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Russia's War in Ukraine: Implications for the Politics of History in Central and Eastern Europe

Edited by
Hanna Bazhenova

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Summary

Since the fall of communism, Central and Eastern Europe has become a battleground for a range of interpretations of the past, often resulting in conflicts and memory wars within and between states. In the case of the Russian Federation, history has been transformed from a tool for political manipulation into a basis for expansion and full-scale aggression.

The ideological construct of "Ukrainian Nazism" is based on stereotypes of the Soviet period. It involves blending the past with the present and intensely imitating anxiety about the threat of Nazism from Ukraine to Russia. Through the conflation of the Ukrainian nationalist movement of World War II and contemporary Ukrainian nationalists and neo-Nazis, Russian propaganda associates them with German Nazism, framing aggression in Ukraine as a continuation of the events of 1945.

In the context of information aggression using "historical arguments", Ukraine and other post-Soviet countries are forced to consider history and historical memory as a sphere of national security. Ukraine employs various methods to

protect its historical memory, including state control of history, securitisation, weaponisation, and the politics of decolonisation. However, these strategies preclude the possibility of reaching compromise and achieving peaceful co-existence with Russia.

An important part of Ukraine's politics of memory involves the reevaluation of the concept of the Great Victory. The ongoing military conflict has had a significant influence on the perception of World War II and all the markers associated with Russia. However, the role of the Day of Remembrance and Victory over Nazism in World War II of 1939–45 in Ukraine's cultural and memorial landscape will only be determined after the end of hostilities.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine also poses a challenge to the geopolitical strategies and cultures of remembrance of EU member states. Lithuania, along with a number of post-communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe, responded with the "third wave of de-Sovietisation of the public space". This wave did not spread to Germany, but the aggression led to the rethinking of Russia's place in Germany's culture of memory.

List of Abbreviations

KGB	Committee for State Security
LLS	Liberal Movement of Lithuania
LP	Party of Freedom
LŠS	Lithuanian Family Movement
MCIP	Ministry of Culture and Information Policy
OUN	Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists
OUN(b)	Bandera faction of the OUN
STI	Health Law Institute
TS-LKD	Homeland Union – Lithuanian Christian Democrats
UINM	Ukrainian Institute of National Memory
UPA	Ukrainian Insurgent Army
ВРУ	Верховна Рада України

Introduction

"Who controls the past controls the future:
Who controls the present controls the past."
George Orwell, Nineteen Eighty-four, London 1949.

The year 2022 was, above all, the year that returned full-scale war to Europe. Russia's invasion of Ukraine constituted the greatest threat to the continent's peace and security since the end of the Cold War and led to tectonic changes in the global geopolitical order. On 21 February 2022, Russian President Vladimir Putin, as justification for the "special military operation", stated that Ukraine "never had stable traditions of real statehood" and said the country was an integral part of Russia's "own history, culture, spiritual space". He also alleged that modern Ukraine was "entirely created by Russia", thus bringing the legitimacy of Ukrainian statehood and identity into question. Putin believes that the most powerful means to destroy people is to negate and eradicate their understanding of their history.

Since the collapse of communism in 1989–91, Central and Eastern Europe has become a battleground for diverse and often conflict-inducing interpretations of the past. Remembrance of 20th-century historical events varies widely across the region, occasionally leading to memory wars within states and between them. However, in the case of Russia, history has transformed from a tool for political manipulation into a basis for expansion and full-scale aggression. The main goal of this publication is to explore how the Russo-Ukrainian war has influenced the politics of history in Central and Eastern Europe and what challenges it poses for memory politics of this region.

In his chapter, Georgiy Kasianov focuses on both the deconstruction of the term "denazification" and the analysis of its use in Russian propaganda. The author argues that this term is intentionally amorphous and is employed primarily as an ideological stereotype to justify aggression. Its presence in the ideological field is due to the reliance of Putin's regime on restored Soviet narratives of "the Great Patriotic War" and "the Great Victory" which present the Ukrainian nationalist movement of the 1930s and 1950s as collaborators or, later, as a Cold War puppet of the West. By conflating the Ukrainian nationalist movement of World War II and contemporary Ukrainian nationalists and neo-Nazis, Russian propaganda associates them with German Nazism and presents the aggression in Ukraine as a continuation of the events of 1945.

The second chapter, written by Yurii Latysh, discusses the changes that have been taking place in Ukraine's politics of memory during the current war. The clash of two historical memory narratives – Russian imperial with Ukrainian

national – was a significant factor contributing to the Russian aggression of 24 February 2022. Russia manipulates history to justify this aggression and aims to destroy Ukrainian identity. Simultaneously, Ukraine employs various methods to protect its historical memory, including state control over history, securitisation, weaponisation, and the politics of decolonisation. However, the author concludes that such politics excludes the possibility of compromise and peaceful coexistence with Russia.

In the third chapter, Rasa Čepaitienė examines Lithuania's political situation after the October 2020 parliamentary elections through the prism of the Russo-Ukrainian war. She argues that the armed conflict provided an opportunity for the government of Ingrida Šimonytė and the ruling majority to attempt to improve their public image. It also served as a pretext to tighten public scrutiny and to suppress criticism of itself by labelling opponents and critics as "agents of the Kremlin" or "vatniks". The exaggerated and demonstrative forms of support for Ukraine displayed by the government and its advocates are interpreted in the broader context of its foreign policy. The author also discusses how elements of modern and contemporary Ukrainian and Lithuanian history are used in national politics of history.

In the fourth chapter, Przemysław Łukasik examines the impact of the ongoing war on German culture of memory. He demonstrates that Russian aggression against Ukraine not only affects the policy of the government in Berlin in the political and economic dimensions but also poses a challenge to its geopolitical strategy and the German culture of remembrance. The warfare becomes a catalyst for an intra-German debate in which the strategic position of the

Russian Federation is being redefined – shifting from a stabiliser to a superpower focused on revising the international order. This inevitably leads to the reanalysis of Russia's place in the German culture of memory.

The final, fifth, chapter, written by Hanna Bazhenova, studies the evolution of the image of the Great Victory in World War II in the public discourse of contemporary Ukraine by analysing the statements and activities of Ukraine's presidents on 8 and 9 May. The author illustrates in particular how the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian military conflict has influenced the perception of World War II and the markers associated with Russia. Hence, the themes explored in this publication not only facilitate the identification of connections between the past and present but also show how the present sets the conditions for future developments.

Hanna Bazhenova
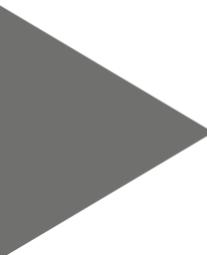
Georgiy Kasianov

"Denazification" and the Use of the Ukrainian Nationalist History Myth by Russia

"Denazification": the History of the Term

Announcing a "special military operation" in Ukraine in his 24 February 2022 address, Russian President Vladimir Putin said: "We will strive for the demilitarisation and denazification of Ukraine."[1] The trope of "denazification" is not based on a coherent narrative describing the object of alleged denazification. The general understanding (if it exists at all) of denazification as a specific process whose goals and objectives were never clearly formulated is based on a somewhat amorphous set of stereotypical formulas. These formulas are widely and actively used in the media, in speeches and statements by politicians, and in talk shows.

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[1]　Владимир Путин, "Обращение Президента Российской Федерации", *Президент России*, 24 February 2022, accessed 3 June 2023, http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67843.

Putin himself could not precisely explain the meaning of the term. He mentioned it on 5 March 2022, referring to certain Nazis in the Ukrainian government and the torch-light marches of those same Nazis in the country's streets[2]. The most comprehensive interpretation of the aims of "de-nazification" can be found in a scandalous article by Russian political technologist Timofey Sergeytsev, who also did not explain the essence of the term "Ukrainian Nazi". Perhaps the lack of a clear definition is part of a discursive strategy; maybe it is because the term "denazification" was a byproduct of the intensive use of chaotic propaganda templates arising from previous discursive practices associated with Russia's wars of memory against Ukraine in the 2000s (during Viktor Yushchenko's presidency).

Sergeytsev explicitly or implicitly outlined the aims of "denazification" as follows:

1) the destruction of "Nazi battalions", the Ukrainian Armed Forces, and territorial defence forces – all of which, he claimed, were complicit in the "genocide of the Russian people";
2) the lustration of Ukrainian authorities, purging them of "Nazis";
3) the prohibition of any organisations "associated with the practice of Nazism";
4) re-education of the population through "ideological repression" and harsh censorship[3].

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[2] "Путин раскрыл смысл денацификации на Украине", *Lenta.ru*, 5 March 2022, accessed 12 June 2023, https://lenta.ru/news/2022/03/05/putin_ukr/.

[3] Тимофей Сергейцев, "Что Россия должна сделать с Украиной", *РИА Новости*, 3 March 2022, accessed 3 March 2023, https://ria.ru/20220403/ukraina-1781469605.html.

It is hardly surprising that this set of measures would have been feasible only in the case of the Russian occupation of Ukraine.

Quite quickly, the term "denazification" became commonplace. Other related words remained in the active vocabulary: "Ukrofascists", "Ukronazis", "Nazis", "Nazi regime in Kyiv", and the like. They have practically become normalised and have reached the level of a cultural code. They do not lend themselves to reflection and are supposed to be consumed by the objects of propaganda as self-evident tropes.

The results of a poll conducted by the All-Russian Public Opinion Research Centre in April 2022 show how effectively these codes influence the consciousness of the general public. Of those surveyed, 88% of respondents believed that there are organisations in Ukraine professing the ideology of Nazism; 76% agreed that "Ukrainian Nazi organisations" threaten Russia; and 70% agreed that the Ukrainian government supports these organisations[4]. At the same time, in September 2022, only 17% of respondents indicated that the purpose of the "special military operation" was to change the political course of Ukraine and "cleanse it of the Nazis"[5].

In June 2023, Putin somewhat unexpectedly returned to the topic of "denazification" as an essential war goal at the international economic forum in St. Petersburg. The question-and-answer session that followed Putin's keynote

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[4] "Денацификация Украины", *ВЦИОМ новости*, 19 April 2022, accessed 12 June 2023, https://wciom.ru/analytical-reviews/analiticheskii-obzor/denacifikacija-ukrainy.

[5] "Специальная военная операция: полгода спустя", *ВЦИОМ новости*, 6 September 2022, accessed 12 May 2023, https://wciom.ru/analytical-reviews/analiticheskii-obzor/cpecialnaja-voennaja-operacija-polgoda-spustja.

speech, which was devoted to economic problems (the speech did not address the theme of the war against Ukraine at all), began with a question about "Ukrainian Nazism" (it is clear that the "moderator" questions were agreed in advance), after which Putin turned to this topic twice, in a more spontaneous manner.

Putin tied the question of "Ukrainian Nazis" (or "neo-Nazi scum", in his wording) to the problem of the West's fight against Russia. In his version, along with measures in energy trade, financial sanctions, and food supplies, the West uses "Ukrainian neo-Nazis" and the "Kyiv regime" as a military force. Speaking about the "special military operation" goals in Ukraine, he concluded: "We have every right to believe that the task we have set for the denazification of Ukraine is one of the key ones."[6]

To justify the necessity of this crucial task, Putin showed the audience a video about Nazi crimes during World War II that mentioned the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), which collaborated with the Nazis and whose members were involved in the extermination of Jews, the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) – here the Volhynia massacre was mentioned (the mass murder of the Polish civilian population in 1943), and the participation of Ukrainian auxiliary battalions in the destruction of civilians in Belarus.

In a broader sense, Putin identified modern "Ukrainian neo-Nazis" with the OUN and the UPA. Moreover, in his presentation, German Nazis and Ukrainian nationalists merged

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[6] "Пленарное заседание Петербургского международного экономического форума", *Президент России*, 16 June 2023, accessed 19 June 2023, http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/71445.

into one single phenomenon. Addressing the past, he did not mention the current trial of prisoners of war from the Azov regiment, traditionally presented in the Russian media as the primary "neo-Nazi" formation.

Instrumentalisation of Discourse

Considering the term "denazification" and the tropes and discourses associated with it, one can identify several options for their instrumentalisation.

The first and most obvious: they are used to mask the actual goals of the war. It is a propaganda fake. The logic of aggressive war justifies this approach; the topic of "denazification" practically evaporated six months after the start of the invasion, leaving, however, the already mentioned related standard, stereotypical formulations.

The second is also related to practical political goals: purposeful use of available objective information and historical facts to represent Ukraine as a country "occupied by the Nazis". This involves using the presence and activities of neo-Nazi and radical right groups in Ukraine, nationalist parties, and organisations with a history of collaboration with the Nazis or which once professed principles ideologically close or identical to the Nazis and fascists (for example, the OUN); the presence of representatives of these groups and parties in government institutions; and elements of historical policy, glorifying organisations which collaborated with the Nazis in the past.

In this case, we observe an intensive extrapolation of such information and facts, their exaggeration and hypertrophy, and their representation as a mainstream of political life. Any information that does not coincide with the thesis of

a country "occupied by the Nazis" is ignored. The most illustrative example is the report of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation dated 30 August 2022, which presents an extensive overview of practices characterised as glorification of Nazism and the spread of neo-Nazism[7]. The Ukrainian section of this report depicts Ukrainian political life as a feast of neo-Nazism. No discussions, public debates, or alternative opinions were ever mentioned.

The third option is related to a particular cultural and political tradition. It assumes that the bearers and promoters of discourses about "Ukrainian Nazism" sincerely believe in its existence as a systemic phenomenon that determines the political physiology of Ukraine. This is related to the ideological tradition of and a historical worldview rooted in the Soviet past and closely linked to the regeneration of the heroic myth of "the Great Patriotic War" and the cult of "the Great Victory" and its transformation into the systemic, central historical myth of modern Russia. The main element of this myth is the decisive role of the USSR in the victory over Nazism and the liberation of Europe from the Nazi yoke. Its essential component is the Soviet propaganda narrative about nationalist collaborators – in the case of Ukraine, the OUN and the UPA as "Nazi collaborators".

Immediately after the end of World War II, Soviet propaganda painted the OUN and the UPA as the worst enemies

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[7]   Министерство иностранных дел Российской Федерации, *О ситуации с героизацией нацизма, распространении неонацизма и других видов практики, которые способствуют эскалации современных форм расизма, расовой дискриминации, ксенофобии и связанной с ними нетерпимости (Доклад Министерства иностранных дел Российской Федерации 2022 г.)* (Москва 2022), accessed 19 June 2023, https://mid.ru/print/?id=1827824&lang=ru#Ukraine.

of the Ukrainian people and Nazi collaborators, using the terms "Ukrainian-German nationalists" and "Banderites" to refer to these worst enemies. At this time, the thesis emerged that the nationalist-Banderites were first collaborators and traitors and then, after the victory over Germany and during the Cold War period, mercenaries of Western special services and servants of capitalism.

Any facts or arguments contradicting the central thesis are prohibited. Simultaneously, the facts of cooperation of Ukrainian nationalists either with the Nazis (before and during World War II) or with Western secret services (after the war) are presented as their essential activity. The Committee for State Security (KGB) shaped this discourse along with active measures of combatting Ukrainian nationalist organisations in Ukraine and abroad. It cultivated these ideological stereotypes for decades until the collapse of the Soviet Union (as well as undertaking special operations against émigré Ukrainian nationalist organisations in the West), so it is not surprising that these tropes have seamlessly migrated into the rhetoric and worldview of ideologists and leaders in Russia, led by a former KGB colonel.

In this case, with the revival of Soviet ideological formulas about "the Great Victory", Soviet discourses about Ukrainian nationalist collaborators and mercenaries of the evil West have also returned. However, now they are modified. For example, the Soviet term "fascists" was first transformed into "Ukrofascists" and then into "Nazis", "neo-Nazis", and "Ukronazis". Perhaps this modification might be explained by the need for conducting information warfare in the West, where the term "Nazis" is more understandable and widespread.

History of the Casus Belli

The phenomenon to which Putin and Russian propaganda appeal, rehabilitation and glorification of the Ukrainian nationalist movement of the 1920s–1960s, represented primarily by the OUN, the UPA, and their offshoots, has a history of almost thirty years. The literature covers it well enough[8], so we will confine ourselves to brief remarks on its essence and form.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Ukrainian diaspora organisations (both factions of the OUN and veteran organisations of UPA combatants) imported into Ukraine the heroic myth they had created of the OUN and UPA as the most courageous and sacrificial fighters for Ukrainian independence. This myth naturally excluded any dark aspects of the activities of the Ukrainian nationalists, among them: collaboration in the "final solution of the Jewish question"; service in the auxiliary occupation police; military cooperation with the Nazis; mass killings of Polish civilians during the Volhynian massacre of 1943; murder of Ukrainian opponents of the nationalist movement, Soviet officials and their families; etc.

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[8]   Andre Liebich and Oksana Myshlovska, "Bandera: Memorialization and Commemoration", *Nationalities Papers* 42, no. 5 (2014): 750–70; Andreas Umland and Yuliya Yurchuk, "Introduction: The Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) in Post-Soviet Ukrainian Memory Politics, Public Debates, and Foreign Affairs", *Journal of Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society* 3, no. 2 (2017): 115–28; Yuliya Yurchuk, "Reclaiming the Past, Confronting the Past: OUN-UPA Memory Politics and Nation Building in Ukraine (1991–2016)", in *War and Memory in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus*, ed. Julie Fedor et al. (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017): 107–37; Oksana Myshlovska, "Establishing the 'Irrefutable Facts' about the OUN and UPA: The Role of the Working Group of Historians on OUN-UPA Activities in Mediating Memory-based Conflict in Ukraine", *Ab Imperio*, no. 1 (2018): 223–254; Georgiy Kasianov, "Nationalist Memory Narratives and the Politics of History in Ukraine since the 1990s", *Nationalities Papers* (2023): 1–20.

This myth was initially cultivated in Western Ukraine, mainly in Galicia. It received massive support from the local Ukrainian population. Here the communicative memory of the OUN and the UPA, and the Soviet repressions (state terror and deportations) associated with the suppression of the nationalist movement, was still alive.

In addition to the nationalists themselves, political forces of the national-democratic orientation contributed to the spread and assertion of this myth. They provided support on two ideological grounds: the recognition of Ukrainian independence and the fight against Soviet power and Communists. National Democrats did not officially share the xenophobic and totalitarian elements of the OUN ideology but, at the same time, tried to ignore the dark sides of their past. In the 1990s and 2000s, they also focused on the political and legal rehabilitation of the Ukrainian nationalists as victims of Soviet repression, recognising the UPA as combatants and fighters for independence, and equating veterans of nationalist formations with Soviet veterans.

During Victor Yushchenko's presidency, representatives of nationalist organisations – notably the Bandera faction of the OUN (OUN(b)) – joined the president's inner circle – for example, Stefan Romaniv, an Australian citizen and head of the OUN(b). The president's wife, Kateryna Yushchenko, was formerly an active member of the Union of Ukrainian Youth, a youth organisation of the OUN(b). Representatives of the "facade structures" of the OUN(b), such as the Lviv Liberation Movement Research Centre and the Youth Nationalist Congress, began their political careers under the protection of Yushchenko and his inner entourage. For

example, Volodymyr Viatrovych was appointed director of the archive department of the Security Service of Ukraine.

President Yushchenko became an active promoter of the heroic myth of the OUN and UPA at the state policy level. He conferred the title of Hero of Ukraine on Roman Shukhevych, his son Yuri Shukhevych, and Stepan Bandera. Under him, the glorification of other OUN leaders, such as Yaroslav and Yaroslava Stetsko, began.

Concurrently, Russia intensified its historical policy, both inside and outside the country. The basis of this policy, as already mentioned, was the myth of "the Great Victory" as the most outstanding achievement of Russia on the world arena. In this context, revising the history of World War II by glorifying the Ukrainian nationalist movement, which took place at the state level in Ukraine, was seen as a challenge to Russia. Similar processes in the Baltic states also caused conflicts with Moscow.

During the memory war initiated by Russia in 2007–10, state-controlled Russian media, Russian politicians, and Russian statespersons developed all the fundamental discourses and formulas describing Ukraine as a reserve of caveman nationalism.

In 2014, Russia used these formulas and discourses under the pretext of protecting the Russian population from "Banderites" to justify the annexation of Crimea and a concealed intervention in Donbas. The words "Banderites", "fascists", "executioners", and "Kyiv junta" (an analogy to the fascist regimes of Latin America) became part of the active vocabulary of Russian propaganda. Symbolic actions repeating the experience of "the Great Patriotic War" and "the fight against fascism" (inscriptions on military equipment "On

Lviv!" and "On Kyiv!", "POW parade" and "Victory parade" in Donetsk) became commonplace[9]. The "unfinished case" formula emerged in this period, communicating the need to "finally finish fascism".

In Ukraine, the intensification of the nationalist memory narrative was an element of a broader response to the territorial losses and military defeats of the summer of 2014 and winter of 2015. Four factors determined the scale of this process.

First, the annexation of Crimea and Russia's partial occupation of Donbas, followed by the creation of proxy republics, resulted in a public demand for a heroic narrative as a core of ideological response to the aggression. In two versions, this narrative began to be cultivated during the uprising of winter 2014, called the Revolution of Dignity. The first version is the heroic fight of the Ukrainian patriotic student detachments near Kruty in the struggle against the Bolshevik army in January 1918. The second version was the history of the heroic struggle of the UPA and the OUN against foreign aggressors.

Second, Russia's actions contributed to the growth of anti-Russian sentiments in Ukrainian society and the formation of a request for a historical justification for Russia's eternal role as the oppressor of Ukrainians. This trend coincided with the existing paradigm where Russia was presented as the "constituting Other" with a whole set of negative stereotypes. Russia was introduced here as the historical opposite of Ukraine, its eternal enemy, and its

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[9]   See Georgiy Kasianov, "How a War for the Past Becomes a War in the Present", *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 16, no. 1 (Winter 2015): 149–55.

oppressor. These stereotypes were cultivated for decades in the ideological constructs of Ukrainian nationalist organisations, primarily the OUN.

Third, success in the internal political competition largely depended on participating in the struggle against an external threat. Virtually all political forces in Ukraine (except for fragments of the Party of Regions, which had re-formed under different names, and the Communists, who were expelled from political life) were eager to support any initiatives, including symbolic policies, represented as fighting Russia. The promotion of the heroic narrative of UPA and OUN history, for which the fight against Russia was paramount, was unanimously supported by the overwhelming majority of political forces, including those who did not share the ideological tenets of the OUN.

Fourth, the central state institution responsible for the formation of historical policy in Ukraine, the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory, was headed by representatives of "front organisations" of the OUN(b), namely Lviv Liberation Movement Research Centre and the Youth Nationalist Congress. Using the above-mentioned factors, they consistently lobbied and promoted the policy of glorifying the OUN, the UPA, and their leaders.

This policy was accompanied by ideological editing of segments of history and memory associated with these organisations' dark past. For example, the UPA was presented exclusively as a leading force of the national liberation movement, fighting against two totalitarian regimes: German Nazism and Communist totalitarianism. School textbooks depicted UPA as a part of the European Resistance. The UPA's war crimes against civilians, if mentioned

at all, were presented, for example, as an organic part of the "Polish-Ukrainian war". The complicity of OUN members in the extermination of the Jewish population was denied or hushed up.

It was this policy of silencing, whitewashing, and relativisation, combined with the unrestrained glorification of the Ukrainian nationalist movement, that Russian propagandists actively used to construct the myth of beast-like Ukrainian nationalists who had taken over Ukraine. Glorification of the OUN, the UPA, and leaders of the nationalist movement was used to prove the "Ukraine captured by Nazis" scheme. Silencing the darker sides and whitewashing the OUN and the UPA was utilised as evidence of the cynicism and amorality of the "Kyiv regime" and its kinship with Nazism.

Conclusions

This analysis is intended to demonstrate what might be considered obvious. However, even self-evident things often lack analysis, being taken for granted.

1) Russian propaganda uses the propaganda of Ukrainian nationalist organisations and the policies based on it to create an ideological construct about "Ukrainian Nazism". This construct involves conflating the past with the present and intensely imitating anxiety about the threat of Nazism from Ukraine to Russia. It creates a hyperreality that claims validity and serves practical needs.

2) Russian propaganda relies on selectively chosen historical evidence and contemporary facts: the presence of neo-Nazi groups in Ukraine and the state's tolerant attitude toward them.

3) Paradoxically, the goals of the promoters of the Ukrainian nationalist narrative of memory (related to glorifying the OUN and the UPA) and Russian propagandists partially coincide. Both are interested in presenting Ukrainian society and the state as followers of the OUN's ideas and the UPA cause's continuators. Both preach a selective approach to facts and interpretations that benefit them. However, they pursue radically different goals. Russian propaganda uses the history of the Ukrainian nationalist movement to justify aggression. Ukrainian promoters of the nationalist memory narrative use it to mobilise resistance to Russian aggression through ideology. At the same time, they seek to achieve an ideological homogenisation of society based on the "single truth" idea and dominant myth, which is transformed into a sacral ideological form, a civic cult, through their efforts.

4) The thesis of "Nazism in Ukraine" is embedded in a broader scheme of confrontation between Russia and the West, where the "collective West" is presented as the patron of "Ukrainian Nazism", using it to destroy Russia. In this picture, the West looks like a follower of Hitler's cause, and Russia looks like a successor to the cause of liberation from Nazism.

5) The growing influence of right-wing radical parties and neo-Nazi groups in street politics in Ukraine (in systemic politics, in presidential and parliamentary elections, their share of support is within the sociological margin of error) coincides with the 2014–22 period. It is directly related to many factors (social, political, cultural), including Russian aggression. These parties and groups were at the forefront of the 2014 uprising, primarily in

a violent confrontation with the pro-Russian Yanuko-vych regime. They also played a prominent role in mo-bilising volunteer formations during the first phase of the war in Donbas.

Some politicians of Petro Poroshenko's presidency played a significant role in their reinforcement. They used right-wing radical and neo-Nazi groups for political and economic goals inside the country (e.g. Interior Mini-ster Arsen Avakov and some oligarchs). Neither these groups nor their patrons in power pursued any foreign policy goals.

6) "Ukrainian Nazism" is a classic simulacrum, behind which hides a relatively simple combination of selecti-vely chosen facts, one-sided interpretations, and outri-ght falsifications aimed at justifying aggression, a war, and violations of fundamental human rights. This simu-lacrum is based on ideological stereotypes of the Soviet period, ensuring their connection with the contemporary task of creating an image of an external enemy necessary to provide unity within the country and consolidation around a common goal.
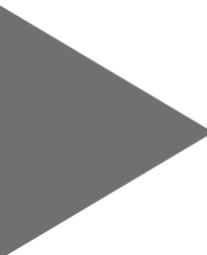
Yurii Latysh

"Get away from Moscow!": Main Trends of Ukraine's Politics of Memory during the Russo-Ukrainian War

Introduction

The Russian authorities use and abuse "historical arguments" to justify their aggression against Ukraine. They deny the existence of the Ukrainian people and the Ukrainian language, arguing that the Ukrainian state does not have its own history. They also promote the concepts of the Russian world, Novorossiya (referring to the territories of southern Ukraine that were allegedly torn away from Russia), and the divided Russian people, and portray Ukraine as a Nazi state. All these myths are expounded upon in President Vladimir Putin's essay "On the Historical Unity of Russia and Ukraine", which served as a prelude to the full-scale Russian invasion on 24 February 2022. In Ukraine, Putin's

intentions and actions are perceived as a direct threat to the existence of the Ukrainian people and their identity[1].

Ukraine is recognised as a constituent part of the Central and Eastern European region of memory. Within this region, a distinctive culture of historical remembrance has been formed. Barbara Törnqvist-Plewa believes that the peoples and inhabitants of the region have significant common or similar historical experiences. Consequently, Central and Eastern Europe can be considered as a particular region of memory characterised by an "obsession with the past", a "surfeit of memories", and a powerful presence of states and churches as memory actors. The landscape of memory in this region can be described as post-colonial, post-catastrophic, and post-socialist[2].

Its formation was influenced by the following historical conditions:

- belated modernisation resulting from the region's peripheral status;
- continuous control by imperial states;
- belated nation- and state-building;
- the experience of living through extreme violence under Nazism and Stalinism (according to Timothy Snyder's concept of "Bloodlands").

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[1] Georgiy Kasianov, "The War Over Ukrainian Identity", *Foreign Affairs*, 4 May 2022, accessed 15 July 2023, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/ukraine/2022-05-04/war-over-ukrainian-identity?fbclid=IwAR0g6XfkmqxWvnxSCPYcdiscDJdS0EuaKn7wX-E50F7YmjLUSlO774JJufNU/.

[2] Barbara Törnquist-Plewa, "Eastern and Central Europe as a Region of Memory. Some Common Traits", in *Constructions and Instrumentalization of the Past. A Comparative Study on Memory Management in the Region*, ed. Ninna Mörner (Stockholm: Södertörn University, 2020), 15.

In Ukraine, after 1991, a single historical canon did not emerge; instead, there was competition between two main models of historical memory – Ukrainian national and post-Soviet (Soviet-nostalgic). Following the Euromaidan events and the Russian aggression in Crimea and Donbas in 2014, the Ukrainian authorities, with the support of right-wing activists and a group of historians led by Volodymyr Viatrovych, implemented a politics of rigorous decommunisation, using the principles of shock therapy (rather the "shock doctrine" of Naomi Klein) in the field of the politics of memory.

The Memory Landscape of Ukraine during the War

The main features of the current memory landscape of Ukraine are the following:

- *Statism*. One of the primary characteristics of the memory landscape of Eastern Europe and the post--Soviet space is the state's pivotal role in shaping the politics of memory through legislation and public institutions. In Ukraine, for instance, the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory (UINM), serving as the central executive organ, plays a crucial role. Traditionally, the politics of memory in the state is directly overseen by the president[3]. However, during the war, the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy (MCIP) has seen an increase in its influence.

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[3] Alla Kyrydon, "The Politics of Memory in Independent Ukraine: Main Trends", in *Constructing Memory: Central and Eastern Europe in the New Geopolitical Reality*, ed. Hanna Bazhenova (Lublin: Instytut Europy Środkowej, 2022), 138.

The independent Ukrainian state is declared the highest value, and its existence is the guarantee of the survival of the Ukrainian people. All the tragedies of the Ukrainians, such as world wars and genocides, are considered a consequence of the absence of their own state[4]. The term "бездержавність" ("statelessness", "absence of a state") is frequently used in Ukrainian but is difficult to translate into other languages. As a defensive response, the concept of a "vulnerable nation" emerged encompassing language, history, and memory, all of which are constantly threatened by prohibitions and destruction. Consequently, historical politics is seen as an important means of legitimising the existence of the nation and state, consolidating society, preventing the recurrence of past tragedies, and, since 2014, countering Russian aggression[5]. During the war, 85% of Ukraine's inhabitants have been found to approve state politics in the sphere of historical memory (Figure 1).

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[4] "Володимир В'ятрович: Теперішня війна найкраще демонструє, що українці усвідомлюють цінність своєї держави і готові її захищати", *УНІАН*, 10 July 2017, accessed 14 July 2023, https://www.unian.ua/society/2021196-volodimir-vyatrovich-teperishnya-viyna-naykrasche-demonstrue-scho-ukrajintsi-usvidomlyuyut-tsinnist-svoeji-derjavi-i-gotovi-jiji-zahischati.html.

[5] *Політика історичної пам'яті в контексті національної безпеки України: аналітична доповідь*, за заг. ред. В. М. Яблонського (Київ: НІСД, 2019), 5, 7.

Is there a need for a state politics in the field of historical memory?

Legend:
- **Yes**
- **No**
- **Don't care**
- **Hard to say / No answer given**

85% / 9% / 0% / 5%
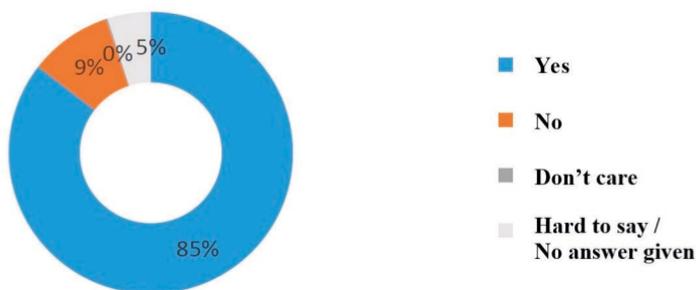
Figure 1. The attitude of Ukrainians to historical politics, poll of Kyiv International Institute of Sociology, January 2023.

Source: Київський міжнародний інститут соціології, *Історична пам'ять: результати соціологічного опитування дорослих жителів України. Аналітичний звіт* ([Київ] 2023), 38, accessed 14 July 2023, https://www.kiis.com.ua/materials/news/20230320_d2/UCBI_History2023_rpt_UA_fin.pdf.

- *Unity and heroism*. It is believed that collective memories and commemorative practices should unite society, instil a sense of pride, and serve as an example for new generations, preparing them for future sacrifices on behalf of their motherland. This thesis holds particular significance during times of war. Ukraine regularly conducts ceremonies to solemnly bury fallen soldiers, featuring speeches by officials and public representatives, religious rituals, and often, people kneel as a sign of gratitude to these heroes. Periodically, discussions arise regarding the establishment of a national Pantheon of Heroes – a National War Memorial Cemetery.

- *Victimhood*. Aleida Assmann noted that "the states that gained independence after the collapse of the

Eastern Bloc based their identity … mainly on the role of the victim, making a traumatic history of Stalin's repressions and the Soviet occupation a collective support of the past".[6] Currently, Ukrainian politics of memory focus on gaining international recognition of the Holodomor of 1932–33 and the crimes committed by the Russian army in the ongoing war, treating them as acts of genocide[7].

- *Securitisation*. Historical memory is viewed as an integral part of state security[8]. The securitisation of historical memory, which began after Russia's aggression in 2014, serves as a means of ensuring the safety of the national historical narrative by delegitimising or directly criminalising Soviet and Russian narratives seen as threats to the state and society. In particular, the decommunisation laws of 2015 were presented by the government as a necessity, since the Soviet past was perceived as a threat to Ukraine's independence. It is worth noting that the Eastern European memory model is quite conflictogenic and often leads to "memory wars" between neighbouring peoples regarding the interpretation of the past. In international relations, the securitisation of the interpretation of history can lead to a dilemma of mnemonic security.

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[6] Алейда Ассман, *Новое недовольство мемориальной культурой* (Москва: НЛО, 2016), 158.

[7] Постанова Верховної Ради України від 14 квітня 2022 р. № 2188-IX "Про Заяву Верховної Ради України «Про вчинення Російською Федерацією геноциду в Україні»", *Верховна Рада України* (ВРУ), accessed 15 July 2023, https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2188-20#Text.

[8] Maria Mälksoo, "'Memory Must Be Defended': Beyond the Politics of Mnemonical Security", *Security Dialogue* 46, no. 3 (June 2015): 221–37.

This dilemma arises when one state challenges the historical narrative that serves as a "foundation myth" for another[9]. The historical narrative used to legitimise the Ukrainian state and unify the people was systematically denied by Russia. Since Viktor Yushchenko's presidency (2005–10), there have been "memory wars" of varying intensity between Russia and Ukraine, which since 2014 have been occurring against the background of a hybrid war – and since 24 February 2022, full-scale aggression[10].

■ *Weaponisation*. Historical science and memory have become a "battlefield" (historical front) during the on-going military conflict, with the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine emerging as a significant actor in the politics of memory. In 2022, the Centre for Military History of the Armed Forces of Ukraine was established, which organises conferences and publishes books, articles, and the monthly *Military Historical Description of the Russo-Ukrainian War*. Among the fellows of the centre are not only military officers but also historians mobilised during martial law. According to Georgiy Kasianov, "the war exacerbated another well-known trend: the blurring of the line between academic research and propaganda"[11].

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9   Ярослава В. Севастьянова и Дмитрий В. Ефременко, "Секьюритизация памяти и дилемма мнемонической безопасности", *Политическая наука*, № 2 (2020): 77.

10   Юрій Латиш, "Сек'юритизація історичної пам'яті під час російсько-української війни", *Наукові праці Кам'янець-Подільського національного університету імені Івана Огієнка. Історичні науки*, 38 (2022): 181.

11   Georgiy Kasianov, "Challenges of antagonistic memory: Scholars versus politics and war", *Memory Studies* 15, no. 6 (2022): 1296.

Decolonisation of Memory

During the war, the main component of Ukraine's politics of memory is decolonisation, as a continuation of decommunisation, which began in 2015, and deRussification, which was launched by some local authorities and right-wing activists after the full-scale Russian invasion. Decolonisation of memory involves the removal of symbols from the public space, including names and memorial signs that are viewed as markers of Russian imperial policy. Ukraine aims to distance itself from the influence of Russian historiography, shape its own national historical narrative, and develop politics of memory connected with the European tradition[12]. The intended outcome of decolonisation is to sever the cultural and historical ties between Ukraine and Russia, thereby preventing anyone from considering Ukrainians and Russians as either "one nation" or "brotherly nations"[13].

Implementation of the decolonisation politics involves several components:

- *Legislative regulation of historical memory*. In December 2022, the law "On the Basic Principles of State Policy in the Sphere of Establishing Ukrainian National and Civil Identity" entered into force. This law commits the state to promoting the history of

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[12] Walenty Baluk and Mykola Doroshko, "Historia – płaszczyzna wpływu w relacjach rosyjsko-ukraińskich w latach 2014–2022", *Rocznik Instytutu Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej* 20, zesz. 4 (2022): 133, 169.

[13] The essence of this policy was successfully formulated by Roman Ratushnyi, a public activist who died in the war: "Burn out the entire Russian subculture in yourself. Burn all the memories from your childhood related to the Russian-Soviet times. Burn the bridges in relationships with relatives or friends who support the other side, with everyone who is a carrier of the Russian subculture. Otherwise, all these things will burn you out." ("Roman Ratushnyi", *Ukrainian Institute*, accessed 12 July 2003, https://ui.org.ua/en/artists/roman-ratushnyi-2/).

Ukraine, particularly the Ukrainian people's struggle for self-determination and the creation of their own state, and those who fought for Ukraine's independence and territorial integrity[14].

In March 2023, the law "On Condemnation and Prohibition of Propaganda of Russian Imperial Policy in Ukraine and Decolonisation of Toponymy" was adopted; it took effect in July 2023. This law prohibits propaganda of Russian imperial policy and its symbols. Within six months, local authorities were required to remove symbols of the "Russian world" from the public space, which included dismantling monuments and memorial signs, and renaming streets and other objects[15].

In June 2023, a law came into force, unofficially named "anti-Pushkin", which simplifies the procedure for excluding monuments regarded as symbols of Russian imperial and Soviet totalitarian policies and ideology from the State Register[16].

- *Destruction of monuments, renaming of toponyms*. Following the full-scale invasion, monuments and toponyms associated with Russia and the USSR began to be perceived as markers of the invader, through which the empire "branded" its territory. The belief

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[14] Закон України від 13 грудня 2022 р. № 2834-IX "Про основні засади державної політики у сфері утвердження української національної та громадянської ідентичності", *ВРУ*, accessed 15 July 2023, https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2834-20#Text.

[15] Закон України від 21 березня 2023 р. № 3005-IX "Про засудження та заборону пропаганди російської імперської політики в Україні і деколонізацію топонімії", *ВРУ*, accessed 15 July 2023, https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/3005-20#Text.

[16] Закон України від 3 травня 2023 р. № 3097-IX "Про внесення змін до деяких законів України щодо особливостей формування Державного реєстру нерухомих пам'яток України", *ВРУ*, accessed 15 July 2023, https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/3097-20#Text.

was that by removing them, the victim could sever historical ties with the aggressor[17].

In the spring of 2022, the renaming of toponyms and the dismantling of monuments started at the initiative of local authorities and right-wing activists, mainly in the western regions of Ukraine. Sometimes monuments were vandalised. Later, to regulate this spontaneous process, referred to as deRussification, the MCIP established an Expert Council on Overcoming the Consequences of Russification and Totalitarianism. The Expert Council prepared recommendations, emphasising that issues regarding preservation in the public space or replacement (in the case of toponyms), or dismantling and relocation (in the case of monuments), should be resolved in accordance with existing legislation[18].

Subsequently, the Expert Council compiled a list of the top ten most common "Russian" urban names recommended for renaming. These names included astronauts Yuri Gagarin and Vladimir Komarov; poets and writers Alexander Pushkin, Mikhail Lermontov, Maxim Gorky, and Vladimir Mayakovsky; Soviet pilot Valery Chkalov; the plant breeder Ivan Michurin; general of the Russian Empire Alexander Suvorov,

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17 Olena Betlii, "The Identity Politics of Heritage: Decommunization, Decolonization, and Derussification of Kyiv Monuments after Russia's Full-Scale Invasion of Ukraine", *Journal of Applied History* 4, no. 1–2 (2022): 149.

18 "Рекомендації Експертної ради з питань подолання наслідків русифікації та тоталітаризму", *Міністерство культури та інформаційної політики України*, accessed 16 July 2023, https://mkip.gov.ua/news/7362.html.

and Soviet World War II hero soldier Alexander Matrosov[19].

In 2022, Ukraine witnessed the renaming of 9,859 toponyms and the dismantling of 145 monuments, including 34 dedicated to Pushkin[20]. Interestingly, many “victims” of the decolonisation were monuments and toponyms relating to Russians who did not support imperial policy (the Decembrists, Alexander Herzen, Vladimir Mayakovsky, and Andrei Sakharov), along with monuments and graves of World War II participants. Unique Soviet monuments are not dismantled, but decommunised. In August 2023, on the shield of the famous “Mother Motherland” monument in Kyiv, the Soviet hammer and sickle was replaced by the Ukrainian Trident (Figure 2). The decision to replace the coat of arms was supported by 85% (662 thousand people) of voting participants on the “Diia” mobile application of electronic governance.

■ *Installation of monuments to the victims of Russian aggression*. In the spring and summer of 2023, several monuments were erected. These included a monument in Kharkiv dedicated to the children who had lost their lives due to Russian aggression (Figure 3), a memorial wall in Bucha honouring the victims of the Russian occupation (Figure 4), a memorial fountain

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[19] “ТОП-10 найбільш вживаних в Україні «російських» урбанонімів, рекомендованих до перейменування Експертною радою МКІП”, *Міністерство культури та інформаційної політики України*, accessed 16 July 2023, https://mkip.gov.ua/news/7468.html.

[20] “У 2022 році в Україні перейменували майже 10 тисяч топонімів”, *Міністерство культури та інформаційної політики України*, accessed 16 July 2023, https://mkip.gov.ua/news/8940.html.

Figure 2. "Mother Motherland" monument, Kyiv.
© Aleksandr Gusev, Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International licence. Accessed 25 August 2023, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mother_Ukraine_2023.jpg.

Figure 3. Monument to children who lost their lives due to Russian aggression, Kharkiv.

Source: President of Ukraine, "Olena Zelenska opens a monument to children killed as a result of Russian armed aggression in Kharkiv", 4 June 2023, accessed 25 July 2023, https://www.president.gov.ua/ru/news/olena-zelenska-vidkrila-u-harkovi-pamyatnik-dityam-yaki-zagi-83393.

in Lviv commemorating the Hero of Ukraine Dmytro "Da Vinci" Kotsiubailo and all volunteers of the Russo-Ukrainian war.

- *Reevaluation of holidays*. These changes encompassed the establishment of 8 May as the Day of Remembrance and Victory over Nazism in World War II, 28 July as the Day of Ukrainian Statehood (Day of the Baptism of Kievan Rus'), and the celebration of Christmas based on the Revised Julian calendar on 25 December, not 7 January.
- *Modifications in the school history curriculum*. The colonial status of Ukraine within the Russian Empire/USSR becomes the central narrative.

Figure 4. Memorial wall honouring the victims of the Russian occupation, Bucha.

Source: Фокус, "Не можна забути і пробачити: у Бучі відкрили меморіал жертвам ЗС РФ (фото)", 2 July 2023, accessed 3 August 2023, https://focus.ua/voennye-novosti/576296-nelzya-zabyt-i-prostit-v-bu-che-otkryli-memorial-zhertvam-vs-rf-foto.

■ *Removal of Russian and Soviet literature from libraries*. In April 2022, to this end, the MCIP established the Council for the Development of the Library Sector.

Conclusions

Russia launched against Ukraine not only a conventional war but also a war in the sphere of historical memory. Russian historical politics threatens the existence of the Ukrainian people, denies the viability of their state, and asserts that Ukrainian history is inseparable from the history of Russia.

Ukraine is forced to defend its historical memory, which has become an object of strict control by the state. This control includes legislative regulation of history, promotion of heroism, utilisation of past tragedies and traumas, and efforts to destroy everything related to the memory of the adversary, such as monuments, toponyms, and literature. While the state is the main actor of memory, control over memory politics is not monopolised by the authorities represented by the president of Ukraine, the MCIP, and the UINM. Instead, it is partially shared with local governments and civil society.

The politics of memory of Ukraine can be summarised by the slogan "Get away from Moscow!", which was used by the writer Mykola Khvylovy in literary discussion in the 1920s. The target of such politics is the establishment of a unified vision of the past; the destruction of all historical and cultural ties with Russia, denial and prohibition (potentially even leading to criminal liability) of Russian and Soviet historical narratives; and mental mobilisation of all Ukrainians around the anti-colonial, anti-communist, conservative, nationalist historical narrative, linked to the discourse of the "thousand-year" national liberation struggle against the "eternal" enemy – Russia.

The official use of the pejorative term "ruscism (rashism)" as "Russian fascism" marks Russia as an absolute evil, with

which no treaties can be negotiated and no future coexistence is possible. It must only be defeated. According to Ilya Kononov's apt remark, the platform for post-war peaceful coexistence is disappearing[21]. Ukraine's memory politics operate on the premise that only one of the warring states will survive, or the war will be endless, akin to the Arab--Israeli conflict.

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[21] Ілля Кононов, "Політика пам'яті воюючих сторін в ході російсько-української війни 2022 р.: схожість у взаємному виключенні", *Островок*, 8 Decmber 2022, accessed 12 July 2023, http://www.ostrovok.lg.ua/statti/kultura/illya-kononov-politika-pamya-ti-voyuyuchih-storin-v-hodi-rosiysko-ukrayinskoyi-viyni-2022-r-shozhist-u.
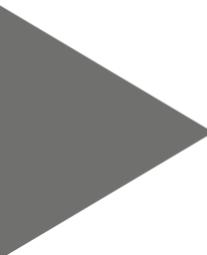
Rasa Čepaitienė

The Ukrainian Factor in Lithuanian Politics of Memory and Culture of Remembrance (2014–2023)

The (Geo)political Context

The shared periods of medieval history and the important parallels between Lithuania and Ukraine in modern and recent times provide ample material for the juxtaposition of the fates of these two countries. Historical policies implemented by the states that use significant historical dates, events, or personalities to provide the foundation for topical issues tend to give them greater depth of perspective and moral weight. The current debate on Ukraine in the Lithuanian public space is a striking example of this. However, before discussing the Ukrainian factor in Lithuanian politics of history and the culture of remembrance of the recent decade, it is necessary to provide a broader domestic and foreign policy context that will give a better understanding

of the motives and the nature of the specific political decisions taken.

Vilnius played a special role in the history of Ukraine ten years ago, becoming the pretext and impetus for the Revolution of Dignity. It was at the Vilnius Eastern Partnership Summit in November 2013 that Ukraine's President Viktor Yanukovych refused to sign the Association Agreement with the European Union, thus giving rise to the Euromaidan. Although Lithuania still remembered the weighty contribution of President Valdas Adamkus in mediating, together with Polish President Aleksander Kwaśniewski, a peaceful settlement of the conflict during the Orange Revolution in 2004–05, the Lithuanian ruling elite was initially cautious about these events. Loreta Graužinienė, the unpopular speaker of the Seimas, was the first of Lithuania's establishment to go to Ukraine and speak from the stage of the Maidan, and she was mocked in her country[1]. Several days before protesters took power in Kyiv, President Dalia Grybauskaitė, on an official visit to Seoul, condemned not only Yanukovych but also "part of the opposition, the aggressive actions of which led not just to bloodshed but also to people's deaths"[2]. Having attracted considerable criticism for this, she later demonstrated her support for the democratisation of Ukraine much more actively and became incredibly

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[1] "L.Graužinienė Kijeve kreipėsi į mitinguotojus", *Alkas.lt*, 26 November 2013, accessed 18 June 2023, https://alkas.lt/2013/11/26/l-grauziniene-kijeve-kreipesi-i-mitinguotojus/.

[2] Rimvydas Valatka, "Ukraina, Lietuva ir praleidusi progą dėl Ukrainos patylėti D.Grybauskaitė", *15min.lt*, 23 February 2014, accessed 18 June 2023, https://www.15min.lt/naujiena/aktualu/komentarai/rimvydas-valatka-ukraina-lietuva-ir-praleidusi-proga-del-ukrainos-patyleti-d-grybauskaite-500-407634.

popular there. She even referred to Russia as "a terrorist state"[3], much to the latter's outrage.

Despite the initial caution of the political elite, the support of the Lithuanian public for the democratic forces in Ukraine was immediate. Lithuanians read the Euromaidan events as a struggle for freedom similar to the one they had fought, and won, in the 1990s. After the barricades of the Maidan protesters were stormed in February 2014 and people were killed, public organisations in Vilnius initiated various actions in support of the protesters and held a rally, "Solidarity Bonfires for Ukraine", in front of the Seimas building. For the participants of these activities, the associations with the events of 13 January 1991, when Soviet troops fired on a crowd of protesters at the TV tower in Vilnius, killing 14 people, and when people stood vigil for days and nights round the Supreme Council (the future Seimas) and lit bonfires, were more than obvious.

In 2020, at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, parliamentary elections in Lithuania brought to power a coalition of the Homeland Union – Lithuanian Christian Democrats (TS-LKD), the Liberal Movement of Lithuania (LLS), and the Party of Freedom (LP). The largest partner of the coalition, the TS-LKD – which was founded in 1993 by Prof. Vytautas Landsbergis, one of the leaders of the *Sąjūdis* (the Lithuanian Reform Movement), and is now led by his grandson Gabrielius Landsbergis – derived itself from the structures of this national movement and attempted to appropriate its

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3   "Dalia Grybauskaitė: Rusija yra teroristinė valstybė", *15 min.lt*, 20 November 2014, accessed 20 June 2023, https://www.15min.lt/naujiena/aktualu/lietuva/dalia-grybauskaite-rusija-yra-teroristine-valstybe-56-467874.

moral capital. In the past, the party emphasised conservative, national, Christian values, but over time a generational change and rapid liberalisation of some of its leaders and influential members have brought it closer, in terms of values, to the other two coalition partners. Despite the negative attitudes of the majority of society, the coalition initiated the drafting of laws legalising same-sex partnerships and liberalising the use of drugs; sought to ratify the Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, introducing the dubious category of "social gender"; and has been actively promoting the themes of neo-Marxist discourse, which have been brought to prominence by the LGBT+ representatives holding positions of influence in politics and their supporters. Legislative restrictions on the expression of public opinion (so-called "hate speech") were also on the way. Taking into account that only 47.1% of all eligible voters took part in the 2020 parliamentary election and that the ruling coalition formed represented less than 20% of all eligible voters with 40.1% of the vote[4], the question arises as to what extent these radical plans for the re-education of society in the spirit of a new progressivism really reflect the position and the expectations of the democratic majority of Lithuania. This, as well as the frequently disrespectful and arrogant political communications of the new ruling elite with the public and the opposition led to the latter's discontent. Current prime minister Ingrida Šimonytė even went as far as to say in February 2021 that if people didn't like the government,

[4] Vyriausioji rinkimų komisija, "Balsavimo rezultatai", 2020, accessed 21 June 2023, https://www.vrk.lt/2020-seimo.

they would be able to elect another during the 2024 parliamentary elections[5].

This political agenda and the lack of communication between the governors and the governed has mobilised citizens concerned about preserving natural family and traditional conservative values. This reaction has also been triggered by the methods in which the COVID-19 pandemic was fought. In response to that, civic protests on a scale not seen in a long time took place in 2021–22. Most of the demonstrations were organised by the Lithuanian Family Movement (LŠS). The Health Law Institute (STI), a group of authoritative medical and legal experts, was also established to defend the constitutional rights of citizens against governmental arbitrariness. Silencing, marginalisation, and even demonisation of these and other voices alternative to the current policy have begun, accusing them of allegedly "working for Russia".

At the same time, a "value-based" foreign policy led by Foreign Minister Gabrielius Landsbergis is directed against authoritarian regimes trampling on human rights such as China, Russia, and Belarus. Lithuania, in violation of its bilateral treaty with China signed in 1991, set up a Taiwanese Representative Office in Vilnius in 2021, angering China, which cut off economic relations with the state. As a result, Lithuania suffered considerable financial losses. Meanwhile, after the 2020 mass protests in Belarus, brutal repression imposed by the regime forced some of the

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[5]   Benas Brunalas, "Šimonytė: tie, kuriems nepatinka ši valdžia, galės 2024 m. išsirinkti tuos, kurie patiks", *Delfi.lt*, 28 February 2021, accessed 23 June 2023, https://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/simonyte-tie-kuriems-nepatinka-si-valdzia-gales-2024-m-issirinkti-tuos-kurie-patiks.d?id=86585297.

Belarusian opposition to flee to Lithuania. Sviatlana Tsikha-
nouskaya, an opposition leader who took part in presiden-
tial elections, was brought to the Lithuanian border by the
Belarusian KGB. In Vilnius, she set up an office, which ral-
lied part of the émigré Belarusian opposition. Lithuania's
active involvement in countering the Belarusian regime
incurred Lukashenko's wrath: he saw it as an interference
in the country's internal affairs. In revenge, he initiated
and diverted flows of economic refugees from the Middle
East to the Lithuanian border, creating a migrant crisis in
the country. Lithuania responded by limiting economic re-
lations with Belarus, despite the fact that it was not in its
national interest.

Prof. Šarūnas Liekis and Dr Algimantas Kasparavičius
have publicly criticised Lithuania's current foreign policy
led by Gabrielius Landsbergis[6] on a number of occasions,
deeming it to be short-sighted, rash, and detrimental to the
country's economy and international prestige. According
to these authors, Lithuania's foreign policy has become
an "anomaly in international relations", which has largely
eroded the tradition of the state's foreign policy based most-
ly on three principles: the defence of national interests, the
participation in the EU-transatlantic defence system, and
the principle of good neighbourliness[7]. The analysts also

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[6] The traces of nepotism are prominent in Gabrielius Landsbergis's career. His famous
grandfather, Vytautas Landsbergis, installed his grandson, a graduate in history and
political sciences, in the diplomatic service and in the chairmanship of the TS-LKD; in
2014, V. Landsbergis also ceded his position in the European Parliament to his grand-
son. That is why in the public space, G. Landsbergis is nicknamed *Anūkas*, "Grandson".

[7] Algimantas Kasparavičius and Šarūnas Liekis, "Lietuvos vertybinės politikos fantomas",
15min.lt, 4 January 2022, accessed 28 June 2023, https://www.15min.lt/naujiena/aktualu/
komentarai/algimantas-kasparavicius-sarunas-liekis-lietuvos-vertybines-politikos-fan-
tomas-500-1622426.

stated that Lithuanian businesses and citizens were the prime victims of such irresponsible adventurism[8].

Lithuania's risky foreign policy can be explained by the myth that the TS-LKD created about itself. It has been observed more than once how this party tries to use Lithuania's recent history as a political resource to amass and consolidate its power. The moral authority of Vytautas Landsbergis is serving this purpose. The myth is consolidated in history textbooks, documentaries, and other popular productions, while at the same time it sidelines or downplays the contribution of other figures from the national revival period to the process of liberating the country from the Soviet empire. Landsbergis is even proclaimed to have "destroyed the Soviet Union", and anyone who doubts this is called a "vatnik", a "kremlin", or Putin's "useful idiot". By a majority vote of the ruling party in the summer of 2022, the Seimas declared Vytautas Landsbergis, who in the early years of independence was the chair of the Supreme Council (retroactively renamed *Atkuriamasis Seimas*, Reconstitutent Seimas), "the first head of state" with a status equivalent to that of the president. The opposition and some public intellectuals objected, and the Constitutional Court repeatedly issued a clarification on the matter; yet despite all that, this firmly established *nomenklatura* myth provided the TS-LKD not only with a monopoly on power but also a monopoly on truth and morality. However, the fact that this political force has a large number of ex-communists in its ranks tarnishes

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8   Šarūnas Liekis and Algimantas Kasparavičius, "Avinėlių tylėjimas ant traukinio bėgių", *15min.lt*, 20 July 2022, accessed 28 June 2023, https://www.15min.lt/naujiena/aktualu/komentarai/sarunas-liekis-algimantas-kasparavicius-avineliu-tylejimas-ant-traukinio-begiu-500-1904948.

its patriotic image: in parliament, it is the representatives of this party that are the most vocal opponents to the efforts to complete lustration by making the names of all known KGB agents public and thus putting an end to the vicious circle of using *kompromat* and speculations on this topic[9]. Demonstrative struggles for democracy abroad and against the authoritarianism of the neighbours while resorting to the analogous methods of suppression of civil rights and freedoms at home, the government's incompetence in managing the country's economy and its unwillingness to listen to criticism, as well as constriction of democratic rights has markedly lowered coalition's ratings and credibility.

Therefore, for this unpopular government, the war that broke out in Ukraine in 2022 has unexpectedly become a tool for improving its image and at the same time a proof that the conservatives' earlier warnings and fears of Russian aggression were not a figment of their imagination. Under the pretext of war, a state of emergency was introduced in the territory of Lithuania, although it does not have a common border with the country that is the victim of aggression, and this has been extended in the area bordering Belarus up until the present day. While this legal situation did not directly restrict citizens' rights, it opened up avenues for the government to be less transparent in its handling of public finances and also served it indirectly in curbing opposing and critical voices and their public expression.

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[9] Of the three Baltic States, only Lithuania has not completed the lustration process. In 2015, the Seimas classified the collaborators of the former Soviet secret services for another 75 years, and any attempts of public organisations to raise this issue again are firmly rejected.

Those in power have monopolised the discourse of support for the struggling and suffering Ukraine (Figure 5 and 6). Public demonstration of "support for Ukraine" in the mainstream media and on social networks, usually in the form of flags or Facebook frames, has become a sign of good taste and, at the same time, of loyalty to government policies. The demonstrative anti-Russian standpoint was manifested in the changing of the name of the Russian Drama Theatre to
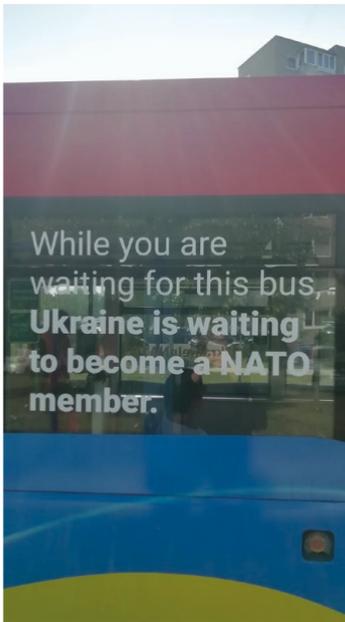
↑ Figure 5. Inscription on a city bus, "While you are waiting for this bus, Ukraine is waiting to become a NATO member", Vilnius. Photo by Rasa Čepaitienė, May 2022.

↗ Figure 6. "Glory to Ukraine!". A composition of fresh flowers on the Neris River embankment near the Green Bridge, Vilnius. Photo by Rasa Čepaitienė, May 2022.

Vilnius Old Theatre and in the elimination of the works of Sergei Rachmaninoff and Igor Stravinsky from the repertoire of the Lithuanian National Opera and Ballet Theatre as if they were responsible for Putin's aggression. As for the pro-Ukrainian attitude, the ruling majority displayed this by the Ukrainianisation of national symbols (Figure 7) and by wearing *vyshyvankas*, embroidered Ukrainian shirts, on 18 May, Vyshyvanka Day. Both moves caused confusion and received unfavourable reviews on social networks. These

Figure 7. The Ukrainianised version of the emblem of the Lithuanian State Border Guard Service.

politicians of the ruling coalition have been mostly indifferent or even negative towards traditional Lithuanian culture and have not contributed to its nurturing, and they have not been seen wearing Lithuanian national costumes in the past. Therefore, such attempts to support Ukraine, where national elements are currently extremely mobilised and used for the rallying of and supporting the community, appear rather hypocritical. This predilection for external affectations was also evident in plans to decorate Vilnius with 33,000 Ukrainian flags during the July 2023 NATO summit, when this money could simply be donated to the front.

Meanwhile, any criticism of the ruling majority and the policies it pursues has come to be seen through the prism of the war as raising suspicions or doubts regarding the loyalty of such critics to the country and its democratic values. The hypertrophied nature of the fund-raising for Ukrainian troops organised by prominent pro-government influencers and the obsessive pursuit of "internal enemies" has provoked dissatisfaction of a large part of the population and dampened their enthusiasm to support war refugees and fighters on the frontline, especially when reports of insufficient transparency in the use of these funds and even of embezzlement of some of the money started emerging in public. In addition, solidarity with Ukrainian war migrants has been weakened by the unrestricted spread of the Russian language in the public sphere.

The Theme of Ukraine
in Lithuanian Politics of History

At this point, it is worth making a brief detour to some earlier events to which the war in Ukraine gives a new

meaning. One is the international campaign conducted since around 2012 with the aim to discredit the participants of the Lithuanian post-war anti-Soviet resistance, in particular partisan leaders Adolfas Ramanauskas-Vanagas, Juozas Lukša-Daumantas, and others. The writers Rūta Vanagaitė and Marius Ivaškevičius, the leadership of the Lithuanian Jewish community, and a number of the citizens of Israel and the USA living in or visiting Lithuania have been quite prominent in accusing them, other partisans, and participants in the June Uprising of 1941 of taking part in the Holocaust. Thanks to these campaigners, attempts have been made both in Russia and in the West to entrench the images of Lithuanians as allegedly massively involved in the genocide of the Jews and of Lithuania as an intolerant state that stubbornly refuses to acknowledge the unpleasant truth about itself[10]. The scandals undermined Lithuania's international prestige due to the absence of an adequate response from the country's official institutions to foreign audiences. In addition, some of these sensitive issues are still insufficiently researched and assessed in Lithuanian historiography. This has hindered the ability of both the state's political establishment and of the public to better prepare for and resist the propaganda attacks that very likely are coming from Russia.

Russia's hybrid and overt military actions in Ukraine prompted a resumption of the de-Sovietisation of Lithuania's public space, which, although quite consistent and

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[10] Раса Чепайтене, "«Скандал поднял новую волну войн памяти» (О книге Руты Ванагайте «Наши» и реакции литовского общества)", *Historians.ua*, 30 November 2017, accessed 29 June 2023, http://www.historians.in.ua/index.php/en/intervyu/2341.

extensive in the 1990s, was not fully completed, as it turned out later. Yet the motivation behind the destruction of monuments during the first (1990–94)[11] and the second (2014–15) "waves" was rather different. The monument iconoclasm of the first wave concerned mostly the symbols of Soviet power and ideology, while the issue of the elimination of other components of the public space with ideologically more neutral meanings or reflecting the memorialisation of World War II was not raised. However, Russia's war against Georgia in 2008 and especially the conflict with Ukraine in 2014 caused concern among the countries of the region about the aggressor's use of these facilities to justify its "rights" to these territories. Like Germany, the Russian Federation was making considerable efforts to organise the maintenance of the graves and memorials of Soviet soldiers in the post-Soviet region[12]. At the same time, any attempt by the local authorities to take independent decisions in relation to these objects led to unpredictable reactions: think of the developments in Tallinn in 2007 related to the saga of the relocation of the "Bronze Soldier". Putin's regime unreservedly saw the attempts by post-communist states to get rid of what they saw as remnants of the occupation period

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[11] Rasa Čepaitienė, "'Leninopad's' Echoes: Changing Approaches to the Soviet Monuments in Lithuania", in *Communist/Soviet Historical and Cultural Heritage of Eastern Europe in the 21st century. Collection of articles based on materials of round tables* ([Vilnius; Brussels]: Konrad Adenauer Schiftung Belarus; Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies, 2022), 96–108; eadem, "The Ricochet of *Leninopad* and the Second Wave of Desovietization of Lithuanian Public Space", *AREI*, no. 1 (2023): 54–77.

[12] *Kariai. Betonas. Mitas. Antrojo pasaulinio karo Sovietų Sąjungos karių palaidojimo vietos Lietuvoje* (Vilnius: Vilniaus universiteto leidykla, 2016).

as an expression of "ingratitude" and "unfriendliness", and as evidence of a "resurgence of fascism"[13].

The influence of "Leninopad" in Ukraine can be partly invoked in explaining the decision to remove the socialist realist statues on the Žaliasis (Green) Bridge in Vilnius in the summer of 2015 and the monument to the Soviet collaborator writer Petras Cvirka in 2021. Yet what could be called the "third wave of de-Sovietisation of the public space" was an unequivocal reaction to the invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022. In response to the crimes of the Russian army against the civilian population of the occupied territories and to the destruction of Ukraine's cities and socio-economic infrastructure, the post-Soviet countries have finally moved beyond a tacit consensus not to touch World War II monuments and memorials, often erected at or next to the burial sites of Soviet soldiers, which still formed a relatively significant part of their symbolic landscapes. There were spontaneous attempts "from below" to remove them. For instance, the six steles of "soldier liberators" in Vilnius Antakalnis Cemetery, the most important memorial to Soviet soldiers in Lithuania, were first excluded from the inventory of protected cultural objects, then in mid-June 2022 the city council took the decision to take them down altogether. Many of the remaining memorials and monuments to Soviet soldiers have also been dismantled in the province. Like other Baltic countries, Lithuania was serious in assessing the political significance of the surviving

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13 "Судьба монументов ВОВ на территории бывшего СССР", *Справка*, *РИА Новости*, 15 April 2008, accessed 29 June 2023, http://www.rian.ru/spravka/20080415/105097329.html.

elements of the Soviet symbolic landscape in the current conflict and for its national security tried to decontaminate them regardless of the artistic and historical value of some of these objects. Also, on 13 December 2022, Lithuania adopted a law banning promotion of totalitarian and authoritarian regimes and their ideologies.

Used extensively for the most important national rituals early in 2023, the theme of the struggling Ukraine contributed to neutralisation of the above-mentioned sentiments of opposing government policies or openly protesting against them. Its accents dominated major historical commemorations, almost overshadowing Lithuanian symbols and insignia. That was especially noticeable on 13 January 2023, when the Freedom Prize, which is usually awarded to outstanding freedom fighters – partisans and dissidents – was handed to Volodymyr Zelenskyy, president of Ukraine. For Viktorija Čmilytė-Nielsen, the leader of the LLS and the speaker of the Seimas, it was an opportunity to allude to her Ukrainian roots and to attempt thereby to boost her public image. Thus, by drawing parallels between the struggle of Lithuania for freedom in the 1990s and ongoing hostilities in Ukraine, the ruling majority attempted to monopolise the memory of the *Sąjūdis* epoch and the moral capital of support for Ukraine.

Conclusions

In the politics of Lithuania, including the politics of history, the theme of Russia's war against Ukraine should in essence be seen as instrumental exploitation of this tragedy primarily for internal needs: for bolstering the image of the current government and of the Seimas. This is done by

resorting to the symbolic capital of the struggle for freedom of the *Sąjūdis* era and blending it with the current fight of the Ukrainians. The ruling coalition, which positions itself as a champion against the world's totalitarianisms and authoritarianisms, has unilaterally complicated the country's relations with China, Russia, and Belarus, resulting in economic detriment to Lithuania itself. Such an approach is negatively perceived by a fairly large part of the public. In addition, it is barely bringing any benefit to Ukraine, and it is clear that Russia has gained the greatest economic advantage from the situation. Lithuania's short-sighted foreign policy has served to upset the fragile balance of geopolitical forces in the region. It is not clear whether the consequences of such a policy were part of a deliberate action plan or evolved as a byproduct of diplomatic and political incompetence. A hypothesis could be raised that the above-discussed demonstrative, exaggerated expression of aid and support for Ukraine by the current ruling majority[14] helped divert attention from internal problems and crises and is just an attempt to obscure the fact that support for the struggling country is a burden placed on the shoulders of the Lithuanian public.

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[14] This includes a recent proposal by a group of members of parliament to change Russia's name to *Moskovia* (Muscovy), which did not attract the support of authoritative historians, linguists, or political scientists.
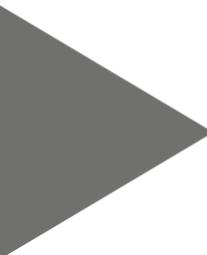
Przemysław Łukasik

The Impact of the War on Ukraine on German Culture of Memory

We currently have a problem in reconciling the cultures of remembrance in our partner countries.[1]

The Fight for Distinctiveness

The problem of the anti-totalitarian and anti-imperialist politicians in Berlin was and is rather to overlook the geopolitical independence of the area between Germany and Russia and to ignore the fact that the diplomacy of the Russian state uses every opportunity to destabilise the situation in those countries that at different times have slipped out of the control of the eastern empire.[2]

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[1]   Josefine Fokuhl, "Berlin Has a Surprising Soft Spot for Its Soviet Memorials", *Bloomberg*, 20 September 2022, accessed 20 April 2023, https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2022-09-20/why-berlin-won-t-be-tearing-down-its-soviet-memorials.

[2]   Łukasz Maślanka, "Projekcje z Krzyżowej", *Teologia Polityczna*, no. 7 (2013/2014): 35.

Analyses that were created after the Russian aggression in Crimea leave no doubt: "It takes quite some time for Germans to realise that Ukraine is not Russia."[3] For the average German, Ukrainians are perceived through the prism of Russia, and the language and culture are treated as local varieties of Russian culture. "If Ukraine was as transparent as Estonia, it would be much easier to argue in Germany in favour of supporting Ukraine with defensive weapons"[4] – this is one of the conclusions of such analyses. The problem, however, is not the lack of knowledge itself, but above all the asymmetric perception of Russian-Ukrainian relations by Berlin's political elites. Germans prefer to talk about the Russians in Crimea rather than about the Crimean Tatars or the Ukrainian history of Crimea, argues Ukrainian historian Andrii Portnov, who works as an academic teacher in Germany[5]. In the political caricature of Western European media, Ukraine is often presented as a poor girl squeezed between Russia and NATO, deprived of her own opinion. Meanwhile, as another Ukrainian historian, Yaroslav Hrytsak, argues, the difference between Ukrainians and Russians is not in ethnicity or language, but in political culture. According to the historian, Ukrainians, unlike Russians, see themselves as an active subject of history, not a passive object

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[3] Oliver Gnad, ed., *Ukraine Through German Eyes. Images and Perceptions of a Country in Transition* (Bonn; Eschborn: German Agency for International Cooperation, 2018), 22.

[4] Ibid., 23.

[5] Andrii Portnov's opening lecture "Rethinking Memory Studies in the Time of War" during the International Conference "The Politics of Memory as a Weapon: Perspectives on Russia's War against Ukraine" (8–10 February 2023, Berlin). See Flucht, Vertreibung, Versöhnung, "Opening and Opening Lecture, 8 February 2023", 16 February 2023, video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pUY2TpWCrmo.

that accepts what fate will bring[6]. The non-military dimension of the war in Ukraine boils down to Kyiv's struggle for recognition by all European nations of its own independence and distinctiveness. The means to fight for distinctiveness should be, inter alia, the development of Ukrainian studies in the West, which will also help us to get to know and understand Russia and its imperial tendencies.

Russian Invasion of Ukraine and German Response

Yes, Ukraine has a right to defend itself, but if we – Germany and the West – do something Putin chooses to interpret as participation in the war, we might suddenly find ourselves in World War III, and Putin could nuke us. So Scholz is right to take small steps and stick to nuance.[7]

The Russo-Ukrainian war marks the end of the old international order and the beginning of Cold War 2.0. This reality is to be characterised by constant competition for spheres of influence, and this competition may lead to a world war. There are many hotspots and unstable spots on the map of Europe and beyond, and according to political theology professor Herfried Münkler, Ukraine is just one of many such areas. "Keeping a relatively quiet peace will cost us a lot of strength and imagination, and above all money",

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[6] Marci Shore, "Germany Has Confronted Its Past. Now It Must Confront the Present", *The Foreign Policy*, 8 August 2022, accessed 23 April 2023, https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/08/08/germany-russia-ukraine-nazi-stalin-crt-slavery-confront-present/.

[7] Andreas Kluth, "Germans Are Waging a War of Open Letters Over Ukraine and Russia", *Bloomberg*, 11 May 2022, accessed 20 April 2023, https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2022-05-11/putin-debate-germans-argue-over-russia-policy-via-open-letter-campaigns#xj4y7vzkg.

emphasises the German political scientist[8]. Conflicts can spread geographically, and Europe's main task is to block this process. In this new reality, Russia and Putin play the role of a destroyer, not a defender, of the international order. In this way, the – as it turned out – incorrect assumptions of German foreign policy towards Moscow from the last three decades have been undermined. The belief that Russia can be modernised, among other means through trade (Wandel durch Handel), turned out to be a pipe dream. And the Nord Stream project, supported by politicians and German business, has become a moral and political failure[9]. The new reality in which the Germans woke up in 2022 is a world in which, on the one hand, they want to help Ukraine, and on the other, they are afraid of drawing Germany and NATO into the war and putting their citizens at risk. The *Putinversteher* ("Putin sympathisers") have been replaced in the German public debate by the *Unterwerfungspazifismus* ("submissive pacifism"), which has its roots in the traditional *Ostermärsche* (Easter peace march) of the Cold War era[10]. Philosopher and sociologist Jürgen Habermas argues that the West cannot let Ukraine lose this war, but at the same time warns

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8   Herfried Münkler, "Putins Krieg zerstört die Hoffnung auf ein gemeinsames »Wir«", *Der Spiegel*, no. 9, 25 February 2022, accessed 22 April 2023, https://www.spiegel.de/ausland/wladimir-putins-angriff-auf-die-ukraine-das-ende-der-alten-weltordnung-a-fa31d97d-8208-408c-8106-21e9e776ac64.

9   Burkhard Olschowsky's paper "German Ostpolitik – Traditional Patterns and New Approaches" during the International Conference "The Politics of Memory as a Weapon: Perspectives on Russia's War against Ukraine" (8–10 February 2023, Berlin). See European Network Remembrance and Solidarity, "European perceptual patterns and stereotypes of Russia and Ukraine (II)", 30 March 2023, video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z__Tj7ZVujY.

10   Bernard Chappedelaine, "Germany and the Zeitenwende", *Institut Montaigne*, 2 June 2022, accessed 20 April 2023, https://www.institutmontaigne.org/en/expressions/germany-and-zeitenwende.

against hasty decisions and succumbing to Kyiv's "moral blackmail"[11]. Habermas suggests vigorous attempts be made to start negotiations and find a compromise solution that will not give the Russian side any territorial gains beyond the pre-war period and helps the Kremlin save face[12].

The opinion of the Intellectual is shared by the majority of German society. According to polls in May 2022, 63% of Germans expressed fear of drawing the country into war, 38% wanted to limit supplies to Ukraine, and 55% supported the idea of providing supplies[13]. Research by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace found that 52% of Germans expected a restrained attitude, while only 41% expected more involvement from the German government. However, Germany understands stronger involvement primarily as a diplomatic action[14]. The world's reaction to the conflict was support for Ukraine. Among the countries that provided the greatest support to Kyiv, the following can be mentioned (% of the country's GDP): Poland (0.64%), the Netherlands (0.46%), the United Kingdom (0.38%),

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[11]   Jürgen Habermas, "Krieg und Empörung", *Süddeutschen Zeitung*, 28 April 2022, accessed 20 April 2023, https://www.sueddeutsche.de/projekte/artikel/kultur/das-dilemma-des-westens-juergen-habermas-zum-krieg-in-der-ukraine-e068321/?reduced=true.

[12]   Julia Haungs, "Habermas über die Ukraine und mehr Sichtbarkeit von Frauen ab 47 in Film und TV", *Südwestrundfunk*, 15 February 2023, accessed 21 April 2023, https://www.swr.de/swr2/leben-und-gesellschaft/habermas-ueber-die-ukraine-und-mehr-sichtbarkeit-von-frauen-ab-47-in-film-und-tv-1522023-100.html.

[13]   "Viele Deutsche haben Kriegsangst", *ARD-DeutschlandTrend*, 13 May 2022, accessed 23 April 2023, https://www.tagesschau.de/inland/deutschlandtrend/deutschlandtrend-3019.html.

[14]   Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, "One Year On: Germany's Foreign Policy Shift and the War in Ukraine", 2 February 2023, video, https://carnegieendowment.org/2023/02/02/one-year-on-germany-s-foreign-policy-shift-and-war-in-ukraine-event-8008.

the United States (0.37%), Canada (0.25%), and Germany (0.21%)[15]. The total scale of support from Germany is estimated by the government in Berlin at 14 billion EUR. Berlin's military support in 2022 amounted to 2 billion EUR, and it is expected to amount to 2.2 billion EUR in 2023[16]. In 2022, over 1 million 100 thousand refugees from Ukraine were registered in Germany (of which 63% were women, and 35% were children and adolescents under 18)[17].

Complex Russian-German Relations

Remembering the past does not heal any wounds inflicted in the present. However, events in the present can never erase what happened in the past. No matter what, the past lives on in us: either as repressed history or as history that we accept. For too long, we Germans have failed to do that when it comes to the crimes committed in the east of our continent. The time has come to rectify that.[18]

Germany's leniency towards the strengthening of Vladimir Putin's dictatorship, which has lasted almost a quarter of a century, has been interpreted in various ways. This was perceived as a desire to maintain the beautiful vision of the "end

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[15] Martin Armstrong, "The Countries Committing the Most Aid to Ukraine", *Statista*, 4 April 2023, accessed 20 April 2023, https://www.statista.com/chart/28489/ukrainian-military-humanitarian-and-financial-aid-donors/.

[16] "Military support for Ukraine", *The Federal Government*, 6 April 2023, accessed 22 April 2023, https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-en/news/military-support-ukraine-2054992.

[17] "Starker Zuwachs an ukrainischen Staatsbürgern seit Ende Februar 2022", *Statistisches Bundesamt*, accessed 23 April 2023, https://www.destatis.de/DE/Im-Fokus/Ukraine/Gesellschaft/_inhalt.html.

[18] "Anniversary of Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union", *Der Bundespräsident*, 18 June 2021, accessed 20 April 2023, https://www.bundespraesident.de/SharedDocs/Reden/EN/Frank-Walter-Steinmeier/Reden/2021/210618-Invasion-SovietUnion.html.

of history", in which Russia is modernising itself towards liberal democracy through economic relations. The pacifist passivity of the German government was also seen as a kind of penance for doing too much in the past. Finally, Germany's attitude was interpreted as compensatory leniency for its former victim (World War II caused the death of 27 million citizens of the USSR, including 8 million Ukrainians) and an expression of gratitude for the peaceful end of the Cold War and consent to German reunification[19]. The experience of the Stalingrad defeat is supposed to haunt the German consciousness and result in the conviction that it is impossible for Ukraine to win the war with Russia. The very slow/late turn (Zeitenwende) in German policy towards Russia that we are witnessing is also the result of the continuing influence of the culture of remembrance. While the majority of Germans support Ukraine, there is also a minority that opposes it. The community of Germans from the former East Germany is particularly active against involvement in the conflict in Ukraine. They try to reveal what historically connects Germans and Russians. An example of this is the figure of Catherine the Great, who was born in German Stettin, is considered one of the greatest empresses, and incorporated Crimea into Russia[20]. For this part of German society, Russia's propaganda arguments that Ukraine is not a separate country and the war is a conflict within the family are convincing.

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[19] Shore, "Germany Has Confronted Its Past."
[20] Eric Langenbacher's paper "German Memory Orthodoxy in the Aftermath of the Russian Invasion of Ukraine" during the conference "12th Genealogies of Memory" (26–28 October 2022, Warsaw). See European Network Remembrance and Solidarity, "Genealogies of Memory 2022: panel Memory, International Relations and Disinformation", 9 December 2022, video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HM5kakRf2n8.

Soviet Monuments

In the end, you just have to say whether someone likes it or not, the Soviet Union liberated Germany from Nazism… These things are a reminder of that.[21]

The German culture of remembrance is characterised by the coexistence of a sense of responsibility for the infamous pages of German history; a new patriotism, i.e. pride in democracy based on constitutional values; and the image of Germans as victims (victims of the Allied air war, post-war resettlement, but above all victims of the National Socialist regime) in the public debate[22]. The eighth of May 1945 marks the liberation of Germany from the Nazi regime and its terror. The war in Ukraine put German historical memory, in which the Soviet Red Army is the hero liberating Germans from Nazi occupation, to the test. Discussions on the removal of Red Army monuments from public places, which had already begun in 2014, intensified in Germany after February 2022. However, Germany did not take active steps to remove Soviet monuments, unlike other Central and Eastern European countries. Monuments in the capital itself commemorate 80 thousand Red Army soldiers who died capturing Berlin and are protected by an international treaty. Before reunification in 1990, both parts of Germany signed a treaty with four allied powers, including the Soviet Union, and agreed to preserve and care for the monuments.

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[21] Fokuhl, "Berlin Has a Surprising Soft Spot".
[22] Krzysztof Marcin Zalewski, *The Berlin Republic. Evolution of Germany's politics of memory and German patriotism* (Warsaw: Centre for Eastern Studies, 2009).

Symbolic gestures of support for Ukraine in the historical dimension were the recognition by the German Bundestag of the Great Famine of 1932–33 as genocide. Also the Russian-German Museum Berlin-Karlshorst, commemorating the signing of the surrender by the Third Reich, changed its name to the Berlin-Karlshorst Museum. Further changes in German memory policy seem inevitable. Because, as the German political scientist Claus Leggewie put it, the Putin regime has not yet reached the status of a full dictatorship as seen in the cases of Hitler and Stalin, but its fascist features are as recognisable as are its links to Soviet heritage[23].

Conclusions

Ukraine is a country largely unknown to Germans, a situation which results from ignorance and a rather negative image in the German media. In the consciousness of the average German, the word Ukraine is associated with impressions of a country dominated by crisis, war, corruption, and a lack of reforms. The events of Euromaidan in 2013–14 attracted more German attention and were compared to the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989.

The full-scale Russian aggression against Ukraine in February 2022 is seen in Germany, as well as in most of the world, as the end of the old international order and the advent of Cold War 2.0. In the new reality, Germany must get used to the new role of the Kremlin, which has transformed from a stabilising role into a state questioning the post-Cold

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[23]   Claus Leggewie, "„Wladolf Putler"? Was Putins Regime mit Faschismus und Stalinismus gemein hat", *Deutschlandfunk*, 19 February 2023, accessed 22 April 2023, https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/was-putins-regime-mit-faschismus-und-stalinismus-gemein-hat-100.html.

War order. The dominant reaction of society and political elites in Germany is so-called "submissive pacifism", which is expressed in the attitude of restraint in providing military assistance to Ukraine (residents of former East Germany show greater restraint here). In opinion polls, Germans mainly express fear of drawing their country into war (63%).

The armed conflict in Ukraine contributed to overturning the assumptions of Berlin's policy towards Moscow. The realignment that Germany has to make is difficult because it touches on the complex of the Russian-German relations that existed during World War II and the Cold War period[24]. This approach is dominated, on the one hand, by a sense of guilt in connection with the Soviet victims of the German *Drang nach Osten*, and by a sense of gratitude for the peaceful end of the Cold War and the Kremlin's consent to German reunification in 1990, on the other. The contemporary governments in Berlin must take into account the failure of plans for permanent Russian-German economic cooperation (Wandel durch Handel; Energiewende). Not without significance is also the so-called Stalingrad complex, i.e. the belief based on historical experience that it is impossible to win in a clash with Russia.

There are more than 1,000 memorials to Red Army soldiers in Germany. Some of these monuments became the object of anti-Russian demonstrations (covering Soviet T-34 tanks with Ukrainian flags and anti-Putin slogans)

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[24] Marcel Krueger, "Ignorance of history? Germany's culture of memory and response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine", *New Eastern Europe*, 8 July 2022, accessed 20 April 2023, https://neweasterneurope.eu/2022/07/08/ignorance-of-history-germanys-culture-of-memory-and-response-to-the-russian-invasion-of-ukraine/.

the day after the outbreak of the war[25]. However, unlike the post-communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the aggression against Ukraine did not become a catalyst for the removal of Soviet monuments from public places. So far, only the declaration of the Bundestag recognising the Great Famine of 1932–33 as genocide, and the renaming of the Museum Berlin-Karlshorst (the site of the signing of the capitulation of the Third Reich in May 1945) became a political declaration of support.

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[25]   Fokuhl, "Berlin Has a Surprising Soft Spot".
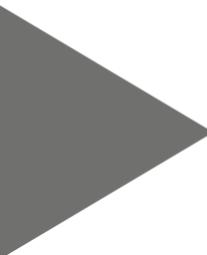
Hanna Bazhenova

Image of the Great Victory in Independent Ukraine: Revising the Concept of Memory

The legacy of World War II played a significant role in shaping Soviet identity. The conceptual foundations of the war's collective memory coalesced during the late 1960s and 1970s and centred on the fact that the Soviet Union played a pivotal role in defeating Germany. The very structure of memory was built around the military commanders, the leaders of the state, the heroic nation, and the warrior hero. Since 1965, 9 May has been the official and the most important public holiday, with its central idea being the victory over fascism, symbolised by the slogan "Never again". The dissolution of the USSR and the emergence of independent nation-states became the impetus for a reevaluation of historical narratives, along with the nationalisation of the memory of World War II by each of these states.

According to Stefan Troebst's classification of memory cultures in Eastern Europe, Ukraine belongs to a type in which there has been no consensus about the communist

past[1]. This has resulted in constant debates concerning the interpretation of this time period, especially World War II as a central element of historical memory. The assessment of the Great Patriotic War (1941–45) and the transformation of the memorial landscape depended on the political changes in the country and on external political pressure, which significantly increased after Vladimir Putin became the president of the Russian Federation in 2000. In the case of Ukraine, reassessment of the war took place by contrasting the existing imperial and post-imperial or post-colonial concepts.

Within the Soviet Conceptual Framework

The formation of memory policy in independent Ukraine was determined by the particularities of the rules of its presidents. This policy during Leonid Kravchuk's presidency (1991–94) was focused on the standard ethno-national myth of the "resurgent nation"[2] trying to distance itself from the extremes of communism and nationalism. The Great Patriotic War, as World War II was called in the Soviet Union, was integrated into the new official narrative by humanising it, focusing on the private history, heroism, and suffering of "ordinary people", while emphasising the mistakes of the Soviet leadership and military commanders and introducing the topic of the UPA into the historical discourse.

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[1]   See Stefan Troebst, "Halecki Revisited: Europe's Conflicting Cultures of Remembrance", in *A European Memory? Contested Histories and Politics of Remembrance*, ed. Małgorzata Pakier and Bo Stråth (New York: Berhahn Books, 2010), 56–63.

[2]   Георгій В. Касьянов, *PAST CONTINUOUS: історична політика 1980-х – 2000-х. Україна та сусіди* (Київ: Лаурус; Антропос-Логос-Фільм, 2018), 106.

President Leonid Kuchma's (1994–2004) approach to memory policy was a derivative of his "multi-vector" domestic and foreign policies. It consisted of modernising the old Soviet model of historical memory by making concessions to different sociopolitical groups and perceptions of the historical past, and of rejection of controversial topics that could shake political stability. This was particularly noticeable in relation to the events of World War II. In his public speeches, Kuchma used the notion of "the Great Patriotic War of the Ukrainian people", thus emphasising the contribution of Ukrainians to the victory and endowing the Soviet narrative with a national characteristic. However, on 9 May, the president tried to avoid mentioning the activities of the UPA in order not to touch upon the broader topic of the intra-Ukrainian conflict of the war years[3].

During Kuchma's presidency, the cult of victory in the Great Patriotic War was fully preserved. On 20 April 2000 in the wake of the 55th anniversary of the end of the war, the Supreme Council of Ukraine adopted a law "On Commemorating the Victory in the Great Patriotic War of 1941–1945"[4]. With amendments made in 2011 and 2012, it remained formally in force until April 2015. The law mentioned the "world-historical significance of the Victory", stating that Victory Day is a day of celebration of the immortal feat of the people who defeated fascism. Reaffirming the status of 9 May as a national holiday and reinforcing the use of Soviet

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[3] Андрій Портнов, "«Велика Вітчизняна війна» в політиках пам'яті Білорусі, Молдови та України: кілька порівняльних спостережень", *Україна модерна* 15, № 4 (2009): 215.

[4] Закон України від 20 квітня 2000 р. № 1684-III "Про увічнення Перемоги у Великій Вітчизняній війні 1941–1945 років", *ВРУ*, accessed 9 July 2023, https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1684-14#Text.

symbology of the Great Patriotic War, the law contained provisions on the mandatory use of the "Victory Banner" during public festivities as "a symbol of victory of the Soviet people, their army, and fleet over fascist Germany". After the adoption of this law, the official schedule of the 9 May celebrations included a solemn procession of veterans through the central streets in Kyiv and other cities in the country.

The coming to power of President Viktor Yushchenko (2005–10) radically changed the official interpretation of past events. Memory politics began to acquire a more systematic character aiming to consolidate society into a Ukrainian nation on the basis of a single vision of its history[5]. In official discourse, the Ukrainian nation became a victim of two totalitarian regimes and the war was presented not so much as a glorious event, but as a terrible tragedy suffered by a Ukrainian people without a nation state.

Even in his first speeches as president, Yushchenko spoke not about the victory of the Soviet people in the Great Patriotic War but about "the victory of the allied nations over Nazism"[6]. Consequently, the theme of victory took on a more Western dimension. Every year on Victory Day, Yushchenko would come to the "National Museum of the History of the Great Patriotic War of 1941–1945" memorial complex and address the veterans. Then he would visit the main exposition, view the thematic exhibitions, and communicate with the

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[5]   Alla Kyrydon, "The Politics of Memory in Independent Ukraine: Main Trends", in *Constructing Memory: Central and Eastern Europe in the New Geopolitical Reality*, ed. Hanna Bazhenova (Lublin: Instytut Europy Środkowej, 2022), 145–46.

[6]   "Виступ Президента України Віктора Ющенка на об'єднаному засіданні Конґресу США 6 квітня 2005 року", *Свобода*, № 15 (15 April 2005): 7.

public[7]. In addition, Yushchenko began to actively pursue a policy of rehabilitating the UPA in the public consciousness, trying to reconcile Soviet veterans with UPA fighters. As a result, at the end of his presidential term, Yushchenko posthumously conferred the title "Hero of Ukraine" on the head of the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists, Stepan Bandera, and the commander-in-chief of the UPA, Roman Shukhevych.

Viktor Yanukovych's presidency (2010–13) was accompanied by a return to the "ambivalent" historical policy practised during Kuchma's rule and by a restoration of the Soviet-nostalgic model of memory. For the first time since 1995, a large-scale military parade was held in Kyiv on the 65th anniversary of the end of World War II, with the participation of 3,000 Ukrainian soldiers and almost 200 soldiers from the Russian Federation and Belarus. On this day, military parades were also held in Odesa, Sevastopol, and Kerch. In 2011–13, the centre of the capital was the site of commemorative events that included the participation of combat veterans along with activists from public organisations[8].

Establishing a New Conceptual Framework
The first Ukrainian president to completely abandon "the Great Patriotic War" concept was Petro Poroshenko, who

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[7] Олександр Лисенко, "Подолання «міфу війни», або від якої спадщини ми відмовляємось: науковий дискурс, політика пам'яті та сучасні виклики (з приводу 70-річчя перемоги над нацизмом і фашизмом)", *Український історичний журнал*, № 2 (2015): 12.

[8] Тетяна Пастушенко, "Війна пам'яті в часи війни: відзначення перемоги над нацизмом після Революції Гідності", in *Суспільно-політична активність та історична пам'ять єврейської спільноти в контексті євроінтеграції України* (Київ: ІПіЕнД ім. І. Ф. Кураса НАН України, 2020), 237.

came to power after the dramatic events that took place between November 2013 and February 2014, known as the "Revolution of Dignity". Through the decommunisation laws adopted in 2015, the term "the Great Patriotic War" was replaced with the term used in Western Europe, "World War II". The same year witnessed a shift in the emphasis from 9 to 8 May, which came to be known as "Remembrance and Reconciliation Day". At the same time 9 May, previously known as Victory Day, was replaced by "Victory Day over Nazism in World War II". In addition, the new legislation introduced a ban on the display of Soviet symbols in public. Concurrently, a red poppy was chosen as a symbol and the words "We honour. We prevail." became the official slogan of both days.

Since 2019, this shift has been largely continued by the incumbent president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy (Figure 8). His speeches and activities on the 8 and 9 May during the first years of his presidency showed that he wanted to reconcile different parts of Ukrainian society. He also called for the remembrance of the dead and respect for the living. At the same time, Zelenskyy stressed that nobody had the right to own the victory or claim that the victory could have been achieved without Ukrainians.

Generally, the activities to mark the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II showed that the Ukrainian authorities had failed to reformat the politics of remembrance, impose the concept of "reconciliation", and shift the focus from 9 to 8 May. The quarantine measures active in the state, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, brought a partial softening of the mood and of the actions of supporters of different historical narratives (Figure 9). Compared to previous

Figure 8. Volodymyr Zelenskyy before his inauguration as president lays flowers on the grave of his grandfather, Semen Ivanovych Zelenskyy in Kryvyi Rih, while President of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko lays flowers at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in the Park of Eternal Glory in Kyiv. 9 May 2019.

Source: Буг, "Порошенко і Зеленський звернулися до українців 9 травня", 9 May 2019, accessed 9 July 2023, https://bug.org.ua/news/poroshenko-i-zelens-kyy-zvernulysia-do-ukraintsiv-9-travnia-314523/.

Figure 9. Flowers at the Eternal Flame at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, Eternal Glory Memorial, Kyiv. Photos by Hanna Bazhenova, 9 May 2021.

years, 2020 and 2021 saw a normalisation of the situation in relation to the celebration of Victory over Nazism Day and Remembrance and Reconciliation Day. The authorities no longer placed such a strong emphasis on separating these dates and showed that, in general, both holidays are equally important.

In 2022 and 2023, Ukraine celebrated 9 May in the conditions of full-scale military aggression. This fact, together with the previous reassessment of the common historical past with Russia, has significantly influenced the perception of the holiday. As a survey of the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology showed, Ukrainians' attitudes to Victory Day changed significantly after the Russian invasion. Whereas in 2010 and 2021, 58% and 30% of Ukrainians, respectively, considered this day to be one of the most important holidays; by February 2023, the number had dropped to 13%[9].

In early May 2023, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy submitted a bill to the parliament of Ukraine proposing that 8 May be the Day of Remembrance and Victory over Nazism in World War II of 1939–1945. He also offered to adopt 9 May as "Europe Day", celebrating like other European nations the "peace and unity in Europe" after the war. The Ukrainian parliament supported this legislative initiative and on 12 June, the president signed the law.

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[9] Володимир Паніотто, "Ставлення українців до свят 1 травня (День праці) і 9 травня (День Перемоги)", *Київський міжнародний інститут соціології*, 30 April 2023, accessed 9 July 2023, https://kiis.com.ua/?lang=ukr&cat=reports&id=1229&page=1&fb-clid=IwAR0D_MUB2UKHwfmXvfYKXviaPMw-Lnh24Lb-YkOhvW8RwNXUtBlL4p-g13w.

Conclusions

The theme of World War II holds a central place in the politics of memory in independent Ukraine. Official interpretations of this period were determined by the specifics of each president's rule. However, the predominant trend was the nationalisation of the memory of the war. Facing less political and national consensus regarding its Soviet past, the Ukrainian political elite dedicated considerable time to formulating a consistent legal approach to the Soviet era. A pivotal moment occurred in 2015 when the term "World War II" replaced "the Great Patriotic War" in public discourse, and the country's commemorative calendar diversified with the addition of "Remembrance and Reconciliation Day" on 8 May. The definitive transition to a common European culture of memory took place in June 2023 when President Zelenskyy signed a law designating the annual celebration of the Day of Remembrance and Victory over Nazism in World War II of 1939–45 on 8 May. However, the role of this day in Ukraine's future cultural and memorial landscape will only be determined after the end of the ongoing military conflict.
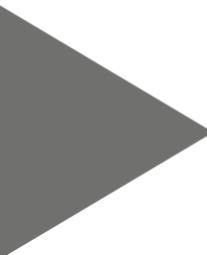
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POLICY
PAPERS

The year 2022 marked the return of full-scale war to Europe. Russia's invasion of Ukraine constituted the greatest threat to the continent's peace and security since the end of the Cold War, leading to profound changes in the global geopolitical order. It also presented a considerable challenge to European cultures of remembrance. This publication aims to explore the impact of the ongoing military conflict on the politics of history in Central and Eastern Europe, examining the challenges it poses for memory politics in this region. The themes addressed not only unveil connections between the past and present but also show how the present sets the conditions for future developments.