Identity and Conflict in Crimea. Exclavisation Tendencies, Russian Memory and Ukrainian Statehood on the Margins of Europe[1]

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Monuments are commonly used to mark the rise and fall of political regimes. When new regimes come to power, some of their earliest actions often involve altering the symbolic geography of the state, such as destroying monuments of the *Ancien Régime*, renaming streets and cities, and erecting monuments of their own. When the Iron Curtain fell so too did most of the statues of Marx, Lenin, and Stalin that dotted the Soviet bloc. Monuments are potent political tools, which is why states, politicians, political parties and other interest groups and institutions spend financial and political capital on both erecting and erasing them. Maurice Halbwachs, an early twentieth century French sociologist, called these interest groups *entrepreneurs de mémoire* to describe their businesslike way of interpreting history and its fertilisation for political means. Halbwachs also argued that memory is a social phenomenon, embedded in the people's social context, and described how collective memory evolves within families, groups, denominations, societies, and nations.[2] The use of memory for the creation and maintenance of ethnic identity is therefore very important in the context of interethnic conflict. Focal points of collective memories are the *lieux de mémoire* or "sites of memory", a term which the French historian Pierre Nora used in order to refer to a broad range of symbols – not only but largely to physical places.[3]

Together with *lieux de mémoire*, borders and border crossers are increasingly the subject of research, especially in Central and Eastern Europe. In this area, shifting borders and borderline experiences belong to the most fundamental formative events of the last several centuries. In particular, Ukraine with its diverse and multilayered history on the frontier between Europe and Asia was confronted with several experiences in which people, goods and ideas crossed over different borders, as well as several times when different borders crossed over people, e.g. lastly when the Ukrainian SSR's (Soviet Socialist Republic) territory was enlarged southwards in 1954 with the Crimea transfer. The modern name of Ukraine derives from the term *Ukraïna* which means 'borderland', 'frontier region', or 'marches'.

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[2] Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

[3] Pierre Nora, 'Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire', *Representations*, 26 (1989), 7-25.

Contemporary parallels for this are the Russian terms *okraina* (outskirt area) and *kraj* (border district). As this short etymology reflects, the geographical location of Ukraine on the border did not only give its name to this *borderland* but also determined the country's self-understanding and was the basis of its cultural, historical, and social identity. [4] The combination of these two identity-forming elements – borders and monuments – are the constitutive elements of this article which seeks to analyse Russian efforts to make a symbolic claim on Ukrainian territory and therefore to support tendencies of an exclavisation[5] on the Crimean peninsula.

Especially in territories with an ethnically mixed population, monuments can be subjects of dissension. One ethnic group's monument can also have meaning for other groups in the same territory. Individuals from another group might find the ideas and interpretation of history represented by the monuments deeply offensive or a sign of impending danger. For instance, there are many cases of political controversies over statues of historical figures considered as noble statesmen by one group and state terrorists by another. Monuments to perceived oppressors can even help solidify the identity of the other group by building a narrative based on victimhood. Changing borders and regimes that reorder the ethnic status hierarchy in a country and society often create a situation where these emotions are more likely to arise. For elites of other ethnic groups, monuments can pose a threat to their power and legitimacy. For the same reasons that monuments are instrumental for the in-group and its elites, monuments also threaten out-group elites. These elites do not want other groups to have strong identities or short-cuts for collective action since these factors could ease the path to increased political power and maybe even future secession.

The three major functions of monuments can be seen as of the utmost importance for historical remembrance in the borderlands of Crimea and for a re-bordering on the Ukrainian peninsula after 1991 in favour of the Russian community living in the area, and ultimately in favour of the Russian Federation. First, monuments are closely tied to national identity, national self-representation, and nationalism, and, therefore, play an important identity formation role in the contested area. Second, memorials have an important functional role as locations for commemorative events, in this case especially regarding national ceremonies of the Russian, not the Ukrainian state. Third – and most important for the Crimean case,

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[4] Andreas Kappeler, 'From an Ethnonational to a Multiethnic to a Transitional Ukrainian History', in *A Laboratory of Transnational History. Ukraine and Recent Ukrainian Historiography*, ed. Georgiy Kasianov and Philipp Ther (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2009), pp. 51-80.

[5] In this context, 'exclavisation' is a hypernym for all political, legal, economic, cultural, medial, and military efforts of a nation state (the Russian Federation together with its compatriots abroad) to establish an exclave on the territory of another nation state (Ukraine).

monuments legitimise and propagate a certain view of the past and, consequently, the present, and therefore have a strong legitimizing role. As William Cohen states, monuments are often the most effective way to spread political ideas and to draw and reshape borders. 'Statues [are] an immediate and apparently unmediated way of communicating political values' and erecting them is 'an attempt to establish hegemony of the ideas represented by the monument'.[6]

The article is structured accordingly in five parts: following this introduction, the second part will be dedicated to a short evaluation of the history of Crimea, its role in Ukrainian-Russian relations, and the ongoing political struggle between Kyiv and Moscow regarding the post-Soviet distinctiveness of the area. Moving on from there, part three will discuss the installation in 2008 of a monument to Czarina Catherine the Great in Sevastopol (Crimea) which will be the focus of this article representing an exclusively Russian *lieu de mémoire* in the disputed public space of the Ukrainian seaport. The fourth part will deal with the russification of the public space and therefore with exclavisation tendencies in Crimea. This will be followed by a summary, and concluding remarks.[7]

Crimea and its role in Ukrainian-Russian relations

The long lasting conflict between Ukraine and Russia about the Ukrainian seaport Sevastopol on the Crimean Peninsula came to a head again in spring 2010, when Russia's ongoing formal presence in the city was established. Sevastopol is a distillation of the Crimean issue and of Crimea's distinctiveness. In no other place are Russian and Ukrainian historical memories and state interests so closely intertwined. After the implosion of the Soviet Union, the ex-Soviet Black Sea Fleet with all its facilities was divided between Russia's Black Sea Fleet and the Navy of the newly independent Ukraine. Therefore, Sevastopol became the home port of both the Ukrainian Navy and the Russian Black Sea Fleet headquarters, even though the city is not located on the territory of the Russian Federation. Under the leadership of Nikita Khrushchev, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union issued a decree on the transfer of the Crimean Oblast – largely populated by ethnic Russians – from the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR) to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic on 19th February 1954. This formal act with a mostly administrative background was carried out without controversy during the Soviet period – in the post-war Soviet Union, the internal frontiers between the

[6] William Cohen, 'Symbols of Power: Statues in Nineteenth-Century Provincial France', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, (1989), 491-513 (p. 495).
[7] Due to the limited space of this contribution and its approach to connect commemorative actions on the Crimean peninsula with Russia-Ukraine relations, the Tatar community in Crimea will not be a subject of this study.

Socialist Republics were relatively permeable and without extensive restrictions for usual border traffic.[8]

After Ukrainian re-independence in 1991, the city of Sevastopol and the whole of Crimea remained within the emerging Ukrainian nation state. Large parts of the ethnic Russian Crimean population and pro-Russian politicians demanded territorial autonomy for the Crimean oblast within Ukraine or even the annexation of the region or the city of Sevastopol to the Russian Federation. Russia tried to turn the whole city 'into a sovereign naval base, akin to Guantanamo in Cuba'[9]. These goals were heavily supported by the Supreme Soviet of Russia and the Russian Duma which enforced Russia's claims to the city and port of Sevastopol in 1993. The Russian parliament adopted a resolution entitled 'On the status of the city of Sevastopol', placing the city under Russian jurisdiction. Simultaneously, the Russian constitution was to be amended 'to include Sevastopol as a part of the Russian Federation'[10] and thereby create an exclave on Ukrainian territory, with force if necessary. In 1994, the pro-Russian movement in Crimea culminated in a Russian nationalist separatism after a pro-Russian party gained the vast majority of seats in the Crimean parliament and a pro-Russian Crimean president, Yuriy Meshkov, was elected. His presidency literally put Crimea into a new time zone by switching the clocks to Moscow time, but he remained the republic's first and only president.

Particularly after the Orange Revolution in 2004 and the election of reform-minded and Western-oriented Viktor Yushchenko as president of Ukraine, sharp political divisions dominated the country. With regard to foreign affairs, supporters of a Western orientation struggled with their pro-Russian counterparts who favoured close bonds to Moscow as well as with advocates of a Third Way. Domestically, the Ukrainian society and the political class were divided as well – the country had descended into chaos because of its various political crises throughout the last several years and was far away from the initially celebrated 'democratic breakthrough'[11] after the promising Orange Revolution.[12] Additionally, the debate on basic principles of state and society were overshadowed by the antagonism between

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[8] Thomas Lundén, *On the Boundary. About Humans at the End of Territory* (Stockholm: Södertörns Högskola, 2004), p. 54; Serhy Yekelchyk, *Ukraine. Birth of a Modern Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 154-55.

[9] Dmitri Trenin, *The End of Eurasia. Russia on the Border Between Geopolitics and Globalization* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2005), p. 156.

[10] Gwendolyn Sasse, *The Crimea Question: Identity, Transition, and Conflict* (Cambridge, Mass: Ukrainian Research Institute of Harvard University, 2007), p. 230.

[11] *Revolution in Orange. The Origins of Ukraine's Democratic Breakthrough*, ed. Anders Åslund and Michael McFaul (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2006).

[12] Rainer Lindner, 'Das Ende von Orange. Die Ukraine in der Transformationskrise'. SWP-Studie 20 (2006). Accessed: 15 September 2011
<http://www.swp-berlin.org/common/get_document.php?asset_id=3219>.

the Western part of the country – dominated by ethnic Ukrainians – and the Eastern and South Eastern part of Ukraine, dominated by ethnic Russians and/or pro-Russian Ukrainians.[13] The presidential elections in 2010 uncovered the gap between East and West again and proved the country's division to be one of the most significant challenges for the future.[14] If the problems of systemic weakness and societal divisions were not solved, Ukraine would continue to 'muddle through'[15] in the future and remain in a state of chronic instability. In the beginning of 2008, the then Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko announced that the current license agreement with Russia on the military facilities in Sevastopol, valid until 2017, would not be extended. This caused extensive protests by the Russian majority in Crimea and far-reaching bilateral upset with Moscow. Based on its important role during both the Crimean War and the Great Patriotic War[16], the title of "Hero City" was awarded to the city of Sevastopol in Soviet times. After this move by Yushchenko to put an end to Russian Black Sea Fleet presence in Sevastopol, the Russian community proclaimed the city's 'third defence'[17] – this time not against a foreign power, but against the centre in Kyiv. Whether or not a third defence against the newly elected administration in Kyiv under President Viktor Yanukovych, Yushchenko's more Russia-oriented counterpart, will be necessary is still pure speculation.

Especially since the Russian-Georgian war in August 2008, the military importance of the region and thus of the Black Sea Fleet has continued to grow, and this in two ways: while Russia's fleet based in Crimea played a crucial strategic role in the conflict with Georgia and therefore the continued importance of the base was emphasised, the psychological effect of the war in Caucasus vis-à-vis the Ukrainian administration in Kyiv was of utmost importance. For many politicians and political analysts in Kyiv and beyond, the Georgian scenario was a blueprint for further developments in Crimea. Experts drew parallels to the developments in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, where the majority population of Russian origin also served as Moscow's main argument for military intervention in Georgian territory. Before the start of

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[13] In this context it is very important to point out that all mentioned actor groups (e.g. "Russians", "Ukrainians", "pro-Russian", "pro-western") are not coherent or follow the same agenda.

[14] It must be noted that this dichotomy and the metaphor of the "two Ukraines", however, is not all-embracing and is based not only on ethnic divisions within the Ukrainian population, as Mykola Riabchuk emphasized both in his lecture "Imagined Russianness, Invented Europeanness: Ukraine as a Europe's Ambiguous Borderland", 23rd March 2005, given at *École normale supérieure*, Paris, and his monograph on the topic: Mykola Rjabtschuk, *Die reale und die imaginierte Ukraine* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2005).

[15] The sarcastic formula of 'muddling through' to describe Ukraine's post-communist transition was first employed by Alexander Motyl in his 1997 article "Making Sense of Ukraine". Mykola Riabchuk, 'What's left of Orange Ukraine?'. Eurozine. Accessed: 15 September 2011 <http://www.eurozine.com/pdf/2010-03-04-riabchuk-en.pdf>.

[16] The term Great Patriotic War is used in the Russian Federation and some other states of the former Soviet Union to describe the portion of the Second World War from 22nd June 1941 to 9th May 1945.

[17] Christian Esch, 'Die dritte Verteidigung'. Berliner Zeitung. Accessed: 15 September 2011 <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/archiv/in-sewastopol-auf-der-krim-liegt-russlands-schwarzmeerflotte--nun-fuerchtet-die-ukraine-eine-abspaltung-wie-in-abchasien-die-dritte-verteidigung,10810590,10585714.html>.

military operations in the two breakaway Caucasian republics, Russian passports were given en masse to Georgian citizens of Russian nationality to ultimately represent the interests of "Russian citizens". Following the war in Caucasus, this 'passportization'[18] as an instrument of Moscow's politics of destabilisation in the post-Soviet realm was also carried out in Ukraine. Russian passports were distributed also in Crimea; a fact which was widely reported and then confirmed by the former Ukrainian foreign minister Ohrysko.[19]

In the context of parallels between the situation in the Caucasus and Crimea, the unofficial statement of Vladimir Putin at the NATO summit in Bucharest in April 2008 is of significance. After he stressed in his speech that Crimea is not a constitutive part of Ukraine, he stated in his conversation with the then US-President George W. Bush that 'Ukraine is not even a nation'[20], which again fed Ukrainian fears about a possible violent secession of Crimea, perhaps with the help of its Russian neighbour with its post-imperial attitude. The Russian Parliament has also made its position clear on this issue. After the NATO summit, the Duma threatened to regard any further rapprochement between Ukraine and NATO as an unilateral abrogation of the Treaty of Friendship between the two countries concluded in 1997.[21] Besides establishing the territorial integrity of Ukraine and the border between the two countries, the treaty additionally determined Russia's recognition of Sevastopol as a Ukrainian city and the 20-year lease for the port of Sevastopol.[22]

But Russia was able to sit out the problem: elected in 2010, the more Russia-oriented successor of President Yushchenko, Viktor Yanukovych, revised the country's course in foreign policy and turned away from close ties to the West and back towards a close cooperation with Moscow. On 21st April 2010, Russia and Ukraine signed the Kharkiv Pact[23] – a new treaty extending the Russian Navy's lease of the Sevastopol base for 25 years after 2017 (through 2042) with an option to further prolong the lease for five additional years in exchange for a multiyear discounted contract to provide Ukraine with Russian natural gas. This Russian chequebook diplomacy vis-à-vis Ukraine in support of its gunboat diplomacy

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[18] Jakob Hedenskog, *Crimea after the Georgian Crisis* (Stockholm: Totalförsvarets forskningsinstitut, 2008), p. 34.

[19] 'Cheney urges divided Ukraine to unite against Russia "threat"', Agence France-Press. Accessed: 15 September 2011
<http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5j57jsvObBZruGm0n7HhUA7rCG7nA>.

[20] 'Hands off Ukraine'. Kyiv Post. Accessed: 15 September 2011
<http://www.kyivpost.com/news/opinion/editorial/detail/42375/>.

[21] 'Ukraine Defends Treaty with Russia against NATO Membership'. Kommersant. Accessed: 15 September 2011
<http://www.kommersant.com/p875768/r_500/NATO_Ukraine/>.

[22] Sasse, 235-37.

[23] Stanislav Belkovsky, 'Ukrainian sovereignty withstands Medvedev'. Kyiv Post. Accessed: 15 September 2011
<http://www.kyivpost.com/news/opinion/op_ed/detail/67349/>.

marked the final victory of the Medvedev/Putin administration over Yushchenko's attempts at an ukrainisation of Crimea and Sevastopol and his turn towards the West.

Exclusive Russian remembrance: the statue for Czarina Catherine the Great

Despite the extension of the lease of the Black Sea Fleet and the supply of energy sources, the Russian majority in the south-east and especially in Crimea is Moscow's last decisive influence on the political development of the former Soviet Union Republic. After Crimea received the status of an Autonomous Republic within Ukraine in the 1990s, the local Prime Minister is not elected only by the Parliament of the Republic of Crimea, but requires the endorsement of the Ukrainian president. Further, the mayor of Sevastopol, the largest city in Crimea, is directly installed by the Ukrainian President and therefore acts as a democratically illegitimate governor sent from Kyiv. Hence the mayor of Sevastopol installed by Yushchenko, Serhiy Kunitsyn, faced an opposition in the City Council which represents the citizens according to their vote and is therefore clearly dominated by pro-Russian forces. As a consequence of this enforced form of cohabitation, the bodies of the city lacked willingness to resolve conflicts which resulted in frequent stalemates in the administrative daily operations during the Yushchenko presidency.[24]

Upon the resolution of the City Council of Sevastopol on the 225th Anniversary of the city in June 2008, a statue of the Russian Empress Catherine the Great was built in Sevastopol, which represented the 'so far most public affront of the Sevastopol Russians against their unloved state'.[25]According to the Russian interpretation and reading of history, the reign of Catherine the Great stands for the major expansion of the empire's sphere, including the conquest of the Crimea and of much of today's Ukraine. Under her aegis, Russia became a world power and the "Third Rome". Also the city of Sevastopol was established under her rule in 1783, which is another important factor in the appeal that the memory around her person holds for the Russian population.[26]

Thus, the establishment of the Catherine memorial as an essential *lieu de mémoire* has a high value in terms of shared memory and cultural identity for the Russians in Sevastopol. The actual act of erecting the monument is similar to the establishment of a claim, the defiant ownership of a given area, separate from the influence of the others – namely the Ukrainians.

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[24] Taras Kuzio, *Ukraine – Crimea – Russia. Triangle of Conflict* (Stuttgart: Ibidem, 2007), pp. 121-39.
[25] Reiner Luyken, 'Stadt im Fadenkreuz'. Die Zeit. Accessed: 15 September 2011
 <http://www.zeit.de/2008/39/DOS-Sewastopol/komplettansicht>.
[26] Olga Pavlikova et al., 'Севастополь поклонился царице-немке' [Sevastopol admires the German Czarina]. Gazeta. Accessed: 15 September 2011
<http://www.gzt.ru/politics/2008/06/16/060134.html>.

This Russian claim to Ukrainian territory created a de facto exclave in which not only the official culture of remembrance from Kyiv is displaced, but also in which a limited sovereignty of the titular nation can be observed – otherwise the statue of Catherine the Great could hardly be placed there against Ukrainian law. In particular, the distinction between the two ethnic groups in Sevastopol is in the foreground, as the person of the Czarina has a diametrically opposite significance amongst the Ukrainian population. Here, Catherine the Great is often regarded as a brutal occupier responsible for several bloody conquests. After the Empress seized power, she continued and expanded Russian rule and stands for the introduction of serfdom, the prohibition of the Ukrainian language and culture and the oppression of the Ukrainian people – a heritage that would be perpetuated by the Soviets later. Her husband and predecessor, Czar Peter III, was deposed by her and later murdered.[27] On this account the Czarina is often perceived as a scheming, power-hungry tyrant in the traditional Ukrainian historical consciousness – therefore, the officials from Kyiv opposed the erection of the statue in 2008.[28]

Thus, the monument for the Empress serves as a unique feature of the historical perspective of the Russian population of Sevastopol and on the entire Crimean peninsula. It is a weapon in the struggle for political dominance in the city and the region; it serves as an instrument to define an area and to declare it as Russian homeland and property. Within this claim, the common view of the past within the ethnic Russian community becomes the basis for the political agenda of the present – and thus the most important determinant for the future of city and region. Russian flags fly all over the city, indicating the various institutions of the Black Sea Fleet and Russian culture. With the monument, an even stronger, immobile symbol of the Russian claim of ownership over the city and the entire Crimea was erected, a defiant symbol of power in stone and metal.

The initiative for the establishment of the monument to Catherine the Great can be traced back to the "Council of Veterans of the City of Sevastopol" – a pro-Russian association of World War II veterans, which benefits from substantial financial support from Moscow[29] – and was frenetically endorsed by the pro-Russian City Council. As expected, the pro-government mayor of Sevastopol installed by the then president Yushchenko strongly opposed the installation of the statue. Ultimately, the City Council decided to build the

[27] Isabel de Madariaga, *Catherine the Great. A Short History* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990), pp. 1-12.

[28] Christian Esch, 'Die dritte Verteidigung'. Berliner Zeitung. Accessed: 15 September 2011 <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/archiv/in-sewastopol-auf-der-krim-liegt-russlands-schwarzmeerflotte--nun-fuerchtet-die-ukraine-eine-abspaltung-wie-in-abchasien-die-dritte-verteidigung,10810590,10585714.html>.

[29] Leon Aron, 'Russia's Next Target Could Be Ukraine'. The Wall Street Journal. Accessed: 15 September 2011 <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB122100831438617621.html?mod=hps_us_at_glance_opinion>.

memorial near the disputed port of the fleet through an administrative trick – the statue was considered and adopted as a 'measure to the development of a green space' which does not require the approval of the mayor. These 'measures' usually concern only infrastructure, including, for example, the creation of trails or the installation of trash cans.[30] After an initial decision by the City Council on 23rd April 2008 for the construction of the monument, the Sevastopol Commercial Court found this decision to be illegitimate.[31] Thus, the establishment of the monument was legitimised with the trick by the City Council at its meeting on 23rd July 2008 *ex post* – the monument was already unveiled and inaugurated on 15th June 2008.

In 1996, the aforementioned association of Russian veterans as the main *entrepreneur de mémoire* had already presented a request to have a statue of Catherine the Great built to the Sevastopol City Council which then was also an expression of an acute separatist movement in Crimea. However, the initiative petered out due to the tense political situation, which only after the Russian-Ukrainian Friendship Treaty of 1997 gradually relaxed. Nevertheless, the architect Grigoriy Grigoryants and the sculptor Stanislav Chizh submitted their jointly developed design in 1997 according to which the monument would later be built. Prior to the implementation of the project, the initiative to install the statue had been negotiated five times in court after the intervention of the Ukrainian City Government. Finally, the memorial project was implemented. Construction began on the evening of 13th June 2008, and in a cloak-and-dagger operation at dawn on 15th June, the monument was inaugurated. In the presence of about 200 official guests who were composed of members of the City Council, pro-Russian parties and associations and representatives of the Russian State Duma, the monument was unveiled and officially inaugurated at seven o'clock in the morning. For security reasons, this was already two hours before the officially appointed time advertised in the city and it was carried out under the protection of Russian nationalists and two pro-Russian Cossack groups from Simferopol and Bakhchisaray. The similar establishment of a controversial monument for Catherine the Great in the southern Ukrainian city of Odessa had already led to a bloody riot. These security concerns would also be justified later.

With a height of more than six meters, the monument to Catherine the Great now overlooks the small park on Sevastopol's Lenin Street with a dignified and serious expression. Before Crimea was incorporated into the USSR, the street was named Ekaterininskaya Street, after the empress, and many pro-Russian activists are in favour of a re-renaming. The oversized,

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[30] Reiner Luyken, 'Stadt im Fadenkreuz'. Die Zeit. Accessed: 15 September 2011
<http://www.zeit.de/2008/39/DOS-Sewastopol/komplettansicht>.

[31] 'Хозяйственный суд Севастополя запретил устанавливать памятник Екатерине II' [Economic Court of Sevastopol forbid to erect a monument to Catherine II]. Sevastopolskie Novosti. Accessed: 15 September 2011
<http://sevastopol.su/news.php?id=4719>.

three-meter-high bronze sculpture depicts the Russian monarch in a ceremonial parade dress. The two medals on her chest and the two sashes, as well as a necklace and a noble head band as a replacement for the monstrous and masculine Imperial Crown underline her official representation. In her right hand the Empress holds a sceptre as a symbol of power; with the left hand, she presents a small scroll. According to the inscription on the pedestal of polished brown granite, this is the decree of the Czarina to Prince Potyomkin for the establishment of the town and fortress of Sevastopol, thus the foundation charter of the city. The granite base from the Ukrainian Tokivske deposits, which supports the 940 kilogram bronze statue, consists of a round granite pillar, with the upper third composed of a hexagonal plate. On the central panel on the front of the monument, a bronze plate bearing the words 'Catherine II, Founder of Sevastopol' is attached. In the granite slab to the left, parts of the text of the Empress' decree for the foundation of the city are engraved, the instruction for the construction of the 'Fortress Great-Sevastopol' with admiralty, harbour, shipyard and military settlements. On the granite slab to the right of the central shield is an engraved relief of a map of the bay of Sevastopol and the founding year of the city, 1783.

The costs for manufacture and erection of the monument were provided by the Sevastopol 'Fund of History and Culture named after Gennadiy Cherkashin'[32] while the bronze for the statue was donated by two of the then board members of the Fund, the patrons Yurij Kravtsov and Alla Kravtsova. The foundation, established in 1996 by writer Gennadiy Cherkashin shortly before his death and later named after him, sees itself as a defender and promoter of Russian cultural assets in Sevastopol. The preservation and development of the city as a Russian city is the clear political mission of the foundation. The opening speech of the memorial was given by the chairman of the pro-Russian Sevastopol City Council and local head of the Yanukovych-led 'Party of Regions', Valeriy Saratov, who complained in particular about the disruptive interventions by the mayor and 'Permanent Representative' of president Yushchenko, Serhiy Kunitsyn, and his administration, subordinated to Kyiv. Saratov stated that the offer of the Kunitsyn administration to replace the statue of the Empress by one of Prince Potyomkin, who at least partly had Ukrainian roots, was rejected 'from a position of superiority', whereupon the mayor audaciously claimed that the monument to Catherine the Great had been placed 'secretly and fraudulently' in the night, as Saratov reported to the crowd.[33]

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[32] Фонд истории и культуры им. Г. А. Черкашина [Fund of History and Culture named after G. A. Cherkashin]. Accessed: 15 September 2011
<http://www.cherkashin.net.ua/fond.php>.

[33] Olga Pavlikova et al., 'Севастополь поклонился царице-немке' [Sevastopol admires the German Czarina]. Gazeta. Accessed: 15 September 2011

All initiatives by Ukrainian nationalist groups to prevent the monument being erected had failed. After the installation of the monument some Ukrainians from Sevastopol showed their dislike and anger against the pro-Russian initiators because of the – in their opinion – one-sided presentation of history. Shortly after the inauguration of the monument, violent confrontations broke out between representatives of both camps at the foot of the monument. Radical Ukrainian nationalists even threatened to overthrow the monument that was built, according to their reading of history, in honour of an enemy of the Ukrainian people – moreover on Ukrainian soil. During the night of 27th October 2008, the monument was smeared by unknown persons in the Ukrainian national colours of blue and yellow.[34] In return, the pro-Russian organisations arranged guards to provide constant protection from attacks for the monument of the Empress – just as happened elsewhere in the post-Soviet space with controversial monuments, which, however, came mostly from the time of the USSR.[35]

Russification of the public space – Exclavisation of Crimea

In Crimea, parts of the Ukrainian minority worries about the territorial integrity of their country and senses a form of 'hostile takeover' through the appropriation of public space by the ethnic Russians, and nationalist circles of the Russian community worship the monument of the Czarina like a saint statue, which they protect with their lives. In their historical consciousness, Sevastopol and the entire Crimea are integral parts of Russia. The heated debates over the construction of monuments in Sevastopol, Ukraine, and the whole post-Soviet bloc is reminiscent to some extent of interreligious discussions between different denominations and the associated bloody history. In Crimea it is not only about different perspectives on history, but about the true faith in antagonistic civil religions whose centres in Moscow and Kyiv proclaim mutual concepts of the enemy and call for missionarisation. Ron E. Hassner argues that sacred spaces, e.g. monuments, can become the cause of conflict because for the faithful they are absolutely indivisible.[36]

<http://www.gzt.ru/politics/2008/06/16/060134.html>.

[34] 'В Севастополе облили краской памятник российской императрице Екатерине II и машины возле штаба ЧФ РФ' [In Sevastopol, the monument of Russian Empress Catherine II and a car near the headquarters of Russia's Black Sea Fleet have been smeared with paint]. Interfax. Accessed: 15 September 2011 <http://www.interfax.ru/russia/news.asp?id=42017>.

[35] As an example, the guarding of the "Alyosha" monuments in Plovdiv/Bulgaria and the Estonian capital Tallinn by the Russian minorities can be mentioned. Felix Münch, *Diskriminierung durch Geschichte? Der Deutungsstreit um den „Bronzenen Soldaten" im postsowjetischen Estland* (Marburg: Tectum Verlag, 2008), pp. 34; 77.

[36] Ron E. Hassner, *War on Sacred Grounds* (Ithaca and New York: Cornell University Press, 2009), and Ron E. Hassner, '"To Halve and to Hold": Conflicts over Sacred Space and the Problem of Indivisibility', *Security Studies*, 12.4 (2003), 1-33.

During the clashes in and about Sevastopol, the Catherine monument and its symbolic effect function as a landmark, which is to be a guide for the Russian majority population in stormy historical and political developments since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Ukrainian statehood in Crimea is often perceived as injustice, but the status of the region within Ukraine was widely accepted by the Russian majority after the Russian-Ukrainian Treaty of Friendship in 1997. After the Orange Revolution took place and Yushchenko turned the country away from Moscow towards the West, the situation radically changed. The President questioned the relations to the Russian Federation and therewith the mutual agreements about Sevastopol and established his Ukrainian nationalist politics of history which both courted the resentments of the Russian-speaking minority within Ukraine and especially the majority on the Crimean Peninsula and in Sevastopol. In this context, the monument underscores the claim of ownership of the Russian majority population over the Black Sea city and the whole Crimea. The erection of the monument for the Czarina as a symbol of the Great Russian Empire is thereby consistently rejected by the Ukrainians; they feel the days of suffering under Russian and later Soviet rule are recalled by the statue. Many ethnic Russians, however, see their Hero City as still belonging to Russia. In this regard, the monument is a helpful symbol reminding them of the greatness and unity of Russia in the times of perceived temporary separation from the mother country. It therefore also expresses a clear aspiration to hegemony which was an integral part of the Russian and Soviet imperialism. This position is supported through political, monetary, and mass media expenditure by Moscow. In the presidential elections in 2004 the Kremlin openly supported the pro-Russian candidate Viktor Yanukovych and his 'Party of Regions'. The crushing defeat of Yushchenko in the presidential elections in 2010 domestically aided the victory of a partly pro-Russian and anti-western counterrevolution following the 'Orange Revolution'. Thus, his foreign policy of rapprochement with EU and particularly with NATO was put to an end by his successor, and the status of Sevastopol and the Russian Black Sea Fleet was codified according to the perceptions of the Russian leadership. On 6th April 2010, a few weeks after his election victory, Viktor Yanukovych dismissed Serhiy Kunitsyn as mayor of Sevastopol and installed his party follower Valeriy Saratov.[37] Even the possibility of an election of the mayor of Sevastopol is currently under discussion in Ukraine which would further diminish the influence of Kyiv on the developments in Crimea and strengthen the influence of Russia. Once established, a newly elected pro-western Ukrainian government would never be able to

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[37] Президент України В. Ф. Янукович [Ukrainian President V. F. Yanukovych], 'УКАЗ ПРЕЗИДЕНТА УКРАЇНИ № 513/2010' [Decree of the Ukrainian President No. 513/2010]. Accessed 15 September 2011, <http://www.president.gov.ua/documents/10820.html>.

take the right to vote away again from the citizens of Sevastopol. Due to a non transparent change of the regional electoral law in 2010, experts are in disagreement over whether the election of the mayor of Sevastopol is already codified or not.[38]

Differing from other post-Soviet countries, memory and identity of the Russian community in Sevastopol and in Crimea are not primarily focused on 20th century history, the Great Patriotic War and Soviet times. The Sovietisation of Crimea was all-encompassing – it is quite surprising that the nostalgia of the Russian community turned from the Soviet to Czarist past or is at least an uncommon mixture of both elements. Remembrance falls back on Czarist Russia and Catherine the Great as the positive incarnation of the Great Russian Empire which is much less disputed than Soviet history. This could be one of the reasons for this recourse of remembrance to the 18th and 19th centuries; it is easier to legitimise, it covers the whole history of the city, and it is still an affirmative story of Russian greatness, success, and superiority, hidden under the distant and largely uncontested label of colonialism rather than on Soviet reminiscences like elsewhere in the post-Socialist realm. These post-colonial notions are reflected by the comments of supporters of the monument who described its erection as another victory over Sevastopol public 'sharovarschina' [39] and national obscurantism in Ukraine.[40]

Czarist past, post-Soviet Ukrainian present – Russian future?

Despite the fact that the Russian remembrance in Sevastopol focuses rather on the colonial Czarist heritage, there are still various links to the Soviet past; many Russians interpret the affiliation of 'their Russian city' Sevastopol to the Ukrainian state not only as an error of the Soviet heritage, but as an Ukrainian occupation of Crimea. Therefore, the Russian nationalist movement 'Sevastopol – Crimea – Russia' launched an initiative to open the 'Museum of Occupation of Crimea' as a response to the opening of museums concerned with Soviet occupation in the Baltic States, Georgia, and Kyiv. These museums are, according to 'Sevastopol – Crimea – Russia', state-organised incitement of hatred against Russia.[41] Just before the opening of the monument to Catherine the Great, the chairman of the Sevastopol

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[38] 'Як Янукович скасував вибори мера Севастополя' [How Yanukovych overturned the election of the mayor of Sevastopol]. Ukrayinska Pravda. Accessed 15 September 2011 <http://www.pravda.com.ua/articles/2010/08/30/5343357/>.

[39] The term derives from *salwar* or *shalwar*, the name of the Ukrainian Cossack bloomers, and is used here as a sarcastic and degrading description of the imputed backwardness and inferiority of the Ukrainian (folk-) culture.

[40] 'Памятник Екатерине II В Севастополе УСТАНОВЛЕН!!!' [Monument to Catherine II in Sevastopol INSTALLED!!!]. Sevastopolskie Novosti. Accessed 15 September 2011 <http://sevastopol.su/arch_view.php?id=4890>.

[41] 'В Симферополе открыт "Музей оккупации Крыма Украиной"' ['Museum of the Ukrainian occupation of Crimea' opened in Simferopol]. Ria Novosti. Accessed 15 September 2011 <http://www.rian.ru/politics/20070312/61857303.html>.

City Council, Valeriy Saratov, pointed out that there will not be a 'war of monuments' in Sevastopol[42], probably referring to the 'war of monuments' in Estonia and its culmination in 2007 in the 'Bronze Soldier Crisis', when Tallinn faced violent clashes between Russians, Estonians and the Estonian police following the relocation of a Soviet war memorial.[43] Saratov might be wrong; the situation in Sevastopol has also been aggravated since the monument was unveiled. Russians, whether Ukrainian or Russian citizens, increasingly use the statue as a site for remembrance and regularly inscribe it with imperialistic meaning by gathering there on former Soviet holidays, flying Russian and Soviet flags, wearing Soviet uniforms, and singing Russian and Soviet songs. Since many ethnic Ukrainians consider their nation 'as a pawn of the Soviet regime'[44] as well as Czarist and contemporary Russia, this continual re-enactment of Russian and Soviet repression, especially on 9th May (Victory Day) and 4th November (Unity Day), has soured most Ukrainians' acceptance of the monument.[45]

Therefore, since most Russians and Ukrainians have only their Czarist and Soviet past in common in a national historical context – which is a history of oppressor and underdog, hero and villain, master and servant – it is difficult for them to find a positive shared memory or common history that transcends this history in order to create a viable inclusive society and a multi-ethnic common future. Despite the importance of borders in the region, the Caucasian example shows the disposability, temporariness and changeability of these borders if it is in the interest of the resurgent Russian power. The arbitrary expansion of the Russian community through passportisation as an instrument of Russian intervention in Crimea can be regarded as a partial alteration or at least a permeabilisation of the border between the Russian Federation and the Ukrainian peninsula. Additionally, the formation and extension of an extraterritorial Russian collective and therewith the development of a Russian exclave on Ukrainian territory is supported by both the Russian community in Crimea and nationalist-minded Russian politicians in Moscow. At the same time, remembrance in the form of the *lieu de mémoire* for Catherine the Great enhances and catalyses this process of exclavisation and re-bordering in Crimea.

Even as increased economic and cultural integration have rendered borders more porous, people and groups still cling to, and are willing to fight for, symbolic territories because they

[42] 'Судьба Екатерины решится в пятницу –13-го' [The fate of Catherine is decided on Friday – 13th]. Sevastopolskie Novosti. Accessed 15 September 2011
<http://sevastopol.su/news.php?id=4855>.

[43] Münch, pp. 17-64.

[44] David R. Marples, *Heroes and Villains. Creating National History in Contemporary Ukraine* (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2007), p. x.

[45] 'В Севастополе демонстрантам с флагом РФ мешали пройти к вечному огню' [In Sevastopol, demonstrators with Russian flag were hindered to pass to the eternal fire]. Vesti. Accessed 15 September 2011
<http://www.vesti.ru/doc.html?id=324115>.

are crucial aspects of their identities and sense of belonging. This reinforces their 'imagined community'[46]. Sevastopol and the whole Crimean peninsula can be regarded as a highly symbolic territory for the Russian majority living in the area which, after the re-bordering in Soviet times, nowadays belongs to Ukraine. Within large parts of the Russian elite and community both in Crimea and in Russia, the Crimean peninsula is still regarded as an integral part of the Russian state. Whereas monuments legitimate elites' power, they can also legitimate an ethnic group's very presence in a territory. In divided societies, ethnic groups often claim that other groups have no right to live in 'their' territory. Monuments as described in this article provide concrete evidence that a group has historic roots, and, consequently, a legitimate right, to live where they do, and to claim the soil as their own.

All this holds true for the monument to Czarina Catherine the Great in Sevastopol. Despite the fact that Crimea has belonged to the Ukrainian SSR since 1954 and then to independent Ukraine since 1991, the statue for Catherine the Great was erected as a landmark and symbol of the power of Russia and a claim for Russian statehood in the region. It therefore represents a symbolic re-bordering in Crimea and the establishment of a de facto Russian exclave on Ukrainian territory, with all its intrinsic conflicts about statehood, borders, commemoration, and national identity. Staking out a Russian claim on formal Ukrainian territory with this historical landmark will without doubt further contribute to the schism between the two antagonistic civil religions which nevertheless have to somehow find a way to coexist in this Ukrainian, Russian, European and Eurasian border region.

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[46] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991).