Article

'Memory must be defended': Beyond the politics of mnemonical security

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Abstract
This article supplements and extends the ontological security theory in International Relations (IR) by conceptualizing the notion of mnemonical security. It engages critically the securitization of memory as a means of making certain historical remembrances secure by delegitimizing or outright criminalizing others. The securitization of historical memory by means of law tends to reproduce a sense of insecurity among the contesters of the 'memory' in question. To move beyond the politics of mnemonical security, two lines of action are outlined: (i) the 'desecuritization' of social remembrance in order to allow for its repoliticization, and (ii) the rethinking of the self–other relations in mnemonic conflicts. A radically democratic, agonistic politics of memory is called for that would avoid the knee-jerk reactive treatment of identity, memory and history as problems of security. Rather than trying to secure the unsecurable, a genuinely agonistic mnemonic pluralism would enable different interpretations of the past to be questioned, in place of pre-defining national or regional positions on legitimate remembrance in ontological security terms.

Introduction

> Just like families should have the right to complete their own photo albums, such a right should also be reserved for states and nations. Otherwise we would be asked to undress ourselves completely, so that our identity could be utterly destroyed. …attacks on the identity [are] targeted in the first place [at] …the most important part of our identity – its core part. The core part is made of our inheritance. Of what we are and what is our inherent being like. That is precisely why all states, nations and people hold dear the story of their origins and inception…We should not deceive ourselves that our perseverance could be guaranteed exclusively with the sword of truth. (Aaviksoo, 2011)

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Thus spoke Jaak Aaviksoo, the Estonian Minister of Defence, at a high-profile government-organized conference on information warfare and psychological defence which took place in the context of the then recently intensified action by Russia towards its former Soviet dependants, to undermine their international image and credibility inter alia by attempting to delegitimize their respective accounts of the Second World War (WWII). If ever a clearer declaration of the ontological security argument was needed, as well as an exposition of its inherent ethical conundrums, here is one. It demonstrates the spread of security outside of its traditional realm of physical survival and it establishes the inevitable connection between state identity and security, underscoring the role of 'national memory' in the biographical self-narrative of a state. Further, it exposes a quintessentially modern political imaginary where the supremacy of sovereign states is an unquestionable fact around the security of which all political life should circulate. An assumption is proposed about the irrefutable interchangeability of the national mythscape and memoryscape (Bell, 2003, 2008). Invoking a 'state's right for informational self-determination' (Aaviksoo, 2011), it makes the case for the right of a nation-state as a self-conscious entity to secure its persistence as itself, if necessary by secrets, lies, silences and disguises. It demarcates the limits of the inside of a state from the outside world by naturalizing the policing of the borders of the self from the perils of the other (cf. Walker, 1993), highlighting the 'compactness' of identity (Aaviksoo, 2009) as a vital necessity for states and nations to survive in the age of 'information warfare'. In short, it *ontologizes* security, transforming it into an inescapable condition of international politics.

In addition to raising major ontological and epistemological questions about determining the limits of a collective 'self', anthropomorphizing the state and its collective 'memory', we are presented with a vision of the world where war serves as a key for understanding politics. 'Our memory must be defended' emerges as a variation of the omnipresent security discourse, as yet another ringtone of the familiar 'society must be defended' logic (Foucault, 2003). Pursuing the security of the biographical self-narrative of the state (Berenskoetter, 2014) (in which mnemonical narratives occupy a central position)[1] as part of the state's security policy invites us to ponder on the ethical implications of framing historical remembrance as a security issue. In particular, striving to fixate on certain collective memories (cf. Steele, 2008: 55) by the juridification of the frames of legitimate social remembrance raises a host of thorny questions about the attempted delimitation, or even closure, of a political discussion on various violent and controversial historical events.

This article dissects the concept of mnemonical security – the idea that distinct understandings of the past should be fixed in public remembrance and consciousness in order to buttress an actor's stable sense of self as the basis of its political agency – against the backdrop of a rapidly expanding research programme on ontological security in IR (Croft, 2012; Giddens, 1991; Kay, 2012; Kinnvall, 2004; Krolikowski, 2008; Lupovici, 2012; Mitzen, 2006a, 2006b; Roe, 2008; Rumelili, 2013; Steele, 2005, 2008; Zarakol, 2010). It inquires about the possibilities of thinking about identity formation outside of a security framework in order to move beyond the politics of mnemonical security. While deliberately normative in scope, the article discusses briefly a number of examples from the actual processes of securitization in the transnational mnemopolitics of contemporary Europe in order also to underpin suggested normative moves in social analysis. Due to the limitations of space, these examples are offered as illustrative vignettes rather than genuine case studies.

The core argument of this paper is that the securitization of 'memory' as the temporal core of a state's biographical narrative leads eventually to new security dilemmas and, therefore, to a reduced sense of security among the competitive securitizers of issues of public remembrance in international politics. The securitization of historical 'memory' whereby 'our' narrative of the past is seen as being viciously misunderstood and misrepresented by other(s), whose vision of the past is thus regarded as existentially endangering for our existence as 'us', tends to reproduce mutual

insecurities and reinstate historical animosities instead of alleviating them (Mälksoo, 2012). Moreover, the ontologization of the state's need to seek and sustain the intactness and consistency of its identity could dangerously depoliticize the act of protecting a biographical narrative of the state. Possible strategic calculations behind the 'ontological' security movements could thus be easily over-looked, and the exercise of power by mnemopolitical entrepreneurs engaged in the process disregarded. Legislation of memory on the assumption that collective memory and, by extension, ontological security, can be cemented by law, in fact depoliticizes it. Setting legal frames on how 'our story' can be remembered is, in a sense, the ultimate securitization, because it 'ontologizes' a particular story, making it an unchanging part of the state's self-definition. It thus enables the power of the ruling regime to be confirmed, encouraging state-bound remembrance practices and thus constituting the political community in a particular way. Seeking to outlaw struggles over possible narratives thus rejects the fundamentally political nature of state identity and, in doing so, potentially curbs certain political and societal activity defined as undermining and endangering for this identity.

Accordingly, I posit that 'memory' as a referent object of security needs to be desecuritized, but not depoliticized (in the sense of Edkins, 1999) whereby issues would remain constrained within already accepted criteria of a specific social form (such as the constitution of a state's self-identity against 'security threats') and dealt with by a technology of expertise or the rule of bureaucracy. It is argued that, rather, we should take notice of the political nature of collective memory as a frame of reference which implicates and produces broadly conceived subjectivity (Edkins, 1999: 1). While memories serve as 'temporal orientation devices that make past meaningful by providing a sense of where "we" have come from and what "we" have been through' (Berenskoetter, 2014: 270), it is important to be aware of the power games in the sanctioning and institutionalization of particular memories . The narrow, state-centric view of the 'subject' of politics, which dismisses those not subscribing to, or explicitly resisting, the sovereign national narratives (bearing in mind that 'we' can never be fully represented and therewith secured anyway; see Stern, 2006: 201–202), should thus be unsettled. The deconstruction of the ontological security claims of states sheds light on the narrative nature of states as social beings (Ringmar, 1996; Epstein, 2011), thereby making it possible to imagine different, less fixed and more pluralistic mnemonical narratives for their 'national' biographies. Historical remembrance as a securitized issue should be brought back to the realm of political engagement and debate. Instead of silencing or depoliticization (which the narrow understanding of politics as public policy, requiring government decisions and resource allocations, essentially amounts to), repoliticization is necessary for generating emphatic understanding and less mnemonical confrontation between nations and communities (cf. Edkins, 1999: 11).

The article proceeds thus. The first section outlines the ontological security argument as it has been revealed in IR, with an emphasis on the mnemonical dimension of ontological security. Next, the problematic case of the securitization of memory is conceptualized and illuminated against the backdrop of contemporary Eastern Europe where competitive claims are being made on securing 'national memories' from Russia to Poland, Ukraine and beyond, ranging from mere discursive securitization to the proposal and adoption of pertinent legislation on the meaning of WWII and the communist experience at domestic, pan-European, and wider international levels. The third section then presents an exploration of the possibilities of dismantling the 'memory room' in the house of ontological security by means of strategies of desecuritization and repoliticization. The paper concludes with a discussion of agonistic pluralism as an alternative political imaginary to mnemonical security.

Mnemonical security as ontological security

The conventional story of security is well known; at least, so we think (Barkawi, 2011). As a concept, security has been expanded from demarcating the need for physical survival as a prerequisite

for states to persevere to encompassing the needs of multiple social actors for ontological consistency as an imperative for the sustainability of their identities, thereby enabling their political agency. Ontological security theory as advanced in IR in various ways (cf. Huysmans, 1998; Kinnvall, 2004; McSweeney, 1999; Mitzen, 2006a; Steele, 2008) argues security-as-being (as distinct from security-as-survival) to be an ontological self-identity need, or an ontologically inherent condition rather than a culturally circumscribed and constructed social good. Ontological security is accordingly a basic premise for constituting a self (Rumelili, 2013). It emerges as a logical derivative of the different constitutive conditions of a state. Hence, the distinction between security-as-survival and security-as-being reflects the distinctive, but equally vital, features of a state – that is, the security of its ʿbodyʾ (e.g. territory, people, sovereign institutions) and ʿideaʾ (i.e. the biographical self-narrative of a state, including its historical memory, and the recognition of other states to its being as such). Consequently, the realm of dangers also embraces both physical and normative threats, whilst the endurance of the particular forms of existence of actors are valued as equal to their physical existence itself (Creppell, 2011: 455). The notion of 'normative threat' draws attention to normative violation as a specific kind of transgression (besides physical violation) which 'elicits a sensation of harm not because there is no order (chaos) beyond oneʾs border, but because of an alternative order' (p. 471). It appears, then, that both security-as-survival and security-as-being are driven and ordered by the 'ethos of survival' (Odysseos, 2002: 413) because the survival of a physical body is not sufficient without the survival of a combination of ideational features of a state, the intactness of which is equal to its physical endurance. Survival thus still emerges as an overriding imperative of both modes of security (cf. Rumelili, 2013). Even though debating the narrowly materialist and rationalist accounts of security studies as traditionally conceived, the concept of ontological security nonetheless sustains the idea of security being the greatest social value, the highest objective of any social action, indeed the universal good. Ontological security reaffirms the categorical preeminence of survival as the ontological drive to protect oneself and surpass the other, if necessary (see Odysseos, 2002: 414). Accordingly, each state also wishes to secure its being as a certain sort of being; to guarantee its cohesiveness in order to reduce the fundamental unpredictability of the surrounding environment and its own vulnerability vis-a-vis other political actors.[2]

Remembering in a particular manner is instrumental in order to sustain a coherent and consistent 'biographical narrative' of a state:

> [I]t creates the 'person' of the state. Without narrative, without a state agent collecting the history of a nation-state into a story that informs current actions, the Self of a state does not exist … conceptually, the 'idea' of the state cannot exist without this narration to develop a sense of continuity. (Steele, 2008: 20; see also Berenskoetter, 2014)

Memory thus emerges as a vital self-identity need as it is invoked to constitute the central narrative of a state about its past in order to form a core part of its consistent sense of the self in the present. The intactness of a collective actorʾs mnemonic vision of itself and its place in the world thus becomes apparent as a prerequisite for an internally cohesive self. Deconstructing the central historical backbone of the self could seriously disrupt and destabilize the respective identity and hamper its agency as an actor in international affairs. However, it is imperative to ask *whose* history, memory, identity, and security we are really talking about in each particular case; to distinguish between the modalities of public, social, and political remembrance, because the tendency of states to 'homogenize' their national identity at the expense of certain 'strangers' is always there (Huysmans, 1998). The successful endorsement of a state's story of origin does not emerge without the exercise of power over what to remember and how the exercise of power over what to

remember and how. What counts for some as legitimate selections in completing one's own 'family album' reads as wilful exclusions and untruthful enforcements for others. The way we conceptualize the collective/social/public 'memory' of a state and the processes of 'remembering' collectively is of special significance in delineating the nature of the political community in question, in addition to the nature of the ontological security of this community. Pondering on the ethical implications of engaging the argument of historical memory in discourses and practices of security policy is therefore an imperative.

More problematically, the social framing of issues of historical remembrance as ontological security problems and the related lax use of military metaphors (such as 'information warfare' and 'information threats') condition and legitimate the rhetoric and the means of security for handling them, thereby enhancing the potential of militarizing a state's historical self-understanding and culture as a whole. This is precarious not only with regard to the tendency of this action to produce, inevitably, a tangled web of new security dilemmas, such as identity-based security demands possibly conflicting with the physical security needs (Mitzen, 2006a), or situations of ontological dissonance in which the multiple distinct identities of states are simultaneously threatened, forcing the state to choose between them (Lupovici, 2012); the securitization of 'national remembrance' also tends to replay the classical security dilemma as one state's memory of a same historical event is not necessarily that of others, and the increase of a sense of ontological security of one state at securing its 'memory' often comes at the concurrent expense of its neighbours' sense of ontological security. Another historical narrative might thus come to be perceived as a threat to the ontological security of the self, and a so-called 'information warfare' necessitating 'psychological defence' (as also described by Aaviksoo in the introductory quotation of this present paper) might ensue (Steele, 2008: 2–3). The Baltic–Russian 'memory wars' concerning the interpretation of the course and consequences of WWII (Muižnieks, 2011) and the Ukrainian–Russian–Polish controversies on the institutionalized remembrance of historical figures, such as Stepan Bandera (Zhurzhenko, 2013), are instructive here. The indefatigability of these mnemonic conflicts, despite vigorous attempts to solve them once and for all by means of various mnemopolitical measures, demonstrates how seeking ontological security via securitizing one's 'memory' reduces somewhat the relative sense of security for the participants of a particular confrontation over remembering the past because it tends instead to amplify negative spirals of ontological insecurity. Moreover, it also seriously curbs the self-reflexivity of the political subject, be it a nation, or a state, about its own past and its role in the present self-understanding and self-representation in the international arena. While the disruption of the automatized 'memory–nation nexus' (Olick, 2003: 5–6), or the 'national identity equals memory-connection' (cf. Bell, 2009), enables a state to interrogate better its sense of self, the securitization of historical memory by means of law gives rise instead to the risk of getting stuck in old and counterproductive roles in international politics (see Mitzen, 2006a, 2006b; Hopf, 2010). Because 'an honest remembrance of the past can challenge the integrity of the narrative of state identity' (Zarakol, 2010: 7), seeking to deduce the ontological security of a state from an embellished mythscape instead of a fair and self-critical poking of the memories of the past remains dangerously alluring (cf. Bell, 2008).

Hence, while mnemonical security captures crucial elements of the identity–security nexus as a notion, it also illustrates the dangers of allowing the metaphoric arsenal of security and war to travel untamed over all other fields of analysis of international political phenomena. To be sure, the assumption of the possibility of ultimate security of a state identity and consequently of its 'national memory' is more commonly shared among the security practitioners than by much of the ontological security literature. Rumelili (2013), Steele (2008) and Mitzen (2006a) in particular acknowledge that seeking ontological security by rigid attachment to a monolithic identity narrative, or the securitization of identity, is only one possibility with regard to achieving basic trust – and a dangerous one at that. Phillip Darby (2006: 465) has nonetheless pointed out that what is missing in most

of the writings on security 'is not only that the acceptance of some insecurity is a condition of security itself, but that insecurity can be enabling as well as disabling'. Similarly, Maja Zehfuss (Zehfuss, 2003) has underscored the inescapable insecurity at the heart of identity, emphasizing how foreignness can never be entirely removed from identity and thus needs to be recognized in order to transform the relation to the other. Considering, then, that the attempts to achieve absolute sovereignty over a particular interpretation of the past are bound to come into conflict with competing and contradictory narratives of the same event, would we not be better off to start from the realization that, no matter how pervasive, mnemonical insecurities (in fact, any insecurities, for that matter) can never be utterly overcome and eliminated?

This is not to suggest here that ontological (and by implication mnemonical) insecurity should therefore be a preferable 'good' instead of the commonly sought ontological security. Rather, because ontological anxiety is, to an extent, quite simply inevitable, it would be wiser to acknowledge and come to terms with it instead of entertaining a pipe dream of a perfectly 'securable' identity and its beholder's historical memory. The openendedness of any identity should be recognized with regard to its perpetual state of 'becoming' on the boundaries of identity and difference in its enduring dialogues with others (Mälksoo, 2010). The perils of collapsing ontological security and the securitization of identity should thus be recognized whenever 'historical memory' is summoned in discourses and practices of security policy.

The securitization of memory

I suggest that especially with regard to the tendency to reach for law as the mnemonic technology, we are witnessing the attempted securitization of 'historical memory' in international politics. Securitization, as we know from the burgeoning work of and about the Copenhagen School, is a discursive process through which certain issues or entities are turned into a threat (Wæver, 1995; Buzan et al., 1998; for a more sociological alternative, see Balzacq, 2011). A successful securitization includes 'the designation of an existential threat requiring emergency action or special measures and the acceptance of that designation by a significant audience' (Buzan et al., 1998: 27). Presenting a particular way of relating to the past as instrumental for the stability and continuity of a national biographical narrative (i.e. the state's self-proclaimed ontological security) could mean, in extreme emergency mode, that the state could legitimize the use of force and violence for protecting its 'memory' (Buzan et al., 1998: 21).[3]

Endeavours to protect certain ways of relating to the past by outlawing others seek to secure particular identities, often in order to overcome a political community's metaphorical sense of shame over past historical experiences and memories (cf. Steele, 2008: 115). The institutionalized remembrance of the Holocaust in Europe serves as a prime example here, because the centrality of this event in the political consciousness of contemporary Western society has dictated the tuning and hierarchical organization of the overall public remembrance of WWII, totalitarian crimes and modern mass death (Alexander, 2002). While the discursive framing of certain ways of public remembrance as ontological security problems emerges as an attempt to 'right past wrongs', the juridification of 'memory' enables political actors to further their alleged ontological security needs with particular rigour and legal backing. The attempts to institutionalize politically and juridically a particular remembrance of the totalitarian communist regimes at a pan-European level, as pursued by Central and East European actors of various political persuasions, especially after the eastern enlargement of the EU, provide ample support for this claim. A number of post-communist countries in Eastern Europe have indeed called for the pan-European criminalization of the denial of crimes perpetrated by communist regimes in the same way that a handful of the EU countries have banned the public condoning, denial and gross trivialization of the Holocaust (Mälksoo,

2014). By seeking recognition for the inclusion of their experiences and assessment of communism in the established European mnemonical narrative and normative verdict of twentieth-century totalitarianisms, the East European actors concurrently seek recognition for their agency as Europeans (Mälksoo, 2009a). In turn, enactment of the memory law by the Duma, the Russian state's legislative body, criminalizing the public remembrance of certain aspects of WWII and aimed specifically at countering the ˙dissemination of false information on the activities of the Soviet Union during WWII' and the 'rehabilitation of Nazism' is the most recent example of this (for discussion, see Koposov, 2014; Kurilla, 2014). The establishment of the Presidential Commission to Counter Attempts to Falsify History to the Detriment of Russia's Interests in 2009 in order to retaliate against symbolic initiatives to establish an official equivalence between Stalinism and Nazism is yet another symptomatic case (even though the Commission has since been disbanded). Both of these initiatives were arguably designed as a response to the multiple attempts to securitize 'national' memories of WWII and communism in other East European countries,[4] thus demonstrating the tendency of mnemonical securitization to produce circular security dilemmas. Altogether, the manifold initiatives to regulate the allowed remembrance of various totalitarian legacies by means of law, ranging from mere declaratory statements to concrete criminalizing measures, stipulating punishments for public condoning, denial and 'gross trivialization' of diverse international crimes, make competing but equally ontological claims on the security of 'memory', or the legitimate public remembrance of the past.

Ordering historical remembrance by means of law constitutes a legal way of closing off a particular notion of identity. As the long-baked Russian memory law on WWII[5] demonstrates, mnemonical securitization is less about fast-tracking in the traditional sense of what amounts to extraordinary/emergency politics and more about 'placing limitations on otherwise inviolable rights' (Buzan et al., 1998: 24); that is, subjecting the freedom of speech (along with academic freedom) as a core component of liberal democratic 'normal politics' to restrictive judicio-political regulation. It is precisely by seeking to put something under political control that should otherwise be left in the realm of ordinary public deliberation, discussion and debate that memory laws qualify as extraordinary measures. As a means of sanctioning a legitimate relationship to the past by regulating certain remembrances as outside the accepted boundaries of political bargaining, the laws criminalizing certain historical positions amount to institutionalized securitization, thus crystallizing 'the response and sense of urgency' (Buzan et al., 1998: 27). These 'laws of fear' are a crucial battleground in the politics of securitization (Williams, 2011: 459). The concrete securitizing potential of particular memory laws depends on their degree of stipulation of related punishments versus the declaratory nature of simply condemning a particular remembrance in moral terms.[6] Russia's recently adopted law on the legitimate frames of remembering WWII is a clear case of securitizing state-defined 'national memory' by outright criminalization of its contesters.[7]

While the discursive construction of historical memory as a security issue constitutes merely a securitizing move, whereby attempts are made to frame a particular historical remembrance as an issue that cannot be debated, a 'memory law' already amounts to a specific security practice, a definite measure that sets firmly the limits to the permitted public remembrance of a particular historical event or legacy (cf. Salter and Mutlu, 2013: 816, fn. 4). It is precisely there that the securitization of memory features as fundamentally anti-political, as it seeks to suppress or transcend the inherent antagonism of the political (see Mouffe, 2005a). The attempts to forge a mnemonic consensus, at national and transnational levels by means of pertinent memory laws, with regard to multidimensional historical issues – such as WWII, the legacy of various communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe, or the many politically motivated mass killings – seek to overcome this antagonism; but, ultimately, end up confirming its state of seeming permanence, because 'the political in its antagonistic dimension cannot be made to disappear by simply denying it or wishing it away'

(Mouffe, 2013: 3–4; see also Mouffe, 2005b). Seeking to protect a particular vision of the past by condemning, delegitimizing, or overtly criminalizing the alternatives is designed to secure a self by antagonizing others by the logic of survival. 'Memory imperatives', such as the allegedly cosmopolitan memory of the Holocaust (Levy and Sznaider, 2002), especially if they are supported by legislation, endanger an open democratic debate on the past, because they tend to replace a healthy confrontation of democratic political positions with a fight between non-negotiable moral values or essentialist forms of identification (Mouffe, 2013: 7). In the context of the securitization of memory whereby particular visions of the past are presented as moral and the others as immoral, or evil, the other thus emerges as an enemy to be destroyed rather than a legitimate adversary 'whose ideas might be fought, even fiercely, but whose right to defend those ideas is not to be questioned' (Mouffe, 2013: 6–7). Attempting to forge certain mnemonic consensus as a higher ideal of a cosmopolitan nature (such as Holocaust remembrance in the EU) is not necessarily a more benign version of securitizing historical memory than the parochial nationalist variants (such as Russia's above-quoted law seeking to protect its legal predecessor's account of WWII, thus essentially criminalizing the critical discussion of Soviet conduct in WWII) since the consensual ideal seeks, again, to eradicate conflict from politics – paradoxically, however, leading instead to apathy and to a disaffection with political participation (Mouffe, 2013: 7).

For IR theory, the securitization of historical memory reaffirms the relevance of the enduring debate about the true nature of the process: namely, should the securitization of a socio-political issue be regarded as its *hyperpoliticization* or rather as *depoliticization*, as the issue is thus shifted outside of the realm of the so-called normal politics and into the hands of the technocratic discretionism of the democratically unaccountable security experts, away from the eye and participation of the public (Edkins, 1999)? After all, securitizing ways of remembering and relating to the past on the justification of their importance for the identity of the actor implicitly attempts to exclude mnemonical conflicts from politics. However, this approach scarcely makes these conflicts simply disappear because they continue to appear large at the social level.[8] The securitization of 'national memory' highlights the tendency to disregard and close off the intrasocietal tensions, disputes, debates and power struggles. Supporting a national mythscape (under a banner of protecting 'our' memory and 'our' identity) makes it imperative that the possibility of an international and intrasocietal dialogue is disregarded, eventually making the – initially somewhat metaphorically labelled 'memory wars' – self-fulfilling prophecies.

The relationship between securitization and politicization is fraught with complexity, however. On the one hand, securitization is rendered in the original Copenhagen School's account as 'fram[ing] the issue as a special kind of politics or as above politics'; 'as a more extreme version of politicization' (Buzan et al., 1998: 23). In contrast, securitization is regarded as being opposed to politicization because the latter 'means to make an issue appear to be open, a matter of choice, something that is decided upon and that therefore entails responsibility, in contrast to issues that…. should not be put under political control' (Buzan et al., 1998: 29). The tenuous distinction between the notions of securitization and politicization reflects a tense combination of a decisionist and exclusionary notion of security, drawing inspiration from a Schmittian understanding of the political, and the Arendtian understanding of politics as the embodiment of the publicly debatable in the Copenhagen School's nodes of extraordinary/emergency and 'normal' politics, respectively (cf. Aradau, 2004: 393). This tension is hardly helped by what is allegedly a missing 'concept of politics or clear definition of politicization' in the Copenhagen School's securitization theory (Aradau, 2004: 389; cf. Wæver, 2011). A harsh dichotomy between politics and security is certainly one of the most problematic premises of the securitization framework (McDonald, 2008, 2011), not least because this distinction may be wholly unfamiliar to those outside liberal democratic states, thus raising questions about the assumption of an inherent, universal logic and dynamics of security

regardless of the physical context (Browning and McDonald, 2013). Moreover, the positioning of 'normal politics' and security in opposition to each other remains oblivious to the extent liberalism (as the ideological frame of 'normal politics') has been predicated on 'security' rather than the commonly held assumption of 'liberty' (Neocleous, 2007).

Problematizing the dichotomous supposition of the distinguishability between 'politics' and 'security', I regard security as being inherently political because it is constituting, reproducing and sustaining power relations. The conceptualization of politics adopted here accepts politics as intrinsically unstable, always in the making – thus first and foremost understanding it as an activity, establishing meaning and identity, rather than a sphere (i.e. the location of political institutions) (cf. the first conversation on politics in the securitization literature; Pram Gad and Lund Petersen, 2011: 318). Securitizing attempts to stop politics and contestations of multiple mnemonic narratives are therefore fundamentally depoliticizing as well as ultimately futile. Meanwhile, because politics could be regarded – in the Foucaultian hyperbolic reading at least – as the continuation of war by other means (Foucault, 2003), analytically sensible distinction between the workings and logic of politics and security remains difficult to make. I concur with Michael C. Williams (Williams, 2011: 459) on regarding the sphere of 'normal politics' and the sphere of security as a continuum rather than a sharp distinction. This present article regards the respective emphases on debate and deliberation versus silence and speed (see Roe, 2012: 252) as the most significant line of distinction between politicization and securitization. However, while politicization in the Copenhagen School's understanding should indicate paying attention to due process through parliamentary proceedings, maintaining a space for debate and disagreement for all parties involved, parliamentary hearings and due process are no guarantee of sustaining 'normal politics' because they could become instruments of securitization for the tendency of the norm/exception binary to become blurred in legislative security politics over time (Neal, 2012: 261). Moreover, as Matt McDonald (McDonald, 2011) has shown, in the context of the public debate on asylum-seekers in Australia, some forms of political debate may actually render securitization more likely, thus questioning the strong analytical distinction between the realms of ʾsecurityʾ and ʾpoliticsʾ in the securitization framework and calling for a further normative explanation of the desirability of various forms of deliberation and debate. Against that backdrop the idea that securitization needs a process of desecuritization to recover the political, as promoted by the Copenhagen School, is too tidy and linear, depicting security strictly as a failure of 'normal politics', and thus failing to regard it as being among 'most powerful of political categories' – as a site of perpetual contestation and possible emancipatory change (McDonald, 2008: 579).

Contextualizing the discussion of the possibilities for dismantling the mnemonical constituent of ontological security in the desecuritization/repoliticization debate, with the above qualifications in mind, I contend that public historical remembrance of the past needs naturally to be discussed politically, but preferably not juridified (which is, in and of itself, a form of depoliticization, the act of shifting public remembrance out of the realm of an open and non-repressive political debate between various actors, state and non-state alike). However, the discourse of mnemonical security enables such a shift, because it normalizes the need for an existential buttressing of a state-defined self-narrative. We should therefore be extremely cautious about the alleged 'ontological security needs' of the states, because this notion can scarcely be regarded as an innocent description of the identity–memory–security nexus. Rather, the argument pursued here takes its cue from Wæver (1995: 56), who claims that 'transcending a security problem by politicizing it cannot happen *through* thematization in security terms, only *away* from such terms'. What, then, could be the wider counter-narrative to the concept of 'we seek to be secure in what we remember (that is,

choose to remember) about our past'? In other words, what could be an effective counter-narrative to mnemonical security?

Desecuritization as repoliticization

It might be desirable to disintegrate the automatized connection between the state-supervised public remembrance of the key historic events of a political community and its so-called ontological security. I argue for the desecuritization of memory, in order to escape the tendency of mnemonical securitization to actually depoliticize deeply political issues and public concerns. The conceptual debate on securitization amounting to depoliticization, or rather to hyperpoliticization, is as old as the notion of securitization itself (Hansen, 2012). I have a firm understanding of the process of mnemonical securitization in the former meaning, because there is hardly 'anything *more* political in social life than the struggle over identity' (Steele, 2008: 5). Therefore, contradicting the calls to depoliticize memory (e.g. Miller, 2010), this article puts forth a call for the positively invigorated repoliticization of issues of social remembrance on the basis of a careful definition of what is really meant by the (benign) politics of memory. Claudia Aradau (Aradau, 2004: 388) has shrewdly pointed out that questions about desecuritization raise fundamental 'questions about what kinds of politics we want'. Taking a cue from Aradau, the rest of this present paper ponders on the kinds of memory politics that would be preferable to the securitization claims made for practices of public remembrance.

Both securitization and desecuritization involve the configurations (and possibly reconfigurations) of self–other relations. However, it is important to note that even though ontological security presupposes an other (since its intimate connection with identity requires differentiation), it does not necessarily lead to the securitization of an other in the sense of defining it as a threat (Rumelili, 2013) – just as being critical of the Soviet conduct in WWII need not, by definition, signify the attempted 'rehabilitation of Nazism', as the zero-sum mnemonic vision crystallized in the recently adopted Russian memory law on WWII seemingly assumes. Accordingly, self–other relations could be reconfigured so that the perceptions of threat would be removed without discarding the distinctions necessary for 'security-as-being'. Nonetheless, even in the case of desecuritization, the emerging self–other relations would still be infused with power, and the possibility of constructing the other as inferior, or distant, cannot be entirely ruled out (Rumelili, 2013). The 'ethos of survival' permeating security, be it physical or ontological, still tends to impose 'a particular kind of a relational mode, whose focus is the protection of the self and the surviving of the other' (Odysseos, 2002: 414). The ethical imperative of self-preservation thus still remains the essence of security.

The politics beyond mnemonical security therefore necessitates a move beyond a secure self, to unravel the subject of security through the sense of the other (Calkivik, 2010: 138). In order to begin imagining the politics of memory beyond the politics of mnemonical security, the radical interdependency of the self and an other should be recognized first. In IR this suggestion has been promoted by scholars working in the vein of Heidegger, Levinas and Nancy, generally underscoring the relational co-existence and 'critical belonging' in contradiction of the assumption of the possibility of absolute subjectivity, or organic community (e.g. Coward, 2005; Odysseos, 2007; Dillon, 1996). Besides re-configuring self-other relations by thoughtfulness about and responsibility for the effects of our actions on the needs of others (cf. Steele, 2008: 164), it might at times be necessary to break free from the habitual routines of self-definition, to be open to reconceptualize oneself in the interests of a healthier ontological and physical self–other relationship, to be more willing to embrace self-reflexivity, to learn and, possibly, change.

Taking our cue from Brent Steele's (Steele, 2008) biographical, narrative-centric approach to ontological security, there is always room for self-reflexive learning and some constructive change in the self-narratives we produce about ourselves. Accordingly, moving beyond the politics of

mnemonical security as a sub-layer of ontological security would entail the ability of political actors to learn to tell new stories about themselves, to break away from the old and possibly harmful routines for both themselves and their 'others'; in a nutshell, the ability to *renew* oneself, not just *survive* as a certain sort of being. Advancing self-interrogative reflexive processes as part of the healthy politics of memory thus becomes crucial for moving beyond the politics of mnemonical security (cf. Steele, 2008: 149). Instead of the public sanctification and securitization of the remembrance of the 'Great Patriotic War' as the core of modern Russia's self-narrative and thus a major source of its ontological security as a powerful and heroic state, the country's historical self-reflection would benefit from the 'memory work' of the likes of *Memorial* – a social movement, dating back to the times of *perestroika*, with the objective of preserving the social memory of Soviet political repressions, and a human rights organization focusing on the perspective of individual sufferings and injustices done by, rather than the glory of, the state. Conjoining historians and legal advocates, *Memorial*'s mnemopolitics comprises the study and commemoration of, and education about, the political persecution and violation of human rights on the territory of the former Soviet Union, both in historical and contemporary perspectives. As a counterpoint to Russia's state-sanctioned selective remembrance of WWII and the overall Soviet experiment (of which the registration of Human Rights Center 'Memorial' in Moscow as a 'foreign agent' by the Ministry of Justice, and the threats of its closure, speak volumes), the focal point of *Memorial*'s legal mnemopolitics has been the amendment of the Law on Rehabilitation of Victims of Political Repression (1991) and legal assistance to the victims of Soviet repressions. Its self-appointed mission remains '… to promote mature civil society and democracy based on the rule of law… to prevent a return to totalitarianism'.[9]

Of course, questioning oneself is often viewed as a sign of weakness by both internal critics and external adversaries – which is perhaps the reason why self-interrogation tends to be suspended more often than not in the mnemonical practices of states. It is indeed the 'irony of self-interrogative reflexivity… that it may *disturb* before it *heals*' (Steele, 2008: 151). It is hardly surprising, then, that a common trait in the politics of memory of post-war Western and post-communist Eastern European countries alike has been the tendency to recall the immediate collective tragedies first through the prism of national martyrdom or victimhood, before turning a more critical eye to the issues of co-responsibility, collaboration and possibly also guilt. Russia's recently adopted memory law which attempts to curb any discussion of the early wartime Soviet–Nazi alliance and reject the notion of 'Soviet war crimes' is a symptomatic example of this pattern.

Openness to question the rigid vision of one's past and willingness to adopt heterogeneous stories instead of the grand mnemonical narrative of the whole nation or state might surely not only dismantle the well-established and emotionally satisfying routines of the actors concerned, but also eventually result in bringing them closer to the desired sense of ontological peace (or the state of mnemonical asecurity) where issues of remembrance are simply no longer considered in terms of security. Change in the habitual patterns of the politics of mnemonical security cannot therefore happen without reflection on one's habits (cf. Hopf, 2010: 555).

The process of self-reflection and possible transformation is linked to the process of transforming images of the other, whereby the latter comes to perceive the key aspects of their identity to be recognized (Strömbom, 2014). The recognition of the other's difference implies a mutually accepted agreement to disagree on the 'national' interpretations of historical events and issues rather than an achievement of a single joint narrative on the past (see Raag, 2013, for a recent example in that direction).

Conclusion: Towards agonistic mnemopolitics

Thus far I have tried to accomplish two tasks in this paper. First, the concept of *mnemonical security* as a subset of a rapidly expanding research programme on *ontological security* was developed.

Next, this notion was dissected for its tendency to overwhelm the purpose of achieving a sense of consummation for a collective self in international relations as well as its problematic ethical ramifications. Since attempts at competitive consolidation of social memory tend to reproduce rather than eliminate the sense of insecurity among the contesters, I outlined two actions necessary to move out of the politics of security (cf. Dillon, 1996): (i) the desecuritization of memory in order to allow for its repoliticization; and (ii) the rethinking of the self/other relationship.

In this final section, an alternative political imaginary to that of mnemonical securitization is sketched by setting out an argument for the politics of agonistic mnemonic pluralism instead of the futile search for a mnemonical consensus. In lieu of the exponential growth in securitization of the conflicting views of the past and the attempts to solve this tension by outlawing certain ways of remembrance at national and regional levels, a radically democratic, agonistic memory politics would be in order, because this would halt the knee-jerk reactive treatment of issues of identity, memory and history as problems of security. The selective censorship of social remembrance precludes the actors from justifying and rationalizing their actions (cf. Owens, 2007: 5), thus denying the process of ontological security seeking its true political content. Agonistic pluralism in the politics of memory presumes the vitality of the struggle over interpretations of the commonly experienced past in order to advance a better understanding of the self and clarify the mnemonical component of a self–other nexus. With regard to agonistic politics in general, the version of memory politics advocated here presumes the impossibility at any time of excluding conflict, disagreement and discord from political action (cf. Arendt, as cited in Owens, 2007: 25–26). Assuming that certain differences and the contestability of social remembrance remain irreducible, the public relationship to the past has to remain in the realm of the speakable, debatable and discussable – that is, it should be allowed to exist in the sphere of the political, or the realm of speech, as Hannah Arendt put it (cited in Owens, 2007: 5). In the long run this would amount to a step towards a political order in which the moves seeking to securitize 'memory' are less likely to succeed (see Tjalve, 2011: 442).

Instead of seeking the mnemonic consensus as an expression of the idealized mnemonic security, agonistic memory pluralism emphasizes the opportunity to identify with clearly defined opinions and positions in the public sphere, on the assumption that the political model oriented towards consolidating a consensual common vision offers neither choice nor meaningful alternatives (Mouffe, 2013). While Mouffe's concern is with democratic politics at the domestic level, her model's core warning '… of the illusion that a fully achieved democracy could ever be instantiated' (Mouffe, 1999: 757) is evocative in the context of mnemonical security-seeking, enabling the extension of the argument for agonistic pluralism to discuss also the interaction of states with each other. It thus necessitates a move *beyond* the politics of mnemonic security and towards agonistic pluralism in collective remembrance, that is, towards the politics of memory between plural equals. However, such a mnemopolitical engagement is based on the presumption of the readiness of the contenders to concede to the idea of the mutual dependence and ultimate openendedness of their identities. The expeditious adoption of the model of agonistic mnemopolitics remains rather farfetched in Eastern Europe against the backdrop of the considerable power imbalances between Russia and its former Soviet dependants and the former's state-endorsed mnemopolitics determining the identity of the state (and its ability for agency thereof) in zero-sum terms.

The suggestion to stand clear of regulating public remembrance of historical events by means of law, avoiding outright criminalizing bans on historical interpretations in particular, might easily be read as a call for a First Amendment for Europe, something akin to the eponymous stipulation of the US Bill of Rights which protects free speech broadly. However, a failure to acknowledge the accompanying legal debate over regulating so-called hate speech would be equally ignorant. As Browning and McDonald (2013: 250) have perceptively pointed out:

> The normative preference for deliberation evident in the commitment to desecuritization … is not sufficiently robust to enable us to engage with difficult questions concerning the forms of deliberation that should be encouraged or even the circumstances in which 'hate speech'… might be curtailed.

Evidently, guaranteeing free speech together with regulating to prevent the harms of hate speech present competing policy demands (Gelber, 2010). It is not surprising, then, that hate speech and historical revisionism/negation have often become convoluted in European legislations and legal practice. While this discussion is out of the scope of this article, it remains the case that in a situation where several European jurisdictions as well as case law by the European Court of Human Rights have established the criminalization of Holocaust denial or defence as an important exception to the freedom to debate the past, or the justifiable restrictions on free speech (Brems, 2011: 288), competitive quests to apply the same delimiting standards to remembering other cases of genocide or crimes against humanity (e.g. the crimes of the totalitarian communist regimes), or simply to cases of 'ontological security significance' (such as the remembrance of WWII as defined by the current Russian regime), are bound to occur, with potentially detrimental consequences for both transitional justice in the countries under question and academic freedom and freedom of speech in general.

The argument presented here has called for more politics of memory instead of the widespread attempts to fix the public relationship to the past by juridified rules as a tactic to support competitive 'selves'. In the Arendtian spirit, the importance of a genuine debate between plural equals (see Owens, 2007: 25–26; cf. Arendt, 1958) should be recognized, and the right for the open struggle over memory instead of vain attempts to secure one's own 'national memory' at the expense of the other(s)' only encouraged. Reconceptualizing a self–other relationship from that of enemies to ideological and mnemonical opponents, or adversaries, creates a symbolic space necessary for arguing over the diverging interpretations and positions on the commonly experienced, yet contested, past. Such a move advances both self-reflexivity and that between a self and an other. If the other in the debates on collective remembrance becomes conceptualized as someone whose vision of the past we might not agree with but whose right to defend that vision we do not question as such, a more benevolent perspective for settling these mnemonic debates is created than in a situation where the securing of a memory is regarded as necessitating the destruction of another (cf. Mouffe, 1999).

Agonistic mnemonic pluralism, informed by critical historical research, should alleviate understanding about – although not necessarily the mutual acceptance of – different readings of the commonly experienced past. From the ontological security perspective, reflexivity about oneself is a surer step in the direction of achieving a sense of self-consummation and accomplishment than uncritical attempts at consolidating a single authoritative vision of the past for a political collective. Abandoning the hope of achieving security of memory would eventually create a space more conducive to amicable mnemopolitical solutions in international affairs.

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Notes

1. Cf. the concepts of ontological narratives (which are used to define who we *are*, which, in turn, can be a precondition on knowing what to *do*) and public narratives (Somers, 1994: 618–619).
2. Cf. the Copenhagen School's notion of 'societal security', defined as 'the ability of a society to persist in its essential character under changing conditions and possible or actual threats … the sustainability, within acceptable conditions for evolution, of traditional patterns of language, culture, association, and religious and national identity and custom' (Wæver, 1993: 23).
3. As Dmitri Rogozhin, a member of the Russian State Duma, suggested in April 2007, when Russian and Estonian remembrances about whether the Soviet annexation of the country in 1945 qualified as 'occupation' or 'liberation' from the Nazis clashed around the relocation of a Soviet war monument (the so-called 'Bronze Soldier') in Tallinn, such a move could have constituted a *casus belli* against Estonia (Delfi, 2007).
4. The Ukrainian parliament, for example, adopted a memory law in 2006, originally proposed by President Viktor Yuschenko, criminalizing the denial of the Great Famine or *Holodomor* (i.e. extermination by starvation) of 1932–1933 and its genocidal nature. Ukraine further attempted (though eventually to no avail) to secure the adoption of a special resolution at the United Nations that would have declared *Holodomor* an act of genocide against the Ukrainian people. Likewise, Russia has sponsored resolutions in the UN opposing the alleged resurgence of Nazism since 2003. Several Central and Eastern European countries, including the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary and Lithuania, have specific clauses in their national legislations regulating the legitimate remembrance of totalitarian communist regimes and the denial of their crimes.
5. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that while multiple draft bills have been discussed by the State Duma since 2009, the adoption of the final version of the law was notoriously fast in April 2014, against the backdrop of Russia's intensifying military confrontation of Ukraine.
6. Such as a number of recent political declarations by the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the EU, condemning totalitarian communist regimes in various ways (Mälksoo, 2014).
7. The perpetrators of the crime of 'rehabilitating Nazism' face a penalty up to 300,000 rubles, forced hard labour or imprisonment for a period of up to three years. Further penalties are foreseen in the event of an abuse of public office or mass media. Fines are also introduced for desecrating Russian military glory dates or monuments.
8. As was vividly demonstrated in the context of the so-called Bronze Soldier crisis in Estonia in April 2007 when the legal backing for the relocation of a Soviet-era WWII monument from Tallinn city centre to a military cemetery could not curb violent upheavals of the Russian-speaking youth, fiercely disapproving of the move (Mälksoo, 2009b).
9. See http://www.memo.ru/eng/about/charter.htm (accessed: 29 July 2014).

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