SECURITIZATION OF HISTORICAL MEMORY DURING THE RUSSO-UKRAINIAN WAR

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Abstract. The purpose of the research deals with the study of the historical politics of Ukraine during the war in the context of national security. The theoretical framework is based on the concept of securitization developed by the Copenhagen School (Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver) and the concept of Politics of Mnemonical Security (Maria Mälksoo). The research methodology is based on the use of a transdisciplinary approach the principles of objectivity, historicism, systematicity, the use of methods of analysis and synthesis, generalization and systematization, comparative-historical, historical-typological and problematic-chronological. The studies novelty is that the article examines for the first time the phenomenon of securitization of memory during the Russo-Ukrainian war against the background of the features of the landscape of memory in Eastern and Central Europe, analyzes the legislation, highlights the views of representatives of the Ukrainian authorities on the role of history in the war time. The securitization of historical memory in Ukraine began after Russia's aggression in 2014 and serves as a means of ensuring the safety of the national historical narrative by delegitimizing or directly criminalizing Soviet and Russian narratives that are considered a threat to the state and society. Its main reason is the abuse of "historical arguments" by the Russian authorities, which include the denial of the existence of the Ukrainian people and the Ukrainian language, statements about Ukraine as a "failed state" and the Nazi state, the concepts of Russian world, Novorossiya, and the divided Russian people. Securitization is a forced and temporary wartime policy. In a democratic and pluralistic society, national memory cannot be formulated officially or regulated by bureaucracy. After the war, historical memory must be desecuritized, de-weaponized and returned to the realm of political participation and public debate.

Keywords: Politics of History, Mnemonic Security, threat, Memory Wars, Identity, Decommunisation, de-Russification.

Tytuł: Sekurytyzacja pamięci historycznej podczas wojny rosyjsko-ukraińskiej
Streszczenie. Celem artykułu jest analiza polityki historycznej Ukrainy w czasie wojny w kontekście bezpieczeństwa narodowego. Ramy teoretyczne opierają się na koncepcji sekurytyzacji wypracowanej przez szkołę kopenhaską (Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver) oraz na koncepcji polityki bezpieczeństwa

mnemonicznego (Politics of Mnemonical Security) Marii Mälksoo. Metodologia badań bazuje na podejściu transdyscyplinarnym oraz zasadach obiektywizmu, historyzmu i systemowości; wykorzystano metody analizy i syntezy, uogólniania i systematyzacji, a także metody porównawczo-historyczną, historyczno-typologiczną oraz problemowo-chronologiczną. Nowość badawcza polega na tym, że artykuł po raz pierwszy analizuje zjawisko sekurytyzacji pamięci w trakcie wojny rosyjsko-ukraińskiej na tle specyfiki krajobrazu pamięci w Europie Wschodniej i Środkowej, dokonuje analizy ustawodawstwa oraz przedstawia poglądy przedstawicieli władz Ukrainy na rolę historii w czasie wojny. Sekurytyzacja pamięci historycznej na Ukrainie rozpoczęła się po rosyjskiej agresji w 2014 r. i służy jako środek zapewnienia bezpieczeństwa narodowej narracji historycznej poprzez delegitymizację lub bezpośrednią kryminalizację narracji sowieckich i rosyjskich, uznawanych za zagrożenie dla państwa i społeczeństwa. Jej główną przyczyną jest nadużywanie przez władze rosyjskie „argumentów historycznych", obejmujących m.in. negowanie istnienia narodu ukraińskiego i języka ukraińskiego, twierdzenia o Ukrainie jako „państwie upadłym" i państwie nazistowskim, a także koncepcje „ruskiego miru", Noworosji oraz „podzielonego narodu rosyjskiego". Sekurytyzacja jest wymuszoną i tymczasową polityką czasu wojny. W społeczeństwie demokratycznym i pluralistycznym pamięć narodowa nie może być formułowana odgórnie ani regulowana biurokratycznie. Po zakończeniu wojny pamięć historyczna powinna zostać desekurytyzowana, zdeweaponizowana i przywrócona do sfery partycypacji politycznej oraz debaty publicznej.
Słowa kluczowe: polityka historyczna, bezpieczeństwo mnemoniczne, zagrożenie, wojny pamięci, tożsamość, dekomunizacja, derusyfikacja.

INTRODUCTION

Russia has been conducting powerful information attacks on the Ukrainian humanitarian space, designed to erode the national consciousness of the Ukrainian nation. According to Oleksandr Udod, one of the most effective and dangerous methods used by Russia is to influence the historical consciousness – an integral part of the public consciousness – of its own citizens, citizens of Ukraine, and the international community. To achieve this goal, Russia has developed, formulated, and is implementing an extremely rigid politics of history [Udod 2022: 1488].

To justify the aggression against Ukraine, the Russian authorities use 'historical arguments': denial of the existence of the Ukrainian nation and the Ukrainian language, claims of the non-historicity and failure of Ukrainian statehood, the concept of the 'Russian world', Novorossiya, the divided Russian nation, Ukraine as a Nazi state, the use of the past to make territorial claims, etc. [Yablonsky 2019: 26–36].

Vladimir Putin tried to formulate the historical basis of Russian aggression in his article 'On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians', which was published on the Kremlin's website on 2 July 2021 in Russian and Ukrainian. The very fact that the head of state wrote an article on historical topics signaled that the author attaches great importance to this issue and that actions should be expected soon after words. Thus, history became not only a tool but also one of the reasons for the legitimization of the war [Shapoval 2022: 230].

In the context of information aggression using 'historical arguments', Ukraine is forced to consider historical memory as a sphere of national security policy.

SOURCES AND RECENT RESEARCH

The source base is based on legislative and regulatory acts of Ukraine, speeches, statements and publications of state, political and public figures, and the opinions of historians.

The theoretical basis for the study of securitization of the past in state policy was laid down by Maria Mälksoo [Mälksoo 2015]. The peculiarities of the Eastern European landscape of memory, in particular trauma as a component of national security, were examined by Barbara Törnquist-Plewa [Törnquist-Plewa 2020]. Vitalii Lozovyi explored the current situation with the securitization of memory and history in Russia, where political practices have been legitimized by historical arguments, and historical policy has become an important part of security policy [Lozovyi 2022:49-53]. Sam Edwards analyzed the use of the memory of the Second World War in Volodymyr Zelenskyy's speeches to obtain military assistance from the United States and the United Kingdom [Edwards 2022:46-57]. The purpose of the study is to examine Ukraine's politics of history during the Russian-Ukrainian war in the context of national security.

The theoretical and methodological framework are based on the concept of securitization developed by representatives of the Copenhagen School (Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver). It provides for the extension of the concept of security beyond the traditional sphere of physical human survival and allows us to consider an extremely wide range of phenomena from the point of view of security.

Security is interpreted as a constructed phenomenon. When the state securitizes a problem (considers it a security threat), it simultaneously justifies the use of extraordinary means and methods of influence to protect society [Buzan, Wæver, de Wilde 1998: 25; Buzan, Wæver 2003: 491].

Any sphere can be the object of securitization. By shifting the aspect of studying security from the state to society, representatives of the Copenhagen School included the problem of preserving the identity of nations and ethnic groups among the existential threats [Buzan 1991: 18–19]. While the state protects its sovereignty, society protects its own identity [Hellberg 2012: 65].

Maria Mälksoo defines mnemonic securitization as the subordination of freedom of speech, including academic freedom, as a core component of liberal democratic 'normal politics' to restrictive legal and political regulation [Mälksoo 2015].

Since Ernest Renan's Sorbonne Lecture (1882), the collective memory of the past has been considered one of the most important components of national identity. The vivid metaphor of the nation as a 'daily plebiscite' suggests that historical narratives can be used to achieve a high level of national unity. "A heroic past with great men and glory (I mean true glory) is the social capital upon which the national idea rests. These are the essential conditions of being a people, having common glories in the past and a will to continue them in the present, having made great things together and wishing to make them again"[Renan 1992].

Certainly, it is easier to convince people of the need for emergency measures when the problem is associated with trauma, past conflicts, national prejudices, etc., in particular in the context of historical enmity with neighboring states. When the past becomes an object of national security, governments and political elites are main actors in politics of history. They actively interfere with the scholarly, writing, teaching, commemoration or oblivion of various components of the native history. Central and local authorities are mobilized to defend the dominant narratives, legislative regulation of the interpretation of past events is founded, a national pantheon of heroes and a calendar of 'red' and 'black' dates are formed, and memory scape is marked with 'own' monuments and cleared of 'others'. The securitization of memory is often accompanied by restrictions and prohibitions, including the prohibition of the use of 'undesirable' symbols, restrictions on 'hostile' narrative speakers in media, etc.

Russia's politics of history in recent decades has viewed historical memory and history as an existential threat. This is especially true of the concept of the victory over Nazism in World War II. Attempts to revise the Soviet-Russian vision were inevitably perceived in the Kremlin as an encroachment on Russia's sovereignty and intentions to deprive it of the title of victorious state. The claims of the East Slavic peoples to the heritage of Kyivan Rus, attempts to separate national historical narratives from the general imperial or soviet narrative were also perceived with trauma.

Thus, a mnemonic security dilemma has formed in Russo-Ukrainian relations: the historical narrative used to legitimize the Ukrainian state and unite the people has been systematically denied by Russia or pro-Russian forces in Ukraine. Since Viktor Yushchenko's presidency, Russia and Ukraine have been engaged in memory wars of varying intensity – conflicts over the interpretation of history, which have been taking place against the backdrop of a hybrid war since 2014 and a full-scale war since 24 February 2022.

Ukraine's political elites faced a difficult choice: to ignore the influence of the neighboring country or to develop a set of measures aimed at protecting 'own'

historical narrative and discrediting historical narratives important for consolida-
ting the population of the opposing state. Mnemonic security dilemma in Russo-
-Ukrainian relations soon took on the following form: if one side uses the issue of
historical memory as a weapon, the other side will try to wield the same weapon.

A defensive reaction was the concept of a 'vulnerable nation' (language, hi-
story, memory, which are constantly threatened with prohibition and destruction),
which is inherent in most countries of the mnemonic region of Eastern and Cen-
tral Europe to some extent. Here, a specific culture of historical memory has been
formed, associated with the attribution of past traumatic experiences (repression,
deportation, genocidal acts) to the sphere of national security [Törnquist-Plewa,
2020; Пархоменко, Сараєва, 2020].

The first clear manifestation of memory securitization in Ukraine was the
recommunication. The 'memory laws' adopted in 2015 were presented by the
government as a necessity, as nostalgia for the Soviet past was seen as a threat
to Ukraine's existence. As a result, by 2020, 51493 toponymes 991 settlements,
and 26 districts were renamed, and 2409 monuments and memorials were demo-
lished. For security reasons, the government ignored an open letter from foreign
and Ukrainian scholars and Ukrainian studies experts who warned that 'any legal
or "administrative" distortion of history is an assault on the most basic purpose
of scholarly inquiry: pursuit of truth [Marples D. et al. 2015].

The legislative and regulatory framework for memory securitization was for-
med during the presidencies of Petro Poroshenko and Volodymyr Zelenskyy. The
Law of Ukraine 'On the National Security of Ukraine' has a rather broad interpre-
tation of threats to the national security of Ukraine. They include "phenomena,
trends and factors that make it impossible or difficult or may make it impossible
or difficult to realize national interests and preserve national values of Ukraine"
[Law 2018].

The National Security Strategy of Ukraine, approved in 2020, specifies a list
of current and projected threats to the national security and national interests
of Ukraine. It states that 'destructive propaganda both from outside and inside
Ukraine, using social contradictions, incites hostility, provokes conflicts, and un-
dermines social unity'. In response, "the state will resolutely resist humanitarian
aggression, develop Ukrainian culture as the basis for consolidating the Ukrainian
nation and strengthening its identity" [Strategy 2020].

The Doctrine of Information Security of Ukraine (25 February 2017) mentions
"legislative regulation of the mechanism of detection, recording, blocking and
removal from the information space of the state, in particular from the Ukrainian
segment of the Internet, of information that ... promotes communist and/or national

socialist (Nazi) totalitarian regimes and their symbols" among the priorities of state policy in the information sphere [Doctrine 2017].

In 2021, the Doctrine was replaced by the Information Security Strategy, which runs until 2025. Among the tasks to be carried out to counter disinformation and information operations of the aggressor state is the prevention of demonstration of information and audiovisual products containing propaganda of the communist and/or national socialist (Nazi) totalitarian regimes and their symbols. For the information reintegration of Ukrainian citizens living in the temporarily occupied territories, it is envisaged, in particular, to "refute disinformation, including ideologemes of Soviet and modern Russian historiography, about the past and present of Ukraine and its territories currently temporarily occupied by the aggressor state…" [Information 2021].

Russia's full-scale aggression against Ukraine has had a significant impact on the historical vision to the 'common' imperial and Soviet history. Everything Soviet is now often perceived as Russian and therefore hostile. The main reason for this is the use of Soviet symbols and speculation on the common historical past by Russian propaganda. This resulted in a policy of de-Russification, including the renaming of streets with Russian or Soviet names, the dismantling of monuments associated with Russia (its symbols were the 'Pushkin fall' and the demolition of the monument to the Founders of Odesa with the central figure of Catherine II).

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has associated knowledge of history with the defense of Ukraine. On 1 September 2022, he said: "Knowing and defending always go hand in hand. To know more than a thousand years of history of our statehood and to defend when someone says that Ukraine did not exist." [Zelenskyy 2022].

Anton Drobovych, head of the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory, believed that historical memory is important for national security as a 'soft power'. According to him, the loss of historical memory increases state vulnerability. As an example, he cited the events of 1917-1921, when Ukraine declared independence but lost, despite the fact that tens of thousands of people defended it with arms [President 2021].

In Ukraine, unlike in Russia, the actors of politics of history are not only the central government, but also local self-governments, political parties, non-governmental organizations, activists, public intellectuals, etc. The central government, on the one hand, does not claim to be the initiator of any renaming or dismantling (unlike during the presidency of Petro Poroshenko, when the state took full responsibility for the implementation of decommunisation, often ignoring the opinion of local communities), and on the other hand, is trying to streamline this process.

The Expert Council of the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine on overcoming the consequences of Russification and totalitarianism has prepared recommendations on monuments related to Russian and Soviet imperial history. This document is indicative in nature and places full responsibility for de-Russification on local authorities. In particular, it is emphasized that the issue of dismantling and relocating monumental objects is within the legal framework and should be resolved in accordance with the current legislation on the protection of cultural heritage. It is unacceptable to have monuments in the public space to persons "who participated in the propaganda and implementation of the Russian imperial and Soviet totalitarian policy aimed at enslavement of Ukraine, repression of participants in the struggle for independence, political repression and other crimes of the imperial and totalitarian regimes" [Recommendations 2022].

With regard to military monuments and memorials of the Second World War, it is recommended to maintain its in good condition, use it for educational purposes, emphasizing the heroism of the Ukrainians and its belonging to the victorious nations. At the same time, it is recommended to remove inscriptions containing Soviet and Russian military propaganda ('Soviet homeland', 'Soviet people', etc.).

In times of war, such a politics of history is perceived as a necessary but justified step. However, the securitization and weaponizing of historical memory have many threats. Attempts to privilege a certain interpretation of the past through legislation lead to a restriction of the possibility of discussion [Berenskoetter 2014: 262-288]. According to Maria Malksoo, legislative regulation of the interpretation of the past only leads to the reproduction of a sense of insecurity among opponents of this approach. That is, as a result, it leads not to consolidation, but to a split in society [Mälksoo 2015].

CONCLUSIONS

The securitization of historical memory in Ukraine started after Russia's aggression in 2014 and is a means of ensuring the security of the national historical narrative by delegitimizing or directly criminalizing the Soviet and Russian narratives, which are considered a threat to the state and society. Its main reason is the misuse of 'historical arguments' by the Russian authorities, including the denial of the existence of the Ukrainian nation and the Ukrainian language, the claim that Ukraine is a 'failed state' and a Nazi state, the concept of the 'Russian world', Novorossiya, and a divided Russian nation. Securitization is a forced and temporary policy for the period of war. In a democratic and pluralistic society,

national memory cannot be formulated officially or regulated by bureaucracy. After the war, historical memory should be desecuritised and deweaponised and return to the socio-political sphere.

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