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THE HISTORICAL DISCOURSE IN THE STRATEGY AND PRACTICE OF FOREIGN POLICY OF UKRAINE

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Abstract

The article aims to analyze the correlation of the ideological context of historical narratives and memorial discourse with the national strategy and foreign policy practices in a historical retrospective, using Ukraine as a case study.

Scientific novelty. The article analyzes the changes in the use of historical narrative in Ukraine's national strategy and some practices of Ukraine's foreign policy; it examines the most important topics of historical memorial discourse since 2014, when Ukraine chose the Euro-Atlantic geopolitical vector and claimed its historical affinity with European countries.

Conclusions. The way the past is represented is crucial for Ukraine in the process of forming a modern nation. The article emphasizes the importance of considering Ukraine's historical policy and representations of the past, both in the international arena while preserving the country's ethnocultural basis, and in incorporating Ukraine's historical past into the European historical narrative. The article notes that historical discourse changed with Ukraine's shift towards European and Euro-Atlantic integration, disrupting Russia's geopolitical strategy and leading to open expansion.

The article has identified that among the narratives that aimed to prove Ukraine's historical proximity to European countries and/or historical/mental/cultural differences with Russia and reinforced the Euro-Atlantic geopolitical choice, in addition to those already traditionally analysed by researchers, are the issues of (1) the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917-1921 was a manifestation of the struggle for independence and unity of Ukraine, continuation of the traditions of national statehood; (2) condemnation of the crimes of the communist totalitarian regime, primarily the

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demand for recognition of the Holodomor of 1932–1933, as a systematic act of genocide against Ukrainians committed by the leadership of the Soviet Union.

The article has noted the presence of controversial historical themes and figures such as the image of Stepan Bandera and the activities of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and the danger of using issues of national memory in information propaganda in the international arena.

Keywords: foreign policy, national foreign policy strategies, historical discourse, use of history, historical narrative, Ukraine, politics of memory, historical policy

ІСТОРИЧНИЙ ДИСКУРС У СТРАТЕГІЇ ТА ПРАКТИЦІ ЗОВНІШНЬОЇ ПОЛІТИКИ УКРАЇНИ

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Анотація

Мета статті – проаналізувати в історичній ретроспективі кореляцію ідеологічного контексту історичних наративів, меморіального дискурсу з національною стратегією та практиками зовнішньої політики (на прикладі України)

Наукова новизна полягає в аналізі змін у використанні історичного наративу в національній стратегії України та окремих практиках зовнішньої політики України, топових тем історичного меморіального дискурсу, які були актуалізовані після 2014 року, а саме після обрання Україною євроатлантичного геополітичного вектору та демонстрували історичну спорідненість України з країнами європейського простору.

Висновки. Для України у контексті реалізації завдання формування модерної нації беззаперечно важливим є формат репрезентації минулого. У цьому контексті стратегія формування історичної політики України та офіційні репрезентації минулого репрезентація на міжнародній арені одного боку зі збереженням етнокультурної основи та водночас інкорпорація історичного минулого країни в європейський історичний наратив. Визначено, що історичний дискурс набув іншої артикуляції зі зміною політики багатовекторності та визначення пріоритету європейського вибору України. Відмова України від політики лавірування між двома великими центрами тяжіння – Європейським Союзом і Росією, чітке оголошення курсу на європейську та євроатлантичну інтеграцію порушило російську геополітичну стратегію та визначило початок відкритої експансії.

Серед наративів, які демонстрували історичну близькість України з країнами Європи або/та історичних/ментальних/культурних відмінностях з Росією та підсилювали євроатлантичний геополітичний вибір, крім тих які вже традиційно аналізувались дослідниками, стали питання (1) Української революції 1917–1921, як прояву боротьби за незалежність і соборність України, продовження традицій національної державності;

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(2) Засудження злочинів комуністичного тоталітарного режиму, в першу чергу вимоги щодо визнання Голодомору 1932–1933 рр., як планомірний акт геноциду проти українців, створений керівництвом Радянського Союзу.

Векторно, зазначено наявність контрверсійних історичних тем та історичних постатей (Образ Степана Бандери та діяльність Організації українських націоналістів (ОУН)). Зазначена небезпека використання питань національної пам'яті в інформаційній пропаганді у міжнародному середовищі.

Ключові слова: зовнішня політика, зовнішньополітичні національні стратегії, історичний дискурс, використання історії, історичний наратив, Україна, політика пам'яті, історична політика

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URL: <https://konsensus.net.ua/index.php/konsensus/article/view/125>

Problem statement. Historical issues have long been the subject of not only academic discourse but have also become firmly embedded in political practice. The systems of ideologically labeled activities carried out by countries in the implementation of domestic policies and the international policy form and consolidate ideas about the historical past. “Points of tension” may form the basis for conflicts and the justification for foreign policy strategies and practices. Today, in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war (2014–2022), the European community, primarily Ukrainians, have to live through tragic events and see the consequences of historical manipulations with history, while historical mythologies are actively used by Russian propagandists to justify the occupation and annexation of Ukrainian territories. The academic community and politicians state that historical narratives and historical discourse have become the basis for building not only domestic policies but also foreign policy strategies of countries. Ukraine is no exception in this trend.

Analysis of recent studies and publications. Scientific publications on the topic can be divided into two large groups: on the one hand, these are works by experts who specialize in foreign policy and offer analyses on determining the priorities of Ukraine's foreign policy and ways to achieve them; on the other hand, these are experts in memory studies who consider the conceptual foundations of interstate interaction through the prism of national memory policy and memory conflicts; and state that these are tools in the context of propaganda wars. At the same time, it should be highlighted that representatives of all fields of knowledge, experts in international relations, political scientists, and historians interpret the policy of memory in general and historical narratives and historical discourse in the national and international arena as related to the security of the state.

The subject of particular focus is the legitimization of the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine through the use of historical narratives in the international

arena¹. Some ideas aimed at understanding the issues of the correlation of historical narratives with the national strategy of Ukraine and European countries and foreign policy practices are presented in the publications of foreign and domestic scholars, in particular O. Boyko, I. Derluyn, L. Klimenko, I. Litart, D. Olik, L. Nahorna, A. Penkala, Y. Shapoval and others².

The best practices of Ukraine's foreign policy during the period of independence and specific recommendations for implementation were studied and analyzed within the framework of the project 'Concept of Ukraine's Foreign Policy', which was implemented by the Diplomatic Academy of Ukraine named after Hennadii Udoenko under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with the support of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in Ukraine and Belarus, in cooperation with UA: Ukraine Analytica³. The authors of the project analyzed the main directions of Ukraine's foreign policy in terms of conceptual content and identified the priorities of Ukraine's foreign policy up to 2030, including the issues of historical narrative and conflict-inducing aspects of historical memory. In the context of the research issue, the analytical report of the National Institute for Strategic Studies (2019) presents a wide range of issues that have been studied, namely: analyzing the security (domestic political and geopolitical) problems of Ukraine's modern policy of historical memory. The historical and memorial issues of Ukraine in relation to its European neighbors were precisely studied in the report⁴. The analysis of Belgian scholars Alina Penkala, Ine Litart, and Ilsa Derluyn is also interesting in the context of the study of the issue. They identify dominant historical narratives that affirm the monovectoriality of Ukraine's foreign policy direction since 2014. The first narrative is

¹ Bogomolov A., Lytvynenko O. Ghost in the Mirror: Russian Soft Power in Ukraine. Briefing paper. Chatham House, 2012. P. 16.; Rotaru V. Silencing the contestant. Legitimizing Crimea's annexation by mimicking the West. *European Security*. 2019. № 29. Pp. 2–23. URL: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/337164705_Silencing_the_contestant_Legitimizing_Crimea's_annexation_by_mimicking_the_West

² Культура історичної пам'яті: європейський та український досвід / Ю. Шаповал, Л. Нагорна, О. Бойко та ін. Київ, 2013. 600 с.; Шаповал Ю.І. Політика пам'яті і євроінтеграційні прагнення України (2014–2019 рр.). *Проблеми всесвітньої історії*. 2020. № 2 (11). С. 7–24. URL: <http://ebooks.znu.edu.ua/files/2021/PVI/PVI2020n11/7.pdf>; Penkala Alina, Derluyn Ilse, Lietaert Ine Ine The Ukrainian Divide – The Power of Historical Narratives, Imagined Communities, and Collective Memories *Berghahn Journals*. 2020. Vol. 10. P. 125–139. URL: <https://doi.org/10.3167/reco.2020.100311>; Olick Jeffrey K. States of Memory: Continuities, Conflicts, and Transformations in National Retrospection (ed.). Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003. 368 p.; Olick J. Collective Memory: The Two Cultures. *Sociological Theory*. November 1999. № 17 : 3. P. 333–348. URL: https://dli.cuni.cz/pluginfile.php/654706/mod_resource/content/1/olick-collective-memory--the-two-cultures.pdf; Klymenko Lina. The role of historical narratives in Ukraine's policy toward the EU and Russia. *International Politics*. 2020. Vol. 57. P. 978–984.

³ Концепція зовнішньої політики України / За редакцією Сергія Корсунського, Євгенії Габер, Андрія Веселовського, Ганни Шелест. Грудень 2019 (робочі матеріали за підсумками 2019 року). URL: <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/ukraine/15890.pdf>

⁴ Політика історичної пам'яті в контексті національної безпеки України: аналіт. доповідь / [Яблонський В.М., Лозовий В.С., Валевський О.Л., Здіорук С.І., Зубченко С.О. та ін.] / за заг. ред. В.М. Яблонського. Київ: НІСД, 2019. 144 с.

that Ukraine is a liminal space between the East and the West. The second is that 'Ukraine is not Russia'⁵. The analysis of these particular aspects has been carried out, however, the issue of correlation of historical narratives with the national strategy and practices of Ukraine's foreign policy still needs to be considered and further studied.

The aim of our research is to examine the correlation of the ideological context of historical narratives and memorial discourse with the national strategy and practices of foreign policy in historical retrospective (with the case study of Ukraine).

Introduction. According to American political scientists Thomas Graham, Ryan Menon, and Jack Snyder, in terms of geopolitics, Ukraine is a zone of collision between the interests of Russia and the West⁶. Therefore, as highlighted by Ukrainian scholars Mykola Alexiievets and Yaroslav Seko, Ukraine was pursuing a multi-vector and non-aligned foreign policy from the first decade of its independence until the middle of the 2000s⁷. Thus, Ukraine was not certain in its choice between European and Eurasian vectors, although the adoption of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between Ukraine and the EU in 1994⁸, the first EU-Ukraine summit in 1997⁹, the adoption of the Decree of the President of Ukraine On approval of the Strategy of Ukraine's integration into the European Union¹⁰, can be considered a de facto declaration of Ukraine's choice of the European vector. However, at the same time, the resolution of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine On the key directions of Ukraine's foreign policy adopted on the July 2, 1993, stated that one of the main directions of the state's foreign policy was cooperation within the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and that 'the dominant bilateral relations with the border states' were Ukrainian-Russian relations. According to the resolution, the relations between Ukraine and Russia were supposed to develop in the spirit of 'genuine good neighborhood, mutual respect and partnership'¹¹. The conflict between Russia and Ukraine in 2014 hastened the end of the multi-vector policy and pushed Ukraine closer towards a European orientation.

⁵ Penkala Alina. Derluyn Ilse, Lietaert Ine Ine The Ukrainian Divide...

⁶ Graham Thomas, Menon Rajan, Snyder Jack. Ukraine between Russia and the west: buffer or flashpoint? World Policy Journal. (SPRING 2017). Vol. 34, No. 1. P. 107–118. URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26781473>

⁷ Алексієвєць Микола, Сєко Ярослав. Зовнішня політика України: від багатовекторності до безальтернативності. URL: https://shroni.chtyvo.org.ua/Alexsiievets_Mykola/Zovnishnia_polityka_Ukrainy_vid_bahatovektornosti_do_be_zalternatyvnosti.pdf?

⁸ Угода про партнерство і співробітництво між Україною і Європейськими Співтовариствами та їх державами-членами. URL: https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/998_012#Text

⁹ Саміти Україна-ЄС. Міністерство закордонних справ України. URL: <https://mfa.gov.ua/yevropejska-integraciya/samiti-ukrayina-yes>

¹⁰ Указ Президента України. Про затвердження Стратегії інтеграції України до Європейського Союзу. URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/615/98#Text>

¹¹ Про основні напрями зовнішньої політики України. Постанова Верховної Ради України. URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/3360-12?lang=en#Text>

Euro-Atlantic Geopolitical Vector of Ukraine (2014): A New Articulation of Historical Narratives

The Revolution of Dignity in 2014 resulted in the overthrow of the pro-Russian government led by Viktor Yanukovich and a change in Ukraine's foreign policy strategy. The catalyst for these processes was the outbreak of Russian military aggression in the East and South of Ukraine. Petro Poroshenko, as the officially elected president, proclaimed Ukraine's course toward membership in the European Union (EU) and NATO. The mono-vectorality of the foreign policy course was enshrined in the following documents: Ukraine-EU Association Agreement (2014)¹²; and the resolution of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine On the European choice of Ukraine (2014)¹³. In addition, it should be highlighted that the Presidential Decree On the Strategy for sustainable development 'Ukraine-2020' (2015)¹⁴ declared the top priorities for the establishment and development of Ukraine as a member of the European community. Another important legal document was the Law of Ukraine On National Security of Ukraine (2018), which established integration into the European political, economic, security, and legal space, as well as membership in the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation as Ukraine's fundamental national interest¹⁵. It became Ukraine's clear geopolitical choice after many years of balancing the European and Eurasian vectors of foreign policy development.

Ukraine's decision to align with the Euro-Atlantic geopolitical sphere and move away from the Eurasian project has prompted a need for a new approach to memorial policy. This involves shaping narratives that highlight Ukraine's historical connections to European countries and underscore its differences from Russia.

Lina Klymenko, a Ukrainian political scientist and researcher at the University of Tampere in Finland, examined the official statements of Ukrainian political leaders in 2014 within the context of the country's Euro-Atlantic geopolitical alignment. Klymenko found that these leaders frequently invoked historical events in their speeches to promote narratives that emphasized Ukraine's historical ties to Europe. For example, former Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko not only referred to the baptism of Kyivan Rus by Volodymyr the Great over 1,000 years ago as a religious event, but also as a political-European choice. According to Klymenko, Ukrainian political leaders used historical narratives to justify Ukraine's European geopolitical alignment, framing it as a continuation of historical tradition. She identified the following narratives in modern

¹² Association agreement between the European Union and its Member States, of the one part, and Ukraine, of the other part. URL: <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/storage/app/sites/1/uploaded-files/ASSOCIATION%20AGREEMENT.pdf>

¹³ Заява Верховної Ради України "Про європейський вибір України". Верховна Рада України. URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1679-18#n8>

¹⁴ Указ Президента України. Про стратегію сталого розвитку "Україна-2020". Верховна Рада України. URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/5/2015?lang=en#Text>

¹⁵ Закон України. Про національну безпеку України. URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2469-19?lang=en#Text>

Ukrainian historiography: 1) Kyivan Rus is seen as a precursor of the modern Ukrainian state, firmly rooted in the European sphere. 2) The 17th and 18th century Hetmanate is viewed as a Ukrainian state formation based on democratic principles, contrasting with the colonial policies of the Tsardom of Moscow. 3) The period of Ukraine's inclusion in the USSR is depicted as a time of Russian occupation, positioning Ukraine as a champion for its own statehood while portraying Russia as a colonizing force¹⁶.

We can identify several narratives used by Ukrainian political leaders to showcase Ukraine's historical connection to European countries and to highlight the historical, mental, and cultural differences with Russia. These narratives are cited as the historical foundation for Ukraine's decision to align with the Euro-Atlantic geopolitical direction. The narratives include the following points: 1) The Ukrainian Revolution of 1917-1921 is viewed as a demonstration of the fight for independence and unity, carrying on the traditions of national statehood; 2) Contentious historical topics and figures, such as the representation of Stepan Bandera and the activities of the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN); 3) Condemnation of the crimes committed by the communist totalitarian regime, with a specific emphasis on the demand for acknowledgement of the Holodomor of 1932-1933 as a systematic act of genocide against Ukrainians, which was artificially created by the Soviet Union's leadership.

These narratives are directly linked to the implementation of Ukraine's foreign policy. Each of these points has been thoroughly examined individually.

(1) *The narrative about the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917-1921.* In 2016, the former President of Ukraine, P. Poroshenko, issued a decree On events to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Ukrainian Revolution. The orders in the document generally continue the tradition of commemorating the heroes of Kruty, first initiated by President Viktor Yushchenko (2004-2009), but also introduce some differences from the previous ones. It emphasized that commemorating the events and prominent participants of the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917-1921 should be a priority for Ukrainian public authorities in 2017-2021. The importance of this practice lies in honoring the traditions of the struggle for independence and unity of Ukraine, military victory, creators of national statehood, and the historical significance of events related to the liberation struggle of the early twentieth century and the establishment of Ukrainian statehood¹⁷.

(2) *The decree outlined various events to mark the anniversary:* publication of scientific papers, collections of documents and materials, encyclopedic and other publications dedicated to the 100th anniversary of the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917-1921, its role in the history of Ukraine and Europe; organization of thematic informational, educational, cultural and artistic events in educational and cultural institutions aimed at providing information about the events of the Ukrainian Revolution 1917-1921; holding

¹⁶ Klymenko Lina. The role of historical narratives in Ukraine's policy toward the EU and Russia. *International Politics*. 2020. № 57. P. 978-984.

¹⁷ Указ Президента України. Про заходи з відзначення 100-річчя подій Української революції 1917-1921 років. URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/17/2016#Text>

thematic exhibitions of archival documents, material memorabilia and photographs of significant events and figures of the Ukrainian Revolution 1917–1921; comprehensive assistance to scientific and local history research on the history of the Ukrainian state and the Ukrainian liberation movement, and the popularization of them; holding events by Ukraine's diplomatic missions abroad with the participation of representatives of the Ukrainian diaspora to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Ukrainian Revolution; organizing the spread of information materials on the role of the Ukrainian Revolution in European and World history. Thus, Petro Poroshenko highlighted the importance of promoting and disseminating the narrative about the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917–1921 and its role in the formation and affirmation of Ukrainian statehood as well as its significance in international politics.

Ukrainian historians Yaroslav Hrytsak and Oleksandr Komarov also use the narrative mentioned above in their publication 'The Way of Formation of the Ukrainian Identity'. The scholars emphasize that during that period Ukraine emerged *not only as a historical, political or literary narrative, but also as a separate unit with all the formal features of statehood*¹⁸. The historical narrative of the Ukrainian Revolution 1917–1921 is supposed to justify Ukraine's right to independence and statehood, and influences its geopolitical course away from Russia.

It corresponds to the officially proclaimed Military Doctrine of Ukraine of 2015, which states that Russia poses a military threat to Ukraine and, accordingly, the main goal for Ukraine is to repel the armed aggression of the Russian Federation and to participate in the implementation of the European Union's common security and defense policy¹⁹.

It is important to note that the Decree of the former President of Ukraine P. Poroshenko No. 17/2016 On events to celebrate the 100th Anniversary of the Ukrainian Revolution outlines specific resolutions for various institutions, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine. It includes dissemination of information materials about the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917–1921 and its role in European and world history abroad, aiming to shape Ukraine's international image as a state with historical experience in pursuing independent foreign policy, enhancing Ukraine's political authority in international relations.

(2) Ukraine vs Poland: controversial historical topics and figures (the image of Stepan Bandera and the activities of the OUN).

The historical narrative about the image of Stepan Bandera is controversial, both for Ukraine and for European countries, especially Poland. On the one hand, for

¹⁸ Грицак Ярослав, Комаров Олександр. Шлях становлення української ідентичності. Запоріжжя. Платформа спільних дій. 36 с. URL: <https://uinp.gov.ua/elektronni-vydannya/shlyah-stanovlennya-ukrayinskoyi-identychnosti>

¹⁹ Указ Президента України. Про рішення Ради національної безпеки і оборони України від 2 вересня 2015 року «Про нову редакцію Військової доктрини України». Верховна Рада України. URL: https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/555/2015?find=1&text=%Do%Ao%Do%A4+%Do%BA%Do%BE%Do%BD%D1%84%Do%BB%D1%96%Do%BA%D1%82#w2_1

Ukrainian society, he is a symbol of the struggle against totalitarianism, a kind of manifesto for moving away from the communist past (since Soviet historiography strongly condemned Bandera and his activities), and a symbol of the struggle for Ukraine's unity and independence. On the other hand, this narrative has a certain negative impact on the implementation of Ukraine's strategic foreign policy course, as it often becomes a stumbling block in dialogue with European partners, especially Poland.

A precedent can be seen in the interstate misunderstanding between Ukraine and Poland in 2010, when Viktor Yushchenko awarded the title of 'Hero of Ukraine' to Stepan Bandera, which was criticized by the former President of Poland Lech Kaczynski. At the same time, the European Parliament, on the initiative of Polish MEPs, adopted a resolution stating that the European Parliament *"Deeply deplores the decision by the outgoing President of Ukraine, Viktor Yushchenko, posthumously to award Stepan Bandera, a leader of the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) which collaborated with Nazi Germany, the title of 'National Hero of Ukraine'; hopes, in this regard, that the new Ukrainian leadership will reconsider such decisions and will maintain its commitment to European values"*²⁰.

The next memorial Law concerning Stepan Bandera, which led to another misunderstanding with European countries, was adopted on April 9, 2015. The Law On the Legal Status and Honouring the Memory of Fighters for the Independence of Ukraine in the XX Century. According to the Law, the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), headed by Stepan Bandera, was recognised as fighters for the independence of Ukraine in the XX century. The law also outlined the rights of certain individuals to receive state and municipal social guarantees²¹. This caused outrage among one of Ukraine's key partners, Poland. During the VIII meeting of the Interparliamentary Assembly of Ukraine and Poland in June 2015, the Vice-Marshal of the Polish Sejm, Elżbieta Radziszewska, made a statement that *"it would be better to remove the controversial provisions of the law on the OUN and UPA"*²². Subsequently, in 2016, the Polish Sejm adopted a resolution On the Perpetuation of the Memory of Victims of Genocide Committed by the Ukrainian Nationalists Against the Citizens of the Second Rzeczpospolita in 1943-1945²³. This demonstrates the conflicting viewpoints between Ukraine and Poland regarding the historical role and actions of the OUN and Stepan Bandera.

²⁰ European Parliament resolution of 25 February 2010 on the situation in Ukraine. European Parliament. February 2010. Brussels. URL: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-7-2010-0035_EN.html

²¹ Про правовий статус та вшанування пам'яті борців за незалежність України у XX столітті. *Верховна Рада України*. 2015. URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/314-19#Text>

²² Польща хоче, щоб Україна скасувала статус ОУН і УПА як борців за незалежність. *24 Канал*. 2015. URL: https://24tv.ua/polshha_hoche_shhob_ukrayina_skasuvala_status_oun_i_upa_yak_bortsiv_za_nezalezhnist_n_586803

²³ Uchwała Sejmu w sprawie oddania hołdu ofiarom ludobójstwa dokonanego przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich na obywatelach II RP w latach 1943-1945. *Sejm Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej*. 2016. URL: <https://www.sejm.gov.pl/Sejm8.nsf/komunikat.xsp?documentId=2D76E3019FA691C3C1257FF800303676>

K. Zarembo also stresses the importance of historical memory in the relations between Ukraine and Poland in her publication ‘Audit of foreign policy: Ukraine-Poland’²⁴. In particular, the scholar emphasises that for the Polish side, it is generally accepted that the activities of Ukrainian nationalists were an act of genocide against the Polish people, while Ukrainians perceive the OUN as a symbol of patriotism and the struggle for independence.

Since the beginning of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation in 2022, Poland has become one of Ukraine’s main allies. The country has become a logistics hub for supplying Ukraine, hosted more than a million Ukrainian refugees, and was one of the first to impose sanctions against Russia. However, the topic of the controversial historical narrative of both sides has been repeatedly raised by the Polish leadership. Thus, during a ceremony commemorating the 79th anniversary of the Volyn tragedy on July 11, 2022, Polish President Aleksander Duda called on Ukraine to recognise the ethnic cleansing of Poles by the OUN²⁵. At the same time, the President of Poland emphasized: “Those whom we know were murderers, were also heroes of Ukraine, at a different time and with a different enemy, and were killed by the Soviet government. They were fighting with deep faith for an independent, free Ukraine”. This statement can be perceived as an attempt to reach an understanding and find a consensus between Ukraine and Poland on the past, in particular the activities of Ukrainian nationalists. In the context of Russian aggression, the Ukrainian authorities are taking steps to find common ground with Poland on the issue of the common historical past. An example of such commemorative practice is when the President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, participated in a memorial mass with the President of Poland at the Cathedral Church of Saints Peter and Paul in July 2023 to honor the victims of the Volyn tragedy. On that same day, Volodymyr Zelensky made the statement: “Together we honor all the innocent victims of Volyn! Memory unites us! We are stronger together!”²⁶. Respecting the historical past serves as the foundation for strengthening bilateral ties, fostering critical strategic partnerships, and represents an important step for countries in pursuing their own strategic foreign policy objectives. Analysts and international relations experts rightly point out that elevating this emotionally sensitive issue to the level of political discussions within both Poland and Ukraine creates favorable conditions for the manipulation of national memory in information propaganda, leading to a detrimental impact²⁷.

²⁴ Зарембо К. Аудит зовнішньої політики Україна-Польща. URL: http://neweurope.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Aud_Ukr_Poland_ukr_net.pdf

²⁵ Poland asks Ukraine to confront dark past despite common front against Moscow. *Reuters*. URL: <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/poland-asks-ukraine-confront-dark-past-despite-common-front-against-moscow-2022-07-11/>

²⁶ Зеленський і Дуда вшанували пам’ять жертв Волинської трагедії. *Історична правда*. URL: <https://www.istpravda.com.ua/short/2023/07/10/162883/>

²⁷ Концепція зовнішньої політики України. За редакцією Сергія Корсунського, Євгенії Габер, Андрія Веселовського, Ганни Шелест. Грудень 2019 (робочі матеріали за підсумками 2019 року). URL: <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/ukraine/15890.pdf>

(3) Condemnation of the crimes of the Communist totalitarian regime: recognition of the Holodomor of 1932-1933 as an act of genocide in the international arena

Ukraine's proximity to European countries and its distinct historical narrative from Russia was emphasized through practices that condemned the Communist totalitarian regime and equate it with the Nazi regime.

In 2015, Ukraine adopted the Law On the Condemnation of the communist and national socialist (Nazi) totalitarian regimes in Ukraine and the prohibition of propaganda of their symbols²⁸. At the same time, several laws were also adopted, such as the Law On Perpetuating the Victory over nazism in the Second World War of 1939-1945; the Law On access to the Archives of the repressive bodies of the communist totalitarian regime of 1917-1991. By enacting these laws, Ukraine aims to integrate into the European political, cultural, educational, and legal space, since the Law On the Condemnation of communist and national socialist (Nazi) totalitarian regimes in Ukraine and the prohibition of propaganda of their symbols states that the law was adopted in accordance with PACE resolution 1481 (2006); the European Parliament's declaration "On the Proclamation of 23 August as a Europe-wide Day of Remembrance for the victims of all totalitarian and authoritarian regime"; the European Parliament resolution of October 23, 2008 on the commemoration of the Holodomor, the Ukraine artificial famine (1932-1933); and the European Parliament resolution of April 2, 2009 on European conscience and totalitarianism. Historical narratives also play an important role in this process.

Ukraine is claimed to be a victim of the communist totalitarian regime. To confirm this fact, the following key narratives are used: Ukraine's accession to the USSR was violent, with the use of terror methods against the Ukrainian population, while the population was not in favor of the accession. This explains the demand of Ukrainian political leaders for international recognition of the Holodomor as a systematic act of genocide against the Ukrainian nation committed by the Soviet leadership.

In 2006, the Law of Ukraine On the Holodomor of 1932-1933 in Ukraine officially recognized the Holodomor as genocide of the Ukrainian people²⁹. The law emphasized that the mass famine was artificially created by the top leadership of the USSR, resulting in the elimination of millions of people, the destruction of the social foundations of the Ukrainian people, and the suppression of its traditions, spiritual culture, and ethnic identity. Subsequent resolutions, decrees, and orders adopted by the law further reinforced the narrative that the Holodomor was created to suppress resistance to the communist regime. In particular, in 2022, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted a resolution On the Appeal of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine to the Parliaments of the World on the Recognition of the Holodomor of 1932-1933 as Genocide of the Ukrainian

²⁸ Закон України Про засудження комуністичного та націонал-соціалістичного (нацистського) тоталітарних режимів в Україні та заборону пропаганди їхньої символіки. URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/317-10#Text>

²⁹ Закон України № 376-V Про Голодомор 1932-1933 років в Україні URL: <https://www.president.gov.ua/documents/376v-5122>

People in Ukraine. According to this resolution, the Ukrainian parliament calls on international organisations and parliaments of the world to “restore historical justice” and recognise the Holodomor of 1932–1933 in Ukraine as a crime of genocide against Ukrainian people. The resolution states that Holodomor was artificially created by the leadership of the USSR to quash resistance to the communist regime. The dissemination of this narrative is one of the key components of Ukraine’s foreign policy. In 2021, according to the Decree of the President of Ukraine On Events dedicated to the 90th Anniversary of the Holodomor of 1932–1933 in Ukraine – Genocide of the Ukrainian People³⁰, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine was ordered to continue its efforts to secure the recognition of the 1932–1933 Holodomor as a genocide by foreign states and international organizations; “to ensure that foreign diplomatic missions of Ukraine hold events dedicated to the 90th anniversary of the Holodomor of 1932–1933 in Ukraine with the participation of representatives of the Ukrainian diaspora abroad and Ukrainian organisations abroad”; “to make invitations to participate in official events to be held in Ukraine dedicated to the 90th anniversary of the Holodomor”.

As mentioned above, one of the directions of Ukraine’s foreign policy is to call on the international community to recognise the Holodomor as an act of genocide against Ukrainians. As of 2023, 32 countries have officially recognised the Holodomor as genocide³¹. Estonia was the first country that officially recognised Holodomor as an act of genocide against Ukrainian people in 1993. The Baltic Assembly was the first international organization to recognize it at the interstate level. Several of Ukraine’s strategic partners, including the United States, Poland, Germany, Canada, France, the Netherlands, the Czech Republic, and others, have also recognized the Holodomor as a genocide against the Ukrainian people. The European Parliament’s recognition of the Holodomor as genocide was particularly significant for Ukraine. The recognition of the Holodomor as genocide has gained momentum in 2022–2023, likely due to Russia’s military aggression against Ukraine. Many of the countries that have recognized the Holodomor as genocide also have memorial monuments dedicated to the victims. Some of these countries also have practices of commemorating Holodomor victims. Monuments to victims of the genocide are located in Poland, the United States, Germany, Canada, Italy, the United Kingdom, Belgium, Argentina, and Australia. This effort is important for Ukraine because it demonstrates that the country was a victim of the communist regime, not a supporter of it. It also aligns Ukraine with the condemnation of totalitarian regimes, thus reinforcing its proximity to European democratic values and its aspirations for European integration. Additionally, these efforts are aimed at holding Russia accountable for its actions, including providing material compensation to Ukraine in the future.

³⁰ Указ Президента України. Про заходи у зв’язку з 90-ми роковинами Голодомору 1932–1933 років в Україні – геноциду Українського народу. URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/598/2021#Text>

³¹ Визнання Голодомору актом геноциду в світі. Музей Голодомору. URL: <https://holodomormuseum.org.ua/vyznannia-v-sviti-holodomoru-aktom-henotsydu/>

Thus, in the implementation of its foreign policy, Ukraine insists on the international community's recognition of the Holodomor as a systematic act of genocide against Ukrainian nation in order to suppress the population's opposition to joining the USSR. In this way, this narrative becomes one of the points for Ukraine's proximity to European democratic values, and accordingly explains the European integration aspirations of the state, which are laid down in the foreign policy strategy of the state.

Conclusions. In the context of forming a modern nation, the format of representation of the past holds undeniable importance for Ukraine. Therefore, the strategy of formulating Ukraine's historical policy and official representations of the past should aim to preserve the ethno-cultural basis while also incorporating the country's historical narrative into the broader European historical context, aligning with the overall strategy of foreign policy implementation. The historical discourse has taken on a different articulation with the shift in Ukraine's multi-vector policy towards its European choice. The narratives that aim to prove Ukraine's historical proximity to European countries and/or historical/mental/cultural differences from Russia and reinforce the Euro-Atlantic geopolitical choice, include the following: (1) the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917-1921 as a manifestation of the struggle for independence and unity of Ukraine, continuation of the traditions of national statehood; (2) condemnation of the crimes of the communist totalitarian regime, primarily the demand for recognition of the Holodomor of 1932-1933 as a systematic act of genocide against Ukrainians created by the leadership of the Soviet Union.

The European experience of developing standards and practices of politics of memory and building bilateral and multilateral relations on this basis is relevant for Ukraine, as Ukraine needs answers to a variety of questions. One such question is: How to shape the politics of memory while considering national security and foreign policy strategy. The experience of living in wartime has sparked this discussion. The ability to build effective relations, improve communication, and learn from others is an important social skill that is inherent not only in individuals but also in nations and peoples, and is, in fact, the key to their prosperity.

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