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Post-colonial Solidarity? Estonia's Support for Ukraine: A Critical Discourse Analysis

MA Thesis

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Authorship Declaration

I have prepared this thesis independently. All the views of other authors, as well as data from literary sources and elsewhere, have been cited.

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Abstract

Ever since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Estonia has been a strong supporter of Ukraine. While much of the support can be explained by shared security concerns, the security dimension doesn't thoroughly explain the vast moral support. This thesis seeks to discover which discourses were used by Estonian officials to show solidarity towards Ukraine. Using Critical Discourse Analysis on officials' speeches and addresses between February 2022 and March 2026, the thesis uses postcolonial theory to analyze different discourses of support. In addition, the thesis seeks to answer what discourses were used to explain the root causes of Russian aggression and how a friendship was created between Estonia and Ukraine.

Postcolonial solidarity was exhibited through four discourses. Those discourses emphasized the consequence of the war, helped Ukraine seek justice, created solidarity through presenting the war as colonial and made a call for support from other actors. Three discourses provided explanations for the root causes of the war: Russian need to eliminate democratic Ukraine, the domestic dimension of Russian society and politics, and inherent evilness of Russia. Postcolonial friendship was exhibited through four discourses. Those sought to integrate Ukraine into NATO and the EU, showed how the war had united other states with Ukraine, showed the closeness between Estonia and Ukraine but also actively excluded Russia to create unity between other states and Ukraine.

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Introduction

In 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine shocked the world - few considered war in Europe in the 21st century a possibility at all. The shock initially created a lot of questions but soon different states started to mobilize support for Ukraine. Amongst one of the most vocal supporters was Estonia. Estonia's behavior was considered exceptional, as it managed to renegotiate European imagined geography (Hagelin & Gibson 2025) and over-step the expectations set for it in the geopolitical sphere as a small-state (Kutnarová 2025).

While shared security concerns between the two states help explain to an extent why Estonia became one of the most outspoken proponents of Ukraine, as anxieties over security can be existential questions for small states, it doesn't explain the ample moral support. Security concerns explain why military aid was deemed detrimental to help Ukraine win the war but security concerns fail to explain the spectrum of different types of support that were mobilized. Moral support, or solidarity, was still evident in public discourses through active advocacy and identification with Ukraine (Budrytė 2023).

The high level of solidarity might be explained by other similarities besides security concerns that unite Ukraine and Estonia. Both countries belong to the diverse list of post-Soviet states that are united by an experience of having been a part of the Soviet Union. This experience has led to long lasting consequences in both societies. For instance, questions over Soviet memorabilia in public spaces are actively debated in Estonia (Yatsyk & Sazonov 2025; Makarychev & Ventsel 2026). In Ukraine the collective memory is going through a transformation and collective identity is ardently being reconstructed (Vitov & Tymofieieva 2025). If we were to look at the "Soviet experience" of Ukraine and Estonia as cases of colonization by the Soviet Union, then these on-going debates would be debates over colonial legacy and could explain why the states show strong amity, or postcolonial solidarity, towards each other.

However, being post-Soviet doesn't inherently lead to sympathy towards other states with a comparable history. For instance, the ex-prime minister of Hungary, Victor Orban, was known to stall support initiatives aimed for Ukraine at the European Union (EU) level. Previously Communist Slovakia also used to be in the Soviet sphere of interest and their prime minister Robert Fico is also known for his antipathy towards supporting Ukraine. Natural comity might not exist between two neighboring post-Soviet states either, as exemplified by the persistent strife between

Armenia and Azerbaijan. Thus, we are left with the question of why does Estonia show such strong support for Ukraine?

This thesis aims to answer how postcolonial solidarity manifested in the Estonian official discourses to explain the vast moral support Ukraine received from Estonia. The main research question of the thesis is the following: How does postcolonial solidarity manifest in the official discourses of the Estonian prime minister, foreign minister and the president? In addition, two sub-questions are asked. First, in order to prevent future aggressions, one must know, or at least try to make sense of, what caused the on-going war. Therefore, we could ask what were the reasons provided for the war and Russian aggression. This is addressed by asking the first sub-question: What postcolonial arguments were used in Estonian foreign policy narratives to explain the root causes of the war? Second, the public discourses also showed how through material and moral support relations of solidarity were created between the two states. But so far it's been unclear exactly how this solidarity was produced through discourses by the state officials. Thus, the second sub-question is asked: How were postcolonial arguments used in the creation of friendship?

The theoretical expectation of this dissertation is that Estonia showed much of its moral support through a solidarity that is postcolonial in nature because both states still have colonial legacies that prevail and are actively being contested. Many societal debates over collective memory and identity are centered around these colonial legacies which leads to certain similarities between the two societies. Since both states are seen as similar and they both share a border with the aggressor that is Russia, discourses of shared experiences, history, identity and common goals could be the sources of postcolonial solidarity and the vast moral support.

The relevance of this topic comes from the fact that Estonia's support towards Ukraine has not been researched through the postcolonial lens. Estonian behavior (and support) towards Ukraine or due to the war in Ukraine has been previously researched through small-state behaviour (Raik & Arjakas 2024; Kutnarová 2025), geopolitical perception (Hagelin & Gibson 2025) and identification with Ukraine (Budrytė 2023). While Budrytė (2023) analyzed the unity between the two states through the postcolonial lens, her analysis included all of the three Baltic states. She also included different sorts of discourses, including apolitical actors such as the secretary general of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the media. Thus, the author of this thesis is not aware of any research previously done with the focus only on the official discourses of Estonia on supporting

Ukraine and analyzed through postcolonial framework. But knowledge in this field could provide answers as to why, and how a strong sense of solidarity was created on the official state level to understand similar cases in the future better.

The method of analysis is Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) developed by Norman Fairclough, using his three dimensional model on a single case (Estonia). The data includes official speeches and statements made between February 2022 and March 2026 by the prime minister, the foreign minister and the president. The speeches and addresses are exported from official government sites using specific keywords to narrow down relevant data.

The structure of the thesis includes three separate substantive chapters. The theoretical framework of postcolonial theory is presented in the first chapter. This includes an overview of postcolonial theory, Edward Said's ideas, criticisms of postcolonial theory, introduces solidarity and colonialism as concepts, makes the case for the Soviet Union in the role of the colonizer and shows how it has been previously applied to the cases of Estonia and Ukraine. It also briefly gives an overview of potentially problematic aspects of using postcolonial theory in the abovementioned cases. Then a literature overview is presented after which the interesting tensions between the theoretical framework and the two states, Estonia and Ukraine, are explained. The second chapter focuses on methodology. It gives an overview of the research questions, data used, CDA as the analytical tool and potential weaknesses of the research method. The third chapter is analysis, providing answers to the three research questions. The answers to the questions are provided in the order of the research questions. After that a conclusion is added, to summarize the study and to add ideas for future research.

Chapter 1: Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

1.1 Post-colonial theory

Post-colonial theory is the academic study of political, economic and cultural consequences of imperialism and colonization. It is a critical analysis of ideological imperialism, its continuing influence and consequences in previously colonized areas. The theory emerged mainly in the second half of the 20th century. Postcolonial studies look into the consequences of colonialism and imperialism, the ways in which knowledge of other peoples has been created and instrumentalized for colonial aims. Schwartz (2005: 6) provides one simple definition: Postcolonial studies designate the academic study in the West of the cultures and contexts of decolonisation. Postcolonial as a term first emerged to replace other terms, such as non-western or third world. It lacked the derogations of the former labels, unifying formerly subjugated people, it embodied a historical dimension and opened an analytic window onto the common features of the people who had only recently “thrown off their European chains” (Moore 2001: 113).

The emergence of the theory during the second half of the 20th century coincided with the fall of multiple Western empires, national emancipation of people who gained independence from said empires, emerging contexts of decolonisation and the poststructuralist and Marxist academics, which provided lessons and new tools derived from a specific struggle against European colonial imperialism. According to Schwartz (2005: 5) this enabled theorists to distinguish the present from historicist explanations, like the ancient antipathies often blamed for conflict, and instead enabled the theory to examine inclusion and exclusion and the reasons behind it in empirical detail with theoretical precision. Post-colonial theory raises a number of questions in economic, sociological, philosophical and political realms, while questioning the violence which has accompanied cultural interactions, processes and explanations, while also providing alternative models of accommodation (ibid.). It has enabled scholars to draw parallels between areas heretofore seen as noncomparable (Moore 2001: 112).

Postcolonial theory grew out of poststructuralism and postmodernism while directed against various grand narratives and figures of the subject and identity (Gandhi 2019: 10). Marxist thought focused on the economic paradigms while poststructuralist thought provided a Western critique of

Western civilization. According to Gandhi (2019: 25-26), postcolonialism learnt through this “to diagnose the material effects and implications of colonialism as an epistemological malaise at the heart of the Western rationality”. Suspicion of Eurocentrism was at the heart of Marxist theory which was also picked up by postcolonial theory. It also contains poststructuralist nuances of power and knowledge borrowed from Foucault, hegemony from Gramsci, difference/difference, deconstruction from Derrida and other critical theoretical frameworks (Burney 2012: 46).

What sets it apart from postmodernism and poststructuralism is the fact that postcolonial theory has a strong sociopolitical and social justice agenda - illuminating the nature of subjugation and oppression of the postcolonial subject both in history and present times (Burney 2012: 46-47). Postcolonial theory has been thought of as a critique of history, being the discourse that the West has instrumentalized to assert its hegemony over the world (Gandhi 1998: 170). The West started equating history with civilization and through this made the “underdeveloped” nations historical, similar to the West. Through this logic the West remained the sovereign subject of all histories. Postcolonial theory intends to make the voices of the “others”, who were silenced or ignored by the West, heard (Gandhi 2019: 171). The post-colonial theory intends to eliminate Western hegemony over knowledge, histories, discourses and intends to recognize non-Western voices in their pursuit to deconstruct Eurocentric assumptions of the non-West.

The theory has posed different questions in literature, sociology, economy and philosophy. Not only does it critique discourse of nationality, ethnicity, race and gender but also identity, self-image and ideology, while deconstructing the structures which are embedded in our representations of “the Other” in literature, art, curriculum etc. (Burney 2012: 49). Therefore it’s not useful to look at postcoloniality from only a historicist perspective but to look at different discourses in separate fields to throw light on colonialist discourses that still persist in cultural and social forms.

Postcolonial theory challenges Western assumptions about colonized people while demonstrating hybridity and heterogeneity of the colonized places and people, critiquing discursive legacies of colonialism but also contests the social hierarchies and power structures of imperialism (Burney 2012: 46). It throws light on the intricate cultural, social and geopolitical relations between the colonizer’s historical past and the colonialist discourse still very prevalent in the twenty-first century (ibid: 44). A big part of the reason why it has become popular in academia is due to the

fact that it describes to varying degrees of contemporary political, social, cultural and literary situations in much of the world (Moore 2001: 111-112). Postcolonial lands are torn between a desire for autonomy, yet a deep history of dependence; between being indigenous and hybrid; between resisting external pressures from the colonizer and complying. Postcolonial peoples' wish to escape their colonized situation paradoxically give the ex-colonials disproportionate weight in the minds of the colonized, as the danger of disappearing or becoming a part of a neocolonial relation exists (Moore 2001: 112).

Postcolonial theory rests on its critique of colonialism and colonial discourses. According to Ashis Nandy there are two types of colonial conquests: one of physical conquest of territories and the other of occupation and conquest of minds, selves and cultures (Gandhi 2019: 15). The second has to do with how people perceive themselves and others, including the ways in which the Occident created the image of the Oriental as an inverse image of the coloniser. As Burney (2012: 44) puts it: "Empire, geography and culture become central issues with the colonial domination of the globe and hence are salient concepts in postcolonial theory. /.../ Location, or where you are and where you come from, matters."

Colonial discourse often rationalizes the actions of the colonizers through oppositions, such as maturity/immaturity, civilisation/barbarism, developed/developing, progressive/primitive etc. (Gandhi 2019: 32). The colonised are considered childlike and these oppositions serve the colonial civilising mission, where the colonization is presented as a form of tutelage to help bring the colonized closer to maturity.

Overall, colonialism is defined by two key points. First, it's a Eurocentric colonial model that is based on a binary relationship between Europe and the rest of the World (which is also considered the Other). Second, it's a model that is constrained by clear timeframes (Hennoste 2003: 92), between the 15th and 20th century. Colonialism exists nowadays as well but in its slightly changed form and now goes by the name "neocolonialism". This term first emerged in the wave of decolonization in 1960s Africa, describing countries that are politically independent but "still deeply tied to the economic apron-strings of Europe and Africa" (Olaniyan 2005: 270). As resource extraction remains the main tenet of neocolonialism similarly to colonialism, we could argue that the content of new colonial relations hasn't changed. What has changed are the ways in which it's done and communicated. However, as the practice of colonialism has changed shape, but not

substance, it's widely understood that "colonialism" in the shape of what it was in the 18th or 20th century has ended and different kinds of neocolonial relations have replaced it. Thus, it could be argued that "colonialism" as such is confined to the past and to analyze current colonial relations "neocolonialism" could be a more fitting concept.

1.2 Edward Said's "Orientalism"

Often theories are developed by one or a select few authors. However, postcolonial theory has no one definitive author nor one concrete moment of emergence. There is no one author who makes the case for postcolonial theory, everything it entails and all of its consequences. Relevant authors of postcolonial theory include Edward Said, Frantz Fanon, Gayatri Spivak, Homi K. Bhabha, among others.

Edward Said wrote "Orientalism" in 1978, which became one of the foundational texts of postcolonial theory. In the book he explained his ideas of what he dubbed "Orientalism": the relations between the Orient and the Occident, how the Orient has been constructed and how discourses of the Orient are managed and produced. His arguments set the stage for the birth of a theoretical perspective: postcolonialism (Barney 2012: 49). Said's Orientalism became the catalyst and the reference point of postcolonial theory by drawing upon Foucauldian paradigms and Foucault's notion of a discourse to isolate the workings of Orientalism through explaining relations of power (Gandhi 2019: 25). His approach to postcolonialism is characterized by an emphasis on empiricism and historicism (Burney 2012: 47).

Said defined Orientalism in the following way (1978: 73):

Orientalism is the generic term that I have been employing to describe the Western approach to the Orient; Orientalism is the discipline by which the Orient was (and is) approached systematically, as a topic of learning, discovery, and practice. But in addition I have been using the word to designate that collection of dreams, images, and vocabularies available to anyone who has tried to talk about what lies east of the dividing line.

Said's "Orientalism" focuses on two main arguments about Western imperialism and the discourse following it. First, Orientalism is considered a way to rationalize colonial rule. During the 18th and 19th Century all the way up to the Cold War, the Western empires created a vast body of

knowledge about how the East was to be understood. The central claim was that the Orient had the same goals and needs as the West. Orientalism was used to absolve imperialism of any misconduct. Colonialism created a legitimizing discourse to justify the West's superiority. Second, Orientalism was used to justify colonial rule in advance - discourses surrounding Orientalism created a fertile ground for future colonization even before the colonization itself began.

Said creates a binary in Orientalism between the Occident and the Orient. The Occident is the West: modern, advanced, male, rational. The Orient is backward, ancient, developing, exotic, female. Said (ibid.: 4) notes three assumptions about the Orient. First, the Orient is not a fact of nature but is man-made; it's an idea with a history and tradition of thought in and for the West. There is a difference between true and political knowledge. Said notes how the truth is nonpolitical, but the research cannot be completely separated from his subject of study. An Orientalist researcher is first a representative of a nationality and after that an individual. A Western researcher of the Orient has to be aware of their cultural background and the fact that their nation has had an interest in the Orient. Second, ideas, cultures and histories have to be studied with their configurations of power. A relationship of power and domination with differing degrees of hegemony is always between the Orient and the Occident (ibid: 5). Third, cultural hegemony gives Orientalism its durability and strength. This is done through what Gramsci identifies as hegemony - certain cultural forms predominating over others become cultural leadership, creating us (Europeans) versus them (the Orient) distinctions. According to Said, the Orient was not only discovered to be Oriental, but it was made Oriental through submission (ibid.: 6).

Defining Orientalism is no simple feat, but Said (ibid: 12) says the following:

Orientalism is not a mere political subject matter or field that is reflected passively by culture, scholarship, or institutions; /.../ it is rather a distribution of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical and philological texts; it is an elaboration not only of a basic geographical distinction (the world is made up of two unequal halves, Orient and Occident) but also a whole series of "interests"... /.../ it is above all, a discourse that is by no means in direct, corresponding relationship with political power in the raw, but rather is produced and exists in an uneven exchange with various kinds of power. /.../

Said claims that political imperialism governs entire fields of study, scholarly institutions and imagination, making it impossible to avoid (ibid.: 13-14). With *Orientalism* he focused on the exchanges between authors and political concerns in three great empires of the time: British, French and American and their relationship with the Arabs and Islam. *Orientalism* doesn't have a singular methodological starting point besides the one of three empires. France and Britain were also the places in which Oriental studies first flourished, together with the fact that they were the two greatest colonial networks before the 20th century. After the Second World War, the United States took their place.

Said used strategic location as a concept which describes the author's position in a text with regard to the Oriental material they write about. Strategic formation as a concept analyzes the relationship between texts and how they acquire power among themselves and in the culture at large (ibid.: 20). Whoever writes of the Orient has to locate themselves in relation to it, they have to address the reader, contain the Orient and represent it on its behalf; all while affiliating itself with other works, audiences, institutions and the Orient (ibid.: 20). This creates an Orientalist discourse and the study of it focuses on how the author, the text speaks for the Orient, describes it, presents it for those outside the Orient - the text itself becomes a representation of the Orient, but not a natural depiction (ibid.: 21). Said analyzes individual texts and writers and tries to reveal the relations between those and a larger body of Orientalist texts by connecting Orientalism to ideology, politics, logics of power to analyze the West's conceptions and treatments of the Other and to understand Western politics and Western cultural discourse.

Said contended that for many in the non-West, grand narratives still dominate the psyche of colonized subjects and still exist as forms of hegemonic Western impositions of the mind (Burney 2012: 47). For his interest in *Orientalism* Said (ibid.: 25) mentions the personal dimension - to know oneself through historical processes to date and to create an inventory for it (borrowing Gramsci's words). Said grew up in two British colonies being "Oriental". From the 1950s he noted how the relations between the West and the East were turbulent - the "East" signified danger, and the stereotypes by which the Orient was viewed became more reinforced. To talk about the Orient, the speaker has knowledge and power over it. And to have such knowledge of it, means domination and authority over it, as we know it, including denying it autonomy, because what matters is the speakers' and audiences' understanding of the Orient, not what the Orient really is (ibid.: 33).

In the early 20th century the knowledge of the Orient grew greatly and at the same time the European-Oriental relationship was based on the idea that Europe was always in a position of strength, always stronger than the Orient (ibid.: 40). Said notes how knowledge of the Orient was generated out of strength, which in a way created the Orient, the Oriental people and their world - the Oriental is then contained and represented by a dominating framework created by the West. At that time what we consider “the West” ruled much of the Earth and Orientalism coincided with that period of expansion, providing a vocabulary, rhetoric and figures for justification and reinforcement of said expansion through Orientalism. The British and the French shared lands and rule, but also the intellectual power that was Orientalism. This provided a family of ideas and a set of values, which helped see Orientals as phenomena with characteristics (ibid.: 41-42). Orientalism provided the difference between “us” (The West, Europe) and “them” (The East, The Orient, the strange). The Westerner was the stronger one, providing shape and being able to penetrate the strange, having to control and prevent crises by creating a distinction between the two worlds and by inviting the West to control the Orient (ibid.: 47-48).

Over time, Western actors took the Oriental actors and attributed them agency and roles. Muhammad became the actor of the Orient - their representative and a false copy of what the West considered an original God - the Christian God (ibid.: 62-63). The Oriental became the theatrical stage of the entire East and anything non-Western. Orientalists presented themselves and their creation as systematic, correct and truthful, which signaled Orientalism’s power and effectiveness. Through this a threesome relationship emerged: on the Orient, on the Orientalist and on the Western consumer (ibid.: 67). Orientalists were always changing the Orient to be more like themselves and the Orientalists made it their work to convert the Orient into something else. Empirical material, such as knowledge of specific local religions, about the Orient did not count: what only mattered was the geographical, historical and moral apprehension (ibid.: 69), through which the Orient was compared to the West. Only the Orientalist vision depicting the Orient counted for the Western audience, and this vision only served the goal for which it was created – to control the Orient. Through this, Islam, for instance, started to play the role of the outsider for the Occident inside Europe (ibid.: 71).

Napoleon’s conquests in Egypt and elsewhere were also driven by Orientalism. According to Said (ibid.: 80), this was the first time Orientalist knowledge was put to test to conquer the Oriental: to

use Orientalist knowledge for a colonial goal. The Orient was in Orientalist books - it was available and reachable - it was a subject that could be dealt with because books about it enabled it. That kind of Orient was silenced and submissive, it couldn't resist in the books. It might be argued that if Napoleon's conquests to Egypt were Orientalist, then the same applies to the French invasion of Russia as well. Following this logic, Russia would be the Oriental "victim". And indeed it is so - Russia was certainly Orientalized as seen as the "Other". It was also the subject of different wars and conquests. But this doesn't mean that the Soviet Union, its predecessor or successor, weren't at any point the ones Orientalizing "others" themselves. Annus (2023: 120) notes that, empires reflect the values of their times and as colonialism is a time specific phenomenon, the empires of the 19th century differed greatly from the ones in the 20th century. In the context of this thesis, the Soviet Union can be considered what Annus (2023) calls a "late-colonial empire". A longer discussion on the coloniality of the Soviet Union is covered in subchapter "1.6 Making the case for Soviet Union as the colonizer".

Said's goal was to identify the relationship between Orientalism as a discourse and the historical and institutional context in which it had been created. Europe studied the Orient in a way in which the Orient never studied Europe in return. Europeans created great volumes of scientific knowledge about the Orient, but the Orient never answered with the same meticulous knowledge production. To create expertise, one has to have power to be there and be an expert in ways the natives themselves cannot be. As Said discusses in *Orientalism*, postcolonial theory most importantly, reveals the hidden structures of power and knowledge that govern the social construction of the "Orient" as Other (Burney 2012: 46). The non-Europeans who have been denied the right and ability to think by the West, are the ones who feel the persistent power asymmetries of the knowledge production and distribution in the most painful way (Tlostanova 2015: 43). Said ultimately calls upon the Oriental to become the victors - the language of emergence, not residue, has always been at the heart of Said's work (Alessandrini 2005: 446).

1.3 Said's critics and criticisms of postcolonial theory

While postcolonial theory hopes to empower those whose voices have not been heard, it's also been criticized for several reasons. One criticism is that the theory seeks to homogenize colonialism into an all-inclusive category but fails to account for similarities between societies which have not

experienced colonialism. This act of homogenization of colonialism also fails to account for different forms of colonialism and anti-colonial struggles (Gandhi 1998: 168). Different societies have had different levels of exclusion by race, ethnicity, religion, gender or by other attributes. There are fundamental differences to how, for example, Australia was colonized and the ways in which Asia or Africa was militarily subordinated.

In the theory's very name, the prefix "post" bestows colonialism as the theory, sees entire histories chained to the colonial period. Histories are either before, during or after colonialism, thus becoming defined by it. At the same time, the prefix also refers to an end - as if a better world has emerged, where colonialism is no more. This ignores the divisiveness of societies and problems of neocolonialism are brushed aside. The theory is also built on the assumption that clarity occurs progressively in time - we can now see what we couldn't before. But by applying this logic the theory distances itself from the immediate and instead moves towards distance.

According to Gandhi (2019: 171) postcolonialism delivers the idea of a world which is historicised through a single category of colonialism. This has different implications. First, random encounters and non-encounters become cases within a relationship of retaliation and coercion. History thus becomes knowable as movement between anti-colonial resistance and subordination. While Western dominance is true, the creation of histories is complicated by failures both on the sides of dominance and resistance (Gandhi 2019: 172). The non-imperial West and the Other, that is able to live with the alternative West, are ignored.

Said's Orientalism and "othering" as a process can be described as unidirectional, which according to Albrecht (2019: 184-185) can be considered a specific historical instance of a larger transhistorical interaction of knowledge and power. This can be described by the examples in which colonizers used discourses to "other" the colonized, but also the reverse - the situations in which the colonized saw themselves as superior to the colonizers. The act of distinguishing other actors from oneself and marginalizing them is present in both cases, with just the roles reversed. This was also the case for the relationship between the Soviet Union and Estonia, as well as Ukraine. However, according to her, this does not paint the entire picture of complex relations in situations of colonialism clearly, which is why she therefore calls upon the postcolonial theory to become more multidirectional. The goal would be a shift in genuinely comparative and global discussion of colonialism and empire that would go beyond the time and scope usually considered

(ibid.: 185), to widen the postcolonial horizon with unseen recurring political, intellectual and cultural practices, ideological constructions and similar functioning mechanisms (ibid.: 191).

Although the criticisms are relevant, postcolonial theory provides the academic world with an ethical paradigm that enables systematic critique of institutional suffering (Gandhi 2019: 176). Said's ideas enable us to see the connections between power and the imperialist discourses which were used in the past and the discourses that are used to subdue subjects under colonizers' power even nowadays.

1.4 The Concept of Postcolonial solidarity

1.4.1 Solidarity as a concept and its application on Estonia and Ukraine

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, solidarity is “unity (as of a group or class) that produces or is based on a community of interests, objectives, and standards”. The word comes from the French *solidarité*, from *solidaire* characterized by solidarity, and from the Latin *solidum*, meaning whole sum. According to the Cambridge Dictionary solidarity is “agreement between and support for the members of a group, especially a political group”.

Solidarity as a concept can be considered a floating signifier: it can mean a lot of different things in different contexts but lacks a single referent. Solidarity has been used in different disciplines and has been defined by numerous authors. According to Jabri (2007: 715) the expressions of solidarity are of interest to the scholar of International Relations in their location at the nexus between the international and the human, a problematic, transnational, and indefinable location where the political takes place beyond the confines of the sovereign state.

Sociologist Emile Durkheim explained that solidarity comes from bonds with others and the readiness to act upon them. He differentiated between two types of solidarity: organic and mechanical. Organic solidarity stems from the division of labor, where homogeneity in individuals is the basis for solidarity, whether through work, educational training or lifestyle, describing mostly modern societies (Jary & Jary 1991: 22). Mechanical solidarity describes developing or primitive societies with a simple division of labor, where solidarity stems from similarity between individuals (Jary & Jary 1991: 389).

Laitinen & Pessi (2014: 1) provide a more simple and broad definition: solidarity is emotionally and normatively motivated readiness for mutual support. They note that while the term can be ideologically loaded to some, others claim that accurate uses of solidarity can exist (ibid.: 1). Solidarity as a concept is both normative and descriptive. For the latter, solidarity refers to a connection between people or members of a group, no matter if large or small. For the former, solidarity is often based on thinking as a group, as a “we”. The focus is on “us together”, not on egocentrism nor “thou-centrism”, both of which focus on “you” or “me” as subjects (ibid.: 2).

Using Laitinen’s & Pessi’s (2014) definition of solidarity, we can see it goes both ways in the relations between Ukraine and Estonia. On the one hand, Estonian politicians have claimed on many instances their government’s and the state’s solidarity with Ukraine - whether it shows through sending humanitarian aid, ammunition, taking in refugees etc. This way Estonia stands in solidarity with Ukraine. On the other hand, we can see a certain narrative also emerging from the Ukrainian side. Ukrainians have motivated readiness for mutual support. This mutual support aspect emerges from Ukraine fighting the war against Russia. In this rhetoric, Ukraine supports Estonia and the rest of European countries by fighting in the war against an actor, who could be an existential threat to other states as well. Ukraine is sacrificing itself for Europe (including Estonia), and for all other states that Russia might want to conquer. Kaja Kallas said the following at a press conference with the Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki on the 25th of April 2023:

Russia’s aggression is not only a European issue or a regional conflict. What is at stake in Ukraine is the right to exist as a country. Russia is testing if conquering and colonising a country in the 21st century is possible. Russia wants to rewrite the European security order and bring back the spheres-of-influence policy where might make right. These are existential principles of existential importance to both of us.

In a way Ukraine is “keeping Russia busy” and depleting their resources which in turn weakens Russian economy and morale. Russian political and military leaders famously promised to take Kyiv within three days but as this plan failed and as Ukraine effectively resists and counterattacks, Kyiv managed to also tarnish Russian reputation. Ukraine managed to humiliate a formerly great empire and a military powerhouse by not giving up. The war also drew a clear line between democratic and non-democratic powers, ostracizing Russia in the West as a consequence. Ukraine

sacrificing itself in the name of keeping Western civilization safe is a great price that Ukrainians have to pay. It can be expected that Europe and Estonia should pay a price for it, whether material (through resources or monetary means) or immaterial (values, endorsement etc.). As a result of this war and through different narratives of solidarity, a “we” has emerged between Europe, Estonia and Ukraine.

Through these mutual relations, both states show solidarity with one another, just in different ways. Different discourses, arguments and reasonings have emerged as a way to explain and justify actions to the public and the reasonings behind the war, while many of them focus on security or humanitarian justifications. One of those narratives is one of postcolonial solidarity that can be understood as a type of solidarity that emerges from (a shared) postcolonial past. This solidarity, or readiness for mutual support, comes from articulations of shared or similar past experiences, a similar historical legacy, shared narratives of being part of an empire in the past, having to find one’s identity as a people after independence, having experienced similar struggles and adversity. The solidarity of how the two states have a similar historical legacy also reaches into today - the colonial legacy of the Soviet Union is still there. Narratives of returning to the grand empire are still relevant and Russian imperialist ambitions are often used to explain the motivations behind the war. Postcolonial theory here helps us deal with the colonial legacy of the past but also current events and potential future outcomes. As Smith et al. (1997: 8) note, people read their future through a set of expectations which were formed in the past, making the states’ understanding of their history important to the vision of themselves and their future.

The postcolonial similarities cannot be claimed to be the only source of solidarity, though. As both states share a common enemy and many security concerns, much of the support and solidarity has been articulated through security narratives, whether it be the amount of ammunition or arms sent from Estonia to Ukraine or training military personnel for Ukraine to help defeat Russia and defend their sovereignty. Besides, there are many countries which share a postcolonial past and former colonizer but are still hostile towards one another. This happens even in the post-Soviet space, for instance animosity between Armenia and Azerbaijan is well-known and enduring.

However, postcolonial solidarity still seems to gleam through official discourse. Official discourses generated by state representatives and officials use a mixture of both. The security discourses are articulated through an existential lens, for instance by claims that if arms are not

sent, then Ukraine as a state might cease to exist and if that were to happen, other post-Soviet states (including the Baltics) might be next. The postcolonial discourses focus more on a shared past, similar identity and values. There are also other discourses focusing on the humanitarian aspect, the role of international law etc. All of these are heavily intertwined but the postcolonial theory helps us narrow down a single discourse of the many.

1.4.2 Colonialism as a concept

Colonialism as a concept has many definitions but it is widely understood as a practice of domination, which involves the subjugation of one people to another. According to Kohn & Reddy (2024) the difficulty of defining colonialism comes from the fact that often it's used as a synonym for imperialism. While both colonialism and imperialism were forms of conquest, imperialism often describes cases where a foreign government administers a territory without significant settlement. Colonialism on the other hand describes cases with the colonizers' settlement, violent dispossession and political domination over foreign territories. The practice of colonialism involved the transfer of a population to a new territory, whereas imperialism drew attention to the way in which a country exercises power over another (Kohn & Reddy 2024). Hennoste (2003: 92) provides a wider definition for colonialism, defining it as the empire's relation to the periphery, province, marginality and barbarity, as a relation between the civilized territory and its surrounding marginal area. Since this definition could be applied to many different situations, even ones that don't involve territorial conquest (such as relations between medieval nobility and serfs), this definition for colonization would be too wide in the context of this thesis as it also involves vertical power relations in a society. Therefore, this thesis will draw on the widely understood definition of colonialism.

Annus (2011) also provides seven typical features of colonialism. First, foreign supremacy is established over a territory. Second, the supremacy of the colonizer is guaranteed by the technological mastery lacking in the culture of the colonized. Third, the economy is reconstructed to serve the interests of the colonizers. Fourth, after the establishment of colonial rule, it usually works without constant and oppressive military supervision. Fifth, the foreign power presents itself and is accepted by the colonized as an enlightenment undertaking. Sixth, the identity of the local population becomes based on those who make the natives feel secondary and unworthy. According

to Annus (2011: 446) the experience of being oppressed becomes an important aspect of the local culture. Seventh, the colonial situation has an impact on the colonizer. The author notes that her typology for the features of colonialism is incomplete (ibid.: 446), however it is sufficient enough to use it for the analysis of Estonian and Ukrainian cases, providing interesting and complex relations between the colonized and the colonizer, which will be further looked at in the following subsections and literature overview.

1.5 A certain blindness of postcolonial theory towards the Soviet and Russian past

Postcolonialism is often highly critical of Western imperialism and their colonial conquests. But as this thesis shows, imperial domination is not only reserved for Westerners. While postcolonial theory mostly focused on the consequences of British, French and sometimes Dutch imperialism, it said little about the actions of the empires that were to the East - namely Russia. Postcolonial studies have not seen Russian colonialism as part of its research agenda, with a few exceptions (Annus 2011). This is for multiple reasons.

First, postcolonialism grew out of Marxism and poststructuralism. Marxism and Leninism claimed to be anti-imperial ideologies, although the Soviet leaders' actions of conquering different lands and people did not match what their ideology preached. Marxists also have an affinity to Soviet leaders and imperial Russia due to Marxist ideology. The Soviet Union was the clearest and longest example of an enduring socialist country, making it a special case. Supporters of Marxism can idealize the Soviet Union and thus might be blind to its imperialist actions and consequences. According to Western critical canon, it is impossible to be a victim of Marxism and colonialism at the same time, as Marxism belongs to a tradition of anti-colonial discourse (Racevskis 2002: 42). And the Soviet Union never declared itself an empire either, as did many Western empires. It proclaimed a voluntary union of republics, where national identities dissolved into one.

To complicate things further, Moore (2001: 123) also raises an interesting point: by calling the Russo-Soviet colonization a deviation from the Anglo-French colonizing “standard”, it again perpetrates the centrality of the Western world. Calling the Russo-Soviet forms of colonization different would be a part of orientalizing Russia and setting the West as “the example”, for which one should strive for, the norm yet again. Creating a clear and concise map of Soviet coloniality is a difficult task as ideals and realities are often in contradiction. The Soviet Union and its anti-

imperial rhetoric are one example of this. Another example is the way in which the Western empires have been set as “the gold standard” of colonialism, discarding other empires to the peripheries of postcolonial studies. The tension between Marxist studies and implicating the Soviet Union of colonialism also adds to the confusion.

Second, postcolonialism as a theory developed around the time when previously colonial dominions started to become independent from their colonizers. According to Schwartz (2005: 1), in an historical sense postcolonialism aims to describe movements of national liberation that ensued Europe’s domination of the Globe. At that time when Edward Said wrote *Orientalism*, the Soviet Union was at its strongest and it took another few decades for it to fall. Therefore, neither Said nor other authors could have written about the Soviet empire dissolving before the year 1991 because simply put - few believed that the Soviet Empire could ever fall at all.

Continuing this, thirdly, for many the Soviet Union was not even considered a colonialist empire. The prevalent notion was that the empires, whose centers were in Western Europe, were the imperialist colonizers. Between them and their colonies were often great geographical distances, often thousands of kilometers. And more often than not, there was sea or waters separating them from their colonies. The center and the periphery of an empire were clearly separated by great distances. The Soviet Union on the other hand had its colonies close to it, connected by land. An empire annexing territory close to it was not treated as colonialism, but as something different. The Western European empires started falling, their colonies started gaining independence and they came to be heavily criticized by emerging postcolonial theory. The prevalent understanding was that only Western states were capable of being colonizers. Representatives of anti-colonial liberation movements denounced Western states’ colonial ambitions but believed that Soviet communism could be “the final solution to the misfortunes of the modern world” (Racevskis 2002: 44). The communist ideology of the Soviet Union was used in the same manner, to further the same imperial interests as rationality, Christianity and civility were used by Western states in their colonial conquests.

Fourth, unlike Western settler colonies, some of the people being colonized were familiar. They weren’t unknown like the indigenous people of the Americas or Australia (Sviezhinitsev & Kisly 2023: 235). This applies especially to the people in Ukraine or Belarus, less so to others, like people in the Caucasus for example.

Fifth, as the Western states were considered colonizers, the East was left out of the discussion. How could the Soviet Union or its predecessor Tsarist Russia possibly be a colonizer when it is geographically located in the East, while some of its colonies were to its West; when the state itself was considered “Oriental” or exotic compared to its Western counterparts. For a long time, leftist critical theory was implicated in a misperception of the Soviet system. It represented a bright future for mankind, so much hope and ideological capital had been invested into it that many Western thinkers ignored evidence of Soviet crimes, such as the slave labor system (Racevskis 2002: 43). The intellectual left wanted to believe that a global empire that was righteous, moral but also durable, was possible. And the Soviet Union embodied this very dream.

Sixth, the ways in which the Soviet Union governed its satellites and how colonial governance shaped local cultures, economies, institutions and peoples' lives varied vastly in the empire. The colonial experience between territories was great and most states had very different histories with relatively few common features (Annus 2011: 441). This makes the relationship between postcolonialism and the Soviet Union even more diffused as the colonial experience was different for dominions.

All of these different reasons contributed to a certain blindness the postcolonial theory had for Tsarist Russia's, Soviet Union's and Russian Federation's imperialist conquests. It also explains why the people and lands conquered by said empire(s) were not seen as subjects of colonization for decades.

1.6 Making the case for Soviet Union as the colonizer and potential criticisms

To establish the Soviet Union in the role of the colonizer, Annus (2023) has created a 13-point system to explain the coloniality of power in the Soviet and post-Soviet contexts.

First, coloniality, colonialism, postcolonialism and decoloniality are not fixed concepts, which is why every colonial situation and thus postcolonial context is different - as Annus puts it, there is no colonialism “gold standard” (ibid.: 120). Second, continental colonialism differs from overseas colonialism, making comparisons between the Soviet Union and other empires useful only in a “limited matter” (ibid.). Third, colonialism develops as a comparative phenomenon as empires of different hierarchical standing use comparisons of each other in expressing similarities between their territories. Fourth, subsequent colonial regimes create comparable layers of history: Soviet Union in the 1930s contrasted itself as a decolonizing power against tsarist Russia, only to later

during Stalin's reign start making positive comparisons to tsarist self-governance. The Russian and then Soviet Empire strove to build its own globality/modernity, by positioning itself first as a Orthodox kingdom and later a Soviet world, though the empires were not essentially different from each other - only the Soviet tactic in relation to its colonies became more cruel and refined, eliminating all alternative thinking and being (Tlostanova 2012: 135). Fifth, colonialism is a timespecific phenomenon and as the Soviet Union can be considered a "late colonial" empire, which started losing prestige in the latter half of the 20th century, the Soviet Union was a "masking empire". It was an empire which didn't consider itself an empire, promoted decolonial rhetoric but was in actuality an empire nonetheless. Sixth, colonial power structures develop in history, making regional policy in different parts of an empire vastly different due to geography, religion, ethnic traditions, legacies of empires, previous value-systems, material infrastructure and global processes. Seventh, the colonial power cannot work without using local elites as one depends on the other. Eighth, control of territory is the main characteristic of colonialism, but this also includes control over politics, economic and cultural fields. Ninth, colonialism is not necessarily economic extraction, as controlling a colony from afar was often very expensive and resulted in numerous problems and failures. Annus (2023: 121) exemplifies this with the case of Holodomor famine in Ukraine. Tenth, colonial attitudes are characterized by disinterest towards local culture, pretending to be superior and the civilizing mission's paternalist rhetoric. In the Soviet Union this was exemplified by discourses of Russian superiority before other peoples, where Russians were depicted as having to civilize others. Though the discourse was selective, leaving out ecological destruction, disrupted ecosocial relations and sometimes coercion of monocultural development (ibid.: 122). What makes the Soviet case of coloniality especially complex is that the rhetoric of friendship goes hand in hand with its "civilizing" rhetoric (Annus 2019: 245). Eleventh, the hegemonic part of the dominating peoples doesn't see the discourses of their superiority as morally objectionable, instead discourses of "big Soviet homeland" persisted in many Russians even after the fall of the empire. Twelfth, authoritarian colonial regimes are multidirectional: the political power is based on ideology and in the Soviet empire the colonial matrix of power was connected with means of production being tied to the state, the power of one party and the socialist ideas of a welfare state. Thirteenth, the colonial situation gives birth to new stereotypes and essentialist "us versus them" contrasts, where the people of borderlands try to exclude colonial newcomers from

their imaginary zone of national intimacy. This later created numerous problems after the fall of the empire (ibid.: 122).

Račevskis (2002) makes a similar case for Baltic colonization by the Soviets. According to him, as colonialism involves domination, territorial occupation and control, which materialized in the form of ideological regulation of colonial subjects and a manufacture of consent was created. This involved areas of contention, such as language, history and education, which the Soviet system controlled. As language is a fundamental strategy to domination, the entire semantic dimension of linguistic expression was controlled by the regime (ibid.: 40). Russian was imposed as the lingua franca, inhabitants were displaced to gradually disperse and eliminate identifiable ethnic groups (Račevskis 2002.: 41); mass and arbitrary relocation of entire non-Russian peoples took place, the Soviet reconquest of the once independent Baltics happened in 1941, the invariable Russian ethnicity of the number-two man in each republic took place and Russia has a Third World policy from its Moscow center (towards the peripheries) (Moore 2001: 123).

Annus (2011: 449) notes that Soviet colonialism shared many features with Western colonialism, such as economical and political hegemony and attempts to shape the worldview of the oppressed, but it ultimately backfired. The ideological terms of Soviet colonialism functioned in reverse, creating an imaginary opposite of itself: the happy ideal of a Western world, which was free of Russian influence (ibid.).

The colonial matrix of Soviet rule in the Baltics was glaring in the overall reconstruction of societies and consequently in peoples' everyday lives (Annus 2019: 248). This ranged from the visible Soviet military in public spaces, to reorganization of education systems, to different political or economic decisions made in Moscow for the interests of Moscow etc. - creating a common understanding of living under "Russian rule" (ibid.: 249). The history was cleansed and a settler-colonial historical narrative was created, being one of the most important elements of facilitating the creation of a settler-colonial society (Sviezhinitsev & Kisly 2023: 237). Soviet authorities also created a policy of indigenization, which meant promoting national languages and the local elites under the control of the Communist Party to restrict any nationalist aspirations of the non-Russian nations further (Sviezhinitsev & Kisly 2023: 236).

The array of post-Soviet states is incredibly diverse just like the postcolonial world, with some nations young, some quite old but according to Moore (2001: 115) the nations were

“unquestionably subject to often brutal Russian domination” for anywhere from forty to two hundred years. As Moore (ibid.) puts it:

It should be clear that the term “postcolonial”, and everything that goes with it - language, economy, politics, resistance, liberation and its hangover - might reasonably be applied to the formerly Russo- and Soviet-controlled regions post-1989 and -1991, just as it has been applied to South Asia post-1947 or Africa post-1958. East is South.

Certainly, not every person migrating from the Soviet Union to the Baltics was a colonizer. Many came searching for a better life and opportunities, many were sent against their wishes. But as Annus (2019: 249) notes, in the eyes of the locals, the Russian-speaking settlers, en masse, functioned as colonizers, as the great influx of migrants seemed culturally threatening.

What complicates the arguments regarding Soviet colonization further is the fact that the empire was just as lethal towards Russians as it was to non-Russians and that the Soviets radically devalued Russian identity for decades (Moore 2001: 123).

1.6.1 Specifics of the Estonian case of colonization

Double colonization as a concept is mostly used by feminist scholars to describe how women and men experience coloniality differently. Hennoste (2003: 99) instead uses it to describe a situation in which one society is colonized by different actors with different cultural spaces, which results in colonization being different both times. It might be argued that Estonia for instance was first colonized in the 13th century by Germans, who had a Western European culture, creating a Western colonial layer. Afterwards in the 19th century, Russian power was added to it, creating a moment of double colonization. In the 20th century the Soviet colonization with its ideology was added as another layer on top, though that rested heavily on the previous Russian layer (ibid.). This thesis’ focus of colonization will emanate from the Soviet occupation, not from any earlier regimes or orders, as the Soviet experience had a lasting impact on both Ukrainian and Estonian societies. These impacts are felt even nowadays, as decolonialization and postcolonial heritage are still actively debated in both societies (Velmet 2023; Annus 2023).

In the context of how Soviet Russia acquired the territories to grow into an empire, seizure, annexation and occupation are used most often and regularly interchangeably. But in many cases

of colonization, occupation doesn't seem to fit very well, though many postcolonial scholars use them interchangeably (Annus 2011: 442). This is for two reasons: first, occupation is seen as bloody annexation of a territory, and second, colonization originally meant to describe the transfer of communities, who sought a better life in other territories, while keeping their allegiance to their original culture. Annus (2011: 445) explains that while the Communist Russia did not colonize the Baltics and instead occupied it, the period of occupation turned into colonialism. This happened after different modes of resistance turned into forms of hybridity, the identity of the oppressed became infected by the new regime over time and a co-existence with the new power came to life. Strakhov (2023: 263) makes a similar case for the current day Ukraine, claiming that Russia never intended to occupy only a specific area (Crimea), but hoped to subjugate Ukraine completely. This is why the current on-going war is colonial in nature and not merely an occupation of Crimea. Annus (2011) states that occupation has a short life-span but when the occupants settle, their ideology starts to change the ways in which the occupied relate to the world and the economic, social and cultural modes at work are those of the colonial endeavor.

1.6.2 Specifics of the Ukrainian case of colonization

Ukraine in the Soviet Union also had a complex history. It included a civil war, communist terror, famine, repressions, oppression of different ethnicities and the Chernobyl catastrophe (Strakhov 2023: 254). Crimean Tatars were deported physically but also denied of their nationality in censuses, ceasing to recognize the existence of Crimean Tatar language and culture (Sviezhinitsev & Kisly 2023: 236-237).

Crimea was first annexed by the Russian Empire in 1783. Crimea's history as a colony is similar to a lot of other peoples' that became part of the Russian empire. It was not separated from the empire by sea, the colonized people were well known to Europeans and the new imperial control in the 19th century shared many settler-colonial practices with other empires (Sviezhinitsev & Kisly 2023: 235). As the population was mostly Muslim, it allowed the Russian Empire to orientalize Crimea and thus feel more European itself.

However, for a significant part of the Ukrainian population, the Soviet Union was considered "an evil", which was represented through a history of fighting against communism from famous insurgents, such as Bandera, or the tragedies of Holodomor and Chernobyl (Strakhov 2023: 258).

The Stalinist faminogenic policies were interpreted by different parts of Ukrainian society as an embodiment of imperial rule coming from Moscow and the colonial dependence of Ukraine (Hrynevych 2021: 136).

The coloniality of Ukraine also had implications for the full-scale war that Russia started in 2022. It was not only justified by Russia through imperial ideas but the invasion became a colonial war in terms of its methods as well, such as having the goal of Ukraine completely subjecting, aggressor fighting both troops and civilians and establishment of new political and economic order in occupied lands (Strakhov 2023: 261). Postcolonial theory is also relevant as different authors have noted how Ukrainian society, collective memory and its identity is going through a postcolonial and decolonial awakening (such as Vitov & Tymofieieva 2025; Stryjek, Markowska-Marczak & Konieczna-Salamatin 2024; Oleksiyenko 2025).

As of writing this thesis, the war is still on-going, and the question of decolonization affects two regions of Ukraine the most: Donbas and Crimea. “The Crimean question” is debated for instance, where one model of solution presumes reducing Crimea to the level of a general oblast, while another, which is decolonial in nature, argues for a Crimean Tatar autonomous region after de-occupation (Sviezhentsev & Kisly 2023: 240). Moore (2024: 56) also argues that long before the Bucha massacre or even Holodomor, the Russo-Soviet oppression of Ukraine was colonial in nature and that the full-scale invasion of 2022 is just the latest example of Russia’s colonial ambitions. Strakhov (2023) also analyzed the ongoing war, concluding that the war started by Russia is colonial in nature.

1.6.3 Potential pitfalls for post-Soviet coloniality

Multiple authors call for more research on Soviet coloniality (Moore 2001; Tlostanova 2015; Tlostanova 2012). Tlostanova (2012: 138) calls for Eurasian studies and comparative imperialism to take into account Soviet and socialist coloniality and to critically analyze them. However, she does note that such a discourse would have to be separate, with its own categories and concepts, while avoiding “the pitfalls of violent resistance and subaltern self-victimization”. Researchers in the post-Soviet sphere have to be careful not to self-victimize or pretend martyrdom but should instead create new ways of thinking to decolonize knowledge of themselves and others. Moore (2024: 57) also warns of nationalist dangers, stating that with regards to Ukraine and other post-

Soviet states, it is important to image post-Soviet postcoloniality without ethnonationalist exclusion. Velmet (2023) notes how nationalist movements have “hijacked” the concept, using it to justify repressing Russian minorities in Estonia.

1.7 Literature overview of previous studies

Budrytė (2023) analyzed how the Baltic states identified with Ukraine, initiating policies to support Ukraine and continuing their transformation from policy-takers to policy-makers internationally (Budrytė 2023: 82). The author found that the war in Ukraine became “a decolonizing moment of sorts, when the states asserted their agency and became players in the wider European security landscape. Budrytė argues that the states experienced “vicarious identification”, through which emerged a new shared identity with Ukraine. This resulted in the creation of new identities and discourses enabling the three states to assert their agency and become heard in the transatlantic community, ultimately resulting in a “decolonizing moment” (ibid.: 98). Domestically, vicarious identification was pursued by governments and accompanied by an anti-colonial nationalist politics of memory. Budrytė however notes that vicarious identification is never absolute and in the Baltics, it exposed the vulnerabilities of the Russian speaking minorities.

Discourses on securitization/de-securitization of Soviet monuments in Estonia after the war in Ukraine have been analyzed by Yatsyk & Sazonov (2025) and Makarychev & Ventsel (2026). While both studies focused on securitization discourses as their primary topic, the discourses on Soviet monuments and memorabilia have to do with postcolonial legacy. For this reason, the analysis of both studies shows how discourses on colonial legacies can be instrumentalized through securitization. Although the studies do not focus on coloniality per se, the studies do show the ways in which a postcolonial society can actively engage with the three nexuses between postcolonial theory and the situation in Estonia, that will be presented in following subchapter.

Yatsyk & Sazonov focused on public debates on Soviet-era monuments in Estonia after the 2022 invasion of Ukraine. Their main perspective was focused on mnemonic security, asking questions of how a common past is remembered and self-emancipation through domestic issues is aimed at erasing references to Soviet meanings in the collective identity of Russian-speakers. Yatsyk & Sazonov used critical discourse analysis on most popular Estonian media, that featured relevant coverage, and eight in-depth expert interviews. The articles were chosen between February 2022

and August 2023, expert interviews were conducted in late 2023 and the beginning of 2024. Their analysis revealed four narratives: mainstream, far-right, pro-Kremlin and pro-Estonian Russian speakers. According to the authors, the country struggles with building domestic consensus in relation to the Soviet wars (ibid.: 29). The mainstream narrative was used to protect the national feelings from possible mnemonic traumas triggered by the war in Ukraine. The mainstream narratives overlapped with far-right ones, which proposed either indiscriminate demolition of monuments or targeting only those considered to glorify Soviet Russian figures. The pro-Kremlin narratives promoted the stance that the Estonian government was motivated by Russophobia and drove the country into crisis, fuelling inter-ethnic hostility. Pro-Estonian Russian media expressed grievances over the loss of Soviet-era symbols, while the mainstream discourses focused on Estonian Russophones and how to replace Soviet-era meanings for them.

Makarychev & Ventsel (2026) analyzed how the on-going war in Ukraine changed Estonia's attitudes toward "material legacy of the Soviet past" through the Estonian government's stances on the relocation of Soviet monuments. Focusing on public debates over Great Patriotic War memorials, the authors addressed two questions: how the material symbols of the Soviet-era were securitized in political discourse and how practices of securitization and de-securitization intersected in Narva. Makarychev & Ventsel emphasized how the interplay between security framing and cultural decolonization can be mutually constitutive. Using multilayered theoretical approaches, such as postcolonial and decolonial theories, heritage studies, political semiotics and the Copenhagen school of international relations, the authors analyzed media articles (between spring 2022 to the end of 2023) and visual material that appeared in Narva. The authors found that the policy of ridding the public space from remnants of the Soviet past solidified existing dividing lines and created new "contingencies, vulnerabilities and dependencies in society" (ibid.: 16). On the national level the threatened referent object defined the content of securitization discourses. On the local level "the heritage debate" was a combination of securitizing and de-securitizing narratives. Both securitization and de-securitization strategies functioned as highly politicizing moves (ibid.: 17) and the case was found to be involving competing strategies rooted in challenges tied to ontological security, where the strategies "manifested in discursive and performative practices related to material objects of the past" (ibid.: 18)

Hagelin & Gibson (2025) used qualitative content analysis on the Estonian prime minister's Kaja Kallas' tweets to analyze how the politician tried to reconfigure the imagined geography of Europe and Estonia's marginality within it. They focused on how Kallas, as the leader of the Reform Party and as prime minister, attempted to spatially reconfigure Estonia and the Baltic states within the EU. The authors contributed to the existing literature on changing spatial concepts of Estonia by examining how the prime minister used social media to articulate spatial concepts and advocated for a change in geopolitical perception of the region, Estonia and Ukraine internationally. They found that the war in Ukraine led to renegotiation of European imagined geography in three ways: reconfiguration of the margins, highlighting the expertise and agency of the margin and shared values as new interpretations of moral geography. This study did not focus on postcolonial discourses but instead on renegotiation of imagined geography. Nonetheless, geopolitical perception can be tied to the second nexus between postcolonial theory and Estonia. The second nexus deals with the complex relationship between association with the West, and not the colonizer as is the case with most postcolonial states. To identify with the West and pursue reimagination of geopolitical perception is a clear example of actively challenging the ambiguity derived from Soviet colonization as it tries to identify Estonia as Western and actively create distance from Russian sphere of influence.

Kutnarová (2025) looked at Estonia's reaction to the Russian aggression against Ukraine as an exceptional case of small state behavior. The author found that using compelling narratives, a smart state strategy that uses the state's expertise, leading by example, acting as an "honest broker" and using firm persuasive negotiation helped Estonia meddle with the usual limitations for a small state (Kutnarová 2025: 905). Kutnarová analyzed the strategic narratives presented by the prime minister Kaja Kallas and ministers of foreign affairs Eva-Maria Liimets and Urmas Reinsalu that were addressed to international and domestic audiences in speeches between 24th of February 2022 and 5th of March 2023. However, Kutnarová left out president Alar Karis' stances due to his "limited executive capacities, visibility and options to influence European diplomacy" (ibid.: 909). Kutnarová found that the Estonian narrative included values and norm-setting addressing different audiences with a solid and careful selection of language. These aspects helped build a structured and unified narrative that had a positive reception among international audiences which then exceeded the expectations for a small state's international impact and behavior. A compelling and credible narrative based on example and pervading foreign and security policy discourses of

ministers was the key to success in being heard and recognized. This research did not look at postcolonial theorizing directly either, but it can be analyzed as such, since the exceptional small state behavior arose due the colonial war in Ukraine. The study did look at strategic narratives which were aimed at bolstering foreign policy goals through values and norm-setting. At first the values or the norm-setting might not appear as postcolonial but if reframed as acts of active opposition of the colonizer, the study can be applied along the parallels of the third nexus. That nexus dealt with orientalizing Russia, since the colonized seek to become the norm-setters, not followers. The active norm-setting could be interpreted as reclaiming power over the normative dimension, as Russia wages its war on the front lines and on the normative realm.

1.8 Applying postcolonial theory to Estonia and Ukraine - three nexuses appear

Postcolonial theory has mostly been applied to the victims of Western imperialism. As a theoretical tool it hasn't been as popular among post-Soviet states due to its Marxist roots and its anti-Western stances. The Baltics and Ukraine are post-Soviet states which are located geographically to the West of its colonizer but they also wish to align themselves with the West ideologically, politically, institutionally, economically. The Baltics were by the time of the annexation by the Soviets already modern states with established national identities, who were proud of their national cultures but who also felt superior to their invaders (Annus 2011: 443). In a 2001 essay, David Chioni Moore argued that on the one hand postcolonial studies have been silent on the former Soviet sphere, and on the other hand, the post-Soviet scholars have failed to think of their regions in the useful postcolonial terms. He termed this phenomenon a "double-silence". In 2024, after the full-scale war in Ukraine had been going on for two years, he revisited his prolific essay. There he argued that the double silence is now mostly down to one: the post-Soviet spaces now yield a lot of research, with researchers using the literature of West-based scholars who focus primarily on the Global South (2024: 50-51). The reverse however has not happened, major postcolonial studies journals rarely mention post-Soviet or postcommunist scholars or research - thus the post-Soviet has not yet reshaped the postcolonial assumptions and at the intersection of postcolonial and post-Soviet studies, has become "now a largely one-way street" (ibid.: 52). However, postcolonial theory could be useful to analyze how the relationships between power and knowledge influence current discourses between two states with a similar background: Estonia and Ukraine.

Three interesting nexuses emerge between postcolonial theory, Said's ideas of Orientalism and the cases of Estonian and Ukrainian coloniality.

1. The first nexus emerges from the fact that postcolonial theory, including Said's ideas, deals with different remnants of colonial legacy in postcolonial states.

This applies to Ukraine and Estonia as well, as both societies currently deal with questions of decolonization and memory politics. After the war against Ukraine broke out, topics of decolonization in Eastern Europe have become more prevalent. On the one hand, Slavic, Eurasian and Eastern Europe studies as fields have long been criticised for their tendency to Russify the region (Annus 2023: 118). On the other hand, the asymmetrical power relations in the region force scholars to create a more coherent approach to imperial or colonial power structures, as they shape personal, sociocultural and ecosocial relations in the region to this day (Annus 2023: 118). Questions of colonial heritage of the Soviet Union are still relevant in much of Eastern Europe. What to do with Soviet memorabilia in public spaces, how to differentiate colonizers from the colonized and other similar questions are still being raised (Velmet 2023).

Coming to terms with one's past also reinforces one's self-consciousness: in the context of becoming a European subject, Estonia and other Baltics call for an equal remembrance of their pasts to emerge as Europeans (Mälksoo: 2009, 655). This has been crucial for the identity formation of Estonia, where the European identity has been actively pursued, while ditching any remnants of a Soviet identity. At the same time, it's important for young nation states in the post-Soviet sphere to gain intellectual independence and create their own knowledge about themselves. According to Tlostanova (2015: 50) freeing oneself from coloniality of knowledge is a long and painful process which requires learning to unlearning on different grounds in order to free oneself from intellectual dependency and catching up modus to create knowledge that would be original and vigorous enough to not be subalternized in the global North. Decolonization of Russia also serves a political goal: unless Russian political elites confess their history of colonial violence, the imperial way of thinking will persevere (Annus 2023: 118).

2. The second nexus emerges from the tension between the concept of hybridity and its complex relationship with Ukraine and Estonia - as they associate themselves with the West, they actively challenge the ambiguities derived from Soviet colonization.

Hybridity as a concept is one of the most used but also most contested concepts in postcolonial theory (Hennoste 2003: 89). It refers to new transcultural forms, which are created in the contact zones of colonization. Hybridity can be political, cultural, racial, linguistic etc. The term was first coined by Homi K. Bhabha (1994), who contends that cultural ethos is created in a liminal space, “a third-space”, creating a hybrid identity between the colonizer and the colonized (Burney 2012: 59). Hybridity signifies cross-cultural exchanges and refers to the identities, which are created from mixed cultural sources. Although post-colonial theory attempts to show mutual changes in the cultures of the colonized and the colonizer, hybridity generally refers to the destabilizing of the colonized culture (Gandhi 2019: 136). Thus, although the Soviet Union colonized the two states and the cultures mixed mutually, both Ukraine and Estonia contested the Russian culture. Instead, they saw themselves as beyond it. On the one hand they were culturally and symbolically associated with the West, and on the other were more developed than the center of the empire. As hybridity explains different transcultural forms and changes, Ukraine and Estonia were also heavily influenced by Russian/Soviet culture and norms. But by actively associating themselves with the West, even during the colonization period, they actively challenged the ambiguities of that colonization. This nexus was further investigated in the subsection “1.6 Making the Case for the Soviet Union as a Colonizer”.

3. The third nexus appears as Said’s Orientalism and much of postcolonial theory revolves around the West orientalizing the East. Yet in Ukraine and Estonia the relationship is inverted: colonies orientalized the colonizer before, during and after the colonization.

This has in part happened due to what Tlostanova (2015) calls the imperial difference, which refers to those powers, or “losers” as she puts it, who failed in their imperial mission and as a result took second-class places (ibid.: 46), while being colonized intellectually, epistemologically and culturally by the winners. Imperial difference is further divided into internal and external versions. Internal imperial difference refers to the European losers of the second modernity (South of Europe). External imperial difference refers to the non-Western, non-capitalist empires, like the Ottoman Sultanate or Russia, which felt like colonies in the presence of the West (ibid.: 47). The external imperial difference generated Russia’s secondary status in Europe, while also orientalizing it. Simultaneously, within Russia there was a specific version of secondary Orientalism as well: its own inferiority complexes were projected onto its non-European colonies

in Central Asia and Caucasus through its role as a civilizer (ibid.: 47). The Russian colonies could be divided into two: the non-European colonies felt the double dictate of coloniality of knowledge in the Western and Russian versions, but the others regarded themselves standing higher than “the Russian subaltern empire”, refusing its dictate and hoping to be one day integrated into Europe (ibid.:47). Both Estonia and Ukraine can be categorized under the latter.

Ukraine’s postcoloniality helps us raise certain questions even today. Moore (2024: 58) noted how outside of Ukrainian, Ukraine-adjacent or diaspora populations Ukraine did not garner as strong nor as wide of a support in the Western academia or in progressive cultural institutions as the Palestinian cause did. As a scholar he admitted to not having a clear answer to it but noted how on the one hand Ukraine has never been “civilized” enough for the West but as it doesn’t belong to the Global South, it finds no solidarity with anyone else either (ibid.: 59). He continues, stating that it is precisely in Russia’s interests to convince scholars to ignore Russia and her victims on the colonial map and to convince observers how the war in Ukraine is simply “an internal Slavic conflict” (ibid.: 59). Thus Ukraine is perceived as too eastern and too western at the same time by Western audiences, which makes orientalizing Russia a strategy to further align itself with the West.

The theoretical part of this thesis has tried to make the case for why Ukraine and Estonia are both postcolonial states that have experienced colonialism. The following parts of this thesis will be conducted by focusing heavily on the concept of postcolonial solidarity. This postcolonial solidarity might be exactly what Moore (2024) is showing lacking from the Western progressives towards Ukraine.

Of course, Western states have also sanctioned Russia, people have called to boycott Russian products, media, oil etc., but these initiatives have had the strongest impact and support from states which do have a bigger Ukrainian diaspora or which consider themselves Ukraine-adjacent - such as the Central and Eastern European or Baltic states. One might ask then how and why does their postcolonial solidarity towards Ukraine manifest? Finding the answer to the question of why don’t Western European states, the Global South or others care about Ukraine and its liberation from the imperial-colonial constraints would need further research and probably seeking the answers to that question could take up entire books. Therefore, this thesis will try to answer the questions, to which we might find (slightly) shorter and more concrete answers in the following chapter.

<u>Previous relevant research on the topic</u>	<u>What this research adds to the existing literature</u>	<u>Methods for adding new knowledge</u>
Vicarious identification of the Baltic states with Ukraine, which led to a “decolonizing moment of sorts” (Budrytė 2023).	New knowledge by using postcolonial framework to analyze official Estonian discourses on support for Ukraine as this has not been done before.	Critical discourse analysis (CDA).
Vicarious identification with Ukraine was pursued by governments with anti-colonial nationalist politics of memory (Budrytė 2023). Ontological insecurity is behind it.	New data as the study includes the latest data available. Most studies on Estonian stances on security or foreign policy discourses were done in 2022, 2023. This study includes data up to 2026, including the years 2024 and 2025 – all of which are until now largely uncovered by research.	Norman Fairclough’s three-step model.
Discourses that are tied to postcolonial legacies are actively debated (Yatsyk & Sazonov 2025; Makarychev & Ventsel 2026). War in Ukraine rearticulated issues on ontological security and de-Sovietization of Estonian public spaces.	Analysis and comparison of three leaders. Two are political actors (the prime and foreign minister), one leader is apolitical actor (the president).	CDA aims to reveal how discursive practices maintain the social world (including relations with unequal power).
Baltic presidents emphasized a shared history with Ukraine (Soviet occupation trauma). Also narratives of fighting and	Narratives where Estonia and Ukraine orientalize Russia - barbaric, uncivilized,	Discourse contributes to the construction of social identities, social relations,

suffering a “Soviet genocide” with Ukraine (Budrytė 2023).	underdeveloped, corrupt, the East, the Other.	systems of knowledge and meaning.
Articulation of a new Europe with Ukraine in it. Kaja Kallas shifted perspectives on expertise and agency of the margin to shape geopolitical orders (Hagelin & Gibson 2025).	Narratives between “hybridity” and association with the West/EU/NATO.	Discourse functions ideologically - contributes to the creation and reproduction of ontological security.

Table 1. Brief overview of the most important information on previously done research (first column); what this study adds to the literature (second column) and methods of creating new knowledge (third column).

Chapter 2: Methodology

This thesis aims to understand how and why Estonia, one of the most vocal supporters of Ukraine, chose to show solidarity towards Ukraine. Providing material and military help can be explained by shared security anxieties. As of April 2026, Estonia ranks second in its total allocations to Ukraine relative to its GDP (The Kiel Institute 2026). Helping Ukraine fight against Russia is considered an existential question for the Estonian state and providing material help is one way to stop the Russian aggression. But the security dimension explanations for support fail to capture the full spectrum of support that was shown towards Ukraine. Different interpretations of solidarity and togetherness were still noticeable in public discourses. Budrytė (2023) for instance identified how the Baltic states identified with Ukraine through “vicarious identification”, which was deemed by the author as something deeper than just friendship. The moral support or solidarity could be explained by the similarities that unify the states, as both share a border with Russia – the aggressor-state with whom they also share a complex colonial history and relationship. Therefore, the solidarity could be postcolonial in nature but to understand if it is so, and how it is used, we have to understand the discourses that have constructed this “postcolonial solidarity”.

In the introduction it was already briefly explained that to be post-Soviet and postcolonial doesn't inherently equate to solidarity or even friendship between two states. But if it's not inherent, then how is this support constructed and created through official discourses? In order to answer this question, the following main research question of the thesis is proposed: How does postcolonial solidarity manifest in the official discourses of the Estonian prime minister, foreign minister and the president?

It is generally known that to prevent an event from happening again in the future, one has to know what caused the event in the first place. Different explanations for why Russia started its war against Ukraine have been presented in the public discourses. Thus, in order to prevent future aggressions and understand Russia's motivation for its actions, first additional research question of the study asks the following: What postcolonial arguments were used in Estonian foreign policy narratives to explain the root causes of the war?

Vicarious support and identification have also led to a certain friendship between Estonia and Ukraine but it is currently unclear how and what discourses were used to create this friendship.

Thus, as the second additional research question, the thesis asks the following: How were postcolonial arguments used in the creation of friendship?

The thesis' research design is a single case study that uses Critical Discourse Analysis to analyze the official discourses of Estonian representatives through a framework of postcolonial theory. The postcolonial framework has not been widely used in research of Estonian foreign policy prior to this thesis which enables the dissertation to create new knowledge on how Estonian officials have incorporated postcolonial rhetoric and explanations in their discourses. Discursive practices, which include discourses, reflect and actively contribute to social and cultural change. This makes the main purpose of discourse analysis to show the links between social and cultural developments and discursive practices (Jorgensen & Phillips 2002: 78). Critical discourse analysis is one type of discourse analysis, which studies how in the social and political context the social relations of power are enacted, reproduced and resisted by text and talk (van Dijk 2001: 352). Discourse analysis as a method will be introduced more thoroughly in this chapter below.

This study is a qualitative single case study of Estonian official discourses. These discourses are represented by three actors: the prime minister, foreign minister and president. Using discourse analysis on a single case study contributes to the deepening of knowledge on official Estonian discourses, how Estonia came to support Ukraine so strongly and how this support was communicated to local and international audiences. Postcolonial theory is the theoretical framework, which also provides three interesting nexuses and tensions between the theory and the two post-Soviet states. Since postcolonial theory has garnered little attention from analyses of Estonian-Ukrainian relations, this thesis would provide new data and observations in this field as well, as most previous studies have focused on the security or small-state policy dimensions.

The method for analysis is critical discourse analysis (CDA) developed by Norman Fairclough (1995). It includes a three-dimensional model consisting of text, discourse practice and cultural practice. Discursive practices, through which texts are produced and consumed, are viewed as an important form of social practice which contributes to the constitution of the social world including social identities and relations (Jorgensen & Phillips 2002: 61). CDA aims to shed light on social, cultural phenomena and processes of change. CDA brings social analysis into language studies and contributes to critical social analysis through a focus on discourse and relations between discourse and other social elements, such as power relations, ideologies, institutions, social

identities (Fairclough 2012: 9). Discourse is a form of social practice that constitutes the social world and is also constituted by other social practices. Thus, it is in a dialectical relationship with other social dimensions: it does not just contribute to the shaping and reshaping of social structures but also reflects them (Jorgensen & Phillips 2002: 61). For Fairclough, social structure is understood as social relations in society as a whole, in specific institutions, and as consisting of discursive and non-discursive parts.

The three dimensional analysis entails attention to processes of text production, distribution and consumption (Fairclough 1995: 9). CDA provides theories and methods for the empirical study of relations between social and cultural developments in social domains and discourse (Jorgensen & Phillips 2002: 60). In Fairclough's CDA framework the texts analyzed are not looked at in isolation, but together with different institutional and discursive practices within which the texts are embedded (Fairclough 1995: 9). On the one hand it is a normative critique, as it doesn't simply describe existing realities but also evaluates them; on the other hand it is an explanatory critique as it also seeks to explain existing realities by showing them to be effects of structures, mechanisms or forces that the analyst postulates (Fairclough 2012: 9).

CDA engages in linguistic textual analysis of language use in social interaction as discursive practices. In CDA it's claimed that discursive practices contribute to the creation and reproduction of unequal power relations between social groups, which are understood as ideological effects (Jorgensen & Phillips 2002: 63). The research focus is on both the discursive practices that construct representations of the world but also the role that these practices play in promoting the interests of different social groups.

Jorgensen & Phillips (2002: 67) point out that in CDA two dimensions of discourse are important focal points: 1) the communicative event (an instance of language use, such as a speech) and 2) the order of discourse (the configuration of all discourse types which are used within a social institution or field; types consist of discourses and genres). Within the order of discourse there are specific discursive practices through which texts and talks are produced, consumed and interpreted. An order of discourse is a social structuring of semiotic difference, a particular social ordering of relationships between different ways of meaning-making (for example the network of social practices which constitutes the field of education, is constituted semiotically as an order of discourse) (Fairclough 2008: 232-233).

As Fairclough's three dimensional model consists of different levels of analysis, it allows for detailed textual analysis, macro-sociological analysis of social practice and micro-sociological analysis, where everyday life is treated as the product of people's actions where they follow a set of shared "common sense" rules and procedures. The benefit of drawing upon the macro-sociological tradition is that it takes into account that social practices are shaped by social structures and power relations which people are often not aware of (Jorgensen & Phillips 2002: 66). Fairclough understands discourse in three ways: discourse as the language used as social practice, discourse as the kind of specific language used within a field and discourse as a count noun (a way of speaking which gives meaning to experiences from a particular perspective) (ibid: 67).

Fairclough's three dimensional model points to language use as a communicative event consisting of three dimensions: 1) it is a text (speech, writing, visual image or a combination of those), 2) it is a discursive practice, which involves the production and consumption of texts, 3) it is a social practice (wider social practice to which the communicative event belong to). Thus, the analysis of a communicative event has to include: 1) analysis of the linguistic structure (the level of text), 2) analysis of the discourses and genres which are articulated in the production and consumption of the text (the level of discursive practice) and 3) analysis of whether the discursive practice reproduces or restructures the existing order of discourse and what consequences this has for the wider social practice. In CDA all three dimensions have to be covered in the analysis of a communicative event (Jorgensen & Phillips 2002: 68).

For this thesis, the data or selection of texts, will consist of speeches and statements made by the prime minister, the foreign minister and the president of Estonia. The speeches and statements are collected from official government websites which are released by Riigikantselei (The Government Office), Välisministeerium (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) and Presidendikantselei (Office of the President).

The prime minister's and foreign minister's speeches and statements were chosen as sources since they shape the foreign policy of the state. Therefore, they also construct the foreign policy through the discourses they produce and communicate. Although the president is an apolitical figure, who usually doesn't actively participate in shaping the foreign policy, their speeches and statements still reflect the wider foreign policy discourses. Their stances should support the government's

foreign policy positions but additionally add another layer of actorship and discourses. The president's discourses have a legitimizing characteristic and function while also presenting their personal ideas and opinions. Analyzing these discourses in addition to the government's adds additional denseness and variety to the data. All three of the actors have a role through which they represent the state internationally and domestically. The data cited in the analysis will be added to the list of references; the references however do not include the full list of all data analyzed. The references of data will include the entire date, including day and month, to help differentiate between different sources and add clarity. All of the data analyzed was either in Estonian or English. All the data cited in the analysis, that included material in Estonian, was translated to English by the author.

Sources of data included speeches and statements, as these speech acts communicate the official discourse of the ministers and the president. In their communicative events they represent the official discourses of the state which are used to address the public, the media and international society. Two main criterion were established for choosing data. First, the speeches and statements had to include relevant keywords. Those were found using certain key terms in Estonian and in English, such as "Ukraine", "Russia", "war", "solidarity", "support", "colonial", "imperial", "imperialist", "empire". As most relevant texts issued by official government channels included these terms in an overlapping manner, these key terms were found to be sufficient to find all relevant communicative events. Using these keywords also helped find the most relevant data by narrowing it down to select texts that were relevant to answering research questions. Second, criterion for data selection involved only choosing communicative events with direct speech. The data had to have either a quote or had to be a speech. This meant only choosing data where the actors had spoken themselves - either by delivering a speech or having their statements quoted. Afterwards only direct speech was coded and analyzed, no other sentences or information from statements or press releases was included. Joint-statements between different parties, such as prime ministers of the Baltic states or others, were also dismissed.

The total corpus of material included 38 speeches and 17 statements and addresses. This included 19 speeches by Kaja Kallas, 13 speeches by Alar Karis, 4 speeches by Margus Tsahkna and 2 speeches by Urmas Reinsalu. 1 Statement by Kristen Michal, 4 statements by Kaja Kallas, 9

statements by Alar Karis and 3 statements by Margus Tsahkna, with no statements by Urmas Reinsalu were analyzed.

The timeframe for the data was between February of 2022, when the full-scale invasion of Ukraine started, and March 2026 (included). Thus, the data included four years of material with the latest discourses among it. As most studies on the Estonian officials' stances and foreign policy focused on either the first or second year of war, this study generated new knowledge of newer discourses and enabled to analyze if, and what kind of changes have happened over the four year period.

The data analysis is based on an inductive approach to CDA. This method entailed multiple steps. First, the research questions were defined. Then, the phenomenon of analysis was to be understood in broad terms. After this, expectations of what the sources will articulate was formulated. Afterwards the data, which in this case are speeches and statements, was read, while looking for relevant statements which could answer the research questions. Then these relevant statements were coded. As the data was analyzed, a detailed codebook was compiled. Afterwards the codes were analyzed through postcolonial theory using Fairclough's three dimensional model. When compiling the codebook and analyzing the codes, some codes were merged to reduce the number of different codes to a manageable level in order to create general codes representing separate discourses.

Some research limitations must be considered also. First, qualitative methods, and discourse analysis included, suffer from what some might consider as "being unscientific". The analysis is not easily repeatable as is the case with many other social sciences' methods. For qualitative research in general, there is no fixed procedure for the production of material for analysis (Jorgensen & Phillips 2002: 76).

Second, case studies are also considered ambiguous and show inconsistencies in definitions, subjects of investigation and methodological choices (Starman 2013: 29). These weaknesses lead to criticisms against single-case studies. Some of them include inability to generate theories based on case studies, difficulty of generalization based on an individual case and researchers potential weakness toward a bias for verification.

But many weaknesses of the method can be mediated by providing transparency throughout the entire research process: including data collection, documentation of the research process and steps,

any biases etc. The three criteria for qualitative case studies should be according to Gammelgaard (2017: 911) be transferability, truth value and traceability. As long as the researches is transparent through the research process and records the methods for conducting research, the abovementioned weaknesses of the qualitative and single case studies can be alleviated.

Discourse analysis as a method is heavily dependent on the analyst as it is an interpretive method. The analyst is to decide what to analyze, how, at what level etc. - making the role of the researcher very important but also highly responsible for the outcome and quality of the research. Since many research decisions depend on the researcher as a person, the researcher must be well aware of this caveat at all times during the research and try their best to make research decisions as neutrally as possible. The researcher has to leave their personal opinions, feelings, identities and experiences behind when conducting CDA and try to be as objective as possible. At the same time, the researcher has to be well versed in the topic they wish to study through qualitative means. This includes being knowledgeable of different nuances, social and historical contexts and other relevant info on the research topic and texts. The researcher can hold no biases but also has to have great social cognition. However, validity of the work can be ensured by the researcher through transparency of the research process and awareness of these potential weaknesses.

Chapter 3: Analysis

3.1 Postcolonial Solidarity of Estonia towards Ukraine in Official Discourses

First research question asked the following: How does postcolonial solidarity manifest in the official discourses of the Estonian prime minister, foreign minister and the president? The analysis found four distinct discourses of postcolonial solidarity. The first discourse had 6 different sub-discourses/narratives/rhetorics/argumentation – all of these concepts will be used alternately. Under each discourse their lines of argumentation are presented and afterwards their postcolonial nature is discussed.

First discourse: The outcome of the war will dictate the future world order

The first discourse that emerged was one that emphasized the importance and the weight of the conflict. This discourse tied the outcome of the war to the future of the world, mainly the liberal normative order. The outcome of the war was to decide the future of Europe - a place that is on the one hand a geographical location but on the other the birthplace of democratic values. As Russia started the war against Ukraine, a sovereign state, it violated the established normative values. The war against Ukraine was framed in this narrative as a war against the liberal world, what we know as the West, and against all states that consider themselves to be democratic. It focused on the importance of universal values that define the democratic states and the principles they are built upon, namely democracy, states' right for self-determination and sovereignty, territorial integrity, freedom, justice and equality. Russia was depicted as not only having broken the norms in the past, but actively violating these norms and doing everything in its power to destroy them. Russia's war is shown as a war against all democratic states and values. Through this Russia is shown as an actor that tries to create a new illiberal order by starting a war, by violating Ukraine's territorial integrity and right to self-determination as Russia tries to win Ukraine's territories for itself. The war on Ukraine is shown as a war on democratic values, thus infringing upon normative Western states' sovereignty, interests and moral compass as well.

While the war is acknowledged as a question of security for Western states, through this discourse it also becomes a question of Western states' own morals and their role as the established normative leaders. Supporting the victim is generally considered to be the right thing according to universal values upheld by Western states. Therefore, supporting Ukraine is shown as the morally correct thing to do. Kaja Kallas (9.10.2023) for instance said: "Ukrainians and President Zelensky

are proving the same thing to the entire world every single day. Ukraine has bravery, will and reason to fight, and it has a moral cause – its sovereign right to be free. It is our moral duty to do our utmost to help Ukraine because they also defend our values, principles and democracy. Without our help, Ukraine cannot win. Without victory of Ukraine, our values, freedoms and democracy will be lost.” Kallas linked the role of a normative leader plainly to moral duties. This moral duty has to be defended for two reasons. First, because Ukraine is defending the Western values from the illiberal Russia. And second, because unless the Western states follow their “moral duty”, they themselves have failed as moral leaders, resulting in them losing their legitimacy as normative leaders.

If the states were to not support Ukraine, or if Ukraine were to lose the war (due to lack of support), the legitimacy and power of Western states as normative leaders might collapse. Therefore, this discourse created a logic by which Russia is established as the aggressor of normative values and order, while consequently establishing a responsibility for Western states to support Ukraine. Supporting Ukraine is seen as a democratic act, one that defends said Western values, while not supporting or staying neutral is depicted as undemocratic and siding with the aggressor.

Another narrative focused on how Ukraine is fighting for “us”. Depending on the audience of the addresses, the “us” depicted meant the West, Estonia, the EU, NATO or the liberal order. This narrative entailed how Ukraine and its people were sacrificing themselves for the West by fighting Russia now. Since Russia is seen as a threat to the West, Ukraine is shown to be currently dealing with the aggressor, taking away Russia’s attention and capabilities from potentially attacking other states. If Ukraine manages to win the war, the West will not have to fight Russia itself. Through this narrative, Ukraine is on the one hand fighting for its sovereignty but also sacrificing itself for the safety and the territorial integrity of the West. Mentions of literal fighting, dying and suffering due to the war were also present.

This narrative was evident in the words of Kaja Kallas (03.05.2024): “Russia has brought full-scale genocidal war back to European soil. For the third year, Ukrainians are defending not only their sovereignty and freedom, including the freedom to choose their European future, but also the freedom of everyone else in Europe. This is our joint struggle for freedom – except that Ukrainians are the only ones fighting on the battlefield, paying with their lives. If aggression is stopped by Ukrainians, then no one else has to fight.” This statement shows how the war is fought over

Ukrainian sovereignty on the one hand, but simultaneously it is a question of universal fight for freedom. The war on the normative values, including freedom, combined Europe and Ukraine into one.

At the same time another narrative emerges, one that focuses on Ukraine's perseverance and bravery. This discourse establishes how the Ukrainians are brave by fighting an aggressor that is considered much more powerful. It shows Ukrainians as mighty, enduring, powerful, fearless, and unstoppable. This discourse tries to create a sense of hope that Ukraine can win the war and stop the aggressor. This discourse also draws on how Ukrainians are willing to fight for their freedom and by extension for the freedom of the West. It creates a narrative which is explained by the logic that if Ukrainians are willing to fight for themselves and for the liberal order, then Ukraine is not only worthy of the West's support but also entitled to it.

Kaja Kallas (06.08.2022) said the following: "We have the biggest aggression in Europe in decades at our doorstep. And of course this has a price for us all. I agree with those who call inflation a "war tax". It's the price we're paying for not having the war on our soil. Unlike Ukrainians, we are paying this price in euros and Swiss francs, not countless human lives and destroyed buildings."

Through establishing how much Ukrainians suffer for their own and for the West's freedom, audiences of said discourses were told to also endure hardships for Ukraine's sake – similarly how Ukraine is fighting the war for us. The hardships were high energy, food or gas prices. In this manner a certain sympathy and solidarity towards Ukrainians was communicated, since high prices or economic problems were depicted as marginal compared to the price of values and rights. Kaja Kallas (25.04.2022) also said the following when speaking about how important it is to communicate the need for support towards Ukraine: "I understand the hard choices that leaders of democratic countries face today. /.../ Gas might be expensive but freedom is priceless. It's up to each government to decide how big of a burden its people are willing to carry. But it's just as necessary to transmit the message to our people - the problem of our neighbor today, is our problem tomorrow. We are all in danger when our neighbor's house is on fire."

Mentions of positive sides of the war were also present. Mostly this discourse focused on how different actors, such as the EU, NATO and Baltics were united by their mobilization for aiding Ukraine and standing against Russia. Foreign minister Urmas Reinsalu (27.01.2023) also noted

how the war was able to “unite Ukraine, tie together its people and Ukraine’s regions”, referring to ethnic minorities and groups previously distant in the society. The discourse also included in seeing a positive shift in Europe’s perception and rhetoric of Russia. This discourse included how Russia tried to divide Europe by sowing war, but that plan instead backfiring and creating a more united Europe. The discourse overall focused on how the war united Europe and mobilized help in the face of a crisis unseen before – this would not have happened had there not been war. This narrative also focused on what Ukraine had to offer to others, mostly in the form of war experience, a well-developed and experienced army with great cyber-capabilities. But it also mentioned Ukraine as a vast market with great potential. Reconstruction after the war was depicted as a fruitful and useful endeavour, which could be beneficial for different Estonian companies and a way for development cooperation organizations to gain experience.

Postcolonial solidarity of the first discourse

In this discourse, Estonia bases its postcolonial solidarity on creating a narrative by which the war in Ukraine is a war against all democratic values and states. Estonia is supporting Ukraine by framing the war as an existential question for the West, the liberal order it has created and by appealing to its moral compass as the normative leader.

Estonia establishes a narrative that communicates the importance of the war to wider audiences, including different partners, such as allies, or organizations, such as the United Nations. The postcolonial solidarity in this discourse comes from the fact that Estonia is supporting Ukraine by talking about it, by bringing it up as a topic in its foreign policy. But also from the fact that by framing the war as something detrimental and existential, it creates agency and establishes a logic by which all democratic states need to be invested and interested in the outcome of the war. Or more precisely, how to create an outcome of the war which is beneficial for democratic states. The postcolonial solidarity thus comes from the creation of a narrative that Ukraine is not only brave and enduring, but also entitled to the West’s aid.

The positives of war were used to unite the West and Ukraine but also helped establish Ukraine as a partner in the future. The postcolonial solidarity stems from seeing Ukraine as someone to learn from and as someone who can help the West better their security.

Second discourse: Appeal to international law, holding Russia accountable and reforming the United Nations

The second discourse focused on how the normative international order works on the basis of respecting the international law. This discourse had six sub-discourses.

The first sub-discourse attended to the fact that Russia is breaking international law by waging war and committing various crimes in Ukraine, which is why it needs to be held accountable. Unless Russia is held responsible for its actions, the normative order would not fulfil its goal of upholding liberal values (including justice), and would therefore fail. This would result in the liberal order losing its legitimacy and power. International laws, rules and norms are for all actors to follow but if an actor fails to follow said accepted rules, they need to face consequences.

These narratives were tied together with a narrative of needing to reform the United Nations (UN). The need to reform the UN was shown through a narrative where Russia was displayed as a member of norm creating international institutions, mainly the UN, while actively breaking said norms and laws themselves. This rhetoric aimed to highlight the hypocrisy of the situation and Russia's actions and pushed for the need to change the UN as an organization so that similar abuses could be stopped and prevented in the future. The narrative also argued that if the UN is unable to hold Russia accountable and Russia can go on to abuses the system, while keeping their legitimacy, power, veto-rights and a right to exercise their interests at one of the most important international organizations, then Russia is not isolated. Since Russia cannot be isolated by geography, according to the sub-discourse it can be isolated mentally. The narrative tries to delegitimize Russia in the international sphere, and thus give Ukraine more power. Speaking about Russia's attitudes for the normative order and its disrespect for laws, organizations and the international system, Alar Karis (21.09.2022) said the following: "Russian invasion, including the illegal occupation of Crimea in 2014 and the subsequent seize of lands in Georgia and Moldova, is a sign of Russia's disrespect for international law and the rules-based world order, and an attack on the UN Charter, every value and principle of the UN." This statement shows how Russia not only disrespects the existing order, and by extension its members and organizations, but consistently attacks and hollows the international community's core values and instruments of communication.

The discourse of international law just described is closely tied to the first discourse, the weight of the war, since the outcome of the war is depicted as the foundation of the future world order. A just peace has to come to Ukraine for Ukraine's sake but also for the legitimacy of the liberal world order and its institutions. The normative institutions lose their legitimacy if Ukraine loses, because ideas of justice and freedom form its very foundation. But unless they are able to deliver satisfactory and rightful justice for Ukraine, Russia and the illiberal values win, changing the scale of prevailing norms.

President Alar Karis delivered speeches at the UN General Assembly on multiple occasions, where he was always critical of the organization and the Security Council. Despite the criticism towards the UN, he still managed to create a narrative of sympathy and solidarity with Ukraine. He noted how the aggression war of Russia made resolving other conflicts all over the world more difficult, contributing to food insecurity, economic recession and pressure on the humanitarian system. Suffering or conflict-ridden states could understand this message easily, since it appeals to problems which are relevant and familiar to them. Russian aggression in Ukraine was depicted as adding to the suffering of those affected by “pandemic, conflicts, starvation and climate change effects” (Alar Karis 21.09.2022). Karis (ibid.) also pointed out how the Russian aggression will have international consequences on food security, as “Russian aggression will cause the greatest famine since the Second World War”. Through this rhetoric he made the Russian aggression a problem that concerned all states struggling, especially those with high prices and economic problems. Karis stated that economic problems, high inflation or energy prices weren't happening due to sanctions, but instead due to Russian aggression in Ukraine, which Russia was free to stop any moment. Through the creation of these narratives Karis made the Russian aggression a problem for the UN as an organization, for its members and the entire world. Food insecurity, economic problems and pressure on the humanitarian system are problems that affect all states to some extent - some more, some less. But these rhetorics helped Karis show how the war in Ukraine is not just another local conflict, but a question of stability and well-being for the entire world. The outcome of the war was also tied to the values of the UN – this logic questioned whether the UN we know will exist in the future, or will it cease to exist, if Russia were to be let off without consequences.

Another narrative included framing the war through concrete concepts of international law. Through this rhetoric the war was defined as a genocide, an act of aggression, a violation of human rights, a crime against humanity, an occupation. All of these crimes go against different conventions and treaties which regulate the relations between states. Most states have chosen to adhere to these conventions and treaties, as these are seen as the norm. Establishing Russia's acts as violations of international law on the one hand frames these crimes as clear violations of law. And on the other, it enables to hold Russia accountable according to different instruments of international law. This in turn would enable the courts to prosecute people responsible for said crimes, make them responsible and have them receive a just punishment. By breaking norms and laws, Russia is shown to be unlawful, backward, disrespecting of generally accepted norms that regulate international life and ultimately peace. Russia is actively othered through this narrative.

This narrative was exemplified in this following quote by foreign minister Urmas Reinsalu (23.02.2023) who said the following at the UN General Assembly: "Over 17 million people in Ukraine need humanitarian aid. Over 1,6 million Ukrainians have been deported, including thousands of illegally adopted children. Therefore, I call countries everywhere in the world to recognize the aggression-war of Russia against Ukraine a genocide. Putin hasn't made it a secret that his desire is destruction. /.../ Russia has to be held accountable for all atrocities - including the crime of aggression - committed in Ukraine. /.../ Therefore, Mister Putin, you will stand before this tribunal and pay for the crimes which you have committed." By addressing the Russian regime leader directly in a familiar manner, Reinsalu attributed all of Russia's crimes to Russian president Vladimir Putin and indicted him personally for all of the crimes that have been committed on Ukrainians.

Another prevalent narrative involved calling for the creation of a special war crimes tribunal for Russian war criminals. According to the narrative the tribunal would prosecute those who were guilty of the following violations of international law: war crimes, starting the war, violating human rights, crimes against humanity, genocide, and the crime of aggression. As the International Criminal Court has no jurisdiction over the crime of aggression, the idea of establishing a special international tribunal was actively advocated for. As Kaja Kallas (3.12.2023) noted in her speech, the crime of aggression is "the Mother of All Crimes" and cannot go unpunished - which is why the creation of a tribunal with the widest international legitimacy was deemed necessary.

Margus Tsahkna (15.11.2023) noted how not only is the creation of a tribunal necessary, but the current international law protects war criminals: “It's of fundamental importance to us that violations of the rules are not ignored. So that those who sow destruction and atrocities will not go unpunished. Putin and his associates will be held responsible for aggression against Ukraine. But right now its not possible to hold leaders of states responsible according to international law without a special tribunal because they are protected by impunity.”

The creation of a special tribunal and holding Russian war criminals accountable was deemed necessary in this narrative on the one hand for legal reasons. Only through international law, tribunals and prosecution could there be a fair and legitimate punishment for those responsible for Ukraine's suffering. But on the other hand, legitimate and lawful justice was deemed imperative for moral reasons as well - so that the Ukrainian society and all other victims of wars could feel a sense of justice too. These narratives of holding Russia accountable were illustrated by examples of the past, mainly pointing out how there were Nürnberg or Tokyo tribunals. Those helped etch the depth of the crimes into history, hold criminals liable, ultimately help victims feel a sense of justice and help societies move past committed crimes by learning from mistakes. The parallels between past tribunals and the need for one in the current war also helped highlight the severity of the crimes that have been committed. But the narrative also showed the logic of how there were never any tribunals for the crimes of the Soviets, which led in Russian impunity. In this narrative this impunity stemmed from the past and carried over to today, being one of the root causes of the war. The narrative of Russian impunity will be further analyzed under the third research question.

Another sub-discourse focused on how Russia has to pay for the war and the damage done to Ukraine. This discourse included Russia paying reparations, having sanctions applied to it and use of its frozen assets to fund the reconstruction of Ukraine. For instance, Kaja Kallas (06.08.2022) said that the Western states will agree on legal ways in which Russian resources could be used for the benefit of Ukraine: “We should also make sure that the aggressor pays reparations – the Kremlin must pay for every road destroyed, every building shelled and every bridge ruined. For that, we should use Russian assets and central bank reserves frozen by sanctions. And of course, we are rule of law countries and should agree on international laws to be able to do that.” In another speech she noted how use of confiscated Russian assets was considered acceptable in virtually all dimensions, legal and moral, by saying the following (Kaja Kallas 03.05.2024): “I am also glad

there are movements within the G7 and the EU on how to use Russia's frozen assets for Ukraine – this is not only strategically but also morally and legally the right thing to do.”

Another narrative that was prevalent focused on returning to Ukraine what belonged to it. The main focus was on the territories but also on Ukraine's people: mostly people and children that had been deported to Russia. The narrative intertwined the inhumanness of deporting children together with the unlawfulness of the act, while highlighting the number of potential victims. By helping Ukrainian children return to their homeland, Ukraine gets back their citizens but also their future. The children, who are to be returned to Ukraine, are part of the wider Ukrainian youth who are the future of the country. Not only are those children considered the future leaders but also the workforce, tax payers and voters who can help reconstruct the country after the war.

Margus Tsahkna (23.01.2024) emphasized very emotionally the importance of addressing the children's deportations in the following statement: “Another area where Russia must be held accountable and where we all must act with real urgency – that is the unlawful deportation of Ukrainian children. The list of children taken to Russia currently includes 20,000 children, but the real figure is higher by an order of magnitude. I am proud that there are Estonians who have worked in their spare time to locate those children and bring them to Ukraine to reunite them with their parents. The well-being of children is also important in our work of reconstruction in Ukraine where we have constructed a kindergarten and are building family homes for orphans.” In this statement Tsahkna expressed multiple overlapping discourses, including the need to return the deported children to Ukraine, but also showed the friendship between Estonia and Ukraine and emphasized the help already given for the children through on-going reconstruction projects.

Kaja Kallas also spoke on multiple occasions in her speeches of her own family's experience. The experience of her mother being deported as a baby by the Soviet regime was shown as the same as the things that Ukrainians were experiencing now. The regime had changed, the supposed empire had fallen but behavioral patterns of the regime remained the same. Kaja Kallas (3.12.2023) stated the following: “Russia's large-scale genocidal war against Ukraine has opened up old wounds. For example, stories of kidnapped Ukrainian kids deported to Russia open the wounds of those 75-year-old Estonians who returned from Siberia after being deported as kids there by the Soviet regime. They were the lucky ones, many did not return. My own mother was deported as a six-months-old baby. This is not a unique story of my family. Almost every Estonian has a family

story of Soviet crimes and terror. This makes it clear why accountability for Russia's war crimes must be front and centre now – unless unpunished, it continues over and over again. As we all know, there was no Moscow tribunal established to offer justice to all these children who fell victims to Soviet Russia's war crimes. Times have changed since then."

Postcolonial solidarity of the second discourse

Postcolonial solidarity from appeals to international law help Ukraine seek legal and moral justice. The discourse seeks to hold the perpetrators accountable so that the crimes against Ukraine would be accounted for and would enable Ukraine to feel a sense of justice. The discourse also aims to reform the UN and the Security Council for Ukraine's sense of justice but also for others, who might end up in a similar situation.

Advocating for making Russia pay for reparations and war damages is also another way of showing postcolonial solidarity as it seeks to use the colonizer's assets to help the colonized. Normatively and economically isolating Russia from the rest of the world (or from at least as many states as possible) can also be a source of solidarity, since it distances the colonizer and creates barriers between channels of communication. Weakening Russian economy in turn weakens Russian military which might have positive benefits for Ukrainians fighting them. Russia with a weaker economy might additionally be less incentivized to offend other states, or to colonize them in the future, if the economic cost of the war is considered great. States changing local laws to enable using frozen Russian assets could also be seen as a source of postcolonial solidarity, as Ukraine could benefit from it economically. But solidarity could also be shown through states willing to endure problems in the name of isolating Russia and supporting Ukraine. Those problems could be economic, related to high food or gas prices, higher government spending on helping refugees etc. Solidarity also comes from promises to reconstruct Ukraine, through providing literal aid and monetary help, but also from willingness to help Ukraine long-term. These slogans include continuing support after the war and seeing each other as partners in the future, creating a united vision of partnership no matter the cost.

Returning to Ukraine what belongs to it narrative shows postcolonial solidarity through fighting for Ukraine's territorial integrity, sovereignty and right to exist as a state. Postcolonial solidarity

additionally comes from trying to restore Ukrainian ethnic integrity by fighting to get back all of their citizens, including those deported and especially children. Ukraine is about to become one whole again, and not only territorially, but also spiritually.

Third discourse: Colonial war and Imperialist ambitions

The third discourse that surfaced was one that depicted the war as colonial and imperialist in nature and had a total of eleven sub-discourses. The discourse created a narrative in which Russia is the colonizer and Ukraine the colonized. This discourse drew heavily on drawing parallels between history and current day events, exemplified by the similar Soviet experience that both Ukraine and Estonia share. Similarities between histories, traumas and experiences were used to establish a strong discourse of having a similar historic background – one that was bound by the Soviet experience - and one, that is at the fault of causing the war in Ukraine today.

This discourse is especially prevalent in Kaja Kallas' speeches; she tied the Estonian colonial experience of Soviet violence, oppression and deportation together with the events unfolding today in Ukraine. She showed how these two separate historical events are essentially the same; and in both cases the perpetrator is also the same.

But president Alar Karis also used it a lot, especially when addressing the United Nations or when speaking to partners with a clear colonial history. In his speeches at the United Nations assembly Karis drew parallels between Ukraine and victims of different conflicts all over the world. This logic can be seen as three-fold. First, calling the war colonial in nature made it more easily understood and sympathetic for others who had suffered under colonialism. The war in Ukraine was thus reframed as a war between an oppressor, who wishes to exterminate and exploit, and a victim, who wishes to stay sovereign and independent. Many smaller or newer states could understand and sympathise with the struggle for independence, territorial integrity and stability. Second, the narrative portrayed Ukrainian suffering as universal human suffering. The narrative showed how conflicts all over the world can be very different, but the suffering of civilians and innocents is the same. This again appealed to all, who had experienced war or its consequences in one way or another. Third, by showing similarities between Ukraine and victims of other conflicts, Karis called for the reform of the UN for the sake of the victims. While holding Russia accountable and reforming the UN was shown as important from the legal perspective, this narrative showed

the importance of reform for all victims. This included mobilizing support from all victims of conflicts no matter where. The need to hold the perpetrator accountable is something that all those who have been wronged understand. Karis made sure that the message was not only a question of getting justice for Ukraine but reforming the UN for all, including future victims. Karis also used the colonial war narrative when meeting different African presidents in order to communicate the similarities of both states' experiences and the hardships of dealing with a colonial legacy.

The colonial war discourse also concentrated on othering Russia by focusing on the historical aspect of colonial wars. Colonialism and colonial wars were shown to belong to the historical past, not contemporary European reality. As Kaja Kallas (22.11.2022) said: "On the 24th of February Russia signed out of the civilized world. Before February it was naively thought that the age of empires and colonial conquests had permanently been left in the past of Europe and an era of peace had begun.". Through this narrative Russia was depicted as backward - acting in a way that is not suitable to a contemporary state; Russia is thus barbaric and doesn't belong to the civilized world. The quote also shows how even if Russia was considered a part of the civilized world before the war, it no longer belongs to the civilized realm and is now instead isolated and ostracized by said civilization. Kallas' quote also shows how leaving civilization was Russia's own choice and no one else's: by choosing to start the war, Russia chose to strive for becoming an empire once again and start a war on European soil after decades of peace.

A narrative of Russian imperialism was also evident in the analyzed material. This discourse portrayed imperialism as something that had been a part of the Russian state, ideology and psyche for a long time. Most imperialist ambitions were illustrated by the Soviet example, showing how history was repeating itself. This included drawing parallels between painful historical memories for the Estonian and post-Soviet states and contemporary Ukraine. The narrative included mentions of how the Soviet Union as an empire might have fallen apart but its ideology hadn't, since the ideology lives on in current day Russia. Kaja Kallas (20.02.2024) for example stated the following: "And these are the same values that President Meri called to protect in his speech, and I quote: Western, and above all German policy, has to make a fateful choice. Either the neo-imperialist policy of a great eastern power will be tolerated, financed, and in the short term, possibly even profited from." The quote from Kallas shows how Russian neo-imperialist ambitions were well known established facts – Lennart Meri also mentioned it. But the quote also shows how

the imperialist policy of Russia had not changed, since it was the same during Lennart Meri's time as a president. "Neo-imperialist" implies that the ambitions are imperialist in nature, but "neo" or new in the methods used – Russian policy has not changed, but the tools they use to achieve said goals are new.

Narrative of Russian imperialism also incorporated ideas of imperialist nostalgia and the wish of the Russian elite to return to the Soviet empire. Both were shown as root causes of the war and as drivers of neoimperialist and neocolonial ambitions of Russia to win territory, people and resources through war.

Mentions of clear Russian imperialist ambitions beforehand were also evident. This included citing previous cases, where Russia had tried to seize territory and benefit from ambivalent international law. These included "landgrabs" in Donbas, Crimea, Georgia but also references to the 2007 Munich Security Conference, where "... now as Russia's president, Putin outlined his expansionist ambitions very clearly. Georgia, Crimea, the full-scale invasion of Ukraine followed. And in the last few weeks, he has been making it loud and clear again that none of his plans have changed." (Kaja Kallas 20.02.2024). This discourse included the rhetoric of Russia testing international communities' reactions to two things: annexation of foreign territory and the ways in which international law can be interpreted ambiguously. According to this narrative, the previous annexations were done to test the waters for future expansions. The previous annexations served as a prelude to the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. By this logic Russia will not stop at just Ukraine but is instead a future threat to other European states as well. As Kaja Kallas said in 2023 (25.04): "What is at stake in Ukraine is the right to exist as a country. Russia is testing if conquering and colonising a country in the 21st century is possible." This discourse will also be further analyzed under the third research question dealing with root causes of the war, as multiple discourses overlap.

The colonial war discourse also referred heavily to lessons from history which could be divided into two subsequent narratives: lessons from Estonian history and lessons from history in general. Different lessons from Estonian history focused on the historical memory of the Soviet experience and the colonial legacy that influences the society to this day. This narrative focused on the similarities of Russian acts and crimes in current day Ukraine and the Estonian Soviet experience. It included messages of solidarity and understanding: knowing what it means to suffer from

tyranny, remembering Russian occupation and deportations, knowing that peace offered by Russia can entail crimes against humanity and human rights violations. The narrative also included the way in which the West supposedly had abandoned Central Eastern European (CEE) countries behind the Iron Curtain for decades. These messages were used to create similarities between Ukraine and Estonia. But it was also used to show understanding, sympathy and solidarity towards Ukrainians and their suffering. This was then used to explain Estonia's strong support - as historically Estonia had been forgotten, Estonia vowed to never be alone again. Having experienced being forgotten, Estonia chose to actively speak about Ukraine so the same wouldn't happen to them.

When speaking in Berlin about her personal first encounter of experiencing a sense of political freedom, Kaja Kallas (25.04.2022) said the following: "We know that goodness will always win over evil. That's what my life experience also says. Standing here right now and breathing in deeply, I inhale the same freedom as I did as an eleven year old in 1988. If we do everything to help Ukraine, there will be no more eleven year olds, for whom a breath of freedom is something they can experience from only afar." This statement is personal to Kallas, it shows her own experience of being deprived of freedom. But it also serves as a call for support to mobilize aid for Ukraine. If Ukraine is helped, its people and children will be free and could live in a free world. Freedom in essence hasn't changed and is just as important to Kallas as it was in her childhood.

Lessons from history in general narrative focused on how the West should learn from history and not repeat the same mistakes. War criminals were prosecuted after the Second World War and the same need was applied to the war in Ukraine. Lessons from history narrative heavily overlapped with the discourse of responsibility and international law. The narrative also actively othered Russia by pointing out how due to the war it started war crimes and horrors, which were thought to be never repeated in Europe, were happening again. Estonian actors also mentioned how this inhumane behavior was nothing new to Russia, as said by Kaja Kallas (15.11.2022): "It's not a coincidence - Russia has always acted like this in a war situation." The current day events were also compared to the 1930s, which was depicted as a time which led to two empires dividing Europe, bringing war and anguish together with decades long occupation, tyranny and loss of freedom. The narrative focused on how the same mistakes which led to the Second World War should under no circumstances be repeated in resolving the war in Ukraine.

But this narrative also looked at more recent examples, such as how the West made mistakes in how it dealt with Ukraine and Georgia. While many CEE countries managed to become members of the EU and NATO, Ukraine didn't manage reforms and democratization quickly enough. This led to them being left in a "gray zone" or in a Russian sphere of influence. Kaja Kallas (4.09.2022) said the following: "One example is the decision at the NATO Bucharest Summit in 2008 not to grant Ukraine and Georgia a Membership Action Plan - by now it is clear that this was interpreted by Russia as weakness and a clear invitation to establish itself militarily in Europe." This quote notes how on the one hand Europe chose not to proceed amply enough with the integration of Ukraine into its sphere of influence. Kallas states that this was seen as a sign of weakness from Europe - not establishing political power over Ukraine and having strong economic dependence on Russia led Ukraine to remain vulnerable, which was later used by Russia.

A narrative of Russia wanting to eliminate Ukraine and recognizing the brutality of the war and the inhumane ways in which Russia is waging the war was also evident. It focuses on multiple different points. First, it establishes the narrative that Ukraine is fighting an existential fight - the right to exist as a sovereign state. The war is a means to end the sovereignty and freedom of Ukraine so that it would cease to exist as an independent state. Second, it establishes Russia committing war crimes and crimes against civilians in the legal sense. Third, it establishes the war as immoral, by showing how the war is unjust and seeks to eliminate the people of Ukraine and their state. Raping, killing, deporting and torturing are presented as ways of eliminating the Ukrainian people. This is highlighted by mentioning how many of the victims are innocent civilians, who are supposed to be protected by international law. Through these points the discourse seeks to establish and legitimize Ukraine as a victim morally and legally. But it also others Russia - shows its actions as unacceptable, barbaric, ruthless. Even if Russia belongs (at least) partially geographically to Europe, it doesn't belong there normatively due to its actions.

Another narrative highlighted how the West had been wrong about Russia's intentions. This narrative also entailed the idea that Russian imperialist ambitions could have been contained beforehand through stronger responses. Kaja Kallas (15.11.2022): "We had a chance to prevent future Russian aggression in 2008 and 2014. But the response from the free world was weak. Money was thought to be more important than principles and gas more important than truth." But

instead Europe was shown to be naive about Russia and president Putin, doing business, importing Russian gas and becoming heavily dependent on it.

Having expert knowledge on Russia was also brought up. This was communicated through showing how countries sharing a border with Russia have more first-hand experience and their caution over Russia became reality. Knowing Russia better than Western European countries was shown as the reason why others should listen to post-Soviet or Central Eastern European countries more. This was used to gain power over topics of security in Europe but to also become leading experts on Russia and advocates for Ukraine. All of these points helped gain leverage in the international sphere for CEE countries and much of this leverage was used to further support for Ukraine.

Kaja Kallas said the following when speaking about Estonian independence, which could be applied to Ukraine as well (4.09.2022): “I hesitantly mention a recent comment by Dmitri Medvedev - the top propagandist of the Kremlin regime. And I quote: “The fact that you are free is not your achievement, but rather a failure on our side”. End of quote. I cited it because it captures best what many have discovered only now - while the Soviet Union collapsed, its expansionist colonialist ideology never did.” Through this message Kallas indicates on the one hand how the Soviet “expansionist colonialist ideology” is still alive in Russia. But it also displays Western naivety about Russia by stating that the existence of this ideology has been a recent discovery for many. It positions Estonia as an actor who could see Russian aggression coming thanks to knowing Russia well, while the West chose to ignore the signs in front of them.

Postcolonial solidarity of the third discourse

The postcolonial solidarity from the colonial war discourse comes from different aspects. It creates a clear narrative of Russia being the colonizer and Ukraine being the colonized. Therefore, a clear black-and-white distinction between the oppressor and the oppressed is created, which is utilized for different audiences to understand the dynamic between the two actors. This was used to show the war in Ukraine as a war of conquest, exploitation and horrors, instead of another local conflict. The discourse is also used to ostracize and isolate Russia, which by extension benefits Ukraine as it pressures the aggressor. Historical similarities and politics of memory are also utilized for

creating postcolonial solidarity - the colonial war discourse is only one of the many tools instrumentalized for it. Sharing the same colonizer and perpetrator creates a sense of closeness which was employed by Estonia to produce and justify support for Ukraine.

Postcolonial solidarity in the colonial war discourse was also evident in Kallas' personal stories of her families' suffering, as it showed a sense of sympathy towards Ukrainian suffering. This sympathy came from her personally on the one hand, but also carried over to her position as a prime minister who is the representative of the state and the Estonian people. By telling her personal story and applying it to the case of Ukraine, she showed how she chose to identify with the Ukrainians.

Russian imperialism narrative employed postcolonial solidarity through the creation of discourse, which showed the ways in which history repeats itself. This was illustrated by drawing on Russian impunity and seeing Estonia as the next potential victim of aggression. Identification with the current victim of Russian aggression was established by exhibiting how Estonia had experienced similar atrocities in the past, which Ukraine is currently enduring. Another way in which solidarity is shown is through regret: despite warning the West, Estonia was unable to prevent the war from happening.

Different historical lessons were used to show the similarities between Estonian and Ukrainian experiences. A narrative of Estonia being forgotten by the West for decades was utilised by promising to be good allies to Ukraine, to not forget it and to support it in the future. The lesson of Europe vowing to never repeat the mistakes of the past, namely holding aggressors accountable, yet still failing to implement it in the case of Ukraine, was used to plead for support. This narrative was used to show that although Europe was unable to prevent the war, it now had the opportunity to show Ukraine as much support as possible to win the war. Postcolonial solidarity was also derived from creating a narrative of having to exclude gray zones. These zones were shown as parts of Europe which had not been integrated into the EU or NATO, thus being in multiple spheres of influence. Russia exerting its power through these zones was shown to be one of the root causes of the war. Advocating for active integration of Ukraine both into NATO and the EU was a way of showing postcolonial solidarity, since this was depicted as the main way to prevent future colonization acts of Russia towards Ukraine.

Russia's goal of eliminating Ukraine and its people is a narrative through which postcolonial solidarity was established by citing the brutality of the war and its consequences. Aggression, genocide, crimes against humanity and attacking sovereign state's territory could additionally be interpreted as violent forms of colonialism. Estonia showed its solidarity by understanding Ukraine's need to fight for freedom and by choosing to support it morally and in action. In addition, postcolonial solidarity stems from isolating and othering Russia for the benefit of Ukraine to help distance Ukraine and the West from dependence on Russian resources through which Russia could have leverage and control over other actors.

Postcolonial solidarity from Estonia to Ukraine was displayed furthermore in the narrative of the West having been wrong about Russia's intentions in two ways. First, the West was held morally responsible for not being more cautious of Russia, resulting in the invasion of Ukraine. And second, Estonian actors denigrated the West's choice for doing business with Russia, and becoming heavily dependent on cheap Russian resources, rather than choosing morals.

Fourth discourse: A Call for Support

The fourth discourse which emerged focused on generating and mobilizing support for Ukraine. Two different sub-discourses were used, often in unison.

The first sub-discourse was about mobilizing aid and support. It invited those addressed in the audience, of the communicative act, to support Ukraine. This entailed either acting in support of Ukraine specifically or acting in a way which would hinder Russia's actions and thus war. The narrative mobilized support by exhibiting how Ukrainians are doing their part by fighting for themselves and the West, but now it's the West's turn to help Ukraine through support. The sub-discourse was for instance evident in the words of Kaja Kallas (18.10.2023): "Ukrainians are showing remarkable courage, but without our help, Ukraine cannot win. Without Ukraine's victory, our values, freedoms, and democracy would be lost." The support itself could have been political, economic or martial but these different types of support will be further analyzed under the fourth discourse.

The second sub-discourse was about setting a goal for the support: either sending a certain amount of aid, integrating Ukraine into the EU or NATO, supporting Ukraine's own proposals or peace

plans, setting up the special war tribunal, getting back deported Ukrainian children etc. Some goals were more abstract, such as setting Ukraine winning the war as a goal itself, distributing a narrative that is useful for Ukraine among countries that are not allies, and helping rebuild Ukraine. In this narrative Estonia set itself often as an example - listing the amount of aid that had been or were to be sent, mentioning how much of its GDP is to be spent on aid to Ukraine, how many refugees it had helped or which aid proposals it supported. Estonia therefore invited others to act similarly, showing that if a small state can support Ukraine a certain amount, assisting Ukraine should not be a problem for bigger states. For example, foreign minister Urmas Reinsalu (27.01.2023) said the following: “How many Ukrainian men, women, boys and girls have to lose their lives, before all states supporting Ukraine spend about 1% of their GDP on supporting Ukraine? Estonia is doing that and our policy has been since the start of the war to actively show the way in shaping international support.” In this example, Reinsalu added emotional weight and moral responsibility to the amount of aid being sent by tying a percent of the GDP directly to Ukrainian lives.

Postcolonial solidarity of the fourth discourse

Postcolonial solidarity of the fourth discourse is evident from how the discourse tries to aggregate support for Ukraine. It exhibits what kind of aid has been given, what kind of aid is necessary for Ukraine to win but it also shows solidarity by supporting Ukraine’s own initiatives. On multiple occasions it was emphasized how Ukraine has to choose its peace, how no peace deal between Russia and other actors could be struck without Ukraine’s presence and how Ukraine had to be able to choose its own terms for peace. The postcolonial solidarity from these actions can be derived from how Ukraine is shown as an agent who has to have the opportunity to choose for itself. Ukraine can and should not be forced into accepting any proposals they don’t seem fit.

3.2 Postcolonial Explanations for the Root Causes of the War

Second research question asked the following: What postcolonial arguments were used to explain root causes of the war? Three discourses emerged which sought to explain the root causes for the war. Under these discourses, further narratives and lines of argumentation also emerged, creating complex explanations for Russia's behavior.

First discourse: The war is explained by Russia's need to eliminate Ukraine

The first postcolonial discourse that sought to explain the origin for the war was based on the idea that the war sought to eliminate Ukraine and its people. This discourse overall had a lot of similarities to discourses mentioned in previous research questions and many of these discourses overlapped heavily. This discourse also titled the war an aggression and a genocide. The discourse tried to appeal to international law but saw the elimination of Ukraine and the existing liberal order as the core reasons for Russia starting the war. In the previous research questions, especially the first one focusing on garnering postcolonial solidarity, similar discourses were used to mobilize support. This current discourse however focused more on the logic that by eliminating Ukraine, Russia would destroy or at least change the current normative structure. This was seen as one of the main reasons why the war was started. Thus, this discourse argued that Russia started the war in Ukraine with the goal of eliminating the Ukrainian state and their people.

Second discourse: The myths, lies, impunity and authoritarian leadership of the Russian regime led to the war

The second discourse looking for the core reason for the war focused on how the Russian regime is based on myths, lies and impunity which are then instrumentalized to serve the regime. The regime has built its history on lies and myths, which are then used to justify aggression and breaking international law. But it also explains why the Russian society seems to accept the war and the regime's actions, as these lies by the regime are instrumentalized to control the society. Kaja Kallas (25.04.2022): "Looking at Russia we see darkness, fear keeps that society together."

The Russian elite, especially president Putin, was shown to be used to lying, and the Russian people as accepting of it. Foreign minister Urmas Reinsalu (27.01.2023) said the following about Russian internal politics and society: “In the center of this war are also truth and lies. Russia’s regime has built its aggression and entire existence on fictional stories and myths. This regime has been systematically forming its society’s infospace for tens of years. Let’s remember, what kind of situation is prevailing in Russian society. How are things with freedoms, rule of law and human rights? In the state, which supposedly came to exterminate nazis from Ukraine and to liberate that state? How are things with minorities and human rights protection?”

The discourse also noted how the false narratives created by Russia contributed to “an empire of lies” (Alar Karis 21.09.2022) in order to start the war in Ukraine but also might be utilized in future conflicts. Creating confusion, half-truths and spreading disinformation were shown as some of the tools that Russia uses in its own narratives. The lies created by the Russian regime are used additionally to stop Western states from supporting Ukraine. An additional narrative in this discourse focused on how dictators, and especially President Putin, cannot stand “the truth”, which is why Russia tries to squash democracies, including Ukraine. Russia using lies and trying to deviate others from supporting Ukraine was shown in this statement by Kaja Kallas (06.08.2022): “Take the food crisis, for example - some of the first stories about it came from Russian state-sponsored sources. The purpose has been to pressurise countries into lifting sanctions and blame Ukraine and the West for a crisis engineered by Russia itself. Kremlin propagandists have openly called hunger Russia’s “last hope”. To ease the global food crisis, it’s also crucial to understand who is behind it.”

Within this discourse, another narrative that appeared was one that focused on Russia’s past, impunity and the potential threat it holds in the future. This narrative displayed multiple different lines of thinking. First, it focused on Russia’s past and what it means for the contemporary situation. The narrative brought up Russian nostalgia for the Soviet regime, Stalinism and the Great Patriotic war. When speaking about how Russia isolated itself through going to war, Kaja Kallas (22.11.2022) said the following: “What we are actually witnessing is the last scene of the Soviet Union’s collapse. Vladimir Putin has called the fall of the Soviet Union the greatest geopolitical catastrophe. If it is that way, then through his attack against Ukraine, Putin is bringing this so-called catastrophe finally to life.” Second, a narrative of Russian impunity was prevalent. It

focused on how Russia had not changed - it was shown to not have learned from its history. This narrative focused on the fact that Russia had never paid for its previous crimes, namely those committed in the Second World War. But it also mentioned how Russia had never had to answer for violating international laws or norms in its more recent endeavours in Crimea, Donbas or Georgia. The narrative's focus was on how Russia's crimes had been swept under the rug, leading to Russian officials never being held responsible. Thus, Russia had never had to learn from its mistakes and nor was it ever shamed by others for violating laws. The historical memory of Russia was never revised after the fall of the Soviet Union, unlike what happened in the Baltics. Kaja Kallas (06.08.2022) said the following when accepting The European Prize for Political Culture: "But if it (international rules-based order) doesn't deliver accountability for war criminals and justice for victims, then who is it really for? Impunity is exactly what Putin is counting on."

Third, a narrative of Russia having to face itself emerged. This focused on how the Russian elite but also the entire society would have to condemn the state's past actions in order to change or become better. The narrative mentioned how there was no collective guilt for the crimes committed in the Second World war nor in Ukraine. But Russia could not change, unless its people wanted it to. As Kaja Kallas (15.05.2023) said: "Recognizing national guilt and taking personal responsibility for it is the basis for a society to have a future. It is also a basis for breaking Russia's cycle of violence and aggression." However, Russia was shown to exhibit no responsibility or remorse. Russian society was shown to also be responsible, as territorial expansion and a nostalgia for the past were shown to be considered a virtue amongst the citizens - which in turn would also provide initiative for future wars. According to this logic, there will always be a fear of Russian aggression, unless Russian society and the elite change fundamentally. The impunity, together with no remorse, no accountability and no wish to change, were shown as the main drivers between Russia being a potential threat in the future. This rhetoric was evident in the words of Kaja Kallas (03.05.2024): "This makes it clear why accountability for Russia's war crimes must be front and centre now - unless unpunished, it continues over and over again."

Another narrative was driven by the need to end the war and eliminate aggression. This narrative sought to end the war on the one hand as urgently as possible by citing how consequential the war and its effects are. But on the other end it in a way which would reduce the fear of future conflict to the maximum. The need to eliminate the war was very emotionally presented by President Alar

Karis (16.09.2022): “Unfinished or frozen conflict in Ukraine would be like a rotting wound in the heart of Europe and it would keep us in an opposition with Russia for years.”

Third discourse: The war happened because Russia is inherently different

The third discourse which sought to explain the root causes of the war was aimed at the way Russia inherently is - evil, barbaric, uncivilized, fascist. The entire discourse was built around othering Russia and depicting it as being the very opposite of everything that the West is and what the West stands for. Four subsequent sub-discourses were found.

The first narrative of this discourse was pointed towards how Russia has lost its power, international standing and has become ostracized. Through this Russia was shown as alone, isolated and different due to starting the war which had led to Russia losing respect. When speaking of the miscalculations done by the Russian elite prior to the war, Kaja Kallas (22.11.2022) said the following: “Russia has lost its respect in the eyes of the world and its friends. Russia will never be a trustworthy partner in the eyes of the rest of the world. Never again.”

The second narrative focused on Russia being a fascist, tyrannical, authoritarian, dictatorial, evil pariah state which is uncivilized. These attributes were on the one hand shown to be inherent and resistant, by showing how Russia’s predecessor, the Soviet Union, was the same. The Soviet Union had no freedoms, no rights, its citizens had no choices. Estonia and Ukraine were displayed as working hard to become democratic. Therefore the Soviet Union was portrayed as underdeveloped, especially compared to modern democracies. And current day Russia, as the descendant, had these same characteristics. Attributing these negative characteristics helped to portray the war in Ukraine as a war between good and evil. Yet, Russia was also blatantly titled evil. Exemplified in the speech of Kaja Kallas (04.09.2022): “If we fail to stay strong and push back the aggressor to its territories and prosecute war crimes and crimes of aggression the whole international rules-based order is in danger. The price goes up with every delay and every hesitation. Meeting evil halfway is still victory for the evil.” On the other hand, these negative characteristics were shown to be chosen by Russia voluntarily. Kaja Kallas (22.11.2022) for instance said the following: “On the 24th of February Russia signed out of the civilized world.”

Russia wasn't forced to go to war, but instead consciously chose it. It chose to be uncivilized, it chose to break norms and rules.

Another narrative was focused on how the Russian state is a "war machine". The war machine logic was based on how the Russian state managed to finance the war through its economy. Not doing any business with Russia was seen as the main way to stop this "war machine". The comparison to a machine indicates the complexity of the system: the Russian state is being financed by different sources of revenue, but ultimately these feed the war in Ukraine. By taking away a piece of the machine, the machine can be stopped, it can fall apart and fail to function - similarly to how cutting Russian gas and oil purchases was supposed to hinder its economy.

Similarities of Russia to Nazi Germany, comparisons between Adolf Hitler and Vladimir Putin were also represented as a narrative. On the Holocaust Memorial Day, foreign minister Urmas Reinsalu (27.01.2023) delivered a speech at the UN, where he portrayed current day Russia behaving like Nazi Germany. He said the following: "And here we are now. In the same areas, where Nazis executed Ukrainians and Jews 80 years ago, a new aggression is taking place, which is accompanied by mass murders of innocents and atrocities. This time it's done by the aggressors on incredibly disgusting, twisted and deformed "freeing from Nazis" aegis. What is meant by a freeing from Nazis operation? Bombing a Holocaust memorial in Babyn Yar, torturing and killing people in Bucha, bombing power plants and residential buildings - these are simply barbaric acts invented by a degenerate brain." In this quote, not only is the history repeating itself, but Russia is following in Nazi Germany's footsteps. At the same time Russia is shown to be destroying civilians, infrastructure but also monuments, which serve the purpose of showing solidarity, remorse and function as public showcases of a collective memory.

3.3 Creation of a friendship between Estonia and Ukraine

Third research question was the following: How have postcolonial arguments been used in the creation of a friendship (between Estonia and Ukraine)? Friendship between the two states was created through four discourses. Similarly to the other discourses under previous research questions, these discourses also had multiple narratives. The unified solidarity overall focused on how different kinds of unity were created between varied actors.

The first discourse: Friendship built through integration into NATO and the EU

The first discourse centered around creating a friendship was based on welcoming Ukraine to international organizations - NATO and the EU. The discourse saw integration of Ukraine to these organizations as a clear goal that would eventually become inevitable. Through this discourse, Ukraine was to officially become part of the West and escape “geopolitical no-man’s-land” (Alar Karis 29.03.2024). Integration into these organizations was deemed as the best protection against Russian aggression and influence, thus, if Ukraine were to join, it would be protected from future aggressions. The discourse also sought to create a normative distance between Russia and Ukraine, as Russia and the West were portrayed as opposites. Ukraine was shown to be fighting for the West and the integration of Ukraine was displayed as a fair price the West had to pay for Ukraine’s sacrifices. Integration of Ukraine into the EU was displayed as a tool that could help Ukraine get back on its feet economically and create a positive feedback loop that would enable Ukraine to support itself further as well. Kaja Kallas (08.02.2024) said the following during a speech in Vienna: "Reconstruction combined with European integration and reforms is the perfect boost for Ukraine’s economy and it also helps Ukraine move closer to the EU.”

Second discourse: The West is united with Ukraine against Russia

The second discourse aimed at creating a friendship was geared towards the unity of the West, the Euroatlantic and the EU against Russia. This discourse portrayed the ways in which the West had successfully mobilized against Russia and in support of Ukraine. The narrative showed that the war had united different actors and strengthened alliances in a way which was hard to imagine

beforehand. But the narrative also portrayed how the Russian plan to create division had failed and instead had encouraged certain actors, such as the EU, to become leaders. Kaja Kallas (22.11.2022) said the following when addressing Riigikogu: “Russia wanted to subject Ukraine and crush Europe’s unity. Instead he got a Europe that is stronger and more unified than ever. And he also received a world that does not love Russia. Some fear, some take advantage of Russia, but no one loves.” This discourse also sought to show just how united and integrated NATO and the EU had become. Both organizations were shown ready for enlargement, the strength (whether economic or martial) of them were shown as greater than that of Russia’s etc. Kaja Kallas (20.02.2024) said explicitly that Russian aggression against smaller members of NATO would still count as an attack on the entire alliance: “And it does not make sense to keep asking if Estonia is afraid or if Poland is next. Don’t forget, that question really is a question of whether NATO is next. We all have skin in the game.” But while this discourse focused on the positives of unity, it also focused on potential threats. Russia was portrayed to be creating cleavages, distrust and confusion with two goals: to create disunity between allied states and within democratic societies to weaken support for Ukraine. Both of narratives focused on the importance of unity, awareness, education and need for vocal support in favor of Ukraine. It drew on the importance of democratic values and freedoms that Russia tries to use to undermine the West’s unity, strength and coherence. Thus, Russian actions were seen as no longer only being limited to the front in Ukraine but also as attacks on Western states’ domestic domains. As Kaja Kallas (20.02.2024) said: “Being open is a strength of our societies, it makes it impossible to use surprise as a weapon. By revealing their methods, we can deter harmful actions and make our societies more resilient against hostile influence. /.../ The aim of Russia's influence operations are to create distrust and change our policies, they aim to deter our societies from supporting Ukraine, spark domestic divisions, and influence democratic decision-making - including decisions we make at the ballot-boxes.”

Third discourse: Closeness between Ukraine and Estonia

The third discourse of friendship was based on showing the closeness between Ukraine and Estonia. The narrative portrayed the amount of Estonian support and aid through material means in one respect. When speaking of Russia having to compensate for the damages, Margus Tsahkna (23.01.2024) said the following: “Until Russia has not done so, we need to find possibilities to use

Russia's sovereign assets and frozen assets to pay for the reconstruction of Ukraine and for the damages caused by Russia. As an example, Estonia is going forward with national draft law, allowing the use of frozen assets for advance payment of damages, if Russia is not willing to pay for the damages." The narrative also displayed moral support by mentioning official visits, advocacy for supporting Ukraine, continuing support until Ukraine wins the war and the closeness between the states in another respect. This support was portrayed for instance by Kaja Kallas (22.11.2022): "The 24th of February this year will unite Estonian and Ukrainian peoples' quest for freedom and independence forever." And Alar Karis (21.09.2022) for example vowed the following: "We will continue to provide assistance. We will help reconstruct Ukraine - this has to start right now. We invite others to join us."

The discourse also portrayed the similarities of Estonian and Ukrainian historical experiences. For example, the Estonian experience after the Second World War was portrayed as the same as what Ukraine is currently subjected to. This was exemplified by the words of Kaja Kallas (04.06.2023): "In an effort to further their Russification policy, the Soviet Union deported Estonians and replaced them with migrants from Soviet Russia. Russian occupation meant exploiting our resources and economy. Many nations who have experienced colonialism have seen a similar pattern of mistreatment and exploitation. I recall this because it mirrors the playbook that the Kremlin is using in Ukraine today."

Fourth discourse: Russia is marginal and alone

The fourth discourse of friendship was based on creating a narrative of Russia being marginal and alone. This discourse sought to show how Russia has been excluded from the international society and how it's being actively marginalized. By portraying Russian isolation, the narrative showed the other actors union. Isolation of Russia was shown by the actions of states in international organizations, for instance. As exemplified by the quote of Kaja Kallas (04.06.2023) at the Shangri-La Dialogue: "The international community has given a clear assessment of the Russian aggression via the United Nations General Assembly. 141 Member States have deplored in the strongest terms the aggression by Russia against Ukraine and demanded its complete and unconditional withdrawal from the territory of Ukraine." But the narrative also portrayed Russia as weak and small. Comparison between a mighty Europe and a marginal Russia was evident in

this quote by Kaja Kallas (20.02.2024): "We have the resources, the economic might, the expertise. Our strength outweighs Russia's. Let's not be afraid of our own power."

Conclusion

Support for Ukraine after the full-scale invasion in 2022 was mobilized by many states but the CEE countries bordering Russia became the most vocal proponents. Part of this support is driven by shared security concerns regarding Russia. While security worries explain the need for material and military support very well, it fails to explain the vast range of solidarity that was also shown.

Using the postcolonial theoretical framework, mainly built on Edward Said's book "Orientalism", the study analyzed three research questions by using Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional model of critical discourse analysis on official speeches and statements made by the Estonian prime minister, foreign minister and the president made between February 2022 and March 2026. A total of 38 speeches and 17 addresses were analyzed.

The main research question aimed to answer how postcolonial solidarity was manifested in the official discourses. Estonia showed its postcolonial solidarity through four discourses. First discourse emphasized the importance of supporting Ukraine by depicting the outcome of the war as the determinant which will decide the future of the world and Western liberal order. Whether Ukraine were to win or lose the war was to decide, whether the normative world we know and live in today, will cease to exist or would prevail, which is why Ukraine had to be supported. Second discourse showed postcolonial solidarity between the states as Estonia vouched for Ukraine by emphasizing the need to hold Russia accountable, reform the UN and frame the war in terms of international law. The discourse sought to help Ukraine seek legal and moral justice. Third, a discourse of colonial war and imperialist ambitions of Russia was present, which framed the war through colonial rhetoric depicting power relations and ramifications of colonial legacy. Different historical lessons and expert knowledge as countries bordering Russia were utilized to create solidarity between the two states. Fourth, a call of support was echoed to generate and mobilize support for Ukraine, whether material or moral. This discourse declared Estonia's support but also invited other actors to join in backing Ukraine.

The second research question focused on what postcolonial arguments were used in foreign policy narratives to explain the root causes of the war. The root causes were explained by three distinct discourses. The first discourse portrayed how the war happened due to Russia wanting to eliminate the state of Ukraine and its people. The discourse argued that Russia expected the elimination of Ukraine to lead to the normative liberal order collapsing which is why it attacked Ukraine. The

second discourse looked at the Russian regime's domestic aspects - mainly how the regime and its predecessors have utilized lies, myths, impunity and authoritarianism to gain and stay in power. The discourse followed the logic that tyrannies fear the truth, which Ukraine as a democratic state has and embodies, which is the explanation for Russian need to destroy Ukraine. The third discourse explained the war by stating how Russia is inherently different: evil, barbaric and uncivilized. Root causes of the war were hidden within Russia that could not be changed - its "bad" nature was shown to be the reason for its irrational actions.

The third research question sought to explain how postcolonial arguments were used to create a friendship between Estonia and Ukraine. Postcolonial friendship was created through four discourses. The first focused on integrating Ukraine into the EU and NATO with the aim of deterring Russia in the future. The second discourse focused on the unity of the West, the World and others with Ukraine against Russia. The discourse focused on how the war had brought different actors further together. The third discourse focused on the relationship between Estonia and Ukraine, the ways in which Estonia has helped morally and materially. The fourth discourse sought to create unity by exclusion - it showed the West and the World as a cohesive massive unit that weighed against its smaller marginalized opponent, Russia, much more powerfully.

Estonia showed its postcolonial solidarity towards Ukraine through different discourses in a multitude of ways. Further research could be carried out by including other sources. Interviews for instance could provide rich material for analysis as some have been considered quite controversial and show certain cleavages, if not even shifts, in Estonian foreign policy.

Further analysis could also focus on comparison between different timeframes. For instance, a slight shift in rhetoric of the foreign minister Margus Tsahkna was visible in his annual speech of 2026 where he outright stated that Estonia's support towards Ukraine is no longer simply driven by altruism, but is instead much more pragmatic to elevate Estonian foreign policy and position in the international arena. This slight change showed how the altruistic or normative discourse of supporting Ukraine has shifted towards pragmatism - similarly to the foreign policy changes we've lately seen elsewhere in the world. This dissertation analyzed only Estonian foreign policy but further research could include other CEE states as well. Future research could also analyze how the support or solidarity has changed. Ukrainian drones that have violated the Estonian borders have raised a discussion over how far and how long Estonia is willing to support Ukraine, since

war has now literally reached Estonian borders but not due to Russian actions but instead thanks to those of Ukraine.

The discourse analysis done for this thesis included a lot of material and might've remained a little superficial. Discourse analysis as a method could provide incredibly rich and deep analytical findings. The author believes that since this topic is pretty complex and has many different interesting discourses overlapping one another, research on post-Soviet states' postcoloniality and solidarity would warrant and deserve further research in the future. Other limitations of the study have to do with the fact that single-case studies do not provide generalizable data.

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