

¹² Ammon Cheskin, *Russian Speakers in Post-Soviet Latvia: Discursive Identity Strategies* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 133-140.

¹³ Cf. Aleksandra Kuczyńska-Zonik, "Russia's monument policy in the Baltic States," in *Russia and the EU: Spaces of Interaction*, eds. Thomas Hoffmann and Andrey Makarychev (Oxon: Routledge, 2019), pp. 52-65. For more context, see Katja Wezel, "Memory Conflicts as Barrier to Reconciliation: Post-Soviet Disputes between the Baltic States and Russia," in *The Former Soviet Union and East Central Europe between Conflict and Reconciliation*, eds. Lily Gardner Feldman, Raisa Barash, Samuel Goda and André Zempelburg (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2020), pp.131-148.

¹⁴ Saulītis and Kaprāns, *Latvijas sociālās atmiņas monitorings*; Cf. Mārtiņš Kaprāns, "Remembering communism in Latvia: a nationalizing state and the multi-directionality of the past," in *The New Heroes – The Old Victims: Politics of Memory in Russia and the Baltics*, eds. Iğors Gubenko, Deniss Hanovs and Vladislavs Malahovskis (Riga: Zinātne, 2016), 74-107.

¹⁵ Procevska, "The silent giant," 114, 116-117.

¹⁶ Saulītis and Kaprāns, *Latvijas sociālās atmiņas monitorings*.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

History of the Contestation

The 'Victory Monument' has a long history of contestation. Over the last thirty years, it encompassed several calls for its renaming, removal of its elements (for example, figures of Soviet soldiers), relocation, and addition of explanatory signs or further memorial structures (both complementary and oppositional). It was even subject to an unsuccessful attempt by the ultra-nationalist group 'Pērkonkrusts' (Thunder Cross) to blow it up in 1997, with two group members losing their lives. As of 2021, 'Victory Monument' remains largely unchanged. While the contestation has always been present since the election of the Riga City Council in 1994, the 2019 petition for the removal of the 'Victory Monument' to the Saeima has been a turning point in the history of the contestation.¹⁸

The 2019 petition originated on the community initiative platform ManaBalss.lv [MyVoice.lv] in 2017. The initiative's author, Uģis Polis, insisted that the 'Victory Monument' is a symbol 'that reminds the Latvian people of the tremendous suffering due to the Soviet occupation.'¹⁹ The 'Victory Monument' unacceptability was further explicitly connected to its role in the May 9 celebration. In the absence of the monument, the petition argued, 'the honour and dignity of the Republic of Latvia and the Latvian nation will be restored,' and the park will be free 'from the Kremlin's propaganda fed, not too intelligent and aggressive hordes of people' (Russian-speakers).²⁰ The petition was directed against the monument as a symbol of occupation and the basis of the festive infrastructure of 'Victory Day.' The petition further argued for necessary changes to the international agreements with the Russian Federation. That is the agreements signed in 2008 in compliance with the 1949 Geneva Convention,²¹ with one clause stipulating maintenance and preservation of memorial structures and mass soldier burial grounds on the territory of Latvia and vice versa.²² The still recent unsuccess of the previous petition in 2016, the explicit antagonism and its proposed revision of the conservative interpretation of bilateral agreements can partly explain its slow progression. We should also keep in mind that from the results of the 2017 survey, we can gather that 52,8 % of Latvian speaking-correspondents viewed the monument positively at that time, so it might be that there is still no majority. The required threshold was surpassed only in early 2019 after the Riga City Council announced plans to renovate the 'Victory Park' and public speculation that part of the budget might be allocated for the renovation of the 'Victory Monument.'

¹⁸ Cf. Daina Bleiere, "Overcoming the Communist and Authoritarian Past in Latvia: History and Monuments in the Political Discourse," in *Postdiktatorische Geschichtskulturen im Süden und Osten Europas: Bestandsaufnahme und Forschungsperspektiven*, ed. Stefan Troebst (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2010), 384-388.

¹⁹ Available as an attachment to the Minutes of 2 April 2019 session of Saeima's Mandate, Ethics and Submissions Committee, *Saeima*.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ vLex, "Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Latvia and the Government of the Russian Federation on the status of Latvian burial sites in the territory of the Russian Federation and Russian burial sites in the territory of the Republic of Latvia," vLex, August 22, 2008.

²² See - Article 34(2)(b) Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of August 12, 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I), June 8, 1977.

In opposition, the 2019 petition, 'On the Protection of the Monument to the Fighters against Nazism,' was launched by Tatjana Ždanoka, a member of the European Parliament and a co-chair of the *Latvijas Krievu savienība* (Latvian Russian Union) which positions itself as a defender of the Russian-speaking community.²³ In just over a week, the counter-petition gathered over 20,000 signatures and was submitted to Saeima. The counter-initiative was concise and argued that appeals for the monument's removal 'contribute to the division of society and threaten the unity of Europe in its celebration of the fighters against Nazism.'²⁴ It called for the legal protection of the 'Victory Monument' (as well as any comparable monument in Latvia). As it mainly emphasised the role of the Soviet Army in the 'anti-Hitler coalition' and the defeat of Nazism, the subject of the Soviet occupation was conspicuous by its absence. However, before their protest outside the Saeima building on May 9, 2019, the Latvian Russian Union argued that 'deputies [who] threaten our Monument with their highly paid finger: they receive their salary-surcharge because the real warriors-liberators defeated the Nazis and their fellow legionnaires.'²⁵ The two initiatives were split along either 'liberation' or 'occupation' narratives and drew rigid mental divisions between communities of memory. The support for the above initiatives was shaped by two camps of 'mnemonic warriors,' each arguing that their positions were true and correct and the other false.²⁶

Decision-Making Processes

When the petition on the 'Removal of the Victory Monument' reached the Mandate, Ethics and Submissions Committee of Saeima in 2019, the Committee decided to involve representatives of different organisations, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Culture, Riga Municipal Monument Agency, National Cultural Heritage Board, the Occupation Museum Association of Latvia and the Latvian Association of Politically Repressed in the discussion process.²⁷ When the expanded Committee reconvened on April 24, 2019, it voted in favour of further deliberations on the initiative for the 'Removal of the Victory Monument.' However, it rejected further discussions of the counter-initiative 'On the Protection of the Monument to the Fighters against Nazism.'²⁸ It was the expected outcome. The reasons the Committee gave, however, were technical rather than mnemonic. As a member of the Committee, Janīna Kursīte-Pakule explained to parliament the protection of monuments was considered as already 'sufficient in the existing laws.'²⁹ The 'Victory Monument' did not qualify for an added layer of protection that the existing lists of protected monuments grant and for which Tatjana Ždanoka advocated. The parliament supported the Committee's conclusion

²³ Available as an attachment to the Minutes of 24 April 2019 session of Saeima's Mandate, Ethics and Submissions Committee, *Saeima*.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ A statement published by the Latvian Russian Union on 8 May 2019, *Latvian Russian Union/ Facebook*.

²⁶ Jan Kubik and Michael Bernhard, "A Theory of the Politics of Memory," in *Twenty Years After Communism: The Politics of Memory and Commemoration*, eds. Michael Bernhard and Jan Kubik (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 13.

²⁷ Minutes of the 2 April 2019 session of Saeima's Mandate, Ethics and Submissions Committee.

²⁸ Minutes of the 24 April 2019 meeting of Saeima's Mandate, Ethics and Submissions Committee.

²⁹ Transcript of the 6 June 2019 session of Saeima, *Saeima*.

and voted against the initiative on June 6, 2019. The exception was the members of the Social Democratic Party – 'Harmony' who voted against the Committee's suggestion (that is, for further discussions of the initiative).³⁰

On June 13, 2019, the parliament was presented with the initiative on the 'Removal of the Victory Monument.' Without any discussion, the parliament once again followed the Committee's suggestion and voted to pass the petition along for further discussion within the Commission on Foreign Affairs and Education, Culture and Science. Along with members of the Social Democratic Party – 'Harmony,' members of the liberal party 'Development/For!' voted against.³¹ Most unsurprising among the parties that voted in support of the petition was the National Alliance 'All For Latvia!' – 'For Fatherland and Freedom/LNNK.' Furthermore, the promise to work towards the monument's removal could be found in the National Alliance's electoral programme for the parliament elections in 2018.³²

After the summer break, the joint session of the Committee on Foreign Affairs and Commission on Education, Culture and Science convened on October 29, 2019, and the decision was made to create a working group within the parliament that would work on the proposal concerning the possible future of the 'Victory Monument.' Whilst the first tentative steps towards the formation of the working group were taken at the Committee on Foreign Affairs session on November 20, 2019, as of autumn of 2021, the proposal the working group was meant to develop is 'still in progress.'³³

In January 2021, the chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Rihards Kols, presented his vision of a potential future solution in an article published on the website of the National Alliance. Acknowledging the difficulty of the removal due to the agreements with the Russian Federation, Kols suggested transforming the 'Victory Park' as a whole. He recommended dividing the park into three sections: the territory around the 'Victory Monument' would be transformed into a memorial to the victims of totalitarian regimes, while the other two sections of the park would be dedicated to the 'members of the national resistance movement – partisans, forest brothers, dissidents,' and the 'freedom fighters.'³⁴ On a symbolic level, this proposal strongly resonates with Latvia's 'constitutional duty of memory politics'.³⁵ According to the preamble added to the constitution in 2014, 'the people of Latvia [...] honour their freedom fighters, commemorate victims of foreign powers, condemn the Communist and Nazi totalitarian regimes and their crimes.'³⁶ This state-supported memory also reflects one of the

³⁰ Voting results on the rejection of the collective application of 16,544 Latvian citizens "On the protection of monuments to the fighters against Nazism", *Saeima*.

³¹ Voting results on the further progress of the collective application of 10,822 Latvian citizens "Removal of the Victory Monument", *Saeima*.

³² "Plašā programma 13. Saeimai: Valoda, nacionālā identitāte, vienota sabiedrība", *National Alliance*.

³³ "Kolektīvie iesniegumi - Mandātu, ētikas un iesniegumu komisija," *Saeima*.

³⁴ Rihards Kols, "Uzvaras parka antoloģija un nākotne," *National Alliance*, 18 January 2021.

³⁵ Mārtiņš Kaprāns, "Diskusija "Kā atmiņu politika ietekmē Austrumeiropas demokrātijas" HD 1080p", YouTube video, posted by "Goethe-Institut Riga," 19 December 2017.

³⁶ Likumi.lv, "The Constitution of the Republic of Latvia," *Likumi.lv*.

core sources of the contested nature of the 'Victory Monument.' While the monument was always at the centre of various initiatives over the years, the divergent memories of the Second World War were always at stake.

Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in early 2022, Latvian Prime Minister Krišjānis Kariņš said that 'Victory Monument' was 'a relic of the occupation times can be regarded as a reminder of some sort that has no place in our country anymore.'³⁷ This statement did not come without protest. Between May 9, when Russia commemorates the Second World War victory, and 10, 2022, unauthorised gatherings took place in Uzvaras Park. The Latvian Special Task Battalion, state, and municipal police forces were ordered to disperse the crowd on May 10, 2022, because these demonstrations were connected to glorifying the Soviet regime and modern Russia.³⁸ Interior Minister Marija Golubeva came under scrutiny for the events these two days, with the National Alliance party demanding her dismissal from her seat.³⁹ The party announced that many people at the function were aggressive and did not hide their support for Russia's invasion of Ukraine, something they expected Golubeva to grasp.⁴⁰ Golubeva subsequently resigned on May 16.⁴¹

Despite these controversies, on May 13, 2022, the city council of Riga held an emergency meeting to discuss the monument's future. In a 39-13 decision, the council agreed to instruct the Riga Monuments Agency to perform all the tasks needed to dismantle the monument in Uzvaras Park.⁴² The decision came days after the Saeima lifted legal barriers to the monument's demolition. This was done through an amendment to the aforementioned agreement between Latvia and Russia on preserving Soviet-era monuments. Kols added that Latvia will continue to 'fulfil its international obligations regarding burials and cemeteries holding the remains of Soviet troops.'⁴³ Riga Mayor Mārtiņš Staķis stated on the decision that although 'it will not be cheap,' the demolition is not only a local matter but a national one.

Summary and Conclusions

The decision-making processes behind the 'Victory Monument' in Riga have attempted to propel a dialogue that engages communities of memory rather than pins them against each other. This case explores how the interpretation of memory and events changes over time; it demonstrates the variety of ways the government on both federal and municipal levels, the public of all ethnic backgrounds, and the media can play a role in the contestation process. In this instance, the case serves as an example of the schism in the population between ethnic Latvians – who believe the Soviets were oppressors and occupiers – and the significant

³⁷ LSM.lv, "Soviet memorial's days are numbered, confirms Latvian PM," *LSM.lv*, May 6, 2022.

³⁸ LSM.lv, "Access denied to Soviet monument after pro-Russian rally Tuesday," *LSM.lv*, May 11, 2022.

³⁹ LSM.lv, "Pressure mounts on Interior Minister as coalition party threatens to quit government," *LSM.lv*, May 12, 2022.

⁴⁰ Andrius Sytas, "Latvian minister resigns after commemoration of Soviet wartime victory," *Reuters*, May 16, 2022.

⁴¹ Andrius Sytas, "Latvian minister resigns after commemoration of Soviet wartime victory," *Reuters*, May 16, 2022.

⁴² Latvian Public Broadcasting, "Riga City Council Orders Demolition Of 'Victory' Monument," *Latvian Public Broadcasting*, May 13, 2022.

⁴³ RFE, "Riga City Council Votes To Dismantle Soviet Victory Monument," *RadioFreeEurope*, May 14, 2022.

Russian-ethnic minority in Latvia who see them as liberators. Thus, the distinct interpretations of the Soviets' time in Latvia are brought forth by different populations and their experiences.

Lastly, this case shows that at the core of the contested nature of the 'Victory Monument' and many monuments like it worldwide boast conflicting meanings of liberation and occupation. Other Baltic states are similarly confronting their contested history with the Soviet Union, such as Lithuania and Estonia, where most of the population contend with the Soviet era as either a liberating time or a time when the Soviets used its victory over Nazi Germany to forcefully annex those nations into the Soviet Union. Some fear now that Vladimir Putin, the President of Russia, could use the same argument of protecting ethnic Russians, estimated at a million who still live in the Baltics,⁴⁴ to reintegrate them into the Russian Federation. Krista Viksnins, the program assistant with the Transatlantic Defence and Security Program at the Centre for European Policy Analysis, warned: 'Just as Vladimir Putin issued blood-curdling threats to Ukraine before his unprovoked assault, so too he has menaced the Baltic states.'⁴⁵

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Last updated January 2024

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⁴⁴ Holly Ellyatt, "Fears grow among Russia's neighbors that Putin might not stop at Ukraine," *CNBC*, March 8, 2022.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

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About Contested Histories

Many contestations have been over memorials, street names, and other physical representations of historical legacies in public spaces in recent years. These contestations often reflect deeper societal tensions, whether triggered by political transitions, demographic shifts, inter-ethnic strife, or a growing awareness of unaddressed historical injustices.

Contested Histories is a multi-year initiative designed to identify principles, processes, and best practices for addressing these contestations at the community or municipal level and in the classroom. Conflicts about history, heritage, and memory are a global phenomenon. Although each case is different, comparative cases can indicate lessons learned and reflect best practices.

About IHJR at EuroClio

The Institute for Historical Justice and Reconciliation (IHJR) is a research centre at the European Association for History Educators (EuroClio) in The Hague, The Netherlands. The IHJR works with educational and public policy institutions to organise and sponsor historical discourse in pursuit of acknowledgement and the resolution of historical disputes in divided communities and societies.

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To cite this publication:

Contested Histories, "Victory Monument in Riga, Latvia", *Contested Histories Case Study #94* (January 2024),
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Contested Histories is funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are, however, those of the authors only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

