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Oksana Pochapska
Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Polish Academy of Sciences
Kamianets-Podilskyi Ivan Ohiienko National University
ORCID: 0000-0003-1069-9639

HYBRID TECHNOLOGIES IN COMMEMORATIVE PRACTICES: MEDIA'S INTERPRETATION OF HISTORICAL NARRATIVES

Abstract

The formation of a unified identity within the USSR gave rise to memorial practices which served as tools for consolidating power and promoted a shared historical narrative, particularly one centred on victory in World War II. These practices aimed to homogenise diverse ethnic groups, minimising their individual traits while highlighting their collective role in combating fascism. Russia, inheriting the USSR's legacy, consistently supports these narratives by reshaping facts and utilising factoids, not only revising collective historical narratives but also advocating for Ukrainian assimilation. The hybridisation of commemoration has facilitated the emergence of new narratives that serve as interpretive frameworks for understanding current events. These narratives not only elucidate ongoing conflicts to the Russian populace but also guide the formation of cooperative prospects and global understanding. They significantly influence public opinion and shape collective stances on contemporary issues. This study, drawing on agenda-setting (McCombs, Shaw) and framing (Goffman) theories, aims to examine the distinct characteristics of Russian propaganda's hybrid technologies within memorial practices and their role in shaping the "required" agenda. Survey results underpinning the research provide insight into the potential of commemorations in conducting information and hybrid warfare. Analysing the narratives propagated in the Ukrainian and Polish mass media, reliant on distorted historical facts and mechanisms for constructing a unified Soviet (with Russia) past, is crucial for fostering a secure information environment and enhancing media literacy among the public. Grasping and critically assessing these narratives are essential for navigating the challenges of information dissemination, guarding against misinformation, and cultivating a more enlightened society.

Keywords: commemoration, media literacy, hybrid technologies, media, myth, narrative, memory

Hybrid wars represent conflicts centred around manipulating consciousness and influencing perceptions. These conflicts leverage historical narratives to shape future attitudes and beliefs. Historical context, being distant in both time and space, offers fertile ground for manipulation due to its susceptibility to interpretation and questioning. The primary objective of information dissemination in hybrid warfare is not merely to alter perceptions, but rather to sow seeds of doubt, which can later crystallise into a series of inquiries, often orchestrated by external agendas, with predetermined answers.

Commemoration serves as one avenue for disseminating these preconceived answers to the audience, whether derived from individual intellectual exploration or media influence. In the current context of Ukraine's wartime struggles, these commemorative practices are wielded as tools of propaganda, aimed at not only shifting diplomatic allegiances in favour of Ukraine but also influencing the perceptions of countries aligned with Ukraine in its conflict against Russia. Media platforms play a pivotal role in these processes, serving as conduits for shaping societal agendas, reflecting societal sentiments, and meticulously crafting audience reactions to various events and phenomena.

Features of how modern media reflect and interpret commemorative events, particularly regarding the occupation of territories, serve as integral components of hybrid warfare strategies aimed at reshaping historical narratives, shifting emphases, and falsifying the historical past of the nations targeted in ideological and informational conflicts.

The main aim of this article is to examine the specifics of the use of hybrid technologies in Russian propaganda within memorial practices and their role in shaping the agenda. Accordingly, the main research questions are focused on studying the characteristics of engaging the audience in commemorative practices as a platform for disseminating propaganda narratives, and also on analysing the specifics of Russia's usage of the common Soviet past as a strategy for forming key narratives in the media within occupied and controlled territories of Ukraine, as well as in Poland via information noise and fakes.

Scholars from diverse geographical regions continue to investigate the politics of memory and commemoration as significant phenomena. Ritualising sacred events and moments serves as a cohesive force that not only shapes historical contexts, but also influences the trajectory of national development. The article examines the approaches of various scholars, including Sabine Jagodzinski[1], Robert Klementowski[2], Katarzyna Kącka[3], Oliwia Kropor-

[1] Sabine Jagodzinski, *W namiotach wezyrskich. Komemoracja wojen tureckich w kulturze szlacheckiej* (Warszawa: Muzeum Pałacu Króla Jana III w Wilanowie, 2020), 444 p.

[2] Robert Klementowski, "Polityka pamięci historycznej jako droga do utopii," in *Utopia a edukacja*, vol. IV, ed. Rafał Włodarczyk (Wrocław: Instytut Pedagogiki Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2020), www.repozytorium.uni.wroc.pl/publication/119503 (accessed: 03.11.2023).

[3] Katarzyna Kącka, "Polityka historyczna: kreatorzy, narzędzia, mechanizmy działania – przykład Polski," in *Narracje pamięci: między polityką a historią*, ed. Katarzyna Kącka, Joanna Piechowiak-Lamparska, Anna Ratke-Majewska (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UMK, 2015), 59–80.

nicka[4], Jan Kubik, Michael Bernhard (eds)[5], Eugeniusz Ponczek[6], Anna Wójcik[7], Mykola Doroshenko[8], Alla Kyrydon[9], Tatyana Zhurzhenko, Simon Lewis, Julia Fedor[10], Oleksandr Lysenko[11], Oleksandr Majboroda[12], Oleksandr Udod[13], Oksana Shevel[14], Ihor Shcherbakov[15] etc.

Understanding the historical aspects of Ukraine's development in the context of the geopolitical dynamics of the USSR and Russia's claims to Ukrainian territorial integrity as a strategy to justify the Russian-Ukrainian war allows us to trace the cause-and-effect relationships between the common Soviet past and the formation of contemporary stereotypes. These stereotypes are based on arguments about "one people" and "liberation from Bandera's followers." Consequently, the historical context serves as the foundation for studying the peculiarities of the functioning and implementation of the ideological geopolitical agenda of the ruling political force, which has used and continues to use the media to establish and impose the desired discourse.

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4 Oliwia Kropornicka, "Komemoracja postaci metropolity Andrzeja Szeptyckiego w 2015 roku a proces demokratyzacji na Ukrainie po rewolucji godności," in *Nowa Polityka Wschodnia* 3, 26 (2020): 93–113.

5 Jan Kubik, Michael Bernhard, "A Theory of the Politics of Memory," in *Twenty Years After Communism, ed.* Michael Bernhard, Jan Kubik (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 7–34; online edition, 21 Aug. 2014, https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199375134.003.0002 (accessed: 14.06.2024).

6 Eugeniusz Ponczek, "Polityka wobec pamięci versus polityka historyczna: aspekty semantyczny, aksjologiczny i merytoryczny w narracji polskiej," *Przegląd Politologiczny* 2 (2013): 7–22.

7 Anna Wójcik, "Polityka historyczna jako forma budowy wizerunku Polski na arenie międzynarodowej," *Świat Idei i Polityki* 15 (2016): 438–451, www.cejsh.icm.edu.pl/cejsh/element/bwmeta1.element.ojs-doi-1015804siip201622/c/articles-2195290.pdf.pdf (accessed: 01.02.2024).

8 Mykola Doroshenko, *Russia's undeclared wars against Ukraine in the 20th and early 21st centuries: Causes and consequences* (K.: Nika-Center, 2020), 192 p.

9 Alla Kyridon, "Issues of historical memory for commemorative practices," *Historical memory* 1, 42 (2020).: 7–19.

10 Tatyana Zhurzhenko, Simon Lewis, Julia Fedor, "War and memory in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus," Modern Ukraine, 02.02.2018, https://uamoderna.com/demontazh-pamyati/memory-wars/ (accessed: 10.06.2024).

11 Oleksandr Lysenko, "Competing narratives: memory of the Second World War in Ukraine," *Problems of the history of the Holocaust: the Ukrainian dimension* 11 (2019): 16–34.

12 Oleksandr Maiboroda, "Mythologizing of prehistory: opposite consequences of pseudo-patriotism," in *Culture of historical memory: European and Ukrainian experience*, ed. Yu Shapoval (Kyiv: IPIEND, 2013), 600 p.

13 Oleksandr Udod, "National Resilience on the Field of Commemoration: Traumatic Legacy and Strategies for Overcoming It," in *National resilience of Ukraine: a strategy for responding to challenges and anticipating hybrid threats: a national report*, ed. S. I. Pirozhkov, O. M. Maiboroda, N. V. Khamitov, E. I. Holovakha, S. S. Dembitskyi, V. A. Smolii, O. V. Skrypniuk, S. V. Stoetsky (Kyiv: Institute of Political and ethno-national studies named after I. F. Kuras NAS of Ukraine, 2022), 552 p.

14 Oksana Shevel, "Is there a way out? War memory in post-Soviet Ukraine in a comparative perspective," Modern Ukraine, 21.03.2017, https://uamoderna.com/demontazh-pamyati/shevel-memory-wars/ (accessed: 10.06.2024).

15 Igor Shcherbakov, "Politics of memory as a factor influencing Ukrainian-Polish relations," www.jts.donnu.edu.ua/article/view/8286/8285 (accessed: 22.12.2023).

This research employs the theory of agenda-setting (Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw[16]), within which the creation of narratives is analysed as a strategy for algorithmising behaviour (behavioural stereotypes). This approach enables the vectorisation of decision-making and the prediction of audience reactions to various types of information. Drawing on the works of Jerome Bruner (1990[17], 2009[18]) and Theodore R. Sarbin (1986[19]), we define "narrative" as follows: "A narrative is a set of interconnected real or specified events, facts, or impressions that constitute the narrative text"[20]. Accordingly, since the texts presented in the mass media of a certain period represent a continuous history of the socio-political development of the country, we can consider them as narratives that form the informational picture of a specific historical period.

Methodology

This research employed discourse analysis[21] to study the information environment for the formation of specific narratives, as well as content analysis of publications to clarify and express the context in which propaganda narratives are formed.

One of the productive methods used in the study of manipulative technologies is the case study[22] method, as it provides an opportunity to analyse the peculiarities of using communication strategy formation technology in covering specific topics.

The chronological boundaries of the study cover the period from 2014 to 2024. The research includes an analysis of publications from key Ukrainian media ("The Day", "Ukrainska Pravda", "Left Bank", etc.; a total of 54 names of newspapers), the Polish newspaper "Gazeta Wyborcza", and Russian information resources (RIA, "Vremya", etc.; a total of 14 resources), as well as publications in the Ukrainian and Polish segments of the Facebook social network and the Telegram messenger. Materials for analysis were selected using software (R, Python) using keywords (at the first stage) and content analysis (at the second stage). A total of 979 publications were analysed, some of which are presented in the text of the article.

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16 Maxwell McCombs, Donald Shaw, "The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass-Media," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 36, 3 (1972):. Vol. 176–187.

17 Jerome Bruner, *Acts of Meaning* (Cambridge, Massachusetts; London, England: Harvard University Press, 1990).

18 Jerome Bruner, *Actual Minds, Possible Words* (Cambridge, Massachusetts; London, England: Harvard University Press, 2009).

19 Theodore R. Sarbin, *Narrative Psychology: The Storied Nature of Human Conduct* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1989).

20 Sarbin, *Narrative Psychology*.

21 Zellig S. Harris, "Discourse Analysis," *Linguistic Society of America* 28, 1 (1952): 1–30, https://doi.org/10.2307/409987 (accessed: 17.05.2024).

22 Andrew Bennett, "Case Study: Methods and Analysis," *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences* (2001): 1513–1519, https://doi.org/10.1016/B0-08-043076-7/00751-8 (accessed: 11.05.2024).

A survey was conducted to identify the specifics and motivations of the audience's involvement in commemorative practices. The results of the survey revealed the audience's motivations for participating in such commemorative practices as parades, laying flowers, installing memorial signs, etc. This information justifies the use of publications on media pages and the use of historical (borderline) facts to incite enmity between Ukrainian and Polish audiences.

"World War II" is a fundamental narrative within Russian commemoration

The consolidation of a unified identity under the USSR gave rise to a novel framework of commemorative rituals, which were actively utilised not only to uphold authority by anchoring it in a shared historical legacy, notably the triumph in World War II, but also to homogenise the diverse ethnic identities of the nations within the USSR. Consequently, the construction of a unified historical narrative involved the suppression of ethno-cultural distinctions, the re-framing of the victory over fascism as a collective achievement rather than individual national contributions, the reinvention of symbols, including the promotion of fictional collective figures as national heroes, and the substitution of religious beliefs with ideological tenets. These efforts laid the groundwork for the establishment of new geopolitical boundaries.

Soviet collective memory is deeply rooted in the narrative of triumph during World War II, evidenced by monuments to the unknown soldier, eternal flames, commemorative ceremonies, and the shared experience of loss and victory. This narrative forms the basis of the concept of a grand Russia and the perceived greatness of Russians as the successors to the USSR. Furthermore, Russia has "appropriated" and rebranded World War II as the "Great Patriotic War", emphasising the collective struggle against fascism. This myth, imbued with personal significance, has been instrumentalised by the Russian Federation to bolster the authority of a strong government and foster a sense of national resurgence, echoing the glory days of the USSR.

The myth of victory in World War II was forged around pivotal events such as the defence of the Brest Fortress, the siege of Leningrad, the battles of Stalingrad and Kursk, and the heroic deeds of individuals like Alexander Matrosov and Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya[23]. These narratives, encapsulated in slogans like "our grandfathers fought" and "we do not forsake our own", were visually reinforced by the ubiquitous St. George's ribbon, symbolising Russian primacy as the rightful inheritors of the USSR's legacy. Consequently, monuments and symbols of World War II, including Soviet tanks and aircraft, adorned the central squares of Ukrainian cities and villages, alongside figures associated with the Soviet victory such as Lenin, Stalin, Zhukov, Shchors, and Rozvadovsky. At the same time, an active campaign to discredit Ukrainians living in the western part of Ukraine began,

[23] Lysenko, „Competing narratives," 20.

driven by the formation of a collective image of them as Nazi collaborators. This portrayal appeared quite organic within the context of the complex historical relationship between Ukrainians and Jews until the opening of the KGB archives. More on this can be found in Lubomyr Luciuk's books "Operation Payback: Soviet Disinformation and Alleged Nazi War Criminals in North America"[24] and Alik Gomelsky's "Jewish-Ukrainian Relations: 20th Century"[25], where myths about the hostile attitudes of Ukrainians, including Stepan Bandera and the entire OUN(b), towards Jews are debunked. The purpose of such actions is quite clear: to divide the diaspora, preventing the Ukrainian and Jewish communities, who were natives of Ukraine, from acting together, finding reasons to unite, and thereby creating a strong opposition to informational intrusions. This symbolism extended to street names and even entire cities, making phenomena like "Leninopad" (the toppling of Soviet-era monuments) and street renaming commonplace in Ukraine after 2014:

> Some found it hard to believe that it had truly occurred, while others were shocked by the presence of a Lenin monument on the main boulevard of the country's capital for so many years. Even more astounding was the abundance of Lenin statues discovered in cities and villages across independent Ukraine. This symbolic and evocative event served as a turning point in political consciousness, catalyzing a series of transformative processes across various spheres of Ukrainian culture[26].

Considering that any state needs not only legislative legitimisation but also symbolic legitimisation (such as a flag, coat of arms, anthem, national heroes, etc.), and that Ukraine fought the Second World War under symbols that legitimised the USSR, the perception of victories in the Second World War as victories of Russia, which became the legal successor of the USSR, was formed. Since losing the sense of belonging to this great victory was deemed impossible (as it would have required erasing four years from individual memory), it became much easier to include representatives of all nationalities under the collective concept of the "Soviet soldier". This concept was then embodied in commemorative symbols such as monuments to Soviet soldiers and monuments to the heroes of the Great Patriotic War (which was later renamed the Second World War), among others.

Today, few individuals remain who directly experienced the Second World War, leading narratives of greatness and victory, as well as shared tragic histories, to serve as foundational elements for shaping national identity. In other words, we are discussing the transition from "communicative memory of the war to cultural

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[24] Lubomyr Y. Luciuk, *Operation Payback: Soviet Disinformation and Alleged Nazi War Criminals in North America* (Kingston, ON, Canada: Kashtan Press, 2022), 243 pp.

[25] Alik Gomelsky, *Jewish-Ukrainian relations: XX century* (Kyiv: Ukrainian priority, 2021), 262 p.

[26] Natalia Derevyanko, „Deoccupation of memory", Post Impreza, www.postimpreza.org/texts/deokupatsiia-pam-iati-mystetski-praktyky-komemoratsii-viiny-v-ukraini (accessed: 13.02.2024) [translated by the author].

memory"[27]. Cultural memory aligns with the context of statist ideology and, by its very nature, falls into the category of a memory regime ("an orderly way of remembering certain problems, events, or processes at a specific moment or period, which later, when actively disseminated by state institutions or political groups, acquires an official status"[28]).This phenomenon not only helps to delineate the trajectory of state development, but also aligns with the overarching rationale for the military operations undertaken in Ukraine since 2014.

> Collective memory on a societal scale bolsters group identity through three primary mechanisms: firstly, by fostering an acknowledgment of a shared history, thus establishing a collective temporal continuum that elicits emotional resonance among community members, irrespective of their affiliations; secondly, by transmitting values and behavioral norms; and thirdly, by transmuting historical figures and events into a repertoire of symbols, thereby crafting a distinctive "language" specific to the group. These symbols, in turn, serve as markers of identification within collective memory, aiding in the differentiation between insiders and outsiders[29].

While the dichotomy of "us versus them" is inherent to propaganda narratives, it becomes especially pronounced in times of information warfare. Dating back to as early as 1929, the utilisation of information warfare has been viewed as a collaboration between the state and the media to disseminate and reshape societal stereotypes:

> […] terror is also regarded as a tool of agitation, where it is argued that at times, terror may be employed to persuade one's own populace to align with underground organizations striving for the nation's independence. This underscores the principle that "The strength of an underground organization increases as a result of the threat it poses to hostile factions": "Terror, as a tool of agitation, yields a threefold impact: 1. on domestic society; 2. on the society of the adversary it targets; and 3. on global perceptions"[30].

Overall, researchers, notably B. Shatska, identify several methods used to manipulate public memory. These include selective suppression of inconvenient historical facts, the introduction of fabricated historical elements (often through fictional documents), distortion of the overall trajectory of historical memory

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27 Jan Assmann, "Communicative and Cultural Memory," in *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ed. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 2008), 109–118.

28 Volodymyr Kulyk, "War of Memories in the Ukrainian Media. Diversity of Identities, Political Confrontation, and Production Technologies," in M*emory, Conflict, and New Media: Web Wars in Post-Socialist States*, edited by Julie Fedor, Ellen Rutten and Vera Zvereva (London: Routledge, 2013), 64.

29 Barbara Shatska, *Past - memory - myth* (Chernivtsi: Books-XXI, 2006), 30–31 [translated by the author].

30 Oksana Pochapska, "Opposition of «one's own and another's» as a strategy of communicative influence of the Ukrainian military-political organization," *Language, society, journalism* (2016): 94 [translated by the author].

through embellishment, manipulation of causal connections, assigning blame to adversaries, minimising the culpability of specific historical figures, and crafting a 'required' context"[31]. These methods serve to rationalise contemporary events by framing them within predetermined cause-and-effect relationships.

The challenge of preserving and commemorating memory is intrinsically linked to how society interprets its past, which serves as a fundamental element in engaging aspects of the collective subconscious. Alla Kyridon highlights that commemorations revolve around three interconnected aspects: material, symbolic, and functional[32]. These aspects are intertwined in various ways, all necessitating public attention and broad audience participation. Hence, monuments are erected in highly visible locations, while rallies and parades are conducted with maximum publicity and emotional resonance to attract a wide audience.

Historical aspects serve a crucial function in information warfare. Monuments dedicated to figures like Lenin, Stalin, and unknown soldiers fallen in battle become pivotal in shaping a distinct perception of historical context. Frequently, these memorials possess both historical and commemorative significance, albeit conditionally.

> If Leningrad, Sevastopol, Stalingrad, and Odesa were granted the honorary title of "hero city" as early as 1945, Kyiv received it through the efforts of M. Khrushchev, even after his resignation in 1965. It took two decades for Kyiv to fade from memory regarding the catastrophe of 1941 and the disproportionately high losses suffered by the Red Army during the Kyiv offensive operation of 1943[33].

Commemoration, historically utilised as a tool for shaping collective identity, has undergone shifts in its implementation. While ritualistic components were paramount in totalitarian societies, the contemporary era, marked by desacralisation, emphasises an intuitive connection with the past. Monuments, administrative structures, and national holidays now play pivotal roles, fostering a sense of unity and projecting symbolic visions of the future[34].

A metanarrative, as defined by Jean Lyotard[35], refers to a comprehensive structural framework within which experiences, events, and individual narratives align, adhering to a singular "correct" model of understanding the world. The metanarrative surrounding the Second World War initially emerged from Soviet propaganda channels such as newspapers, radio broadcasts, and informational materials. Over time, it was further solidified through alterations in historiography, including the dissemination of fabricated events and stories that eventually

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31 Shatska, *Past*, 30–31.

32 Kyrydon, A. „Issues of Historical Memory and Commemorative Practices," *Historical Memory* 1, 42 (2020):. 7-19, 11.

33 Lysenko, "Competing narratives," 16–34 [translated by the author].

34 Udod, "National Resilience," 221.

35 Jean-François Lyotard, "The Postmodern Condition. A Report on Knowledge," The Value of Knowledge: A Miniature Library of Philosophy, www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/fr/lyotard.htm (accessed: 01.02.2024).

became accepted truths. These narratives, often rooted in classified archives and lacking alternative perspectives, underwent a process of assimilative heroisation and sacrifice, shaping perceptions of the war's significance.

> For Ukraine, the issue of war history was further complicated by the existence of "divergent" heroes and conflicting trajectories of remembrance[36].

Certainly, if the eastern and southern regions of Ukraine continued to uphold and disseminate the overarching narrative of the greatness and sacrifice of the "united Soviet people" through events like Victory Day parades (May 9), the "immortal regiment", and monuments, then the western territories were shaped by the glorification of the OUN-UPA, which resisted Soviet occupation. This polarisation of narratives was artificially reinforced through information campaigns, which, over time, became accepted as factoids due to their extensive media coverage. These narratives not only influenced the socio-historical space within Ukraine, emphasising the East-West divide, but also permeated into global consciousness, shaping perceptions of Ukraine and Russia abroad.

As a consequence of this hybridisation of memory, two distinct directions emerged: collective memory and individual memory. In addition, another fairly broad population group was formed, characterised by absolute indifference to historical memory – the "mnemonically indifferent"[37]. This group's social behaviour is based not on understanding the historical context and cause-and-effect relationships, but on the emotional component and the arguments of the present memory regime proposed by the official authorities or certain political forces. While collective memory, functioning as a conduit of values and meanings across generations, fosters a sense of national identity, individual memory often remains private, unable to challenge the dominant collective memory. This dichotomy aligns with Noelle-Neumann's concept of the "spiral of silence". Given its influential role in shaping perceptions, the media serves as a potent tool for manipulating public opinion by shaping agendas and framing narratives to align with certain societal groups' interests.

> At the beginning of the war in Donbas, long before Russia filled the region with weapons, pro-Russian separatists in the Donetsk town of Kostyantynivka told reporters that they removed a tank from the pedestal of a World War II monument in the city park, repaired it, and used it against the Ukrainian army—essentially "reviving" it ("Today", 2014). Whether or not this quote is true, the metaphor used is extremely telling—it implies that the ghosts of a war that ended seventy years ago are still easily evoked[38].

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36 Olena Stiazhkina, "Occupation in Donbas: images of the past outside the context of narratives," *National memory: sociocultural and spiritual dimensions. National and historical memory: Collection of scientific works* 4 (2012):. 102–114 [translated by the author].

37 Shevel, "Is there a way out."

38 Zhurzhenko, Lewis, Fedor, "War and memory." [translated by the author of the article].

The dissemination of narratives aimed at perpetuating the dominance of collective memory in Ukraine is facilitated by the so-called Ukrainian pacifist movement. This movement primarily advocates for reconciliation and the normalisation of relations between Ukraine and Russia, often attributing responsibility for the war to domestic "oligarchs" or the Kyiv "junta". The movement suggests that once these entities are removed from power, the issue will automatically be resolved[39]. In contrast to this approach, another narrative has emerged, emphasising Ukraine's historical right to statehood, tracing back to Prince Volodymyr the Great and extending to efforts like the Ukrainian Istanbul Platform, led by Volodymyr Murskyi, which advocates for Ukraine's acquisition of tomos. This second narrative relies more on factual evidence and the publication of archival materials, while the former relies heavily on emotional appeals.

Inheriting the imperial ambitions of the USSR, the Russian Federation continues to uphold narratives formed during the USSR's existence. However, there's a process of partial modernisation, not so much of the collective historical past, but rather of arguments justifying the assimilation of Ukrainians. This partially explains Russia's conduct of a "special operation" (effectively a war) against Ukraine.

The dissemination of narratives about the Great Patriotic War is accompanied by visual symbols such as the St. George's ribbon and portraits of "grandfathers who fought", used extensively in parades. These serve to replace Russians' family memories of the Second World War with an ideological construct, suggesting that saving the world from the Nazis is a unique task for Russians, worth sacrificing for. Other visual symbols include the portrayal of heredity between the Soviet soldier and the modern Russian soldier, highlighting heroic merits, and the depiction of heredity between fascists (Nazis) and Ukrainians in western Ukraine. Additionally, there's the promotion of unity among peoples, through the ideologeme of "fraternal nations", including concepts like "elder" and "younger" brother, which gained prominence after the Second World War and were further solidified after the "celebration' of the 300th anniversary of the Pereyaslav Union in 1954[40].

HYBRIDISATION OF COMMEMORATION SERVES AS A METHOD FOR CONSTRUCTING AN ALTERNATIVE NARRATIVE

For the first time, the concept of hybrid warfare was introduced by Frank Hoffman and outlined as a theory of military strategy. It involves "any action by an enemy who uses a complex combination of ... weapons, guerrilla warfare, territorialism, and criminal behavior on the battlefield in an instant and in a coordinated manner to

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39 Doroshenko, *Russia's undeclared wars.*

40 "Yaroslav Hrytsak: how did the myth of «fraternal nations» arise?," Ukrainian Institute of National Memory, www.uinp.gov.ua/informaciyni-materialy/rosiysko-ukrayinska-viyna-istorychnyy-kontekst/yaroslav-grycak-yak-vynyk-mif-pro-bratni-narody (accessed: 02.02.2024).

achieve political goals"[41]. Considering that wars today are fought primarily in the information realm, as they are not so much about territories but about influencing the decision-making of a population, the concept of hybrid warfare has expanded. Today, it also includes hybridisation through the interpretation and simplified delivery of the desired algorithms of actions and reactions to the audience.

The politics of memory, as implemented by the governments of numerous European states, including Poland and Ukraine, creates a barrier between aggressive cosmopolitanism and nation-building.

Alla Kyridon's analysis of memory policy implementation in Ukraine identified five main stages, beginning with the necessity of legitimising the newly established state by displacing the Soviet past.

> The state memory policy of Poland, initiated towards the end of the 20th century by Juliusz Maroszewski and Jerzy Heidorec, aimed at fostering a common dialogue with Lithuania, Ukraine, and Belarus while supporting their independence[42].

And indeed, Ukraine's current state memory policy is also directed towards fostering a shared dialogue with countries that, like Ukraine, experienced Soviet occupation after the Second World War. This approach fundamentally undermines the foundations of Russia's imperial narratives.

The hybridisation of commemoration has become the foundation for shaping new narratives, which serve as a framework for understanding the current reality not only for the Russian population, who need to justify the ongoing war, but also as a reference point for the global community. The media plays a significant role in this process, whether knowingly or unknowingly spreading fake or manipulative information. While in Western Europe or North America there is a range of information sources, in totalitarian Russia, even the so-called "opposition" media seamlessly align with the prevailing ideological context. Regardless, the implementation of memory policies in both Ukraine and Poland was preceded by national devaluation and forced assimilation under the Soviet regime.

> For national, and especially ethnic, consciousness, the question of the origins of the people, its ancient roots, and its civilizational identity becomes paramount during moments of major historical shifts[43].

The very concept of "hybridisation" in the context of commemorative practices includes understanding the dominance of the formal factor over the semantic factor. This allows the form to be filled with an unlimited number of meanings, thereby creating informational noise within which the ideological vectorisation of society can be aimed at both legitimisation and the collapse of a specific ideological system.

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41 Frank G. Hoffman, *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars* (Arlington, VA: Potomac Institute for Policy Studies, 2007).

42 Shcherbakov, "Politics of memory."

43 Maiboroda, "Mythologizing of prehistory."

One of the most important aspects of hybrid operations is the culture and sensitivity of the population of the country being influenced. Given the fact that commemoration, as it transitions from communicative to cultural memory, is becoming increasingly formalised (such as the "immortal regiment" with plaques displaying photo cards of unknown people in Soviet military uniforms during Victory Day celebrations in Russia, which are then discarded like props), the content of this ritual system can be anything. This includes using hybrid technologies as a method of forming and spreading a radically new narrative, since "the mechanisms of influence on world-view and value patterns have a symbolic and symbolic nature, connected by other senses, with the peculiarities of understanding events"[44]. Commemorative processes are hybridised precisely because of the semantic content of formal-symbolic paradigms.

We will analyse the nuances of hybridisation in commemoration through historical narratives, focusing on the interaction between Ukraine, Poland, and Russia amidst the Russian-Ukrainian conflict that commenced in 2014.

Informational influences and the reshaping of historical narratives are particularly pronounced in historically contentious events. Regarding Ukraine-Poland relations, the most contentious issues revolve around the history of their border region: the actions of the OUN-UPA (including in Volyn), and the commemoration of its victims, along with the interpretation of the OUN-UPA's significance in Ukrainian and Polish history. Given that the Volyn tragedy stands out as the most sensitive historical event in their relations, commemorative practices surrounding it are increasingly subject to hybridisation. In the Russian media, coverage of the commemoration of victims in these events tends to be emotionally charged, employing artistic elements to amplify emotions rather than fostering reconciliation, a stance adopted by both Ukrainians and Poles.

> The presidents of both countries, Volodymyr Zelensky and Andrzej Duda, participated in a joint memorial ceremony. However, despite this, they seem reluctant to address mutual grievances in their respective circles. […] The Ukrainian nationalist movement, which emerged between the First and Second World Wars, was inherently anti-Polish from its inception. Comprised of veterans from the Ukrainian-Polish conflicts of 1918–1919, during which Józef Piłsudski's forces decisively defeated the short-lived Western Ukrainian People's Republic, it harbored deep animosity towards Warsaw. Additionally, Ukrainian nationalists, particularly the anti-Russian separatists known as Petliurists, held no favor for Poland. They remembered how Piłsudski coerced Simon Petliura into relinquishing claims to Western Ukraine and subsequently refrained from supporting him during the Russian Civil War, which evolved into a Soviet-Polish confrontation[45].

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44 I.V. Melnyk, "Hybrid narratives of mass consciousness in the conditions of information confrontation: challenges for the public administration system," *Law and public administration* 3 (2020): 113–120, https://doi.org/10.32840/pdu.2020.3.17 (accessed: 02.02.2024).

45 Igor Gashkov, "Volyn massacre: have Poland and Ukraine forgotten each other?," TASS, www.tass.ru/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/18239251 (accessed: 03.02.2024) [translated by the author].

Indeed, while the presidents of Ukraine and Poland participated in a joint memorial ceremony, a third party—Russia—remains uninterested in resolving the historically contentious situation. Through resources like TASS, which are occasionally accessed by foreign outlets, Russia not only fails to establish factual accounts, but also interprets historical events with a heavily negative emotional bias. This is evident in their use of epithets such as "strong anti-Polish feelings", "anti-Russian separatists-Petlyurists", and "ephemeral Western Ukrainian National Republic".

> Russia employs a similar strategy in Western Europe and North America by disseminating narratives alleging the presence of fascism in Ukraine and justifying its own military actions as a response to provocations from Ukraine and the West.[46].

In fact, these narratives, being among the most prevalent, have gradually evolved and transformed over the course of the war, particularly with Poland's assistance to Ukraine. It's worth noting that despite Poland's ban on media with overtly pro-Russian stances, such as "RT (Russia Today)", "RTR Planet", "Sujuz TV", "Russija 24", these narratives continue to persist and adapt[47].

In a similar vein, within the framework of historical border contexts and invoking the spectre of "Banderite nationalists", Russia propagates the notion that Ukraine is drawing Poland into the conflict, employing it as a tactic to foster anti-Ukrainian sentiments, ostensibly driven by security imperatives and the notion of collective insurance.

Such information finds amplification in social networks under the hashtag #PolskiRuchAntywojenny (for instance, a Facebook group named "Polski Ruch Antywojenny" [Polish Anti-War Movement] has been established; presently, the group's membership is relatively modest – only 165 individuals. However, videos from YouTube, actively circulated within this group, garner between 1,000 to 2,000 views per day, indicating widespread dissemination of the core tenets of the "Polish Anti-War Movement" among the audience). According to Rafal Wujcik, „the Polish anti-war movement is an anti-American and pro-Russian initiative established by Leszek Sikulski, an associate of Grzegorz Braun, a member of the Confederacy"[48].

Moreover, slogans like "Na Banderowski Ryj Zawsze Musi Być Kij" [Polish Anti-War Movement] ("There must always be a stick on the face of a Banderite")

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[46] „Propaganda Diary 2022–2023: VoxCheck презентує базу російської пропаганди в європейських ЗМІ", www.voxukraine.org/propaganda-diary-2022-2023-voxcheck-prezentuye-bazu-rosijskoyi-propagandy-v-yevropejskyh-zmi (accessed: 12.02.2024).

[47] „Rosyjskie programy wykreślone z rejestru programów rozprowadzanych," Serwis Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 24.02.2022, www.gov.pl/web/krrit/rosyjskie-programy-wykreslone-z-rejestru-programow-rozprowadzanych (accessed: 13.12.2023).

[48] Michał Hyra, „Antyamerykańska i prorosyjska kampania rozpoczęta. Sykulski z Pitoniem powołali w Częstochowie Polski Ruch Antywojenny," Gazeta Wyborcza, www.czestochowa.wyborcza.pl/czestochowa/7,48725,29431413,prorosyjska-i-antyamerykanska-kampania-rozpoczeta-sykulski.html (accessed: 17.01.2024) [translated by the author].

are crafted and disseminated, closely intertwined with the narrative about Nazis and Bandera followers, actively propagated by Russian propaganda as one of the justifications for conducting a "special operation" (war) on Ukrainian territory. These narratives undermine the sense of security among Ukrainians, as Poland currently stands as one of the foremost supporters of Ukraine in its conflict against the Russian Federation.

When discussing the substitution of historical memory, we are referring to a fundamentally new phenomenon that primarily crystallised within the realm of propaganda as a means of reshaping consciousness – false memory. Over a certain period of time, influenced significantly by the media among other factors, false memory starts to be regarded as a revelation of concealed meanings and contexts. Essentially, this entails the formation of a collection of factoids, which subsequently evolve into cornerstones and a sort of foundation for decision-making:

> […] facts which have no existence before appearing in a magazine or newspaper, creations which are not so much lies as a product to manipulate emotion in the Silent Majority...[49]

The alteration of commemorative practices played a pivotal role in the occupation of Crimea. As early as 2014, the occupying authorities in Crimea, with their initial actions in disseminating Russian narratives, commenced the destruction of "sites of memory" associated, in various ways, with the history and culture of Ukraine or the Crimean Tatars. For instance, in Sevastopol, a monument to Hetman P. Sagaydachny was dismantled ("A monument to Sagaydachny was dismantled in Crimea. Photo. Video"[50], "War with memory"[51], etc.), as well as a commemorative marker for the 10th anniversary of the Ukrainian Navy ("Ukrainian monuments are dismantled in Crimea"[52]), a bust and monument of Lesya Ukrainka ("Crimea: "traces" of the occupied Ukrainian heritage"[53], "Putin's ally wants to recognise Lesya Ukrainka as a foreign agent, and demolish her monuments in the Russian Federation"[54] and etc.).

> This is an actual foreign agent. She was born and lived in the Russian Empire and, to put it, frankly, harbored negative sentiments towards Russia. Does the law stipulate anywhere that

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49 „Factoid," Merrian-Webster Dictionary, www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/factoid (accessed: 11.02.2024).

50 "A monument to Sahaidachny was dismantled in Crimea. Photo. Video," VolynPOST, 26.04.2014, www.volynpost.com/news/31819-u-krymu-demontuvaly-pamiatnyk--sagajdachnomu-foto-video (accessed: 05.11.2023).

51 Danylo Kulinyak, "War with memory," The Day, www.day.kyiv.ua/article/poshta-dnya/viyna-z-pamyattyu (accessed: 17.01.2024).

52 "A monument to Sahaidachny."

53 Rudolph Medvid, "Crimea: «traces» of occupied Ukrainian heritage," Radio Liberty: Crimea. Realities, www.ua.krymr.com/a/krym-ukraina-mova-kultura-spadschyna-okupatsia/32381928.html (accessed: 13.02.2024).

54 Volodymyr Kostyrin, "Putin's ally wants to recognize Lesya Ukrainka as a foreign agent and demolish her monuments in the Russian Federation," RBC-Ukraine, www.rbc.ua/rus/styler/soratnik-putina-hoche-viznati-lesyu-ukrayinku-1675226958.html (accessed: 17.01.2024).

> a foreign agent must be alive? […] Oh, we have so many impressive individuals like Prigozhin and Kadyrov. True patriots! Perhaps we could erect a monument to someone who has particularly distinguished themselves, perhaps in Soledar. Or maybe a composition featuring Prigozhin and a few of his soldiers... The key is to indulge in a flight of patriotic imagination...[55]

The open-air museum "Native Village" in Crimea, though there was no necessity to dismantle it, underwent a transformation to fit the narrative of Slavic unity, being renamed as the "Slavic Village" ("Occupational 'revision' of Ukrainian symbols in Crimea"[56]).

> After the Russian occupation of Crimea, the sole Ukrainian open-air museum "Native Village" in the Bakhchisaray district, established in 2010, underwent alterations: its owners were compelled to rename it as the "Slavic Village", and two out of the three-hundred--year-old Ukrainian cottages from Volyn were adjusted to fit the Russian and Belarusian settings[57].

As previously mentioned, in altering the politics of memory, the aim is not so much to persuade as to instil doubts, which can then form a clear inclination to either trust or distrust new landmarks in understanding the historical context of the state's development. Indeed, the notion was propagated that S. Bandera was a Nazi and a fascist. Photographs from the march honouring Stepan Bandera, held in Kyiv, were disseminated across all media outlets in Donetsk, Luhansk, and AR Crimea, accompanied by commentary from individuals appointed as leaders of the temporarily occupied territories (for instance: "Deadly contagion: Aksenov on the march in honour of Bandera in Kyiv", "Fascism has prevailed: the Kiev regime surveils and mobilises Nazis", "Sergei Aksenov: Banderites are undermining Ukraine"[58], etc.).

> The New Year in Ukraine traditionally starts with the Nazi Sabbath. The ideological followers of Bandera commemorate the birthday of their idol with torchlight processions, disregarding safety measures related to the pandemic, much like they ignore laws in general. Banderaism is a lethal contagion that is eroding Ukraine. Kyiv's efforts to establish its statehood on the ideologies of radical Nazis led to the collapse of that very statehood. Crimea refused to, could not, and did not remain part of Bandera's and Russophobic Ukraine. Donbass defended its right to join the Russian world with arms in hand. Other regions, at least those in the southeast, will inevitably follow suit. Healthy people cannot reside in a plague-ridden barrack; it's a matter of life and death. Official Kyiv persists in

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55 Kostyrin, "Putin's ally."

56 Serhiy Konashevich, "Occupational «revision» of Ukrainian symbols in Crimea," Voice of Crimea. Culture, www.culture.voicecrimea.com.ua/uk/diialnist-sekretaria-simferopolskoi-i--krymskoi-ieparkhii-upts-oleksandra-iakushechkina-v-natsionalnykh-interesakh-rf/ (accessed: 02.02.2024).

57 Konashevich, "Occupational «revision»." [translated by the author of the article].

58 "Sergei Aksenov: Banderovtsy destroy Ukraine," Russian unity, www.ruscrimea.ru/2021/01/01/sergej-aksyonov-ukrainskij-natsizm-razrushaet-ukrainu.html (accessed: 17.01.2024).

facilitating the ongoing and irreversible disintegration of Ukrainian statehood. Bandera's marches are portrayed in Ukraine and abroad as epitomizing state policy. Ukrainian Nazism has become a tool not only for the country's destruction but also for its complete subjugation to external forces. This is unsurprising, as this ideology did not sprout from Ukrainian soil; it was cultivated in ideological "laboratories" and imported from the West like an artificial virus. However, historical precedent unequivocally demonstrates that Ukraine can only achieve true freedom and independence by aligning itself with the Russian world. Banderaism will inevitably consign itself to the annals of history where it belongs[59].

During the investigation of the audience's reaction to commemorative practices, the total number of participants in the study was 3,276 individuals, of which 1,277 individuals (38.98%) were from the temporarily occupied territories. The survey included questions such as: “Did you attend commemorations for the heroes who died in the Second World War?”, “How important do you consider participation in public events?”, and “How do you feel about participating in mass gatherings?” (with three variations for each question). The results of responses from these three groups were as follows (see Diagrams 1–3).

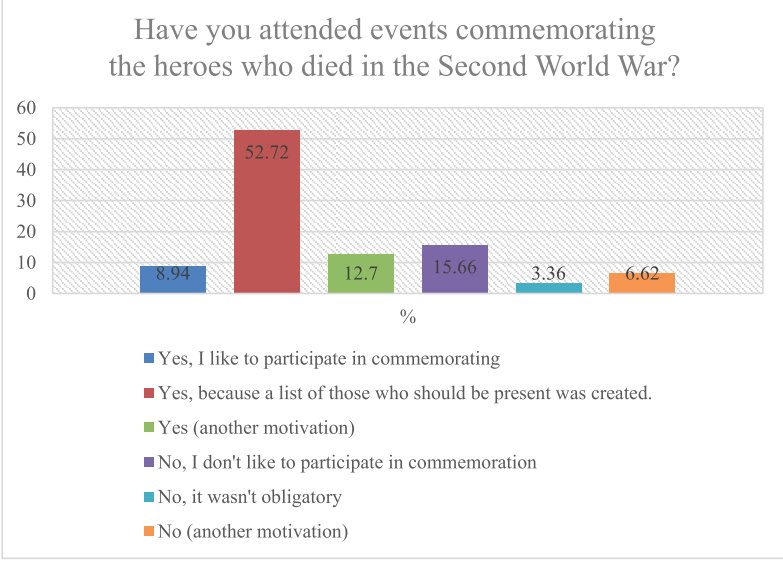

Diagram 1. Ranking of responses to the question “Have you attended events commemorating the heroes who died in the Second World War?”

The responses to this question indicated attendance, largely due to the specified list of individuals expected to be present at the event. These replies were primarily from individuals residing in the temporarily occupied territories, as well as those employed in taxpayer-funded positions (regrettably, the practice of mandating specific attendees at such events persists in many organisations).

[59] „Sergei Aksenov.” Translated by the author of the article.

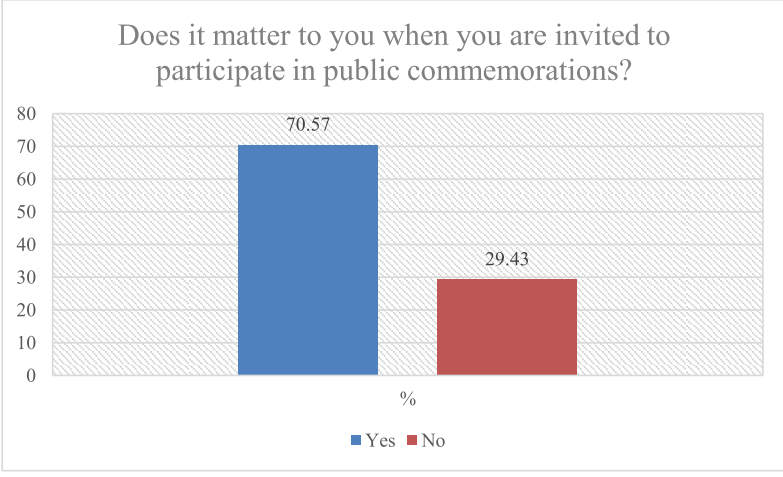

Diagram 2. Ranking of the answers to the question "Does it matter to you when you are invited to participate in public commemoration events?"

The responses to this question underscored the importance for the majority of respondents to be invited to participate in public events, particularly when involving a publicly visible role (not merely marching in a parade, but also carrying a poster, delivering a speech, laying flowers, etc.). Thus, we can infer that the desire for self-expression and public recognition are at play, aligning with other higher--level needs according to Maslow's hierarchy of needs. These needs possess significant manipulative potential, albeit less susceptible to manipulation compared to basic needs. However, manipulations at this level are more challenging to detect.

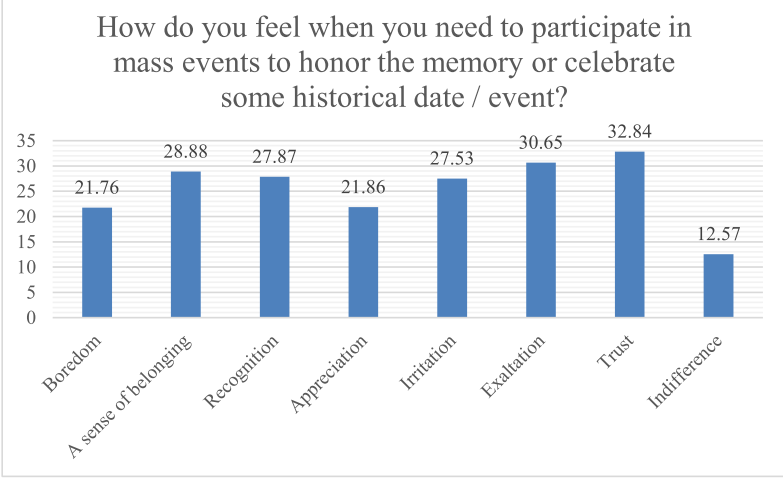

Diagram 3. Ranking the answers to the question "How do you feel when you need to participate in mass events to honour the memory or celebrate some historical date / event?"

Analysing the responses to this question, we observe that the highest percentage in the aggregate comprises positive emotions (a sense of belonging – 28.88%; recognition – 27.87%; trust in the authorities organising the event – 32.84%; elation – 30.65%; gratitude – 21.86%), rather than negative ones (boredom – 21.76%; irritation – 27.53%; indifference – 12.57%). This indicates that commemorative practices generally elicit a positive response among the populace, enabling their use not only for societal consolidation around specific historical themes, but also for building a critical mass to introduce and propagate radical new (often manipulative) narratives.

The survey results provide valuable insights, revealing that the sense of belonging, recognition, gratitude, and elation are commonly experienced when individuals are invited or compelled to participate in such collective mass events. This sense of belonging is deeply ingrained within the context of being part of the collective, which underscores the utilisation of commemoration as a nation-building tool and, consequently, one of the most effective manipulative methods.

The examination of the media's role in disseminating commemorative practices, along with the analysis of the audience's perceptions of mass events organised to honour memory, has shed light on the nuances of employing the hybrid model of commemoration as a manipulative tool. This model is not only utilised to realign the nation's developmental trajectory but also to rationalise war crimes and the occupation of Ukrainian territory by the Russian Federation.

Conclusions

Commemoration is a process of remembering through the actualisation of events, images, and personalities of the past within the context of modern views and needs. Given the temporal and spatial distance of historical events from the moment of their commemoration, the context can be altered to suit current needs and motives.

By establishing regimes of memory, the state or individual political parties give meaning to certain rituals that symbolically legitimise them. This process vectorises the strategy of the population's response to the facts, events, and phenomena of the surrounding reality, effectively hybridising it.

Today, a category of mnemonically indifferent people has clearly crystallised in society. According to surveys, for these individuals, rituals are important at the level of self-expression and recognition through the definition of certain roles in such rituals.

This survey confirms that the majority of respondents consider commemorative practices to be quite positive and are generally happy to participate in them, even when the actions are initiated from above and are thus mandatory rather than voluntary. Moreover, participants in commemorative actions feel much more confident and positive if they have a fixed role. This explains, for example, the mass events in Russia dedicated to the memory of the Second World War, where participants carry photos of unknown individuals dressed in the uniform of Soviet

soldiers. This practice embodies the main narrative of "our grandfathers fought", which has become part of the grand narrative of the Soviet Union as the rightful successor to the USSR and the Russian army as the successor to the Soviet army that won World War II. This grand narrative is embedded in stories about Russia's victory in World War II (essentially appropriating the victory) and the power of the Russian army ("the second army of the world").

Based on these stories and the definition of the "united Soviet people", in which Russian propaganda includes Ukrainians, as well as the "need" to protect the "brotherly people" from the "Nazis" and "Banderites", Russian aggression on the territory of Ukraine is effectively justified.

Historical memory, considering the remoteness of events over time, is transformed from communicative to cultural. In this transformation process, meanings are lost, and the need to fill these gaps creates opportunities for emphasising certain aspects, distorting historical facts, and reformatting cause-and-effect relationships.

The media, as a communication channel, create opportunities not only for transmitting certain narratives but also for structuring meanings through the prioritisation of information (agenda-setting). As analysis has shown, certain interested groups use this to form new meanings within the formal framework of commemorative rituals.

Historical borderlands with unresolved mutual accusations in conflicts that resulted in significant losses for one or both formerly conflicting parties are the most susceptible to reformatting ritual meanings.

Russian propagandists exploit historical borderlands, where unresolved historical conflicts exist. The Polish-Ukrainian historical conflict, the "Volyn Tragedy", serves as such a borderland. Consequently, the image of Bandera's followers is used in informational messages distributed in Poland, primarily through anonymous public forums and the Facebook social network, which are then amplified by groups like "Polski Ruch Antywojenny".

The study of the media's role in the dissemination of commemorative practices and the audience's attitude towards mass events organised to honour memory revealed the peculiarities of using the hybrid model of commemoration as a manipulative tool. This model is employed not only to reformat the nation's developmental vector but also to justify war crimes and the occupation of parts of Ukraine by the Russian Federation.

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