

POLITICS OF GENDER AND NATIONALITY: ESTONIAN PARAMILITARY ORGANISATION

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ABSTRACT

This thesis looks upon the case of the Estonian Paramilitary organisation – the Estonian Defence League (the EDL). In order to work with this research topic, three blocks of analyses were conducted: oral history interviews with young male EDLers, analysis of the EDL publication forewords and photostreams, as well as analysis of the EDL digital archives. As a research finding, I concluded that the EDL self-representation is a military-like, matching outlines of a quasi-secret male-dominated society, built upon nationalism and corresponding exclusionary memory work. The conservatist attitudes towards gender roles manifested in analyses of all the sources, yet there were some important controversies in regard with the self-representation of the organisation.

Key terms: nationalism, militarized masculinities, memory work, the Far Right.

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1. INTRODUCTION

“All nationalisms are gendered, all are invented and all are dangerous” (Anne McClintock).

(McClintock 1997: 89)

My thesis project “Politics of gender and nationality: Estonian paramilitary organisation” seeks answer to a research question on how do paramilitary settings construct masculinities in regard to nation-building. I focus on the self-representation of the armed paramilitary organisation of the Republic of Estonia – the Estonian Defence League (*Eesti Kaitseliit*, hereinafter referred by acronym ‘the EDL’, and ‘EDLers’ when referring to its members). This research topic is of importance because of the institutional culture of the EDL which is carried by a pre-WWII legacy, internal violence, quasi-secrecy, being a part of state patriotic youth work and because of the state ambitions and lack of control of the EDL. The EDL possesses wide range of assets, including legal weapons and is involved in constructing militarised political subjectivities. The organisation seems to recruit new members from early on, being actively engaged in the Estonian education system and in the patriotic national youth work, with EDLers carrying through National Defence Classes and educational visits in public schools. The EDL has established a serious public reputation and so it is important to understand the kind of gender and nation politics the organisation represents. The aim of this project is to contribute to overcoming the overall gap of critical social research regarding Estonian paramilitary.

The EDL, established in 1918, is a legal, voluntary, national defence organization of unified paramilitary armed forces, arranged military-like, operating under the Estonian Defence

Ministry, constituting part of the Estonian Defence Forces and fulfilling tasks given to it by the EDL Law of the Republic of Estonia (in force since March 5th, 1999). So, the EDL is at the same time a voluntary organisation as well as part of the state, defining itself as the 'carpet of protection' covering all Estonia, with more than 21,000 members involved. The necessity of looking at the case of the EDL at this very time derives from the ambitions of the Estonian state regarding the organisation. According to the State Defence Development Plan 2013-2022, the EDL membership has to grow up to 30,000 members in a decade to be able to bear new tasks given to it – that all the Estonian territorial defence tasks should be carried out by the EDL (Estonian Defence Ministry 2013: 4). This agenda seems to copy a historical example of the pre-WWII EDL which consisted of more than 40,000 members (Pedaru 2011: 59). Commenting the Agenda, the Head of the EDL Meelis Kiili stated:

“Even though demographic situation is bad, then trends and people’s awreness about the EDL have remarkably risen. We have to engage ourselves into additional youth work, visit schools, to display the EDL strengths to the outside“ (Postimees 2012).

The Agenda (ibid.) has been criticized by some leading figures of the Estonian Defence Forces, stating that the broader tasks could be unrealistic to achieve, since voluntary membership cannot be forecasted (ERR 2013) and in order to meet the goals set in the Agenda, there is a need for extra resources, staff politics to get *“the right people to do the right things“* (Eesti Ekspress 2013), as well as a need to: *“Finally put an end to this governmental paranoia regarding the EDL, manifesting itself in real life mistrust towards these great people (the EDLers)“* (ibid.).

Similiarly to the State Defence Development Agenda (2013), the Security Policy Development Agenda 2015 Report of Estonian Government (Estonian Ministry of Interior

2009: 25) sees more efficient inclusion of the EDL as an essential part of Estonian internal defence policy. This Report (ibid.) stipulates cooperation agreements between the EDL and the Estonian Police and Board Guard Board as well as the Estonian Rescue Board. According to the Report (ibid.), the desirable role of the EDL would to be engaged, for instance, in large-scale rescue operations, continuation of guarding objects of strategic importance and being a military reserve unit. Furthermore, in the Overview Report about the April Unrest¹ (Eesti Päevaleht 2008), the Police and Board Guard Board stated that it perceived the EDL as its legitimate partner due to active participation of its members' in forcing down the street riots during the Bronze Night. Subsequently, as a gesture of gratitude and as a sign of a trust, the President of the Republic of Estonia became a supporting member of the EDL Sakala unit (Postimees 2008). After the April Events, the Minister of Defence of the time Jaak Aaviksoo declared:

"The role of the EDLers in forcing down the April Unrest cannot be underestimated. Every premise has to be created for the further development of the EDL. The story of the Bronze Soldier indicated in positive light that all is well with the defence will of the Estonian people². /---/ is the state ready to make positive use of the spontaneous volunteering in these kind of situations?" (Postimees, 06.11.2007).

The politics of are sharply contured when taking into consideration that the largest local minority (the Russian community) was strongly offended by the relocation of the Bronze Soldier memorial, not the ethnic majority living in the Republic of Estonia. The April events took

¹ Civil unrest which broke forth in 2007 in the Tallinn and in Eastern-Viru county after relocation of a Soviet WWII memorial known as the Bronze Soldier from central park facing the National Library in the capital to a military cemetery elsewhere in the city (Wertsch 2008: 134). As a result of the events, one person was killed, 100 people were wounded and 1,000 people were arrested (ibid., 133).

² Use of term "*Estonian people*" refers here only to ethnic Estonians, since the Estonian view considers ethnicity and nationality matching (read: accentless command of Estonian language, Whiteness and Estonian full name seem to be decicive factors). The local Russian community is seen as not part of the nation due to poor command of Estonian, issues with citizenship, differing interpretations of history, not following Estonian media space and self-identification according to ethnicity.

place due to a disagreement over the commemorationalization of the past between two "mnemonic communities": the Estonian-speaking majority and the Russian-speaking minority (Wertsch 2008: 133). For the Estonian majority, which positions correspond to those of the EDL, the civil unrest was seen as an act of minority hooliganism which took place due to fabrications regarding WWII from the side of current Russian propaganda apparatus. According to this interpretation, the local Russian minority denies Stalinist crimes against small nations and are seen as victims of lobotomy from the side of Russian media. Wertsch (ibid.) explains in his article that for the local Russian community, the Bronze Soldier stands for liberation and victory against Nazism and constitutes an important part of self-identity, with discourses of 'Russianness' and the WWII victory closely tied to each other. According to this interpretation, all the people under the Soviet regime may have suffered, with no nations in particular standing out as ultimate victims.

For the local Russian community, relocation of the Bronze Soldier bears a meaning for the Republic of Estonia not supporting the fight against Nazism, hence, being a Nazi state. Furthermore, 30% of the state population, mostly of non-Estonian ethnic origin, have been issued an Estonian Alien's Passport which indicates an undefined citizenship. So, the minorities living in Estonia are, in fact, largely non-citizens with reduced rights (Greene 2010). This corresponds to conclusions made earlier by Anne McClintock (1997: 91) who pointed out that in modern Europe, citizenship juridically represents the access towards state resources and rights. In the Estonian case, the Russian minorities do not have the equal rights. It is telling that the EDL's role was appointed out in the quote above as outstanding when bearing in mind that the EDL is known for its patriotic agenda and membership of ethnic Estonian men. Since vast amount of the non-ethnic people living in Estonia are not citizens,

then the following quote by a regional unit head of the EDL demonstrates the kind of exclusionary nationalist project the EDL seems to aim at:

“Instead of asking what will I get from joining the EDL, a citizen should understand that it’s an opportunity to voluntarily contribute to the defence of one’s own state. Unfortunately, there are always those who think in more egoistic terms, /---/” (Saarte Hääl 2013).

The EDL stands out amongst other militias³ with its legality and close connection ties with the Army, since others rarely exist outside the framework of terrorism. For instance, the EDL has a common tradition of military exercises and participation in NATO foreign missions in Iraq and Afghanistan together with Estonian troops (Turro 2009: 18-20). Some EDLers have a previous experience in Bosnia and Kosovo (ibid.), whereas according to EDL corporal Turro (ibid., 20), *“every EDLer should go through at least one mission”*. Cynthia Enloe (2007: 39) has noted that militarization is globalized under the discourse of pursuing national security. For instance, Estonia joining the NATO and participating the missions abroad has been accompanied by the constant rhetorics of vouching the state national security.

The historical legacy of the EDL, such as its speculated past of former key figures conducting the Holocaust events (See: Weiss-Wendt 2008, Balkelis 2012, opposed by Kasekamp 2000: 73-74, 135) remains to be largely undiscussed in academic debates as well as publicly unproblematized. The patriotic education and youth work of the EDL seems also a topic largely out of the media interest. According to major Mark Teel from the U.S. Maryland National Guard, the EDL has a strong partnership with the Guard (Estonian Advantage 2003), following it as a model for development and based on its youth programme called the

³ Militia – a private army of civilians who are enrolled on military lines, subjected to military training and expected to meet the enemy with weapons in physical combat (Duverger 1967: 36-37, as cited in Yoroms 2005: 34). The EDL is referred to as a militia in Pedaru’s (2011) thesis.

'Challenge', the EDL started to work with at-risk Estonian youth (Howard 2004: 191). The importance of the EDL youth work has already previously been stated concerning the State agenda of giving the organisation new tasks.

This thesis is divided into an Introduction, three chapters of analysis and a Conclusion. The Introduction briefly outlines the main necessity of looking at the case of the EDL. The introduction is divided to five following subsections. First of those subsections consist of description of research sources. After this, there is a subsection where the research methodology and methods are introduced, followed by a literature review, theoretical framework and research limitations. There are three core analysis chapters in this thesis which correspond to the three main sources used: interviews, publications, and digitality. All of the core chapters follow the same logic of structure: based on an analysis of a particular source, looking at the self-representation of the EDL, followed by a summary of findings. The first of these analysis chapters of this MA thesis focuses on the results of the interviews conducted with the young male EDLers. The second chapter focuses on analysing the contents of two publications of the EDL. The third chapter focuses on the digital archives of the EDL. The chapters are followed by a Conclusions which sums up the research findings.

1.1 Sources

The empirical part of this thesis is based on interviews conducted with young Estonian male members of the EDL, focusing on their narrations regarding their recruitment to and involvement in the paramilitary. In addition to the oral history interviews with young male EDLers, my research sample consists of digital archives and publications. More specifically, I'm analysing the (1) conducted interviews, (2) the textual and visual content of two EDL

publications “*The EDL In Tallinn 1917-2010*“ and “*For Estonia!*“ as well as (3) content of the EDL digital archives, i.e. its homepage, museum pages and its social media channels in Facebook and Youtube. Analysis methods used in this thesis include oral history for the interviews, visual analysis for the photostreams illustrating the publications and digital archives, and feminist critical discourse analysis when analysing the forewords of the beforementioned pair of publications. The bulk of sources and methods are necessary in order to further understand the discourses expressed in the interviews. However, I will not be engaging in any detailed inquiry of the EDL’s history nor compare the values amongst different generations of men engaged in its activities because this would exceed the limits and resources of compiling this MA thesis. Instead, I’m focusing on the self-representation of the EDL in regard with its project of gender and nation-building, with the conducted interviews being the most important and valuable source for this thesis.

When analysing the publications, I focused on the content of two EDL books, “*Kaitseliit Tallinnas 1917-2010*“ (2010 – hereinafter referred to as Book 1), and “*Eesti Eest!*“ (2008 – hereinafter referred to as Book 2), both of them anniversary publications illustrated with rich photo material. I analyzed these publications in order to find out what kind of self-representation in regard to masculinities and nationhood the illustrations mediate by looking at the photography of several randomly selected book chapters. In the case of Book 1, I selected two chapters about different types of units by occasional sample, and my analysis focuses on the photostreams of Kalev unit (pp. 81-93), and Põhja unit (p. 156-169). In the case of Book 2, I randomly selected two chapters about regional units and analysed the photostream of Põlva unit (p. 119-134), and Saaremaa *malev* (p. 169-186). think about the different sources contrib masculinities and statebuilding

The official Facebook pages of the EDL consist of: (1) the automatically generated interest page of the EDL, in English, with approximately 3,400 likes, and no posts due to technical restrictions, (2) the nominal page of the EDL with approximately 1,200 likes, (3) page of the magazine “*Defend (Your) Home!*” with approximately 900 likes, and (4) a few pages of regional units, and shooting galleries of the EDL. My analysis will focus on the visual compilation (photos section), the Events, and the posts in the nominal page and the magazine page.

The EDL Museum exhibitions are located on the ground floor of the EDL Headquarters in Toompea, i.e., part of the capital closely connected to the history of rulers and power (with the building situated next to the Museum of Occupations and close to the Freedom Square, its geography connotating memory work) but are also partly digitally accessible via the EDL homepage. The Museum functions also as a publisher with new books coming out in yearly bases. For instance, in recent years, publications with headings “*A Man, joining the Men!*” (2013) and “*For Estonia!*” (2008), the latter analysed in this thesis, have been published. These book titles suggest ideologically mobilizing and male-centered content.

Similar, ideologically charged and mobilizing headings occur when taking a look at other sources. The EDL has an official magazine called “*Defend (Your) Home!*” and an official Youtube channel called “*For Fatherland!*” (www.youtube.com/user/isamaaFor/videos), as well as several Facebook groups. Moreover, although declaring openness, flexibility and tolerance as its core values, the EDL events, judging by their programme, celebrate similar type of traditionalist androcentric “interests” and ideals. For instance, a Father’s Day event programme consists of explicit references to weapons, explosives, demonstrations of police special units, competitions, judo, etc.

Gender binaries and strong segregation occur from the structure of the organisation and from its linguistic choices regarding the names of its sub-units. The EDL consists of a male-dominated main body with a gender-neutral name “The Defence League“, regionally spread to every Estonian county, whereas the sub-divisions of the main body refer to differentiation based on gender ideals, age and appointed functions: a female unit named the ‘Female Home Defence’, a boys unit named the ‘Young Eagles’ and a girls unit named the ‘Home Daughters’. These sub-units are designed to assist the main body of the EDL in supporting tasks and/or preparing future membership. They are referring to patriarchal gender hierarchy of a nuclear family designed to assist the career of the father figure.

The gender-specific expectations emphasized in the names of both of the female sub-units manifest itself in explicit references to the gender composition of the organisational body (‘female’, ‘daughters’) and unmobile private sphere (‘home’) which is traditionally female-dominated. As opposed to the female sub-units, the main body, historically opened exclusively to male members, bears no linguistic distinctions of gender, hence, suggesting dominating maleness as a norm and neutrality. Similiarily, the ‘Young Eagles’ do not explicitly refer to gender but to the ‘manly ideals’ such as bravery, mobility, nobility (‘Eagle’) and the age criteria of its members, instead.

1.2 Methodology and methods

1.2.1 Oral history

An oral history interview is a tool and methodology grounded in memory work for gathering information regarding the past (Truesdell 1999). Oral history can expose interrelations

between discourses regarding the past and present (ibid.). I chose to conduct oral history interviews because I was interested in exposing possible underlinings of nationalist collective memory in order to translate the outcomes of those interviews to gendered nation-building of the paramilitary. The connections between nationalism and memory work are explained in more detail in the theoretical framework of this thesis (see: Novick 1999: 3-4, as cited in Wertsch 2008: 145). There were ten pre-designed interview questions which I asked from all the interviewees. For the oral history interviews, I chose to ask the particular questions (Appendix 1) from the interviewees to record their performances on why they decided to join the EDL, based on their current values and attitudes. The gendered discourses about the EDL which the interviewees chose to mediate enabled me to focus on the self-representation of the organisation.

In April 2014, I conducted altogether seven post-structured oral history interviews with young male members of the EDL. The main purpose of conducting the interviews was to understand interviewees' narration of their recruitment to, involvement in and relationship to the EDL and its role in the Estonian society. All of the interviews were conducted in Estonian language, transcribed, translated into English and coded. I provided confidentiality to the interviewees, and their anonymity will be protected during the whole research process, as well as after the thesis has been defended and uploaded. Interview questions (Appendix 1) were offered to the interviewees beforehand via email upon their request. The questions were categorized into three main blocks, referring to the oral history (past) in connection with the present and future perspectives of the interviewee's membership in the EDL.

I conducted the interviews in public settings in Tallinn, with an exception of one interview taking place in the interviewee's office. All of the interviews lasted more than half an hour

and some for approximately 50 minutes. In every interview, I covered all the planned questions, yet modified the phrasings of the questions in process. The questions were asked in a free sequence, with the exception of the first two, depending on the themes brought up by the interviewees. Some of the questions were covered by the interviewees, themselves, without my articulation of the specific question. During the interviews, I didn't let in considerable pauses between answers and questions, trying to contribute to maintenance of a comfortable atmosphere for the interviewees.

The interviewees were sampled using a Snowball method. Originally, I planned to focus on conducting interviews in a single unit of the EDL but the snowball sampling soon led me outside the borders of one unit. I contacted all the interviewees through a social media channel and most of the contacts immediately agreed with an interview. Out of eight planned interviews, seven took place. Interview with Tanel (name changed) was not conducted due to reasons of personal safety, since he started to send me ambiguous virtual messages regarding my mental capacities. I kept asking him what he meant by them but did not receive straightforward replies. Throughout the thesis, I'm referring to the interviewees by fake names: Ülo, Margus, Mihkel, Siim, Indrek, Peeter, Tarmo (Table 1, see Appendix). The sequence of the names appearing in Tabel 1 indicates the construction of the sample in a way that Ülo led me to contact Indrek, etc.

One of the main methodological challenges in using oral history when interviewing the EDL male community lied conducting research work in a possibly dangerous settings. I planned to avoid opening my own opinions and to take an outside position as a researcher and learner, in order not to ethically harm the interviewees and to learn from them, yet at the same time maintaining a critical lense of inquiry. I was aware that this might hinder the natural flow of

the discussion because according to Ronald J. Grele (1998: 43) and to Lynn Abrams (2010: 18), an oral history interview is a interactive, and collaborative creation between the interviewer and the interviewee. Thus, I was sure that if I'd choose to keep too much information back then I wouldn't create a trustful atmosphere. Yet, as Donald A. Richie (1995) put it: "*Oral history collects the interviewee's recollections and opinions, not the interviewer's*" (*ibid.*, 105). I learned from his guidelines that I merely need to challenge and pursue responses which seem poorly clarified, not to argue against opinions which I do not agree with.

Endeavors to establish a trustful and open interview atmosphere were of importance to my thesis project also because as Kathleen M. Blee (1993: 596) wrote, right-wing, reactionary, and racial hate groups tend to be secretive. She also highlighted that the life stories of ordinary people whose political agendas have been found to be "*unsavory, dangerous, or deliberately deceptive*" (*ibid.*), have been given less attention to by historians. So conducting oral history interviews in potentially anti-feminist settings is very important. My readings of Richie (*ibid.*) convinced me that in case profound preparation does not help to tackle issues regarding emergence of types of violence on the spot of conducting the interview, then I always maintained the right to directly decline from exposing my views, and also to end the interview.

1.2.2 Visual analysis

The visual content analysis of the photostreams of the EDL publications, as well as illustrations used in the digital archives, is based on critical feminist visual methodology. The latter has been described by Gillian Rose (2001: 15-17, 19-20) and puts an emphasis to (1)

cautiousness of the gaze and (2) taking the effects of the visual representations into consideration when interpreting visual images. According to Rose (ibid., 5), the visual occupies a central position in the cultural construction of social life in contemporary Western societies. Both Rose (ibid., 19), as well as Howells and Matson (2009: 59) refer to the problematics of connotations of “truthfulness” ascribed to a photograph. According to the latter (ibid., 56-58), photography is required to be seen as "objective", "neutral", and "value-free" documentary medium. However, academic research should focus on the particular versions of reality which the photographs are mediating, not to “truth-claims”.

Methodological points which I took into consideration regarding conducting visual analysis consist of aspects concerning the viewer, technical limitations and mediation. Correspondingly, the viewer is a crucial part of the depiction, therefore a researcher should ponder who is imagined to look at the photographs, who is expected to be persuaded by the photo and whose perception are the photographs expected to affect a change in. In other words, visual analysis should take into consideration to whom the particular photo is addressed to, whom is it meant to allure and by whom the picture is owned (Hall 2001; Howells & Matson 2009: 64; Rose 2001: 12, 15). In other words, one can ask what kind of devices those photos are (ibid., 26). Secondly, regarding the technicalities, a visual analysis should notice the constraints of an image production (ibid., 17, 20), as well as the intentionality of the photographer (ibid., 23) both of which can affect the genre of the image. Thirdly, creation and mediation of social-cultural constructions and political identities (ibid., 21) should be taken into account. One should ask what kind of history the specific physical embodiment of the photos transmit and celebrate in terms of their possible social-cultural associations. Also, equal amount of attention should be given to the economies (ibid., 15) and surroundings of the captions.

A qualitative content analysis focuses on interpretations of textual data through identifying repeated themes, patterns, and meanings (Rose 2001: 54, Zhang & Wildemuth 2009: 1). When conducting visual analysis, I used coded grouping (see: letters B, R, P, G appearing in the list below) of the photos in selected chapters of the books to understand the proportions of the occurrence of the criteria compared with the photo captions.

The analysis criteria was constructed based on the one hand, theoretical works of by Paul Higate (2003) and Rachel Woodward (2003) about militarized masculinities, and feminist theory regarding militarization by Cynthia Enloe (2007). On the other hand, I based on Anne McClintock's (1997) and George Mosse's (1993) concepts of nationalism. In order to understand how masculinities are visualized in regard with politics of nationality, I analysed:

- (B) Declarations of brotherhood, incl. explicit nudity in public
- (R) Discourse of memory work – paying respect in ritual settings, symbols of statehood
- (P) Masculinist posing, incl. strength demonstrations
- (G) Gender segregation

A character's characteristics could be brought forth differently in words and in images, since the latter take up quantitatively more space in a page, hence, are ascribed a higher level of importance (Brugilles & Cromer 2009: 29). Therefore, when conducting the visual analysis, I paid close attention to the relationship between the illustration and its caption. Because of focusing on gender and nation-building in the EDL, I also made sure to notice gender differences in representations of female and male EDLers, and also to representations of nationhood.

1.2.3 Discourse and digitality

When analysing forewords of the two books, as well as when looking at the digital archives, I used critical feminist discourse⁴ analysis as introduced by M. M. Lazar (2005: 11, 20). I view discourse as one of the elements of social practices, aiming for nuanced and contextualized inquiry. When conducting this research, I based on the five key analytical principles introduced by Lazar (ibid.): (1) Feminist analytical activism, (2) Gender as ideological structure, (3) Complexity of gender and power relations, (4) Discourse in the (de)construction of gender, (5) Critical reflexivity as praxis.

The digital archives of the EDL consist of: (1) online pages of the Museum located in the EDL webpage, (2) Youtube channel and (3) Facebook pages. The specifics of those particular virtual (social) environments demanded a critical methodological tool for analysis. Namely, I payed attention to in which ways does a digital compilation shape the specific representations of militarized masculinities, nationhood and memory construction.

Social media platforms, such as Facebook are connected with a further established cultural system of photography, a rise of remarkable privacy concerns and anti-democracy, i.e. navigate certain loss of control over the distribution pathways for personal content (Vivienne & Burgess 2013: 281-282). Youtube is a digital archive influenced by, as well as influencing different kinds of time flow, and (server) space, interhuman exchanges, as well as storage, and display of items (Gehl 2009: 45-46). So, when conducting these analyses, I payed attention to discourses, the context in which they occur and the characteristics of the larger environment through which they are mediated.

⁴ I base on the Foucauldian (1979) understanding of discourse which I see as constituting meaning, thought and 'essence' through social practices which are inherently linked with power relations.

1.3 Literature review

Key findings of this thesis include not only analytical scrutiny but also descriptive accounts regarding the organisation due to lack of previous record of published academic inquiry. Furthermore, correspondingly to its quasi-secrecy, the EDL Vision 2030 and Development Agenda for the years 2010-2013 are not accessible. One has to submit an official Request for Information to the EDL regarding those which might not be satisfied. Regarding the EDL, there only exists a few student theses including, as Pedaru (2011: 5-6) mentions, those defended during the Soviet times. The latter ones⁵ are considered to be ideologically controversial, since their authors “*equalized the EDL with Nazi-Germany power structures Sturmabteilung and Schutzstaffel*“ (ibid.).

The contemporary EDL researches its own history in the form of published publications, articles in its magazine Kaitse Kodu, and acts as an advisory body regarding its representation, such as the case of the documentary film “*Eesti Aja Lood: XVII. Kaitseliit*“ (Talvik & Kangur 2007/2008) regarding EDL past. Several student manuscripts about the EDL are written in the Estonian National Defence College, a higher education institution governed by the same body – the Estonian Ministry of Defence – as the EDL, itself. The theses concerning the EDL range in their focus from history to youth work, and from music to strategic training technicalities. In general, these works tend not to analyse the activities and mission of the EDL from the perspective of critical social theories. The self-representation of the EDL is rarely touched upon in a written text from the side of other parties than the members, Estonian media, or the State bureaucracy. An exception could be a few technical

⁵ Rein Sillar’s thesis “*Relvastatud organisatsioon Kaitseliit Eesti kodanluse diktatuuri süsteemis*” (1968) and Rein Saarma’s thesis “*Eesti kodanluse relvastatud organisatsioon "Kaitseliit"*” (1968)

type of publications from the Estonian Academy of Security Studies which unfortunately do not help this current thesis.

However, the Master's thesis regarding the value system in civil-military relations by Gustav Kutsar (2007) is a valuable source. He analyses the value scales of a broad range of Estonian military groups and organisations, the EDL being one of them, using quantitative research methods to interpret questionnaire results and contures EDLers as patriotic and conservative but also ascribing high value to spiritual growth (Kutsar 2007: 114). According to him (ibid., 112), the EDLers tend to value their profession much less than membership of the EDL which is set as a priority. Nevertheless, the author, Chairperson of the Estonian Association of Injured Combatants, is closely connected to the EDL, just recently ending a common charity campaign "*Let's Give Honour!*" aimed at supporting Estonian veterans and their close ones (Kaitseliit 2014).

The same line of argument about organisational connection applies to the author of one other student manuscript containing critical findings regarding the institutional culture of the EDL. Riina Nemvalts (2002) defenced a Bachelor's thesis about the Female Unit of the EDL, using feminist theories and collocating the bulk of her critical findings under a heading refering to historical and contemporary problems inside the Unit. Five years after her defence, Nemvalts's thesis was published as a book. Unfortunately, the author, as a current employee of the EDL, chose to question in the foreword her own previous findings declaring: "*The EDL never has had, does not have, nor ever will have any problems*" (Nemvalts 2008). This remarkable demise of critical stance regarding state defence, alongside with the acceptance of, what seem to be, institutional sacral dogmas, could be read as characteristic to the specific institutional culture of the EDL. Moreover, judging by this, the particular internal culture

seems to enhance violence towards any debate, questioning or challenging, as the latter could be read as a threat and thereby, muted. Since the EDL has not attracted scholarly attention in social sciences over the past two decades since the Republic of Estonia regained its independence, it is thereby important to ponder why is that so.

Over the most recent two decades of its existence, the EDL has witnessed certain waves of media attention and public interest towards the organisation. During the nineties, the attention often indicated a lack of trust, since the reputation of the EDL was shaken by internal crises regarding criminal affairs related to weapons and real estate, frauds and shooting between the Police and the EDL, the latter known as the Game Warden Crisis (*Jäägrikriis*) taking place in 1993. The EDL has addressed this period of time with the following brief statement published in one of its publications analysed in this thesis:

“The EDL attracted negative public attention – incidents with weapons, explosion in the EDL Järva unit headquarters in 1993, weapon abduction in the EDL Jõelähtme company in 1997, etc – until the end of the nineties” (Jürjo 2008: 15).

However, during the 2000s, the bureaucratic machinery of the institution continued to grow, and as a sign of the emergence of a stable right-wing political era known as the Ansip Years (2005-2014), named after the longest-standing Estonian Prime Minister Andrus Ansip, public trust regarding the EDL seems to have grown. The time period of 2005-2014 also matches the media speculations of a change towards stability in the leading positions of Estonian mafia, with the assassination of the presumable former leader Kalev Kurg taking place in 2005 and with the new speculated leader corporal Assar Paulus being an active EDLer who has received many certificates from the organisation (Ekspress 2014). However, Paulus is currently under custody and in case of conviction will be expelled from the EDL, as stated by

the organisation earlier this year (Äripäev 2014). Nowadays, even though the EDL continues to have media coverage regarding its members, possessions and court cases, the public image of the organisation does not seem to be much affected by those reveals. In fact, with the early nineties bearing a nostalgic stamp of “*difficult and hectic times*”⁶ in Estonia, as if at least some amount of criminality would have been inevitable at the time, further inquiries about the EDL past seem to be skipped. The memory politics regarding the first decade of the newly free state are shaped by a nationalist project of whitewashing and seem to go hand-in-hand with the emergence of a specific soap documentary genre focusing on villain figures. Estonian TV-series from the end of the 2000s, such as the “The Lifetimers” (*Eluaegsed*) and “The Estonian Maffia” (*Eesti maffia*) represented past criminals as patriotic ‘true sons of the nation’ whose deeds were to some extent normalized and excused by the specifics of the era. Similar work of remembrance seems to be shaping the restoration of the EDL.

A more recent rise in media attention to the EDL is also closely shaped by politics of collective memory. The EDL witnessed mass membership applications from the side of the Estonian (male) majority right after the April Unrest, also known as the Bronze Night, in 2007, and during the current events taking place in Crimea, Ukraine. The two series of events, though vastly different in their scope, impact, geographical situatedness and socioeconomical importance, seem to be connected with each other in the collective consciousness of the Estonian majority regarding what is perceived as the threat from the side of the ‘Russian bear’ or the ‘Eastern Enemy’. This phenomena of civil-military mobilization can be explained with mnemohistories of a perceived Eastern threat and an ongoing war of memory. Furthermore, the mass interest seems to be motivated by the public image of the EDL as an armed group on

⁶ “*The first half of the ’90s was the time of cowboy capitalism; this period of time was horseracing towards the bright future, bullets of the bandites whirring in its ears*” (Kroonika 2011).

nationalists who stand for Estonia. This suggests some elements in the EDL public display matching those of reactionary Far Right extremists.

1.4 Theoretical framework

The key analytical concepts for this thesis include nation-building, nationalism, construction of militarized masculinities and collective memory which are used in a connection with each other. The purpose of this theoretical framework is to explain and highlight upon these conceptual connections in regard with their importance to the research question. Maurice Halbwachs (1950: 78, as cited in Wertsch 2008: 145) has suggested that "formal history" and collective memory oppose each other, and Ernest Renan (1990: 11, as cited in Wertsch 2008: 145 and Sikora 2004: 65) has noted that a crucial part of nation-building consists of forgetting.

"A collective memory simplifies; sees events from a single, committed perspective; is impatient with ambiguities of any kind; reduces events to mythic archetypes" (Novick 1999: 3-4, as cited in Wertsch 2008: 145).

So, I'd argue that nationalism stands upon appropriations and exclusions in memory work. George Mosse (1993: 1, 9-10) views nationalism as an exclusionary civic religion.

In this thesis, nationalism is looked upon in connection with militarism because, as defined by Joanne Nagel (1998: 247), nationalist ideology is a goal for statehood, and nationhood, is constructed through patriotic manhood in regard to standing against an Enemy. Nationalist power is socially organized, not merely displaying gender relations, but having risen in societies which are connected with forms of patriarchy, i.e. a gender hierarchy that favours men (Hearn 2006: 157). When using the term 'militarized masculinities', I'm borrowing

Gramscian ideas of hegemony, and Connellian (2005: 42) view of masculinities as fundamentally linked to power, organised for domination, and resistant to change because of power relations. In fact, both nationalism, and militarism are embedded through the maintenance and exercise of statehood, standing in opposition with other nation-states through the threat of an armed conflict (*ibid.*, 247). Nationalism excludes minorities, hence roots in racism and fictionary ideas of homogeny (Yuval-Davies 1997: 11).

"The conception of the 'nation-state' assumes a complete correspondence between the boundaries of the nation and the boundaries of those who live in a specific state. This, of course, is virtually everywhere a fiction" (*ibid.*).

So, nationalist ideology, memory work, and militarized masculinities are connected with each other through common move of exclusion and 'othering', i.e. standing against an Enemy.

This Enemy figure, or, the 'Other' is perceived to be threatening, powerful, and unpredictable. The ideology of the Far Right can be described as rooting in vampire culture, a concept introduced by Donna Haraway (1997: 214-215) when describing the technologies of constructing the monstrosity of the Other (Halberstam 1993: 333) as the dislocated alien, accused of sucking the blood out of the "rightful": feeding off the 'normalized citizen'. In this case, the 'vampires' are the immigrants, the Jews, the possessors of the land, the cosmopolitans who *"speak too many languages and cannot remember the native tongue"* (*ibid.*). Michel Foucault (1998: 51, 55) has described the figure of a 'human monster', and the 'abnormal', as combining the impossible and the forbidden, derived from medieval figure of half-human, half-animal being.

Nationalism is part of a mainstream public discourse in Estonia (Estonian Human Rights Centre 2013: 69; Papp & Kütt 2011: 62), thus, even more so present in the mainstream

comprehensions characteristic to those of the members of the EDL. *Status quo* regarding rigorous gender norms, and nationalist ideology in the society is further triggered by right-wing coalition party politics, and education system which is uncritical towards folk traditions, seeking maintainance of ethnocentric, monoracial ideals, and providing upbringing of younger generations by repeating fighting slogans from the repertoire of the 1980s Perestroika and „Singing Revolution“ era. The EDL as a national-conservative organisation, although declaring tolerance and modernity in its official rhetorics, follows heteronormative traditions of gender segregation, so-called „family values“, praising masculinist ideals, monoracism, and discourse of war. Michael Kimmel (2013: 230), when unpacking the concept of 'paranoid politics' of White male-dominated supremacist (Far Right) groups, defines it as psychological displacement of projecting one's problems to the Other, and seeing the figure of the Other as the source of one's problems. The "law" of warfare is constituted upon military regimen to defeat the Enemy (Jeffords 1989: 183), with (para)military institutions actively using the vocabulary of warfare, through which the discourse of war is established, shaped, and structured (*ibid.*, 184).

The fact that Holocaust events are largely excluded from public discussions in Estonia characterize the general reluctance to address the rise of Holocaust denial and elements of Anti-Semitism and Anti-Roma attitudes in the society since the late 1990s (Weiss-Wendt 2008: 487, 489). According to Kimmel (2013: 240, 244-245), the Extreme Right is populated by lower-middle-class White men who have been hit the hardest by the globalization, and feel unheard in the society, as if 'they were nothing', or, as if they were 'the little guy', seen as unacceptable condition from the perspective of hegemonic masculinity. This can explain some of the conspiracy theories regarding Jewish riches and power in public debates in Estonia which usually bear the sign of hatred, be those homophobic, xenophobic or anti-EU,

though the latter is not much common. In fact, the political ideology of white supremacists movement proves to be more complicated than putting down minorities, expelling immigrants, homophobia and misogyny, as the views of Right Extremists can also be described as (1) procapitalist; believing in free market and free enterprise, (2) extremely patriotic; deeply in love with their country, their flag, and everything it stands for, and (3) racist, and sexist; believing in their birthright as White native men to be entitled to inherit the national bounty (*ibid.*, 252-254).

Connell (2005: 42) sees masculinities as fundamentally linked to power, organised for domination, and resistant to change because of power relations. The concept of 'hegemonic masculinity', as originally introduced by Connell in 1995, was seen as embodying the most honoured ways of manhood, and normative in a sense that it required all other masculinities to relate to it (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005: 832). In the following two decades, the concept received much critique, with R. W. Connell, and James W. Messerschmidt (*ibid.*, 848) acknowledging the need to expand the understanding of the concept to be more holistic, recognising the agency of subordinated groups, and the mutual coordination of power dynamics of both the subordinated, as well as the dominating groups.

Cynthia Enloe (1990: 45, as cited in Nagel 1998: 244) argues that "*nationalism has typically sprung from masculinized memory, masculinized humiliation and masculinized hope*". The renaissance of manliness in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries meant organizations and institutions such as the modern Olympic movement, a variety of boys' and men's lodges and fraternal organizations, and the Boy Scouts of America thoroughly shaping the patterns of contemporary mainstream Western masculinities, as well as the male codes of honour (*ibid.*, 244-245). The latter stresses 'manly virtues', described by Mosse (1996) as

‘normative masculinity’, including willpower, honour, courage, discipline, competitiveness, quiet strength, stoicism, persistence, adventurousness, etc (Bederman 1995; Mosse 1996, as cited in Nagel 1998: 245). The EDL, with its one century old ideological rootings, seems a prolific scenery for researching the maintainance of the kind of masculinity ideals that Mosse (*ibid.*) has described.

It’s noteworthy to mention that the current role and practices of the paramilitary in the Estonian society differ from, for instance, the types of community-based restorative justice schemes practiced during the Northern Ireland conflict where paramilitaries policed ‘their’ respective communities through a brutal system of punishment beatings, shootings, and exiling individuals from their communities (Ashe 2009: 298). According to Yoroms (2005: 36), there are two types of militias, depending on their relationship to the state. Based on the descriptions provided in the literature review, during the early ’90s, the EDL seemed to have moved from a non-state militia to a state-centered one. However, with the new broader development perspectives provided with the state agendas, as well as with the current unstable political-military circumstances in the Eastern Europe⁷ caused by aggressive foreign policies and military operations of Russian Federation towards its neighboring countries, the EDL role might change in the future beyond that of a state-centered militia.

1.5 Research limitations

My motivation for researching this topic and my position as a researcher is rooted in personal history of witnessing my former classmates and coursemates been recruited to the EDL. When it became more clearer that I’ll be focusing on the case of the EDL, I considered this

⁷ Earlier in 2014, additional NATO air forces landed in all of the three Baltic States to ‘assure peace in the Eastern borders of the Alliance’, while Russia threatened to expand its territorial claims beyond annexion of the Crimea, Ukraine.

research topic a challenge due to the risks of conducting research in a community whose values drastically differ from mine. With the help of my supervisor, I tried to prepare myself for facing possible harrassment. This thesis is mainly based on research interviews, accompanied by visual and textual analyses. It should be noted that, unfortunately, the interviews remain to be easily identifiable inside the Estonian context even though coded, anonymized and used selectively. Moreover, it should be mentioned that due to the small amount of the interviews conducted and the limitations of the research sample, the case of the EDL should be considered as an example, not as a thorough analysis of the whole paramilitary organisation since that would have exceeded the limits of this thesis.

2. ANTICIPATED COMBAT DISCOURSE: INTERVIEWS WITH THE EDLERS

In the Introduction part of this thesis, I stated that the notions of nationalism, gendered militarism and memory work are thoroughly connected with each other. Moreover, I argued that the case of the EDL is an important to research due to the paramilitary institutional culture and state ambitions connected with this organisation. In this chapter I will argue that the EDL self-representation seems to be very close to that of the military (masculinities). Furthermore, I will point out EDL anxieties regarding its public display. As a conclusion, I will point out that during the interviews, three main themes of self-representation occurred, connecting the EDL self-representation with combative masculinity, spirituality and the 'manly bond'.

2.1 Interview field notes

Followingly, I'll touch upon some of the key characteristics and issues which influenced the interviews. I experienced the interview questions being acknowledged by the interviewees without an explicit negative stance from their side, with the exception of Tanel as mentioned earlier. However, in a few occasions, the gendered power dynamics seemed to result in sexual harassment from the side of interviewees. For instance, Mihkel stated during the recorded interview that he considered me a 'very feminine woman' after "*looking at my energetic background*" which can be connected with his self-identification as a practitioner of Oriental arts of meditation. Afterwards, I missed one detail regarding his previous response saying: "*I lost that,*" to which he replied, jokingly: "*No matter, I'll raise (your) legs up!*". This disturbing reply referred towards a particular sexual practice aimed for increasing the odds of pregnancy, aimed at belittling the interviewer. The gender power dynamics reveal when

taking into consideration that “raising legs“ by putting a pillow underneath the bottom of a female partner who is trying to get pregnant is usually done in order not to miss any amount of sperm which in the heteronormative intercourse has just been ejaculated by the male partner. This offensive sexist ‘joke’ seems to confirm the image of an violent-aggressive heterosexuality which goes hand-in-hand with the military, therefore connecting Estonian paramilitary futher with the theory applicable the the Army.

Several important aspects influenced the process of conducting the interviews. Namely, the EDL being a quasi-military, quasi-secret organisation seemed to have influenced the discourses used by the interviewees. For instance, the contact who lead me to Ülo chose to accompany him to the interview, unexpectedly. The contact remained to be present throughout the event, sitting in a spot where I couldn’t see his reactions simultaneously but from where her managed to keep direct eye contact with Ülo. He interrupted the interview occasionally with short remarks and seemed to contribute to the gender power dynamics with establishing a role of an evaluative party. Gender power dynamics were not the only issues at stake. More importantly, the contact seemed to be carrying out a work of control regarding the self-representation of the EDL: what to say, and what not to say to the interviewer.

The interview with Indrek suffered under his style of cryptic laconity. The latter seemed to have been caused by the use of a recording device, even though its use was negotiated beforehand. I noticed him avoiding direct answers and contradicting himself. On the day of the interview, he was on the spot half an hour earlier and demanded to change the interviewing site for a more quiet and isolated location that he had chosen. However, in the end of the interview, immediately after I switched the dictaphone off, Indrek’s voice changed to a friendlier and more talkative version. This can be interpreted in term of quasi-secrecy of

the EDL as an organisation. However, the EDL self-representation was a key issue, since Indrek mentioned it to be very important for him to explain to the Western European countries (*sic!*) the distinct essence of the EDL, since the latter do not seem to understand it very well.

Likewise, off the record, Margus provided me with some of his opinions about masculinities, saying that for him and his generation, a 'masculine man' is tough and interested in women, whereas when one analyses the male idols of youth nowadays, then these men are, what he called, 'feminine', and possibly also not necessary sexually attracted to women. After the interview, Tarmo admitted that "of course" he considers the EDL to be a 'macho organisation', and that during the free time in the exercises, in the evenings, the topics of conversation held are mainly about cars, guns, and sexual experiences with women. Hence, the self-representation of the EDL seems to aim towards as hegemonic masculinity as possible in order to meet the 'manly ideals' of the nation; to be the "true sons of the fatherland".

Some of the interviewees aimed to design this research project. In our web conversation, Tanel (interview cancelled) offered himself to help me to "*think through the need of this project and its estimated result. Based on this*", he said, "*the required results can be determined, as well as the people with whom you should talk to.*" Both Tarmo and Margus expressed their concern regarding my thesis project. Tarmo criticized the interview questions as superficial, whereas Margus was worried if my research focus was perhaps sexist, that the research question lacked clarity and that the EDL might not have been the best organisation for a research on masculinities, suggesting me to turn to the Estonian Hunters' organisation instead. This indicates the interest of the EDL towards the way it is introduced. In other words, the EDL is not only interested in its public display but seems to be anxious of it.

2.2 Interview results

All of the interviewees were recruited either in their early teens or in their early twenties. The recruiters were mostly friends of the interviewees who introduced them to the advantages of being a member, or family members who had an early access to ideologically influencing the young men. Directed efficacy from the side of older family members or other respected male figures, such as fathers, brothers, grandfathers, (family) friends, male relatives, towards comprehensions and beliefs of young men resulted in the latter finding it easy to associate with the mission and ideological underpinnings of the EDL hence, believing in the importance of joining the organisation.

“I entered into the EDL based on my own free will and wish. /---/, father took me to the EDL because I expressed interest in joining the EDL Young Eagles organisation“
(Indrek).

The concept of the “free will to die“ corresponds to the 19th century German ideologies of the warrior-citizen who is volunteering to die for its state (Hagemann 2004: 125). Since the EDL has an active relationship towards its past, I’d suggest that this relationship is uncritical in regard to investments made to the historical legacy – though the EDL is publicly declaring otherwise.

Furthermore, the interviewees expressed a perceived connection in between different types of state organisations, such as the Boy Scouts and the Army, to their later joining of the EDL. Hence, I’d assume that the grounding ideology of the national organisations are similar in a Foucauldian (1979) sense of shaping a specific type of nationalist agent out of a working class citizen. In other words, there seems to be large amount of vertical mobility in regarding with membership of those organisations. Moreover, it seems that the founding principles of several male-dominated organisations do not seem to contradict, for instance,

knowledge about the nature is fitted into military agendas. Hence, male bond and male socialization which those organisations provide (Hatty 2000: 127) exceed the importance of any contradictory ideological basings:

“I was also a Scout. Look, everything is much connected with each other. There is something containing in everything“ (Peeter).

Close cooperation between the EDL and several state institutions, for instance the Police, the Army, the Internal Security Service, was represented as natural (Indrek), whereas the EDL’s increasing role and responsibility were perceived as well-earned (Mihkel, Margus). On the other hand, several interviewees expressed a certain distancing from and opposition to the Army, mainly of its hierarchism and centrality of weapons. The Army was represented as untrustworthy due to, what was framed as, insufficient selection criteria and/or the aggressor image (Margus, Indrek, Siim, Tarmo), even though also in the EDL a *“person can deceive, so reality will show what will become of one“* (Mihkel).

In case of the EDL, members see the organisation as the only trustworthy, ‘real Estonian’ security force because of its exclusionary (hence, nationalist – Mosse 1993: 1, 9-10) membership politics, as opposed to the Army. In the latter case, also anti-voluntary nature was pointed out as an obstacle by Margus. In the EDL, every new member candidate has to have three recommenders and pass an oral interview round. Hence, as Ülo put it:

“Well, some kind of Dmitri Linter (political activist, organizer of the Bronze Night events) would not get into the EDL even if he’d be asking“ (Ülo).

In regard to the issues of trust, the interviewees’ relationship to noteworthy events, such as the April Unrest, was explicitly pointed out in several cases. In a nutshell, the Army is not trusted because it contains morally and ideologically ‘unchecked’ elements – in other words, “too many“ Russian-speakers who might not be “loyal“ due to being raised under the influence of

the media space of the “Annectator” – the Eastern Enemy. The Bronze Night in Estonia and the events in the Crimea were represented as one unified crises originating from the East by several of the interviewees (Ülo, Margus, Tarmo). Nevertheless, the group of interviewees more closely connected with the EDL structures through, for instance, employment, seemed to express more Russophobic values, whereas members of an Academic unit (Siim, Peeter) of the EDL remained sceptical about xenophobic generalisations and conspiracy theories regarding Crimea events as some kind of a change in the World Order. As an opposition to the discourse of the Eastern Enemy, Peeter pointed out: “*Russophobia and punching the “stupid Russ” on the face isn’t quite advancing the Estonian thing.*”

According to Woodward (2003: 43), certain group values which construct the basis of military gendered practice need to be brought in for a person to be able to engage in military activities. These values embrace pride in physical prowess, hardships, rationality, invulnerability, coolness under pressure, aggressive heterosexuality and homophobia, misogyny, celebration of homosociability, the ability to deploy controlled physical aggression, and a commitment to the completion of assigned tasks with minimal complaint (Higate 2003: 27, 29, Woodward 2003: 44). Tomasz Sikora (2004: 69-70) has explained how the “body politics” of a nation is constructed upon a homophobic fear of penetration, since both the governing male body as well as a nation state are mostly defined by sovereignty based on integrity and impenetrability. Hence, the nation is a phallic concept (ibid.), whereas homophobia and xenophobia are internally connected to each other. During the interviews, the beforementioned values manifested in repetitive emphasises surrounding the concept of ‘family’, i.e. heteronormative nuclear unit in biological relation to each other. As McClintock (1997: 91) noted, the family trope is an important part of nationalism in organising national history (‘national time’) and depicting social hierarchy as “natural” and “familial”. The

interviewees perceived their own or someone else's changes in the amount of EDL activism in connection to the family. They would forecast a decrease in future activism in the EDL structures when they as members would have a family because according to them, they would then spend their weekends with their family (Siim).

On the contrary, in case of already existing families, Ülo noted a member pattern of an increased EDL activism as a getaway for "*middle-aged men from their wives and children*". The heteronormative articulation of what a family can (only) be corresponds here to the homophobic essence of nationalism, pointed out by Higate (2003: 27, 29) and Woodward (2003: 44). Gay men are framed as 'feminine' Others and left out of consideration as 'abnormalities'. So, the EDL family-centeredness seems to be declarative, yet important part of the self-representation because it helps to draw attention away from what Margus conceptualized as the "philosophy of bullets" – "*If I have to die, give away my life, then I will take with me as many enemies as I possibly can*" (Margus). The trope of death for one's state is an internal part of the military masculinism, since "*dying for your country (is) posited as the highest ethical duty of men – soldiers*" (Sikora 2004: 69). I'd conclude that there is a common trope of family and "self-evident" heteronormativity in circulation which serves the self-representation of the EDL.

Theories regarding militarism are applicable in helping to unpack the particular paramilitary case because the EDL roots in and practices military activities. According to George Mosse (1993: 16), manly youth is seen as an essential part of an image of a warrior, fighting against the enemies of his nation, with the land and nation feminized as 'in need of manly protection' (see: Sikora 2004: 67). Being young and fit has been linked with nature through doing sports in the outdoor settings amidst a scenic landscape – while at the same time politically

connecting those meanings with nationality, citizenship and statehood (Cupers 2008: 174). Those images are closely related with the highly prestigious body politics of corporeal transformation through limitations (Carrigan & Connell & Lee 2002: 115, Dyer 2002: 264, Foucault 1977: 135, Parker 2000: 131-132). Military training involves both physical and social shaping of the male body (Hooper 2001: 82). In the case of the interviews, the beforementioned 'manly ideals' manifested in visual check of the candidate bodies as a recruiting practice. As Mihkel put it, those who aren't visibly longlasting, strong and sportive enough, will not get chose to certain units.

Paramilitary novice recruitment can be explained with its membership publicly represented as a seedbed of 'national manhood'. Hence, young men with weapons in their hands inform the concept of nationalism. Novice recruitment is vouched also by easy access to young men through school visits and patriotic education, provided by teachers, youth workers, etc. Recruitment of boys and young men seems to be worn by motivation to start with the ideological fosterage as early as possible, so to guarantee a lifelong commitment. The latter can be achieved with the paramilitary tightly connecting meaningful male social circles, acting as a labour market and providing many other hidden advantages.

“/---/ these are personal contacts, as well as work-related contacts. /---/ I am an entrepreneur and this idea was offered to me by my subservient, that we could do this together“ (Indrek).

“Oh, you are our guy, I remember you, you are this bro, do come by, let's fix your issue“ (Mihkel).

It is remarkable that the EDL activities were represented by the interviewees as a compatible test towards any person's professional capabilities and human worth, as if

survival in nature and ability to use weapons in certain environment would be enough for this. For instance, as Margus put it:

“An entrepreneur or a person in a leading position can find very good cooperation partners from there (the EDL) /---/ because he is out together with these men. He can see their commitment, their capacities. /---/, how they bear up to the stress, how resourceful they are. /---/ that’s the place where you can find someone to do something for you. /---/ One’s very core essence uncovers itself there.”

In this quote, the Christian idea of the EDL membership as a purge starts to unwrap. The EDLers see themselves as better, more valuable and purified persons, full-breed persons, the ‘right-minded’, loyal, and trustworthy. This patriotic race spirituality sacralizes use of weapons, taking care of the accompanying Christian spirituality. For instance, the EDL attributes in ceremonialized settings, in giving oaths, and in maintaining spiritual tone when talking about war tactics, seem to be all religious. In the past, the military has operated in close cooperation with Christian church in justifying and glorification wars with Christian blood sacrifice, equating death in battle with nobility, saintliness and fighting with evil forces (Hagemann 2004: 123, Kovitz 2003: 7, as cited in Ferrill 1985). The ‘national warrior’ voluntarily chose to sacrifice himself and his death is nationally commemorized as that of a “fallen hero“ (Hagemann 2004: 121). Hence, the nationalism needs heroes and discourse of voluntarism.

Paramilitarism is seen as a life experience (*“an EDLer is in better touch with the world than the Army soldier“*) and human development; teaching one “basic life truths“, hence, every Estonian should be contributing to EDL (Ülo, Mihkel, Siim, Indrek). According to ‘masculine (‘real men‘) imperative’, the survival of a whole team of men depends upon mutual support and cooperation, as one protects one’s peers in all situations, including at the cost of

considerable sacrifice to oneself (Hockey 2003: 18-19). The EDL aims to make sure that all necessary circumstances are provided for the young men never to wish to voluntarily leave the organization. As a result, loss of membership could possibly not only mean losing symbolic capital, such as social ties, but also losing a gendered self-identity (Cooke & Woollacott 1993: 239). The latter can be explained with equating the question of masculinity to one's ability to win a battle and to use physical force (ibid., 236-237). This is why war is publicly seen to be "naturally" male, as the clearest expression of men's "natural aggression", whereas manliness is seen as 'warlike', motivated by "manly urge" to serve one's country and to "protect" their female kin (Cooke & Woollacott 1993: 110, Hooper 2001: 81, as cited in Tickner 1996). Discourses of national security and warfare have strong gendered essence, as the assaulter, the just warrior and the conquering hero are all marked as 'masculine' (Cooke & Woollacott 1993: 111, 238, Kovitz 2003: 3). Military service is seen as an educational practice (Altinay 2004: 70) and correspondingly, the EDL represents itself as a natural component of education and male development, viewed necessary in a person's path of becoming a "real man" and staying one, as it aims for life-long commitment.

Alongside with the politics of masculinity, the politics of femininity seem to be hindered, reduced, or carrying double-standards. On the one hand, women are expected to be home with the children when the 'guys are in the forest' with explicit gendered use of language remarkably common during the interviews. This corresponds to the parallel used by T. Sikora (2004: 67-68) connecting 'Him' with nation and 'Her' with land, when referring to the masculine imperative of protecting the feminine (land)⁸. Men are seen as fathers⁹ and guardians of the nation, whereas women as mothers of soldiers, defined by their capacity to

⁸ In Estonian language, term 'fatherland' is used.

⁹ In Estonian language, 'fore-fathers' is a term used more often than 'fore-mothers'. Furthermore, 'fore-fathers' is associated with respectable historical legacy, i.e. '*wisdom of the fore-fathers*'; '*already our fore-fathers knew that...*', etc.

give birth to sons (Ibid., 68). During the interviews, feminine gender ideals were expressed: “(An ideal woman is) *able to cook, disciplined, not indolent nor let slip, does sports*” (Mihkel). For the paramilitary type of nation-making (Sikora 2004: 68), the feminine is important in terms of keeping the birth-rate high for future membership but this feminine also has to meet high standards to “keep up with the masculine ideals” to build a new, more combative class/race.

In general, for few times during the seven interviews, the term “men *and* women” occurred in the speech when the EDLers were mentioned (Margus, Siim, Mihkel), as opposed to referring to EDLers as “guys” (male)¹⁰. However, this verbal performance of gender equality could be read as an arbitrary fascade of political correctness, still appearing within the discourse of masculinism. Less explicitly engendered us of language from the side of the interviewee was often an outcome of the interviewee having some previous media experience and used more cautious articulations. The overall tone of speaking about the EDLers remained broadly male-centered, with boyhood outdoor games and activities (Mihkel, Indrek, Ülo) and watching movies about respected nobility and decorous, prestigious chivalrous duells (Peeter) named as one of the reasons of joining the organisation. The Othering and opposing – of ‘weak’ men, ‘wrong’ ideology – was framed in gendered terms, suggesting gender binaries, such as strenght and wilderness vs. helplessness and weakness.

The interviewees’ relation towards media reminded of talking about the Eastern Enemy in the discourses used – “*We are not understood*“, they harrass us, they attack us, etc. Besides the criticism towards the ‘wrong-minded’ and the media, other instances inside Estonia which

¹⁰ Since Estonian nouns and pronouns do not have grammatical gender, then gendered distinctions cannot be explained with automatic unconsciousness. One has to put explicit extra effort in emphasizing a specific gender, such as pointing out that “women went“, instead of saying “they went“. Nevertheless, emphasizing the gender is atypical and can be read as explicitly exclusionary.

would affect the EDL were rarely, if at all, discussed upon. However, some interviewees pointed out structural problems and obstacles within the EDL. One of these issues was the fact that there is a difference in structure depending on whether it's a 'peace time' or a 'war time' period. For instance, the EDLers' training follows the 'war time' structure and creates confusion because other structures follow the 'peace time' logic. Other obstacles mentioned were low wages (Indrek, Mihkel), overloaded employees (Siim, Mihkel, Peeter), and need for 'fresh blood' and 'younger' thinking in the leading body of the EDL (Mihkel). Internal competition for better combatants was not mentioned as a problem but seen as motivational and 'natural', instead, whereas unregular attendance of the EDLers was represented as highly problematic (Peeter, Tarmo, Ülo).

2.3 Summary

During the interviews three main themes of self-representation occurred: the antagonist – discourse of the Eastern Enemy appeared when legitimizing the need for EDL –, the oath (credo) – engendered discourse of sacrality was used when identifying and positioning the EDLers; emerged discourse of creation of a new kind of “biocomplete” humankind aka conditional class improvement theory –, and structure of the brotherhood – occurred discourse of the secret order when unpacking recruitment procedure and membership motivation. The main reasons of joining the EDL consisted of acquiring social capital. Membership was seen mostly as life-long, with main motivations being the benefits of the male bond and recreational activities.

3. DECLARING STATELESS MASCULINISM IN THE CONTEXT OF MILITIA

In the previous chapter I proved that the EDL presents itself as a military, emphasising on readiness for a battle, sacrality and brotherhood. In this chapter I will look at the context where certain visual material has been chosen and situated by the EDL in order to understand its self-representation. I will argue that The EDL seems to be trying to represent itself as a true patriotic force who identifies the Enemy to be behind the Eastern border. As a conclusion, I will point out that the this representation is more recreational and political, rather than carried by a death drive or blind faith.

3.1 Analysis of prefaces

In the Estonian context, it makes sense to read the prefaces since as a genre, the prefaces are heavy of ideology. I looked at the prefaces in order to acquire additional information about the construction of masculinities and statehood. Book 1 is defined as a “photo recollection” and consists of two forewords: the first addressed towards the reader, and the latter to the EDLers and bearing a caption of a cliché phrase: *“A picture says more than a thousand words”* (Jürjo 2010: 4-5). Similarly, the foreword of Book 2 bears a leading quote: *“Flashback to the past confirms our faith into the future”* (Jürjo 2008: 5) which can be read as a poetical paraphrase of *“One that does not remember the past, lives without the future”* by locally well-known Estonian patriotist poet Juhan Liiv (1864-1913). The latter phrase seems to be one of the all-time-favourites of various Estonian state institutions in their projects of legitimizing the need for exposing, and possibly also maintaining discourses of historical militarism. An important aspect about this paraphrase is its explicit implication towards the

need for “having faith in“, and “confirmation of believes“, underlining the spiritual and sacral connectedness of use of weapons, as argued earlier in this thesis. The preferred way of self-presentation the EDL seems to be carried by sententious declarations. Weapons and (para)militarism is being packaged into discourses of fatherland and morality, therefore emphasizing on the ‘internal beauty and nobility’, as well as rightfulness of the institutional agenda.

The foreword of Book 2 highlights its relationship to memory work declaring that one has to look at the past to find guidance and examples there: “*We have inherited from our founding fathers an organisational model that suits to nowadays enviably well*“ (ibid.). The discourse of the “free will of citizens“, the favourite of the EDL, is rose in the preface, linking the volunteering and looking at the past with the German traditions of paramilitary exposed earlier by K. Hagemann (2004: 125). The philosophical rootings and values that the EDL stands upon are defined in the preface to be traditionalist family values, male-centeredness and patriotism. Those values are stated to be “strong“, and “*promising for achieving peaceful, and well-balanced development*“ (ibid.), as opposed to uneasy, weak and unbalanced development. Hence, the The EDL represents itself as a flagship of a retrograde value system which makes it difficult, if not impossible, for it to move towards “openness“ (ibid) and contemporaneousness which it also simultaneously aims to achieve as an institution.

In addition, it is stated that “*One who hopes to find an extrapolative study in this book, will be dissatisfied. In those overviews, documents, and human memory are mixed /---/ into protocol of restoration*“ (ibid). This is contradicting the previous declaration of values, or denying that heteronormative family-values are ideological, at all. Furthermore, the preface seems to suggest the book to be “neutral“ and “objective“, as if documentary photography would be

somehow “value-free“ (Howells, 58), not authored by certain persons from their own subjective perspectives and not led by ideological frameworks. I’d conclude that the EDL is concerned about its self-representation and perceives the need to convince that it is not engaging in carefully chosen facets.

The introductory chapter texts of Book 1 regarding Kalev unit is heavily engaged in memory work, drawing explicit parallels between post-WWI era and current day events. The discourse of historical continuity is maintained through indications that the perceived Enemy figure hasn’t changed throughout the time (ibid., 81). The connection with the Bronze memorial is established, suggesting connection between the presumable historical deeds of Communists as the predecessors of the modern rebels of the Unrest (ibid.). The April Unrest is portrayed solely as a foreign aggression and connected with the Eastern Peril figure which has ideologically been carried by Communism throughout the century and with Kremlin continuing the same kind of foreign politics, nowadays (ibid.). Finally, it is declared that like a century ago, the units of the EDL are prepared to go to war against Communism. The process of relegating the April riots comes to be a sufficient reaction on its own, whereas the events come to be utilized as a ‘war toy’ in the representation of outstanding accomplishments of the EDL.

The discourse of historical continuity also gets to be emphasized through a metaphor of “*going back to one’s roots*“ (ibid., 157). In general, there is no reference towards any consciousness regarding gendered composition of the EDL subunits. Gender category, as well as all other social categories remain to be invisible and unnoticed. For instance, the changes in numbers of female members of the unit are not indicated.

3.2 Visual analysis of chapter illustrations

Visual content analysis revealed that most of the photos displayed rituality in male-centered surroundings. This is relevant to the theoretical work indicating that the nationalism is built on an exclusionary memory work which mourns its “lost warriors“ (Hagemann 2004: 121, Novick 1999: 3-4, as cited in Wertsch 2008: 145). There were some differences between the pair of books, since Book 2 seemed to have been guided by much more traditionalist gender roles and striking masculinism. Then again, the illustration material of Book 1 consisted mostly of newer photographs than in the other case. Important distinguishable discourses contain that of Christianity (spiritual settings) and masculinist posing with weapons. Photostreams from the early nineties can be characterised by indistinguishably normative macho posings which could be paralleled with old wartime captures. More recent captures reveal variegated menu of masculinities with an emphasis of fun and entertainment: one can witness fooling around in posings adequate to Safari tourists or Hollywood movie rambos.



Illustration 1.

The group photo (Illustration 1) of 17 men and one woman posing in the snow with the Estonian Border Guard Air Corps helicopter and a winter forest on the background will be briefly analysed here as an example of the EDL representing a variegated menu of masculinities. The lining of the EDLers in the photo consists of twelve standing men in the

back, five men on their knee in the front and the woman situated in the middle of the parallel lines of men, leaning on the men in front of her, engaged in emotional work. Another person smiling as broadly as she is is wearing a skullcap and bringing into focus his palms which are held in a praying manner according to Islam. It remains to be unclear if this demonstration should be read as an innocent posing or as a political performance. However, he does not appear to be the only person carrying a weapon and joking at the same time. Next to the praying man, there is a man with a tough guise, wearing black sunglasses and having positioned his gun onto his right shoulder upright position in a James-Bond-like manner. The people closely surrounding the before mentioned characters seem to be approving and smirking along.



Illustration 2.

Rigid gender order in terms of labor segregation, and distinctions based on biological sex, appear equally in the photostreams of the two publications. For instance, out of 41 photos in the Kalev unit photostream, only one is taken of a group (pair) of women whose full names are brought out in the caption. In at least four cases, the biological sex of people in the photos cannot be estimated due to distance. Women are photographed altogether in at least twelve of the photos but their membership in the organisation is not always clear. A photo located on the last page of the photostream (Illustration 2) is consisting of three people: either side of the

elderly man there is a blonde festively dressed younger woman without uniforms. The names of either of the women are not brought out, unlike that of the man's, with their whole presence remaining to be unnoticed in the caption, as if they would be mere decorations in the photo.

So, a closer gaze to contemporary captures reveals the key motivation factor to be emotional stimulation from access to weapons and adventurous settings. Regarding politics of nation-building, to leave aside the verbal representation as in the prefaces, a contradicting discourse arises from the visual. One cannot find distinguishable symbolics representing Estonian statehood such as a country flag. Instead, the illustrations could easily be mistaken to be located globally anywhere the military (*sic!*) operates. The EDL self-representation outlines an organisation heavy under its garment of nationalist memory work, such as parading, ritual attributes of Christianity, traditional events, etc. Nevertheless, the items chosen for the publications indicate also recreational preferences and benefits of a belonging to a certain clique which is tied together through blood-relation, friendship or marriage. This all has to do more about fun and less about self-denying patriotic duty.

3.3 Summary

The EDL seems to be trying to represent itself as a patriotic, traditional, continuous organisation and to mediate this message has chosen a display of photos to establish projects of "truth", and "documentation". In these publications, the EDLer is first and foremost defined as a patriotic male, whereas the institutional nationalist project can be characterized with dense use of spiritual epithets to legitimize use of weapons. Moreover, there seems to be only one "right" way to interpret history and in this discourse, the Enemy is located beneath the

Eastern borders. However, the visual input can be considered to be contradicting in terms of the desirable representation to be achieved. The visuality tells a story about recreational gatherings and social connections, not (only) the kind of a serious nationalist project maintained in words. One finds a variegated menu of masculinities with an emphasis of entertainment and few distinguishable symbolics representing Estonian statehood, such as a country flag. However, rigid gender order and male domination appear equally in the photostreams as well as in the forewords.

4. DIGITAL STATEMENT ON THE MAKING

In the previous chapter I proved that the EDL self-representation is as a mixture of an armed nationalist project and outdoors group entertainment. Moreover, there were little reminding one of particularly Estonian (para)militarism. In this chapter, I'm analysing the digital archives of the EDL, arguing that it's culture of remembrance aims to be national-masculinist. However, the digitality is underdeveloped and used as just another chat room or as a form without content. As a conclusion, I will point out that although nationalist militarized masculinities are repetitively displayed in the EDL digital archives carried by the aim to attract future membership of civil warriors, there is little youth work to be seen online.

4.1 Content analysis of the digital archives

The digital archives of the Museum of the The EDL are located in the Estonian homepage of the Estonian Defence The EDL, whereas the English version allows no archive access. There is no Russian version. The archives unfold themselves as a monoracial, monoethnic project. Digital literacy and a proficient cultural command of the e-visitor is expected by default. There are no guidelines available regarding how to use the archives, to whom the archives are targeted to, nor about the digitally accessible features. The museum visitor's information in the homepage of the The EDL appears to be incomplete. Furthermore, some special requirements of visiting both the digital archives as well as its physical counterpart appear to be present, such as no fee, yet an excellent command of Estonian, accompanied with profound knowledge about the public discourses regarding the Estonian history.

The Museum appears to be the museologue Lään's private project, with a previous appointment made with him expected when one wished to visit the physical equivalent of the Museum located in Toompea. There seems to be no user feedback form. The digital archives are linearly systematized, compiled from exhibitions dating from 2007 till 2014. After clicking one year in the selection menu, the list of titles of all the exhibitions that were held that year appears. The introduction texts vary greatly in their length.. The archives tend to be compiled episodically, without a clear consciousness of nor much care about their potential use. With this in mind, I can argue that the digital archives give the impression of a project at its very start.

4.1.1 Nationalist ideology appearing in museum exhibitions

Joane Nagel (1998: 244, 247) argued that nationalist ideology is based on masculinized memory, and a move of 'othering', i.e. standing against an undetermined, threatful, and unpredictable Enemy figure. This can be seen as echoing from the male compiler's (Lään's) gaze to the history of the The EDL where all the person exhibitions are devoted to the anniversaries of noteworthy male figures (general-major Põdder, general Laidoner, colonel Balder, and admiral Pitka), telling a story from the male point of view. The exhibitions of personal anniversaries have an extra web feature available which enables the e-visitor to view complete list of the exhibit pieces, including full texts used in the exhibition, compiled together in a separate Word file. The online display of the list of artefacts and texts is unclear and arbitrary, with no explanation about how to understand or read it. It seems as if a working file for the use of the museologue himself has been uploaded for public biew, without any adaptations made. From what it seems, one can make sense of the lists file only after paying a visit to the non-digital exhibition settings in Toompea.

In the case of the anniversary exhibitions of specific historical figures, there are some crucial gender-related points connected with the compilation choices of the digital archives to analyse. I will base the following analysis on the year 2014 two exhibitions held in the Museum, accessible through texts in web – that of general Laidoner, and that of general-major Põdder. The most noteworthy issue about the EDL is its prevalently masculine memory work: the subject, story-teller, perpetuator, target are all male. The Defence The EDL of 1925-1940 was a male-only organisation, with a separate branch of suborganisation for female 'supporters'. Female voice is omitted and women's experiences are left out of the memory construction or engaged in service of the masculinist nationalist project as side-figures. Sexual material is left out, tacit, and muted. There is no portrayal of atrocity.

Nationalist ideology is constituted in Laidoner's citations via 'Us' and 'Them' dichotomy where the unpredictable Other (the dangerous neighboring state) is the Enemy which shall be defeated by the communal 'Us'. Similiar discourse can be found in the excerpt of a speech by general-major Põdder, setting martyrism into the pedestal. In the case of Põdder, his excellent character and looks matching his militarized masculinity is described in homoerotic terms by a noteworthy (male) writer Karl A. Hindray: *"high shoulders, /---/ cavalier's stiff stride, obstinate frizzly-like bristle, moustache, /---/ on the first encounter he seemed to be gloomy, gravely serious, and rough. /---/ (yet,) there was even no need to be a good judge of human nature to find him to be a warmhearted person /---/"* (ibid.).

The distinction between private and public establishes the gender order. The character of Laidoner is represented through the character of his wife Maria Laidoner, as a 'masculine ideal' of the time. Maria Laidoner's professional interests and public activities receive no attention whatsoever. Instead, she is represented as the love object and mourning widower of

the general Laidoner – as the Mrs. Johan Laidoner. She is the tool to assure his undying personal cult as the perfect leader. An excerpt from a love letter from “Vanja” (Johan) to “Masha” (Maria) is included to the exhibition with the aim to indicate general Laidoner not only as a meritorious statesman, skilled fighter and honorary doctor of several scientific organisations but also as a tender lover, neatly matching the previously stated theoretical findings regarding the composition of work in the nuclear family unit where everybody and everything is aimed for improving the father’s (military) career.

4.1.2 Militarized masculinities constructed via social media channels

The official Youtube channel of the The EDL carrying the slogan “For Fatherland” in its address link seems to be a relatively new asset to the EDL’s digital archives. The name of the Youtube channel refers word-by-word to centuries old German model of patriotic valorous masculinity which was constructed upon linking central masculine virtues and ambitions to interests of the Prussian state and the German nation through trinity of family, home and fatherland (Hagemann 2004: 124). According to Karen Hagemann (ibid., 125) citizenship was connected to ‘valour’ through a model of a national warriorism which constitutes the very basis of paramilitary – “*voluntary military service as a form of masculine self-realisation and a rite of initiation into manhood*” (ibid.). The paramilitary was, and in the Estonian case still seems to be, constructed upon a romantic image of a young male hero fighting for his fatherland and prepared for a voluntary blood sacrifice, whereas participation in the post-war ‘fraternal community’ secures his privileges (ibid.). In large, these discourses¹¹ seem to directly correspond to the EDL legacy.

¹¹ Historically, Estonian territories were governed by the German nobility for centuries since early Middle Ages. The last German occupation took place during the WWII. As an example of memory work, many Estonians see the Nazi occupation as ‘civilized’ and warmly waited, whereas the Soviet Union was seen as a brutal occupier.

The EDL Youtube page consists of nine videos, oldest of them uploaded in October 2013, mostly with the length of about two minutes. There is no introductory text opening the aim of the Youtube page, its target group nor selection of the public videos. The only reference guides the visitor to the homepage of the EDL. The headings of the videos are only in Estonian, with no subtitles. The selection of videos appears to be representing ceremonies and traditional paramilitary events, i.e. camps and exercises, matching the importance of the nationalist memory work of the EDL. The compilation of the Youtube channel seems to be unsystematical, ranging from a movie consisting of professional photographs to the Christmas greeting of the head of the EDL. The principle of compilation of the published video catalogue seems to be rather more like uploading every footage that the EDL has about itself that would meet the goals of self-representation.

Almost all the Youtube videos appear to be male-centered, filmed from a masculine point of view, with an exception of a single video filmed in April 2014 where a significant amount of attention and time is given to young women, including women who did not speak Estonian as their first language. This is differing from the rest of the videos where men are portrayed, engaged in group activities in adventurous settings, using weapons and explosives or giving speeches as leaders. Women, if they are part of the moving images at all (since female presence seems to be lacking in half of the videos) are portrayed either as decoratives, smiling to the camera or as engaged in traditionally 'feminine' activities, i.e. giving first-aid, cooking, etc. So, the EDL appears to be lately trying to make certain 'corrections' in its self-representation. On the other hand, the archives articulate a continuous dismissal of middle-aged and older women and any kind of diversity of femininities.

In addition, there is one a 11 min promotion video named 'the EDL' produced by Fucs Studio (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ShipQNz4a-Q>) which one of the interviewees suggested me to watch as 'excellent' due to extensive use of weapons. Interestingly, the latter video is not included in the official Youtube videostream channel of the EDL. This is probably due to its extremely noisy and violent content in terms of explosions and constant shooting from various weapons, accompanied by hard rock music. It seems that this video does not match the representational aims of the organisation, though it seemed to have been a widely popular amongst the male members. Without a reference from the side of an EDLer, I wouldn't have found the video. This could be read as a telling fact regarding the quasy-secrecy of the EDL.

The photostream appearing on the Facebook page of the magazine "*Defend (Your) Home!*" seems to be mostly dedicated to portraying male members in militarized settings, with an exception of the Prize of the Person of the Year where laureates are both female and male. The characterizing texts tend to describe female laureates as "dutiful", whereas male laureates are described using adjectives such as "firm". Majority of the female laureates are engaged in traditionalist areas such as catering, first-aid, youth work, etc. The photos taken of women tend to be highlighting beauty not paramilitary activities, with some exceptions. The Events section consists of public meetings of the editorial staff of the magazine. The posts seem to be substantially connected with magazine texts, photostream of events, or calls / notifications. The section for user-generated material is irrelevant.

User-generated material is irrelevant also in the case of the nominal Facebook page of the EDL. Similiarlily to the page of the magazine "*Defend (Your) Home!*", all the posts are from the institutionalised side, carrying an official logo as the profile picture. The Events seem to represent public ceremonies, concerts, and parades. This appears to be the news channel and

media coverage of the organisation. The photostream illustrates the events, with the gendered division a bit more democratical and balanced than that of the magazine. There are also numerous Facebook groups, for example the closed group of the students, alumnae, and professors of the School of the EDL with approximately 1,000 members and three administrators (one woman, two men), and majority of the (official) posts made by women; open nominal group the EDL with approximately 2100 members and eight administrators (one woman, seven men), with majority of the posts made by men – a very active, highly male-centered discussion group; groups of malevs; and many smaller, specific closed groups, i.e. Tallinn unit page solely for members, military market group, groups for orchestras, female ice-hockey team, etc. The largest of the groups seem to be part of the institutionally approved *unofficial* self-representation of the EDL, as a significant part of the initiating and administrating members appear to be professionally connected with the EDL.

4.2 Summary

As a summary, I'd argue that the digital archives of the EDL seem to be compiled with the principle of establishing mononational-masculinist memory politics. The archives of the Museum tend to be constructed episodically, without a clear agenda aimed at the target group. The online format of the EDL's self-presentation appears to be at its early beginning. There is a lack of guidelines for users, and some of the material published seems unfit for public access. The archives represent the male point of view of paramilitary history and serve the masculinist discourse. Men are portrayed in adventurous settings, engaged in group exercises and handling weapons and explosives. Women are underrepresented, their stories neglected or displayed through traditionalist model of private-public sphere. On the other hand, there appears to be minor changes in the representation of the EDL's digitality regarding gender

dynamics. The case of the “hidden“ video mentioned earlier highlights the secret society of the EDL.

5. CONCLUSION

The purpose of conducting this thesis was to research gender and nation building in the self-presentation of the Estonian paramilitary organisation called the Estonian Defence League (the EDL). This thesis is of importance both due to the lack of previous critical inquiry regarding the self-representation of the EDL and also in terms of the increasing importance of this particular field of feminist research. My thesis contributes to the field of analysing militias with an example of a pro-state militia carrying a historical legacy rooting in racism, homophobia, patriarchy and misogyny. This militia aims to be the better type of military, more trustworthy, carried by a different kind of value system.

However, there were some important contradictions in the self-representation of the EDL. The self-presentation seemed to be rooted in a wish to be viewed as a patriotic flagship of fine voluntary soldiers. Volunteering (“free will/choice“) is represented as the strongest asset of the EDL and as a loyalty guarantee that the members are ready to die for the state in a physical battle. However, the discourses used by the interviewees suggested that the reasons for joining the EDL lie in acquiring social capital (closer to achieving manly ideals, fame, ‘my friends are there’, etc), whereas the motivation for remaining to be a member consisted of variations of weekend hobby-warriorism (homosociality in a sect-like society) and enjoying professional benefits (career pool). The analysis of the photostreams further suggested the EDL being ritually connected less with nationhood and more with declarative spirituality. When adding here problems with regular member attendance, as it came out in the interviews, then this does not necessary give reason to believe in the unhesitating readiness of the EDLer to die for the state. Though, preparation for a war right away to start was present in some of the verbal accounts. Yet, when the state suggested in the Agenda to increase the EDL role and

set the membership goal to 30,000 in a decade, then EDLers were the first to oppose, declaring that the organisation is not ready. That could also be read as a sign that the EDL wishes to further move away from the small amount of state control it still has.

When the interviewees revealed some foundations of an extremist ideology of creating a new and better social class, or, improving the genetic baggage of the Estonian nation to be more combative, then the youth work and digital activity does not correspond to this ideology of eugenics. One does not see EDLers actively recruiting in front of school and kindergartens, nor conducting large-scale youth campaigns. The digitality is under-developed and resources are not used. The Facebook groups are used by middle-aged members as conservatist ideological panel and by the EDL in spread information about coming events. This gives reason to believe that the current self-representation of the EDL reminds rather more that of a political club (though actively declaring its apoliticity) with a well-financed recreational programme, rather than the Far Right extremists taking over the state the very next day. However, this can change depending on military-political circumstances in the wider region. The EDL has both the means and the agenda for unexpected mobilisations and with its nationalist and stagnant ideological rootings, remains to be ideologically easily manipulated, hence, a dangerous armed force.

As for the possible further research, the EDL is on a major scale underresearched using critical social theories. Possible future research directions include looking at historical footages and critical linkages between the legacy of the past and use of those narratives today. This research could base on a comparative analysis of the EDL magazines, movies and documents. The EDL is one of the most widely filmed organisation when it comes to old footages from the 1930s. In addition, there are many documents to further research upon in

order to look at the ideological continuity with the 1920s and 1930s movies and other sources of propaganda. One could research how militarized masculinities are visualized, or focus on shifts regarding the representation of women. Even further, gender in Estonian national security discourse could be researched upon.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix 1. List of interviews and questionnaire

Name (changed)	Age	Occupation	Age when recruited to EDL structures
Ülo	Twenties	Private sector	15
Indrek	Twenties	Entrepreneur	14
Margus	Forties	Entrepreneur	24
Mihkel	Twenties	Entrepreneur	12-13
Peeter	Thirties	Public sector	21
Siim	Twenties	Entrepreneur	23
Tarmo	Twenties	Public sector	20

Tabel 1. Sampling interviewees according to snowball sample method.

Interview questionnaire.

- 1) Please describe how you first got to know about EDL?
- 2) Please describe when and why you decided to join EDL?
- 3) Please describe your first impressions of EDL?
- 4) Please describe your current role in EDL?
- 5) Please describe what is important for you about EDL?
- 6) Please describe what have you learnt while being a member?
- 7) Please describe how has EDL affected your life?

- 8) Please describe which role have social ties established in EDL played in your later life?
- 9) Please describe your motivation (reasons) for continuing your membership?
- 10) Please describe the importance of EDL to Estonian society?

Appendix 2. List of illustrations

1) Illustration 1.

<http://ajalugu.the>

[EDL.ee/gallery3/var/resizes/06_Kalevi_malevkond/33_Piirivalvekooli%206ppus%20123.jpg?m=1382009514](http://ajalugu.theEDL.ee/gallery3/var/resizes/06_Kalevi_malevkond/33_Piirivalvekooli%206ppus%20123.jpg?m=1382009514)

2) Illustration 2.

<http://ajalugu.the>

[EDL.ee/gallery3/var/resizes/06_Kalevi_malevkond/37_IMG_0993.jpg?m=1382009514](http://ajalugu.theEDL.ee/gallery3/var/resizes/06_Kalevi_malevkond/37_IMG_0993.jpg?m=1382009514)

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