

Transformation of commemorative practices in Ukrainian historical discourse

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ABSTRACT

The article is devoted to the study of changes taking place in Ukrainian society in the field of content of historical memory and forms of commemorative practices. The purpose of the study is to identify the main trends in transformations of the form and content of commemorative practices in the Ukrainian historical discourse. During the semi-structured, focused interview with 51 experts representing the main regions of Ukraine, it has been found that current commemorative practices are based on a symbiosis of monologue and dialogue models of memory. The remnants of the Soviet-style totalitarian worldview have led to the popularity of the model of memory, in which the state's monopoly on history prevails. The idea that national memory consists of many particular commemorations is difficult for Ukrainian society to accept. The past is a kind of symbolic resource, the use of which contributes to the legitimization of Ukraine as an independent state. However, the forms of commemoration remain largely old. Along with fundamentally new forms, primarily related to Internet technologies and social networks, in Ukraine, just as in the Soviet period, commemoration is focused on honoring heroes and victims. At the same time, there is a radical reassessment: the heroes of the Soviet era have become villains, and villains have become heroes. All this points to the "hybrid nature" of commemorative practices with an emphasis on the martyrological-victim component and the trauma of the social psyche of Ukrainians.

KEYWORDS

social practices, commemoration, expert survey, historical memory, politics of memory.

Introduction

One of the concepts that enriched Ukrainian socio-philosophical thought of the new millennium is the concept of "social practices". The introduction of this concept into the social science lexicon was caused by the need to overcome the opposition of objective and subjective principles, which led to a methodological crisis in sociology and, accordingly, its division into macro- and micro-sociological approaches and paradigms. The concept of "social practices" differs from the category of "social relations" primarily in the fact that social relations precede social practices: "on the one hand, the subject constructs its practices, but this process is conditioned by previous social relations, on the other, social relations causally cause the practices of the subjects, but this determination is always mediated by the practices themselves. Accordingly, the social appears as a process of continuous interiorization / exteriorization, i.e. interiorization of social relations and the associated reverse process of exteriorization are implemented only within the pre-given social forms, with the precondition of the already-existence of social relations" (Popov et al, 2007: 40).

The concept of "social practices" is functionally intended to unite various forms of human activity by the common denominator. In this context, we should talk about economic, political, religious, artistic, educational practices and so on. An important place among them is occupied by commemorative practices aimed at objectifying collective memory within social relations.

The etymology of the word "commemorative" comes from the French *comme* – "how?" and *memoria* – "memory". The English word "to commemorate" refers to an event or artifact that aims at marking something in the past (a famous person, a memorable date, a place, etc.). Commemorative practices involve a wide range of joint actions (rituals, ceremonies, presentations) and objects (monuments, burial sites, memorial complexes) that enshrine a particular historical narrative that is relevant to all or part of society.

It is clear that the changeability, internal contradictions, conflict of historical narrative extend to commemorative practices. They cannot be defined once and for all, social changes cause increased dynamics of commemorative practices.

Moreover, from the standpoint of social constructionism, the correction of commemorative practices is seen as a project. This understanding follows from the multiplicity of historical realities, which may be changed, re-structured, re-evaluated, that is, transformed as well as the future social reality. As Benedetto Croce once said, "dead history arises, the past becomes the present when life itself demands it".

Projective activities to correct the content of historical memory and relevant commemorative practices have many points of convergence with mythmaking. But such projectivity is also a prerequisite for the constitution of social practice aimed at history. According to P. Corcuff, "for constructivism, historicity is the main concept in three dimensions. Firstly, the social world was constructed based on past pre-constructions; in this respect, constructivism follows Marx, who wrote: "People make their history, but they do it not the way they want, in circumstances that they did not choose, but which are directly available, provided by them and passed from the past". Secondly, past social forms are reproduced, appropriated, displaced and modified, while other forms are invented during actions and interactions (during face-to-face contacts, during telephone, written and other interactions) that take place in the daily lives of actors. Third, this past legacy and this daily work open up the field of opportunities for the future" (Korkuf, 2002: 25).

Thus, the dynamics of the forms and content of commemorative practices reflects certain trends in the development of society as a whole. This article is the result of the study of changes in commemorative practices in Ukrainian historical discourse¹.

The purpose

The purpose of the study is to identify the main trends in transformations of the form and content of commemorative practices in the Ukrainian historical discourse.

Achieving this purpose involves the following tasks:

1. Clarification of changes in the forms of commemorative practices in modern Ukrainian society by comparing them with the Soviet era and the period of the first years after the restoration of Ukrainian statehood.

2. Identification of the transformation of the content of the Ukrainian national narrative and relevant commemorative practices, definition of the range of historical events, the memory of which is fostered by the official socio-political discourse.

3. Personalization of heroes, villains and victims in the Ukrainian history in the 20th century, the definition of controversial stories in the content of modern commemorative practices.

4. Identification of the attitude of experts to the state memory policy and ways to implement it in the political and legal sphere.

Research methods

The main method of gathering information for the study is an in-depth semi-structured survey of experts in

the field of the politics of memory and historical narrative. Prior to the interview, respondents were sent an indicative list of questions for discussion. According to the above tasks, this list consisted of 4 sets.

The first set – the dynamics of forms of commemorative practices – included the following questions:

- What forms of commemorative practices can You name?

- Which ones are typical of our time?

- Compared to the first years of Ukrainian independence, what new commemorative practices have emerged during this time?

- Which ones have disappeared or almost disappeared?

The second set consisted questions about the content of the historical narrative:

- Name 5 events in the history of Ukraine, the memory of which is fostered today by the official socio-political discourse?

- Name 5 events in the history of Ukraine, the memory of which was fostered by Soviet ideology?

- What events of their past would modern Ukrainians prefer to forget?

- What places of memory (monuments, memorial complexes) are symbols of memorial culture of modern Ukraine?

The third set was about personalization of characters, detection of controversial plots:

- In Your opinion, in Ukrainian history, who is

A hero

A villain

A victim

- In Your opinion, what criteria should an ideal national hero meet?

The fourth set was devoted to the attitude to the state politics of memory:

- What were the consequences of the adoption of a package of 4 decommunization laws by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine on April 9, 2015 for commemorative practices?

- Does the process of renaming toponyms and demolishing monuments launched by the Law "On Condemnation of Communist and National Socialist (Nazi) Totalitarian Regimes and Prohibition of Propaganda of Their Symbols" meet European standards?

- In Your opinion, how the victory in World War II should be celebrated?

- How would You describe the politics of memory pursued by President Volodymyr Zelenskyy? How does it differ from the policies of his predecessors?

- Your attitude to the activities of the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory. Is such an institution necessary in the structure of the executive branch?

The interview focused on these areas was not limited to strictly stated issues, the experts had the opportunity to express their position freely, provided additional arguments, examples from their own experience. The conversation was recorded on a voice recorder, the time of one interview varied from 30 to 45 minutes.

Total survey included 51 people. Experts were selected according to their level of competence and professional experience, taking into account gender, age and geographical (regional) characteristics.

¹ The research has been conducted within the research topic "Difficult questions of historical memory of the Central-Eastern Europe of XX-XXI centuries in the paradigm of dialogue of Ukrainian culture" (state registration number 00116U003294), implemented at the Faculty of History and Philosophy, Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University. The author would like to thank the students of the specialty "Philosophy" who helped with the interview.

Table 1.
Regional, gender and age characteristics of respondents

Region	Gender		Age					Total
	M.	F.	Under 30 years	31-40 years	41-50 years	51-60 years	Older than 60 years	
Kyiv	7	2	1	1	1	5	1	9
Lviv	3	4	1	2	2	1	1	7
Kharkiv	3	3	2	1	1	1	1	6
Odessa	3	3	1	2	1	1	1	6
Zaporizhzhia	2	4	1	-	2	1	2	6
Uzhhorod	1	2	-	1	1	1	-	3
Donetsk Region	2	3	1	1	1	1	1	5
Chernihiv	1	2	-	1	1	-	1	3
Vinnitsia	2	1	1	-	-	1	1	3
Cherkasy	1	2	1	1	-	1	-	3
Total	25	26	9	10	10	13	9	51

The sample was formed by the method of “snowball sampling”, but there were not more than two links in one chain. The interviewers worked in Kyiv, Lviv, Kharkiv, Odessa, Zaporizhzhia, Uzhhorod, Chernihiv, Vinnytsia, Cherkasy, and in the unoccupied districts of the Donetsk Region. Some of the interviews were conducted in an online format with mandatory video recording.

The methods used in the processing of primary information is a method of identifying key narratives with elements of content analysis.

Results and Discussion

1. Forms of commemorative practices and their dynamics.

At the level of interviewed experts, the question about forms of commemoration did not cause much difficulty. The vast majority agreed that commemorative practices should be understood as any collective action aimed at restoring the connection between past and present events in people’s minds. Some of the respondents mentioned P. Connerton’s books “How Societies Remember” (Connerton, 2004), A. Kyrydon’s “Heterotopia of Memory” (2016), L. Nagorna’s “Historical Memory” (2012), “Social framework of memory” by M. Halbwachs (2007) and other scientific sources.

Answering the question “What forms of commemorative practices can You name?”, the experts both narrowed and expanded the list of such practices:

“I can name, in particular, the construction of places of memory, memorials, creation of sculptures, monuments, installation of memorial plaques among the forms of commemorative practices; historical reconstructions, i.e. reconstructors’ performances dedicated to certain historical dates, trips to places of military glory, holiday demonstrations. These can be flash mobs, virtual tours with the help of computer technology, relevant activity in social networks” (man, 50 years old, Vinnytsia).

“The forms of commemoration that are on the surface are related to the state memory politics. These include events (mass rallies, demonstrations, solemn assemblies, awards, moments of silence, memorials, declarations of government officials) to commemorate outstanding events in the country. For example, the latest revolutions in Ukraine is useful for self-awareness, critical understanding of national destiny, its neighbors, their evaluation, understanding the strengths and weaknesses of our nation. At the same time, commemorative practices are not limited to such state measures. These should include national holidays that are directly related to rituals, national traditional outfits, folk songs, proverbs, cuisine, customs that appeal to the sacred, including pre-Christian traditions, the national unconscious. Folk crafts, like embroidery, pysanka, painting, author’s poetry and song, carving, pottery, folk dance, etc., all come from the national unconscious, so these practices relate to national memory. The practice of local historiographical and ethnographic research, which is carried out by hundreds of amateur enthusiasts, has a categorically positive effect on the colorful picture of the heritage of the national memory of Ukraine” (man, 40 years old, Donetsk Region).

“There are no classifications of commemorative practices as such, but if we turn to E. Durkheim’s works, we find the division of rituals into positive and negative, depending on what function they perform in society. Durkheim considered commemorative practices as one of the manifestations of solidarity in society and, in particular, wrote about implicit commemoration, i.e. visiting sacred places of the past, pilgrimage rituals. Pierre Nora explored so-called “places of memory”. This concept has become widespread today, including in the Ukrainian context... Another form of commemoration is a holiday, it is also associated with solidarity. Linking holidays to certain dates, which remind of the events of the past important for society, contributes to the unification of people, the formation of their identity. It is possible that over time people forget about the content of the event to which the holiday is dedicated, but it acquires a value-symbolic meaning, becomes identified with individual experience and value system of a particular person... So, in my understanding, forms of commemorative practices are, first of all, rituals, secondly,

places of memory and everything connected with them, and thirdly, the system of holidays" (woman, 50 years old, Kyiv).

"Commemorative practices are the perpetuation of the memory of heroes and historical events, in particular, in texts, in books, in monuments, in public events, in places of memory. It may be a cemetery, which is memory space by its purpose. There may be a memorial complex, such as the Alley of Heavenly Hundred Heroes, Babi Yar, the National Museum of the Holodomor-Genocide. The latter, by the way, was included in the official foreign delegation visit programmes" (woman, 40 years old, Kyiv).

During the interviews, respondents expressed the opinion that the forms of commemorative practices are universal, they basically exist in all societies and perform the same functions. The tendency to simplify commemorative procedures can be traced within the process of historical development: when, for example, in ancient times, the memory of the fallen hero was honored with a mass procession, rich ceremonies, monuments, today it is just a moment of silence.

According to experts, forms of commemorative practices are more conservative and inert compared to the content of commemoration. In modern Ukraine, this leads to the fact that we honor the memory of those fighting against Soviet rule in a "Soviet" way. This hybrid nature of commemorative practices was typical of the 1990s, the 2000s, has existed until the 2004 Orange Revolution and the beginning of President Yushchenko's national memory policy.

Here are some extracts from the answer to the question "Compared to the first years of Ukrainian independence, what new commemorative practices have emerged during this time?":

"During the years of independence, all that was suppressed by Soviet ideology, i.e. scientific (ethnographic, folklore, historiographical) investigations of enthusiasts, began to develop rapidly. A huge number of them appears then. They, one way or another, reveal the truth about our coat of arms, flag, real history of the Cossacks, authentic toponyms and their origins, real relations with neighbors, the real situation in Ukrainian education and science, which overtook the eastern neighbor for more than a century, etc. After the declassification of the archives, the political and unparalleled for our nation sad topic of the Holodomor, repressions and, in general, the consequences of foreign rule in Ukraine is being actively promoted. The subjects of the commemoration showed how the Soviet government erased everything original Ukrainian in science, emptied culture, replaced national memory and self-awareness, made Ukrainians synonymous with illiterate peasants in ridiculous clothes" (man, 40 years old, Donetsk Region).

"Ukraine's present is characterized by a new holidays calendar, which has acquired a pronounced national complexion. Since 1991, when the main state holiday was introduced – August 24, Independence Day of Ukraine, or as it is now called, the Day of Ukrainian Statehood; since 1996 – the adoption of a new Constitution, when we celebrate Constitution Day on June 28; to February 20, when Ukraine honors the memory of the Heavenly Hundred Heroes... Places of memory are also being developed in Ukraine, connected with the named and other events, which are key events for the modern historical narrative: cenotaphs on the Hrushevskyyi Street in Kyiv, the wall of St. Michael's Cathedral, many commemorative plaques and monuments at the sites of death and burial of participants in the Revolution of Dignity, the war in Donbass, etc..." (woman, 50 years old, Kyiv).

"Over the past 30 years, we are witnessing the replacement of the Soviet system of commemorative practices with older, more traditional forms along with the process of de-ideologisation. Religious rituals, such as prayer meetings, processions, and the consecration of monuments, have resumed. This is particularly true for memory of the victims of the Holodomor and Stalin's repressions. Even the candle we light in memory of the dead is a church attribute. See how the victims

from the ATO zone are met in Ukrainian cities and villages – they are met on one's knees! I think the replacement of political and ideological forms with religious ones is a general trend" (woman, 50 years old, Cherkasy).

"Everything connected with the Internet and information technology has appeared. A band on an avatar as a gesture of solidarity with a certain event, a photo with a candle on Remembrance Day, reposts, likes, subscriptions to historical pages on social networks, blogs and forums – all this is new, there was nothing like that in Soviet times because of the lack of such technologies. And the mobile Internet, and in particular social networks, is a powerful tool of memory" (man, 20 years old, Kharkiv).

Experts noted the disappearance (or almost total disappearance) of some forms of commemoration simultaneously with the emergence of new forms of commemorative practice:

"In my opinion, almost everything artificial, planted by ideology, in particular, parades that glorified the greatness of the Communist Party, the Soviet army, the abstract proletariat, has disappeared. Signs and artificial ideological organizations of a semi-coercive nature have disappeared" (man, 40 years old, Donetsk Region).

"Such forms of commemoration as mass demonstrations of workers on the main Soviet holidays, namely May 1 and October 7, have become history. It is already difficult for me to explain how we felt during these demonstrations, how they were organized and conducted, to my students – they just have no idea about it. I am not saying whether it was good or bad, but today such a practice no longer exists. The alternative to the official parade of the troops of the defenders of Ukraine on Independence Day on August 24, which is becoming traditional, has a completely different content" (man, 40 years old, Zaporizhzhia).

"From the Soviet era, I remember the ceremonial rituals of admission to October, to the pioneers, to the Komsomol, which were to symbolize the longevity of generations, the devotion of young people to the ideals of communism. This ritual has become commonplace and was perceived by the majority as somewhat uncritical. It is clear that such forms of commemorative practices have completely disappeared from modern life" (woman, 50 years old, Kyiv).

2. Trends in changes in the Ukrainian national narrative.

Compared to the form, the content of commemorative practices is more flexible. Experts almost unanimously stated the high dynamics of changes in the Ukrainian national narrative, especially after 2014. Everything related to the Soviet era and Russia is gradually being erased from official discourse.

"The main slogan of the national narrative is that Ukrainians have always wanted to be independent and autonomous. This slogan is based on the National Liberation War led by Bogdan Khmelnytsky, but – without the Pereyaslav Council. Modern creators of the politics of memory turn to the events of the 17th century, fostering the short experience of the existence of Ukrainian statehood. They are also based on the events of the Ukrainian revolution and liberation struggles of 1917-1921: when the Bolshevik regime (the "dictatorship of the proletariat") had already been established in Russia, we have a relatively democratic European-style government in Ukraine. The Universals of the Central Council show us the evolution of the political discourse of that time with a general direction from the empire, from Russia. That is, we look for examples that strengthen the current political course in the historical past. The second line in the national narrative is that we have enemies, and the main enemy is our northeastern neighbor. Were it not for the events of 2014, the insidious theft of Crimea and the war in Donbass, the majority of the population of Ukraine may not have realized this fact. Historical memory allows us to return the facts of confrontations, conflicts and wars – temporary defeats and victories – of Ukraine

with Russia from oblivion. The third line in the national narrative is that we want to be a full-fledged European nation, that we have European priorities, an appropriate mentality, an orientation towards the rule of law. The desire for a dignified life, personal well-being, democracy, civil liberties, etc. follows from this" (woman, 40 years old, Kyiv).

Answering the question "Name 5 events in the history of Ukraine, the memory of which is cultivated today by the official socio-political discourse?", experts, in general, confirmed the above opinion.

"Everything related to the preservation and revival of the Ukrainian nation and its cultural heritage is being cultivated today. The core of the historical memory of Ukrainians, in my opinion, is the history of the Cossacks, which led to the event described in large amounts of cultural texts; then, the 1917-1920 Ukrainian national liberation struggle, a short period of Ukrainian statehood, "Executed Renaissance"; then, the Holodomor of 1932-33; Chernobyl, although this catastrophe is not a purely national narrative, it took place on the territory of Ukraine; finally, current events in Kyiv, Crimea, and Donbas, from 2013/14 to the present day. These events will determine the main content of cultural and historical reflections in literature, art, journalism" (woman, 50 years old, Kyiv).

"We celebrate the main historical events every year. They are arranged into the national calendar. Firstly, it is the Holodomor 1932-1933 Memorial Day; secondly, August 24 – the Independence Day of Ukraine 1991; thirdly, May 8 – the Day of Remembrance and Reconciliation; fourthly, June 28 – the Constitution Day; fifthly, October 14 – the Intercession of the Theotokos, the day of the Ukrainian Cossacks. I would like to add the sixth item on February 20 – the Day of Remembrance of the Heroes of the Heavenly Hundred" (man, 40 years old, Donetsk Region).

Compared to Soviet times and the first years of Ukrainian independence, the content of the national commemoration has been significantly revised. Experts emphasized the events cultivated by Soviet ideology, including the Victory over Germany in the Great Patriotic War, the October Revolution, industrialization and collectivization, the first five-year plans, and the first space flight. And also:

"Ukraine and Russia's unification, Pereyaslav Council, 1654; Taras Shevchenko, against serfdom, social and class context; the civil war was the Makhnovshchina in a negative context, and the OUN-UPA, the Sixtiers were not mentioned" (woman, 50 years old, Kyiv).

"I do not recall such events directly in the history of Ukraine, which would be strongly cultivated by Soviet ideology. Rather, they were All-Union dates and holidays, such as the anniversary of the so-called Great October Revolution (October 7), Lenin's birthday (April 22), International Workers' Day (May 1), Victory Day (May 9), and International Women's Day (March 8). Many of these events in the Soviet calendar were not directly related to Ukraine" (man, 40 years old, Donetsk Region).

Respondents noted that historical memory not only preserves the events of the past, but also provides a moral and legal assessment, striking what does not correspond to the modern vision off the national narrative. The high dynamics of commemorative practices would not be possible without "forgetting". Therefore, counter-memory coexists with official memory. For Ukraine, with the ideological and axiological split in its population, the question of what to remember and what to forget is very painful. Here are some answers of experts to the question "What events of their past would modern Ukrainians prefer to forget?"

"They prefer to forget collaboration with the Nazis during World War II, the participation of Ukrainians in the executions of

Jews, including in Babyn Yar" (man, more than 60 years old, Odessa).

"The role of Bogdan Khmelnytsky is rethought, his role as a statesman is reinterpreted as if he defended the rights of the Cossacks and did not aim to create an independent Ukrainian state" (woman, 30 years old, Uzhhorod).

"In my opinion, this is a philosophical question. Ortega's "mass man", which, in fact, constitutes our society, by its consumer nature prefers to forget everything that is not about fun, entertainment, laziness and euphoria. Hence, such a man does not keep in mind everything (unnecessary) that concerns national dignity, national liberation resistance, its heroes, everything that concerns work and the use of one's own energy. Some commemorative practices, like folk crafts, folk songs, dances, some scientific research are largely forgotten "by default". Instead, a person consciously seeks to develop one's identity, to expand the sphere of the identity, to which the national consciousness belongs. Such people, on the contrary, seek to master the national forms of commemoration close to them. Passionarians, ideally, seek to broaden the horizons of the nation to which they belong. Unfortunately, the facts lead Ukrainians to recognize that our mentality has negative traits – too much patience, weakness of resistance to fraudsters, not so much diligence, feelings of inferiority, parochialism. Memory should know the reasons for these traits, and the national consciousness should overcome the shortcomings" (man, 40 years old, Donetsk Region).

Talking about places of remembrance as a form of commemorative practices, respondents most often mentioned monuments in Kyiv dedicated to the events of the Revolution of Dignity, the Holodomor, the events of World War II. Here is a typical example of the answer to the question "What places of memory (monuments, memorial complexes) are symbols of memorial culture of modern Ukraine?":

"In my personal rating of historical monuments, they have the following order: 1) Kyiv, Independence Square, Instytutska Street – the main events of the Revolution of Dignity; 2) Kyiv, Pechersk District, section of the Dnieper bank from the Arsenalna station to the Paton Bridge. The Park of Eternal Glory National Museum of the Holodomor-Genocide, Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra, Local Conflicts' Museum, Motherland Monument Memorial Complex, National Museum of History of Great Patriotic War, Museum of the Formation of the Ukrainian Nation; 3) Baturyn, Chyhyryn, Khortytsia – everything connected with the Cossacks and the period of the Hetmanate; 4) Lviv, old town, Town Hall, Rynok Square; 5) Kruty Heroes Memorial (Pamyatne Village)" (woman, 30 years old, Chernihiv).

Many other places of memory have also been mentioned, especially in the regions, but not all of them contradict the general tendencies of commemorative transformations.

3. Heroes, villains and victims in the commemorative practices of Ukrainians

The human dimension of historical events is usually indicated in the symbolic coordinates of "hero-villain-victim". Proposing to personify these coordinates with examples from the history of Ukraine, we understood well that the answers may be controversial, depending on whether the expert shares the logic of the official historical discourse. The same historical figures were mentioned by the respondents both as heroes and as villains. Directly opposite assessments were made about the roles of Lenin and Stalin, Bandera and Petliura, and, to a lesser extent, I. Mazepa and P. Skoropadsky.

"In my opinion, the heroes are Stepan Bandera, the whole Helsinki Group, Vasyl Stus, Viacheslav Chornovil, Leonid Kadenyuk, Simon Petliura, and among the scientists – they are

Yavornytsky, Paton, Amosov. The villain is Stalin and, most Soviet leaders, with few exceptions, but they are, so to speak, foreigners. From "our side", Medvedchuk, Yanukovich with a cohort, modern hirelings – anti-Ukrainian propagandists – are hidden or overt villains" (man, 40 years old, Donetsk Region).

"We see the pantheon of Ukrainian heroes on hryvnia banknotes every day. These are our glorious princes Volodymyr the Great and Yaroslav the Wise, Hetmans Bogdan Khmelnytsky and Ivan Mazepa, figures of science and culture – Volodymyr Vernadsky, Lesya Ukrainka, Hryhoriy Skovoroda, Ivan Franko. Antiheroes are the enemies of Ukraine who tried to destroy the

Ukrainian state and Ukrainians: Vladimir Putin, Joseph Stalin, Vladimir Lenin" (woman, 30 years old, Lviv).

Some experts avoided answering questions about heroes and victims, limiting their answers to "everything has changed" and "those who in Soviet times presented themselves as traitors (villains) are now considered heroes today – and vice versa". Based on these considerations, as well as removing our contemporaries from the list, we created the following figure:

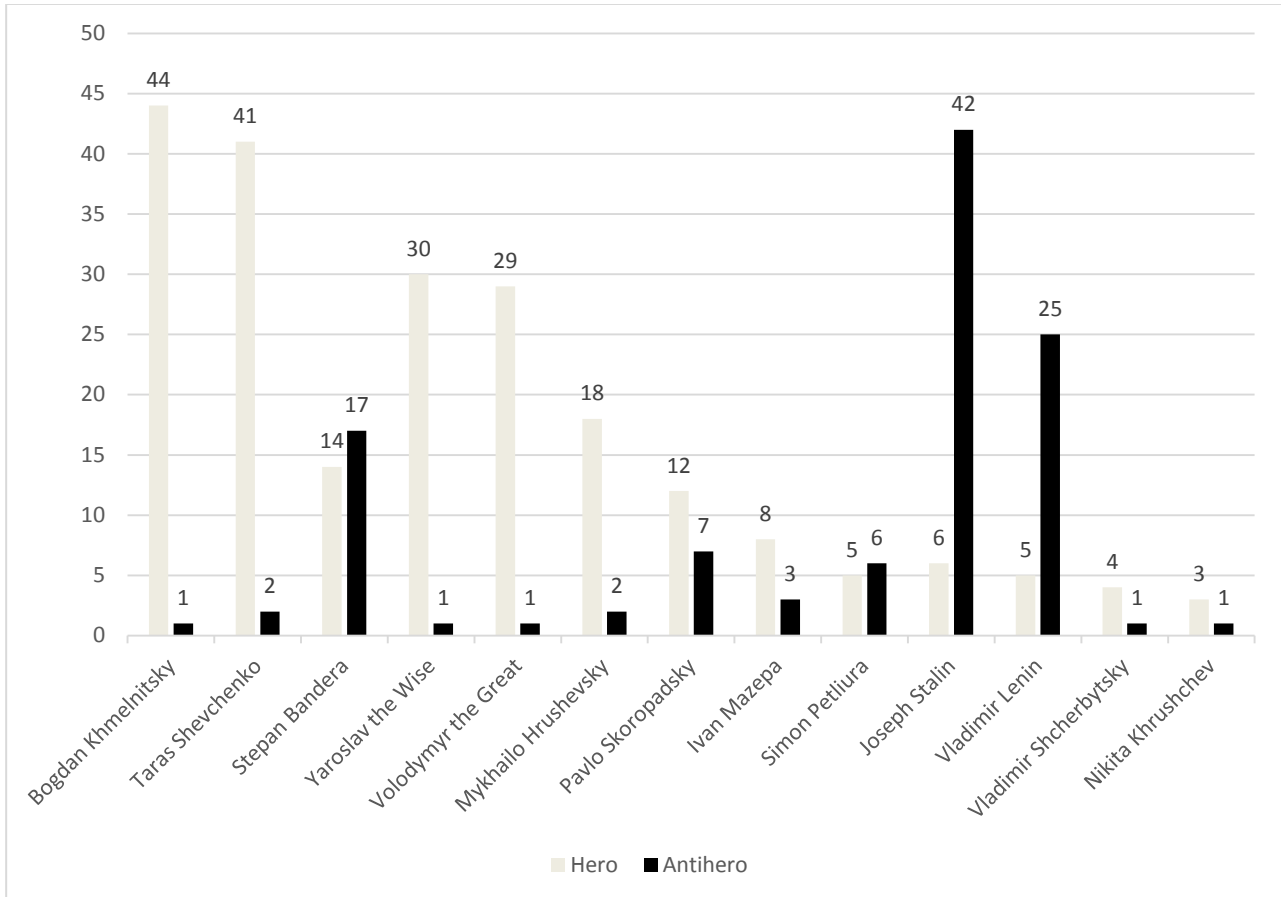


Fig.1. Number of positive and negative mentions of experts in defining heroes and villains in the history of Ukraine.

Answering the question "In Your opinion, what criteria should an ideal national hero meet?", respondents said that it does not have to be a military or political leader. Some mentioned Brecht's statement: "Unhappy is the country that needs heroes". They also cited examples of Vasyl Stus and Serhii Parajanov, whose contribution to Ukrainian culture made them national heroes.

"In my opinion, the ideal national hero should be a patriot. He should be able to obey, even ignore his own interests for the sake of serving Ukraine. There is a high probability that the motives of the hero's actions will not be understood by the majority of the population. He will face irony, criticism, cynicism, rejection. The hero should know that large masses of contemporary society will not appreciate, understand his contribution and laugh at him. And he should be ready for it" (man, under 30 years, Lviv).

"I think Ukraine needs a leader like Golda Meir. It should be ideological but realistic, strong-willed but fair; assess the situation adequately, make complex decisions without hesitation and

be responsible for them to the history" (man, under 30 years, Kyiv).

Experts' answers regarding the identification of victims in Ukrainian history were somewhat unexpected:

"Obviously, the Ukrainian people are the victims. Physical casualties, ruined lives are a huge tragedy. But villains hit not only the nation's physical body. So, the victims are national consciousness, memory, dignity, intellectual and critical abilities. With each death, the nation's gene pool becomes poorer. More than one generation of Ukrainians will pay for the losses and injuries of the 20th century" (man, 40 years old, Donetsk Region).

"As for the victims, there is a very interesting socio-psychological phenomenon. Ukrainians from experience (dekulakization, Holodomor, resettlement, repression) had the opportunity to see that foreign rule threatens the very existence of the nation, that the victims are the whole nation. But the paradox is that Ukrainians are trying hard to survive. A typical survival strategy at the individual level involves radical removal from the victims. We need to distance ourselves from the unfortunate

people as much as possible, distance ourselves from them and get closer to power, to the strong people. The victimhood of Ukrainian history turns into victim blaming: contempt and harshness towards the victim ("it is their fault") and, at the same time, tolerance of the violator. "The victim is not about me, it is about others". The consequence of this is the pathological unwillingness of modern Ukrainians to recognize the historical trauma of the 20th century, mark their past as colonial oppression, as a period of injustice and offences. As a result, we are trying to justify Stalin's executioners ("the times were like this"), to take solace in the military power of the superpower ("the whole world feared and respected the USSR"), to be proud of Gagarin and Korolyov. People of my generation are accompanied by nostalgia for their youth, they say that people also lived then and were happy. The strategy of distancing oneself from victims and history is not dangerous. The logic that "we are weak", "Putin should not be annoyed, because power is behind him" is identical to the logic "Ukraine did not happen as a state" and "there has never been such a state". Such a strategy paralyzes the will in the face of confrontation with Russia. We must not hide behind our own complexes and admit openly that if Ukrainians do not consolidate, they will become the same victims in the nearest future as in the days of the Soviet empire" (man, more than 60 years old, Lviv).

"Today, scientists are discussing the number of Holodomor victims. A well-known saying is the following: the death of one person is a tragedy; the death of one million is a statistic. Unfortunately, we often forget this. The range of estimates of victims of the artificial famine of 1932-33 starts at 2.6 and ends at 5.0 million deaths. On average - 3.8 million, in the Ukrainian media there is a figure of 4 million. This is a huge loss of our people, its gene pool. But, it seems, for some, this is not enough. Recently, there have been attempts to double or triple the sad statistics. In particular, the book "Genocide of Ukrainians in 1932-1933 according to the materials of pre-trial investigations" (Kyiv, 2021) gives a fantastic figure of 10.5 million victims. In this way, the Holodomor "overtook" the Holocaust of the Jews during World War II and can claim first place in European history of genocide. Former KGB General M. Herasymenko, who supervises this "project", insists on 10.5 million, but these figures are not substantiated by demographic or historical research. Arbitrary manipulation of the number of victims reduces the level of trust in official institutions, in particular – in the National Museum of the Holodomor-Genocide. It is no coincidence that on December 1, 2021, "Ukrayinska Pravda" published an Open Letter against the falsification of the Holodomor history, signed by well-known historians, sociologists, and public figures. But the scandal, which is gaining momentum among scholars, only discredits the sacred memory of the victims of the Holodomor" (woman, 40 years old, Kyiv).

4. Attitude to the state memory policy and ways of its implementation in the political and legal framework.

The last set of questions was devoted to the content of the state memory policy. As is known, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted a package of 4 laws in April 2015: "On the Legal Status and Honoring the Memory of Fighters for Ukraine's Independence in the Twentieth Century"; "On Condemnation of the Communist and National-Socialist (Nazi) Totalitarian Regimes in Ukraine and Prohibition of Propaganda of Their Symbols"; "On the Perpetuation of the Victory over Nazism in World War II of 1939 – 1945"; "On Access to the Archives of the Repressive Bodies of the Communist Totalitarian Regime of 1917-1991". The media called the package "Decommunization Laws", although their content was much broader. It has been more than six years since the laws were adopted, and we have tried to find out the con-

sequences of implementing these laws for commemorative practices. Here are some typical expert answers:

"There are definitely positive consequences for the development and revival of national memory, because it has cleared the mental and cultural space for authentic commemorative practices. However, due to decades of tradition, engraving and inertia of thinking, often the masses, especially the older people, evaluate them negatively. This is associated with a separation from the romantic and euphoric adolescence, youth, simple life, the picture of which was painted by Soviet propaganda" (man, 40 years old, Donetsk Region).

"It should not be forgotten that decommunization began not in 2015, but in 1991, and many Soviet monuments and place names had already been desecrated. The sacred memory of the Great Victory lasted the longest, but it was discredited by the Russians and Putin personally. Therefore, the adoption of a package of laws on decommunization only completed the spontaneous process of the "Leninopad". Despite the occasional indignation, the majority of the population accepted the dismantling of monuments and the renaming of streets with understanding and without much emotion. At the same time, in both cases, Ukrainians perceived decommunization not as a natural desire of the population, but as a pro-government initiative" (woman, 30 years old, Odessa).

"I cannot accept the categorical assessments in the law which in fact equates the Nazi and communist regimes. The first mentioned received a verdict from the Nuremberg Tribunal and was found guilty of crimes against peace, humanity, etc., the second one had no legal assessment at all. The norm of this law, which provides for sanctions for "denying the criminal nature of the communist regime", remains in a big question. That is, even if I am silent and do not state anything, am I already a criminal? I think that future lawyers will evaluate this "gem" of domestic lawmaking" (man, more than 60 years old, Lviv).

The process of renaming toponyms and demolishing monuments launched by the law "On Condemnation of the Communist and National-Socialist (Nazi) Totalitarian Regimes in Ukraine and Prohibition of Propaganda of Their Symbols" has caused considerable controversy in Ukrainian society. We asked the experts whether this practice meets European standards.

"I do not see much contradiction in the dismantling of monuments to communist leaders with European norms. However, in most cases this place remains empty. Even when monuments to new heroes are being erected, there is a certain alienation – except the monuments to the Heavenly Hundred and those killed in the Donbas. Monuments and historical events immortalized in monuments are often perceived as something foreign and external. The same thing is with renaming. Few citizens know who was the person after whom the street where he lives was named. And how Lastovsky differs from Kovnir, Anishchenko from Lewandowski, Ivanov from Butyshev (renaming streets in the Pechersk District in Kyiv). The purpose of such measures remains unclear without a broad public discussion. There has been no public debate, which could be an important tool for change in memorial culture. Probably, this happened because the destruction of communist symbols was part of not only a symbolic but also a literal struggle for the spaces of Ukrainian cities, for their belonging to Ukraine, in the conditions of Russian aggression. However, even after the disappearance of the real threat of separatism, the discussion of possible formats of "elaboration of the past", unfortunately, has not received due attention" (man, 30 years old, Kyiv).

"I do not consider myself an expert on European norms, but taking into account the fact that the USSR, communist ideology brought a lot of evil and lies to our land, I am for decommunization. For a long time, the national consciousness was deformed, and the proud, hard-working, strong-willed spirit of the people was replaced by the idea of the lazy peasant, the swineherd in trousers. Real heroes, patrons, historical figures and events were silenced, and toponyms were renamed in the

context of Soviet myths. The status quo must be restored. For example, the city of Kadiivka was renamed Stakhanov. The myth of this alleged hero of labor, the legendary miner, is known. In fact, he was far from moral – an alcoholic, a polygamist. So what is wrong with giving the city its old name back?” (man, 40 years old, Donetsk Region).

Such commemorative practice as the celebration of the Victory in the Second World War provoked no less discussions in Ukrainian society. The vast majority of experts understood this issue as a victory over Nazism, which is celebrated in Russia on May 9. Only two mentioned September 2 and clarified the issue. In any case, all respondents did not agree with the norms of celebrating the Victory which entrenched in Russia.

“Today, there are widespread calls for the “Europeanization” of Victory Day, i.e. the transition to the celebration of May 8, the Day of Remembrance and Reconciliation under the slogan “Never Again”. On the one hand, this is in line with the sentiments of most Europeans who did not win World War II. Even in Soviet Ukraine, not everyone could honestly consider themselves winners, Western Ukraine was seen as a victim. On the other hand, military triumphalism is not exactly what our society needs in a war with Russia, which considers itself the successor to the victors, and its leader declares that Russia had dealt with Germany without Ukraine’s help. Therefore, I believe that the most adequate form of celebrating victory is not “victory”, but a mournful ritual with recalling the memory of the dead” (man, more than 60 years old, Lviv).

“Lao Tzu gave the best answer to this question. The victory should be celebrated with a mourning procession. The so-called “victory” should be dissected in detail. Peoples should remember who suffered the tragedy of the war, who caused it, who resisted and how did they do it. This date should be celebrated with increased broadcasting of thematic information flows, and the mood adequate for this event is mourning. Without festive bravado” (man, 40 years old, Donetsk Region).

It is well known that the state memory policy largely depends on the beliefs and historical awareness of the top figure. Researchers have long noted this fact (see: [Kasyanov, 2007](#); [Skladni pytannia, 2019](#)), but comparing memory policies in Ukraine, they have not yet analyzed the activities of the last President, only of his predecessors. Assessing the specifics of Volodymyr Zelenskyy’s commemorative policy, experts shared their views on its effectiveness. Some pointed to the more moderate nature of the politics of memory, especially in comparison with the aggressive strategies of Yushchenko and Poroshenko, others complained about the superficiality and ostentation of commemorative practices that turn into shows (e.g. girl’s “run” on historical websites during Independence Day parade in 2021). It is clear that the answers to this question directly correlate with the degree of particular expert’s support for the figure of V. Zelenskyy as President of Ukraine in general.

“He is president only by legal fact, not in essence. Zelenskyy is rapidly losing the informal legitimacy that was inspired by the myth of Holoborodko. Therefore, as a non-professional, this person cannot, does not know how and does not want to do anything professional in the field of domestic policy. Including in the context of commemorative practices. He lacks Ukrainian national identity, he is too far from the idea of supporting national memory. This actor has been making fun of Ukrainians and Ukrainians for too long to support him suddenly. Everything that can be done by his apparatus is to show off or borrow someone else’s actions... In my opinion, national memory was maintained (mostly by amateurs) during Kravchuk’s time, and noticeably became one of the vectors of national culture under Yushchenko, and, especially under Poroshenko (man, 40 years old, Donetsk Region).

“In my opinion, V. Zelenskyy’s memory policy is much healthier than that of his predecessors. At least, foreign policy, in par-

ticular, the establishment of relations with Poland and other Eastern European neighbors: the promotion of theses of the Intermarium, of a common Eastern European memory. This year, Poland signed a joint statement to mark the anniversary of the adoption of the Constitution of the Commonwealth, which unites us with Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Belarus – it is hard to imagine such a step in Poroshenko’s time. The second moment was a joint visit of Zelenskyy and his Polish counterpart to the tomb of the Ostroh Prince, which was also a major step towards restoring the common historical memory. I think these are big pluses, because we had mostly conflicts with Poles under the previous president, and today we are friends. The situation with Hungary is a bit more difficult, but Hungarians are not Poles, it is more difficult to establish a common policy with them. At least now there is an ambassador in Hungary, there was even no ambassador under Poroshenko. In general, under Zelenskyy, the politics of memory is not so confrontational. Domestic policy is not much different from what happened before. Zelenskyy wants to please everyone. At the beginning of his presidency, there were statements such as “what a difference”, which were not accepted by civil society, so such theses were edited, “what a difference” ceased, and the theses that appeared under Poroshenko were pursued in a somewhat softened form” (man, 40 years old, Kyiv).

“Unlike his predecessors, President Zelenskyy has a post-modernist view of the historical past, which does not follow a single logic, is not centered around one idea, and does not serve the interests of one political force. This may not be the case when all efforts should be centered on countering Putin, but in the long run, such a multi-subject, democratic, dialogical model of memory is more advantageous. National memory, like an umbrella, covers many ethnic, class memories, does not deny, but tolerates their existence. And Zelenskyy, or rather the one who advises him, understands this” (woman, 30 years old, Odessa).

The attitude of experts to the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory as the leading body for the implementation of state memory policy was extremely positive. Only one respondent, who, by the way, directly managed this organization, gave negative answer to the question “Is such an institution necessary in the structure of the executive branch?”. Other experts called for the preservation of the institution, some, however, suggested referring it to the parliament. Here are some examples of expert answers:

“An attitude is definitely positive. Such an institution is necessary, perhaps not in the executive branch, but in the legislative branch. At the same time, it should not only conduct professional historical expertise, but also be able to veto any laws, decrees or other decisions of the legislative and executive branches (both central and local) that are contrary to Ukraine’s interests or distort historical events in which Ukraine is directly involved. I believe that the UINM should be constantly represented at the international level, for example, by introducing positions of advisers in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine” (man, 40 years old, Zaporizhzhia).

“I would say that the institute of national memory does not “eat” a lot of money, so it does little damage. I personally would not create such an institution, but it suits me perfectly in the format as it exists today. What happened under the previous directors of the UINM, i.e. the opposite strategies, sometimes outrageous ones, shows that much depends on the leader. In particular, the conflict with the Poles I mentioned is partly the fault of the former director of the Institute, Volodymyr Viatrovych. The current director is pursuing a more balanced policy. It is not necessary to close the institution due to the fact that someone once made mistakes. My attitude to UINM is rather positive. I am ready to support it with my taxes” (man, 50 years old, Kyiv).

Conclusions

Summarizing the results of the study, we would like to draw the following conclusions:

1. All experts have demonstrated a high level of awareness of the forms and content of commemorative practices in modern Ukraine. They have noted the increase in civil society activity in the realm of historical memory after 2014, the use of commemoration elements in the process of establishing the collective identity of Ukrainians, in forming a national narrative, drawing historical parallels and even fighting political opponents. The vast majority of experts give a positive assessment of the directions of the state policy of memory and the activity of the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory within the executive power.

2. Commemorative practices are based on appropriate memory models. The remnants of the Soviet-style totalitarian worldview have led to the popularity of the model of memory in which the state's monopoly on history prevails. The past is a kind of symbolic resource, the use of which contributes to the legitimization of Ukraine as an independent state. Today, many decision-makers have received higher education and made a career either in the Soviet era or in the early years of independence, when commemorative practices were aimed at forming and serving a single narrative. The official view of historical events may have contributed to the objectives of patriotic education, but did not provide for different interpretations. Plural model of memory, which recognizes the existence of several alternatives, "interpretations, experiences as a fundamental principle, where 'own' and 'correct' is not so obvious" (Політика і пам'ять, 2018, с.226), has not still received proper spread. The idea that national memory consists of many particular commemorations, such as Jewish, Crimean Tatar, Polish, Hungarian commemoration, etc., or proletarian or aristocratic (noble) commemoration, is accepted with difficulty even by interviewed experts.

3. The transformation of commemorative practices in modern Ukraine indicates a certain inertia of their forms compared to the content. According to one respondent, "Ukrainian history has been enriched with new content, but its memory is preserved in old forms". Along with fundamentally new forms, primarily related to Internet technologies and social networks, commemoration in Ukraine, as in the Soviet period, is focused on honoring heroes and victims. At the same time, there is a radical reassessment: the heroes of the Soviet era have become villains, and villains have become heroes. All this points to the "hybrid nature" of commemorative practices with an emphasis on the martyrological-victim component and the trauma of the social psyche of Ukrainians.

4. The dominant motive of commemorative practices in modern Ukraine is the "nationalization" of historical narrative. The noticeable Ukrainophile renaissance, manifested in the popularization of the names of many undeservedly forgotten figures in Ukrainian history, the return to national symbols and religious rituals, is strengthened by the need for ideological confrontation with Russian hybrid aggression. Leading topics in this regard are the Cossacks, the liberation struggle of 1917-1921, the activities of the OUN-UPA, the dissident movement, the Revolution of Dignity, the modern Ukrainian-Russian war. The tragic events of the Holodomor of 1932-33 are acquiring ethnic tint. However, alternatives to the Ukrainian narra-

tive of memory, such as the Holocaust of the Jews during World War II, are difficult and ambiguous for society, as evidenced by the recent debate over the Babyn Yar Holocaust Memorial.

5. Experts noted a certain decrease in tension around another trend in the dynamics of commemorative practices, namely around decommunization. After the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted a package of decommunization laws in April 2015, the spontaneous process, which has been slowly developing in most regions of Ukraine since 1991, has been regulated at the legislative level. The calendar of Soviet holidays and anniversaries has been revised substantially, the pantheon of heroes has been changed, monuments to Soviet leaders have been dismantled, and the communist regime has been assessed as criminal. Ukrainian society reacted relatively calmly to these measures, which, according to experts, indicates the readiness of the majority of the population to abandon Soviet values and the "override" nature of Ukrainian decommunization. Even the Victory Day over Nazism, which is the most sacred for the entire post-Soviet memorial space, is no longer perceived as "our" holiday in Ukraine.

6. In general, changes in commemorative practices indicate that Ukrainian society has become more homogeneous since 2014. Regional differences in assessments of past events no longer look radically opposite. Experts from the southern and eastern regions and cities sometimes take a more nation-centric and patriotic stance than representatives of the western and central regions of Ukraine. Apparently, the annexation of Crimea and the occupation of Donbass have catalyzed the process of "nationalization" of the historical memory, and commemorative practices have played a role in mobilizing the population around patriotic forces to resist Russian aggression.

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Трансформація комеморативних практик в українському історичному дискурсі

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Стаття присвячена дослідженню змін, що відбуваються в українському суспільстві в галузі змісту історичної пам'яті та форм комеморативних практик. Метою дослідження є виявлення основних тенденцій формальних і змістовних трансформацій комеморативних практик в українському історичному дискурсі. В ході напівструктурованого, фокусованого інтерв'ю 51 експерта, що представляють основні регіони України, було виявлено, що чинні комеморативні практики ґрунтуються на симбіозі монологічної і діалогічної моделей пам'яті. Залишки тоталітарного світогляду радянського зразка обумовили популярність моделі пам'яті, в якій панує державний монопогляд на історію. Ідея про те, що національна пам'ять складається з багатьох партикулярних комеморацій, важко сприймається українським суспільством. Минуле постає своєрідним символічним ресурсом, використання якого сприяє легітимації України як незалежної держави. Але форми комеморації багато в чому залишаються старими. Поряд з принципово новими формами, пов'язаними, насамперед, з інтернет-технологіями і соціальними мережами, в Україні, як і в радянський період, комеморація фокусується навколо вшанування героїв і жертв. При цьому відбувається радикальна переоцінка: герої радянської доби перетворилися на злочинців, а злочинці – на героїв. Все це вказує на «гібридний характер» комеморативних практик з акцентом на мартирологічно-віктимній складовій і травмованості соціальної психіки українців.

Ключові слова: соціальні практики, комеморація, експертне опитування, історична пам'ять, політика пам'яті.

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