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On the Crossroads of History

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On the Crossroads of History

Politics of History in Ukraine and Questions of Identity
in Post-Cold War Europe (1991 — 2019)

Nicolaas A. Kraft van Ermel

Groningen, 2020

On the Crossroads of History

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On the Crossroads of History

Politics of History in Ukraine and Questions of Identity
in Post-Cold War Europe (1991 – 2019)

PhD thesis

to obtain the degree of PhD at the
University of Groningen
on the authority of the
Rector Magnificus Prof. C. Wijmenga
and in accordance with
the decision by the College of Deans.

This thesis will be defended in public on

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Preface

I first became aware of this problem several years ago, when walking across the Charles Bridge, a major tourist attraction in what was then the newly democratic Prague. There were buskers and hustlers along the bridge, and every fifteen feet or so someone was selling precisely what one would expect to find for sale in such a postcard-perfect spot. Paintings of appropriately pretty streets were on display, along with bargain jewellery and “Prague” key chains. Among the bric-a-brac, one could buy Soviet military paraphernalia: caps, badges, belt buckles, and little pins, the tin Lenin and Brezhnev images that Soviet school-children once pinned on their uniforms.

This sight struck me as odd. Most of the people buying the Soviet paraphernalia were Americans and West Europeans. All would be sickened by the thought of wearing a swastika. None objected, however, to wearing the hammer and sickle on a T-shirt or a hat. It was a minor observation, but sometimes, it is thought just such minor observations that a cultural mood is best observed: for here, the lesson could not be clearer: while the symbol of one mass murder fills us with horror, the symbol of another mass murder makes us laugh.¹

When I read Anne Applebaum’s classic *Gulag*, these words immediately struck a chord. They reminded me of an experience I had in high school. In the third grade, we focussed on 20th-century history. Logically, Nazism, communism, and the Second World War were important topics for discussion. After each history class, we had to go to another class. Because I was a bit early for the next lesson, there was some time for casual conversation with my classmates and the teacher. I noticed the teacher had put a pin button depicting Vladimir Lenin on his shoulder bag. Given all that we learned, I asked the teacher why he should be allowed to wear a depiction of a communist dictator and instigator of mass terror. I also pointed out that any teacher or pupil who would come to school with a similar button figuring Adolf Hitler or a swastika would be suspended, at minimum.

The teacher responded that ‘*this was his right as teacher*’ and ended the discussion. This was a strange reply: at our school, it was uncommon for teachers to derive their authority from their status. Instead, they relied on their expertise, and treated any suggestions from students with respect (even if they did not agree). To this day, I still believe I was right: there is a mismatch in how our society treats communist and Nazi crimes and criminals. I still think it is strange that one can buy t-shirts with a picture of Lenin or Ché Guevara and that wearing such paraphernalia is not a *faux pas*. Luckily, wearing a swastika in public, or displaying public affinity with Hitler is! Since third grade, this thought never left my mind. At that time, I felt intellectually neglected and I still do not know why the teacher responded that way. Of course, he might have just wanted to start his class and I was a hindrance. No hard feelings though! That the question of the comparability of communist and Nazi crimes is a central topic of this PhD thesis is no coincidence. It shows how influential a single remark by a teacher can be; without it, I might not have written this thesis at all.

¹ Anne Applebaum, *Gulag: A History* (New York: Doubleday, 2003), xviii.

Two years later, I was still in high school, Ukraine crossed my path. The 2004 Orange Revolution made a strong impression on me, as we discussed the topic in our voluntary school debating class. Ukrainian history also became the subject of my end-of-school thesis (*profielwerkstuk*). What struck me was the social dynamic of the country: how could a nation so mangled by its history rise against a corrupt regime that manufactured election results? Many of the views I developed at that time, I now consider extremely naive, as I have turned from an optimist into a bit of a pessimist regarding Ukraine's future. Nevertheless, my interest in the country never left me. Everything that happened in – and after – 2014 only highlighted that Ukraine was an understudied country that deserves more in-depth attention. This PhD thesis is my modest contribution to this effort.

We live in difficult times: Public debates are increasingly polarized along ideological lines and facts are no longer undisputed. Be it Russia, Ukraine, Europe, climate change or any other controversial subject, a nuanced debate has become increasingly difficult. You are either a pro-Russian propagandist or a Putin hater. You either view the Ukrainian government as legitimate, and consider the country under attack from Russia, or consider the events of February 2014 a 'fascist coup'. This thesis is an implicit statement against this development: I try to speak frankly and spare no-one from fair criticism. The European Union, Ukraine, and Russia all get their share. Eastern Europe is just too complicated to be described in black and white alone. One needs many shades of grey to make a fair assessment. A combination of a historian's toolbox, linguistic skills, and a multi-disciplinary approach are necessary to do so. Fortunately, academic debate still allows for more nuances than public debates.

Being a scholar, especially a historian, is a lonely job: you get to spend hours in libraries, closely examining books and other documents. Therefore, it was a great joy that many helped me along the way. Some, like many of the scholars who inspired me, and whose views I hope to have represented fairly, did this without knowing about my attempts to write about it. The extensive body of footnotes to this study gives them credit where that is due. Forming my views without them would have been impossible.

Without Hans van Koningsbrugge, my primary PhD supervisor, this thesis could not have been written. Not only have his remarks improved this thesis, but they also made me a better historian. He also was instrumental in other ways: He offered me a scholarly home at the Netherlands-Russia Centre of the University of Groningen. Employment at the centre also enabled me to earn a living, without which this study could not have been written. I am equally indebted to my secondary PhD supervisor, Wim Coudenys of the Catholic University of Leuven. Without his critical remarks, this study would have been different. He also prevented me from committing a number of mistakes and stimulated my thought. Both supervisors put a lot of time in my thesis; they did this at the cost of their already busy schedules. Furthermore, I am grateful for the time and effort of the members of the assessment committee and their well-reasoned remarks, questions, criticisms and the occasional factual errors they found.

A few people contributed to this thesis as well. Some friends asked me frequently about my progress or asked about my research outcomes. They include Marit de Lange, Yuri van Hoef, Marijke van Diggelen and Cees Otte. Sytze Veenstra – himself a graduate in Ukrainian Studies – helped to straighten my thoughts in our countless discussions. Mykola Dobysh, a young Ukrainian social geographer, taught me a lot about how Ukraine deals with its past. I have many fond memories of our walks through Warsaw and Kyiv (where he showed me around the city's complicated memorial landscape). I am also grateful to my students at the Groningen University of the Third Age (HOVO Seniorenacademie) and its counterpart in Zwolle (U3L); not only did they take countless classes (and returned), but they were always so kind as to enquire about my PHD project. I often 'abused' them to test my ideas as 'education material'.

Preface

Matthijs Schornagel read and corrected my initial PhD proposal and some early chapters. My colleague Tjeerd de Graaf was so kind to read and correct the manuscript. Some colleagues were also instrumental, helped me with countless – unrelated – projects, and have taught me a lot. They include Elka Agoston-Nikolova, Marcel Stoeten, Ad van der Zwaan and Guido van Hengel. A special word of thanks goes to Tanya Mironava († 2020), who unfortunately had to leave us far too early. She helped me out with many quirks of the Ukrainian language – a language we both do not know natively.

I am also grateful to the organizers of two conferences. In 2017, I was able to present a part of my thesis at the *Workshop 1989 and the West: New Perspectives on the Consequences of the End of the Cold War* organized at the University of Utrecht. In 2018, I had the same opportunity at the conference *Tuning into the Noise of Europe* organized at The Hague University of Applied Sciences. Countless other venues invited me to speak about Ukraine, Russia, and Eastern Europe over the last few years; I used these as extra opportunities to test ideas as well.

Two people have been particularly important as professional sources of inspiration. When I still was a student, Hans Renner taught me what historians do best: telling stories. He also opened up many opportunities for me. After his retirement, he continued to show an interest in my work. I have many fond memories of my high school history teacher, Christian Kwint. He was one of those who inspired me to study history in the first place.

Professional help and inspiration are important factors, but the support by friends and family ensured the success of this project. First, my parents, Lex Kraft van Ermel and Gerry Wakker always supported my aspirations. My late grandmother, Janna van de Graaf is of particular mention: like many in her generation, she never had the opportunity to take higher education. Nevertheless, she was always interested in what I was doing and encouraged me to continue. Of course, my brothers and sisters, all four of them, did similarly. Two close friends, Laura van der Most and Sophie Franssen were always there for me. Countless more friends are worthy of mention. As I would most certainly forget someone, I am not going to mention them all.

A final word of thanks goes to a very special person: Ellis Nijland. Over the last years, you made me a better person. Not only that, but you also accompanied me on fieldwork in Ukraine. You had to hear all my (professional) frustrations, while we passed many monuments reminding of pasts that were far from happy. You also voluntarily accompanied me to an eerie former NKVD/KGB prison and almost froze on a cemetery in Lviv. I hope my love suffices as compensation for such hardships; it is all I can offer in return.

A Note on the Transcription of Russian and Ukrainian

This study is based on sources in various languages. Two of them, Russian and Ukrainian, are written in different writing system than English. Representing Russian and Ukrainian proper names is a challenge because one needs to balance between truthfully and closely representing the phonetic characteristics of the source language and simple understandability of the transcription in the target language. A perfect system of transcription does not exist. This study uses a system that emphasizes simple transcription because most phonetic details are to no use for non-speakers.

Cyrillic		Transcription				Cyrillic		Transcription			
Cap.	Small	From Rus.	From Ukr.	From Rus.	From Ukr.	Cap.	Small	From Rus.	From Ukr.	From Rus.	From Ukr.
А	а	A	а	A	а	О	о	O	о	O	о
Б	б	B	б	B	б	П	п	P	р	P	р
В	в	V	в	V	в	Р	р	R	р	R	р
Г	г	G	г	H	h	С	с	S	с	S	с
Ґ	ґ	n/a ¹	G	g	Т	т	T	t	T	t	t
Д	д	D	д	D	д	У	у	U	у	U	у
Е	е	Ye	ye ^e or e	E	e	Ф	ф	F	f	F	f
Є	є	n/a	Ye	ye	Х	х	Kh	kh	Kh	kh	kh
Є̇	є̇	Yo	yo ^o or o	n/a	Ц	ц	Ts	ts	Ts	ts	ts
Ж	ж	Zh	zh	Zh	zh	Ч	ч	Ch	ch	Ch	ch
З	з	Z	z	Z	z	Ш	ш	Sh	sh	Sh	sh
И ²	и	I	i ³	Y	y ⁴	Щ	щ	Shch	shch	Shch	shch
Й ⁵	й	Y	Y	Y	Y	Ь ⁶	ь	- ⁷			n/a
І	і	n/a	I	i ⁸	Ы ⁹	ы	Y	y ¹⁰			n/a
Ї	ї	n/a	Yi	yi	Ь ¹¹	ь	-				-
К	к	K	k	K	k	Э	э	E	e		n/a
Л	л	L	l	L	l	Ю	ю	Yu	yu	Yu	yu
М	м	M	m	M	m	Я	я	Ya	ya	Ya	ya
Н	н	N	n	N	n	¹²		n/a			-

Table 1: Transcription of Russian and Ukrainian

This transcription system is used only as a rule-of-thumb. In some instances, deviation from the system produces a more readable rendition. In addition, if Russian or Ukrainian speaking authors have used a different transcription of their names in English-language publications that transcription is used.

This system is also used to transcribe Russian and Ukrainian place names. In Ukraine, places might have different names in Ukrainian and Russian. Often these are just different language varieties of the same name. Take for instance Ukraine's capital, which is called

A Note on the Transcription of Russian and Ukrainian

Київ (Kyiv) in Ukrainian, but Киев (Kiev) in Russian. The difference looks small, but the pronunciation is rather different. In international literature, it is increasingly becoming the norm to refer to cities in Ukraine by their Ukrainian names instead of their Russian names. This study follows this norm as well: it writes Kyiv instead of Kiev, Lviv and not Lvov, Odesa in place of Odessa etc.

Notes to the transliteration table

- 1 Not applicable
- 2 Produces an i-sound similar to English ‘police’ in Russian; In Ukrainian it produces a /i/-vowel sound, similar to the pronunciation of ‘bit’ in Northern English pronunciation.’
- 3 Adjectival endings on –ий are transcribed as –iy from Russian
- 4 Adjectival endings on –ій are transcribed as –yi from Ukrainian
- 5 Produces a semi-vowel /j/-sound, like in English ‘you’ in both Russian and Ukrainian
- 6 The Russian hard sign is dropped for readability, as only speakers of Russian will comprehend its transcription.
- 7 Letter is dropped in transcription
- 8 Ukrainian adjectival endings on –ій are transcribed as –iy.
- 9 Produces a [i]-vowel sound, similar to English ‘hit’ in Russian
- 10 Russian adjectival endings on –ый (-ный) are transcribed as -yi.
- 11 The Russian and Ukrainian soft sign is dropped for readability, because only speakers of both languages will comprehend its transcription.
- 12 The Ukrainian hard sign (apostrophe) is dropped for readability, as only speakers of Ukrainian will comprehend its transcription.

Introduction

From November 2013 to February 2014, Ukrainians went to the streets of the capital Kyiv in protest of President Yanukovich's decision not to sign an association agreement with the European Union. The protesters also increasingly considered that the corrupt regime failed to place the interests of the Ukrainian nation above its own needs. The protest's symbols also reflected this: they included the European Flag and Ukrainian nationalist symbols. That these protests were called the *Euromaidan*, combining the prefix *Euro-* with the name of the square where the protests were centred was an even further indication. On December 8, the protesters toppled the Lenin statue that stood at one of the ends of the *Khreshchatyk*, the city's main avenue. It was the first of many statues to fall during and after the *Euromaidan*.¹ This was no ordinary act of vandalism, but a political move: as during the entire period of political unrest, protesters held Ukrainian nationalist symbols and flags, the European flag and sang the national anthem. For the protesters, Lenin represented not only the communist past in Ukraine but also the present-day regime. They associated this regime with a history of Russian oppression and wanted to replace it with expressions of Ukrainian nationalism and the idea of a European Ukraine.

On February 22, President Yanukovich fled the country and the Ukrainian parliament, the *Verkhovna Rada*, installed a transition government. These developments provoked a Russian intervention: on March 18, Russia formally annexed the Crimean Peninsula after a military takeover and organized a dubious referendum. When Russia officially annexed the Crimea, president Vladimir Putin addressed the nation. Like the Ukrainian protesters, he also referred to history to justify his move:

*Literally, everything in the Crimea permeates our common history and pride. This is the location of ancient Kherstones, where the Saint Prince Vladimir accepted baptism. His spiritual feat, the adoption of Orthodox Christianity, predestined the common culture, values, and the foundations of civilization that unify the peoples of Russia, Ukraine, and Belorussia. The graves of Russian soldiers, whose bravery led to the integration of Crimea in the Russian state in 1783 are also located in Crimea. Crimea is Sevastopol, the legendary city, the city of a great fate, the city-fortress and the birthplace of the Russian Black Sea Fleet. Crimea is Balaklava and Kerch, Malakhov Kurgan and Mount Sapun. Every one of these places is sacred for us. They are the symbols of Russian military glory and unprecedented valour.*²

History is one of the critical factors in the ongoing (international) Ukrainian crisis. It has not only been a cause of disagreement between Russia and Ukraine but also within Ukraine. Since Ukraine became an independent state in 1991, contentious historiographical and political debates have permeated Ukrainian society. These debates have spanned the entire history of Ukraine: from the mediaeval principality of Kyivan Rus, via the 17th and 18th century Ukrainian Cossacks to the twentieth century. Nevertheless, debates on Ukraine's recent

1 Srećko Horvat, "Ukraine's Fallen Statues of Lenin Are Not Just a Rejection of Russia," *The Guardian*, last modified March 16, 2014, accessed March 20, 2018, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/mar/16/ukraine-lenin-statues-rejection-russia-eu>.

2 Владимир Путин, "Обращение Президента Российской Федерации," *Президент России*, last modified March 18, 2014, accessed December 6, 2017, <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20603>.

history have been the most controversial.

These discussions have been a battleground between two narratives on Ukrainian history: a Ukrainian nationalist and a Russian or (neo)-Soviet version. Ukrainian nationalism sees Ukraine as a historical nation with medieval roots. This nation has never come to full fruition because of suppression by its neighbours, especially Russia and Poland. As an ideology that favours the creation of a nation-state, it holds that independence in 1991 was the logical outcome of history. This narrative is also inherently European in its outlook: it sees Ukraine as a European country and envisages a future within the boundaries of Europe.³ On the contrary, the Russian or (neo)-Soviet narrative views Ukraine as the birthplace of the Russian nation and considers the country a part of the Russian world (*Russkiy Mir*). The latter is an ideological idea propagated by the Russian state and the Russian Orthodox Church. In its extreme form, this narrative does not even recognise the existence of a Ukrainian nation; it often views the Ukrainians as 'Little Russians' (*Malorusy*), Russia's little brother⁴, whereas the Ukrainian language is considered as a dialect of Russian.

As might be expected, the debate on the causes of the Ukrainian crisis divides scholars. All agree that both domestic and external factors play a role. Nevertheless, they disagree on whether internal or external causes are primary. Some scholars, such as the British professor of Russian and European Politics, Richard Sakwa, see the root cause in a Ukrainian crisis of identities. Two competing state and nation-building strategies that Ukrainian politicians have used since independence in 1991 caused the crisis. The 'monist' strategy drew on the idea of a historical and ethnic nation that finally came together. It also wanted a European future for the country. The 'pluralists' see Ukraine as a culturally and linguistically diverse polity and argue that Ukraine needs a more inclusive form of nationhood: they invite all Ukrainians of all backgrounds to join Ukraine's national community. In Sakwa's interpretation, the Yanukovich government relied on the latter strategy and caused little international problems for Ukraine. On the other hand, the protesters and other Ukrainian governments favoured the 'monist' strategy, alienated large parts of the Ukrainian population, and put Ukraine on a collision course with Russia.⁵ Other scholars, most prominently the British Ukraine specialist Andrew Wilson, see the primacy of Yanukovich's foreign policy and blame the decision not to sign an association agreement with the European Union in November 2013.⁶

Scholars who agree with Wilson tend to present the international conflict around Ukraine as a problem of Russia's foreign politics, while those who side with Sakwa, view it as a problem of Ukrainian domestic politics. The Ukrainian crisis is far too complicated to be seen from only one perspective. Therefore, we need not be too concerned about a debate over its primary cause. It would most likely only lead to contentious debates, at which historians are generally excellent. It is undisputed that discussions on Ukrainian identity do play

3 Modern day Ukrainian national interpretations of history all trace their roots to the work of the historian Mikhailo Hrushevskyi (1866-1934), who is the father of Modern Ukrainian historiography. He sought to depict Ukraine as a European country and presented Ukraine as a kind of *antemurale* of the West. According to him, Russians were an Eastern people only outwardly westernized. Hrushevskyi was critical in his descriptions of the Russian national character and was not alone in this assessment; earlier Ukrainian thinkers, such as Mikhailo Drahomanov, Mykola Kostomarov and Volodymyr Antonovych have influenced his opinion. See: Serhii Plokyh, *Unmaking Imperial Russia: Mykhailo Hrushevsky and the Writing of Ukrainian History* (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 85–86.

4 For the role of Ukraine within the concept of the Russian World, see: Valentina Feklyunina, "Soft Power and Identity: Russia, Ukraine and the 'Russian World(s),'" *European Journal of International Relations* 22, no. 4 (December 2016): 782–785. Russians used the notion of Ukrainians as 'little Russians' to delegate them to the role of 'little brothers' of the Russian nation. Ukrainians have used the same term to argue that Kyiv was the original capital instead of Moscow. See: Andrew Wilson, *The Ukrainians: Unexpected Nation*, 4th edition. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015), 79–80.

5 Richard Sakwa, *Frontline Ukraine: Crisis in the Borderlands* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2015), 28, 37–48, 76.

6 Andrew Wilson, *Ukraine Crisis: What It Means for the West* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 19–37.

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a role. Therefore, it seems a worthwhile exercise to look at the subject from that angle of approach. This does not diminish the validity of other perspectives, such as foreign policy, military history, geopolitics etc.

Ukraine and its Histories

The concept 'Ukraine', like all countries and nations, is a human construction. At different times, it meant different things to different people.⁷ It is even highly unlikely that there will ever be a universally accepted definition. Perhaps Ukraine's current borders provide the simplest definition. Nevertheless, these borders are relatively young and were only formed during the twentieth century. Throughout history, both inhabitants and foreigners have conceived Ukraine's borders in different ways. Ukraine as a nation is no less a confusing concept: Ukrainian nationalists, Russians, and Soviet politicians have all defined it in various ways. Some nationalists have used exclusive ethnocentric notions, others inclusive civic notions. Some Ukrainian and Russian nationalists have concluded that the nation was part of a larger 'Russian' nation. Likewise, Soviet policymakers included the Ukrainians as part of a larger 'Soviet people'. Because of this, the idea of 'Ukrainian history' is equally complicated: it also had and still has different meanings for different people. Ukrainian history can be the history of the Ukrainian nation (in one of its different conceptions) or the history of an idea (how have different people defined 'Ukraine?'). Perhaps the simplest and least ideological (and therefore most elegant) definition of Ukrainian history proceeds from Ukraine's current borders. It focusses on the history of the people who have lived there and how they have perceived themselves and each other.⁸ This study uses the latter definition. However, actors in the political processes discussed, have often defined 'Ukraine' differently. Which definition they used often becomes clear from the context. To enhance readability, this study does not explicitly state which 'Ukraine' or which of its histories is meant. Only when the context provides insufficient information to comprehend the intention of the author, this study makes the definition of Ukraine explicit.

This study utilizes political debates on Ukrainian history to zoom in on the identity questions in Ukraine that have helped to shape the Ukrainian crisis and continue to influence its international and domestic aspects. This will be done by reviewing the two most contentious issues: the 1932-1933 famine in Soviet Ukraine and the activities of radical Ukrainian nationalists in the 1930s and 1940s (especially their actions during the Second World War). Before we can discuss those topics, it is necessary to explain the underlying history and the challenges it presents.

A cursory overview of Ukrainian history in the twentieth century demonstrates that it poses many questions for Ukrainian society, politicians, and historians: the territory of Ukraine

7 Ukrainian studies is a relatively young academic discipline, except for Ukrainian, Russian and Polish historians who had different views of Ukrainian history, no 'outsiders' really mingled in debates on Ukrainian history until recently. Nevertheless, Ukrainian history offers a rich 'playground' for historians to approach from different angles. That Ukrainian history can be approached from so many different perspectives is partly due to the complexity of multiple imperial projects that all had set their eyes on the territory of present-day Ukraine. These projects presented their own conceptions of Ukraine and their interactions with Ukrainians themselves. Thus, both foreigners and Ukrainians developed different perceptions of Ukraine and its history. Therefore, one can look at Ukrainian history through the lenses of various blends of nationalism, transnationalism, multi-ethnism, imperialism, regional studies etc. See: Serhii Plokhly, "Quo Vadis Ukrainian History?," in *The Future of the Past. New Perspectives on Ukrainian History*, ed. Serhii Plokhly (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2016), 1–24. Recently, discussions at several conferences have resulted in the publication of an interesting edited volume on these various angles of approach of Ukrainian history. See: Serhii Plokhly, ed., *The Future of the Past: New Perspectives on Ukrainian History*, Harvard papers in Ukrainian studies (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2016).

8 Recent international histories of Ukraine use such an approach. They focus on Ukraine as a multi-national construct. See, for instance: Serhii Plokhly, *The Gates of Europe: A History of Ukraine* (London: Allen Lane, 2015), xx–xxiv; Marc Jansen, *Grensland: Een geschiedenis van Oekraïne* (Uitgeverij G.A. Van Oorschot B.V., 2017), 7–11.

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felt the destructive force of both the First and Second World Wars and was subject to the horrors of both communist and Nazi totalitarian regimes. Furthermore, Ukrainians clashed with their Polish neighbours and engaged in antisemitic violence. Since a significant proportion of Europe's pre-war Jewry lived in what is today Ukraine, the country also was a major theatre of the Holocaust, in which some Ukrainians also participated.

It would be overly simplistic to attribute all convolutions of twentieth-century history to external forces. Ukrainians played a large part in their history: Ukrainian nationalism emerged in the 19th century and inspired attempts to establish two Ukrainian states in the wake of the First World War, the *Ukrainian Peoples Republic* (1917-1921, UNR) and *West-Ukrainian Peoples Republic* (1918-1919; ZUNR). The temporary overthrow of the UNR by the conservative, but nationalist, 'Ukrainian state' (informally called the *Hetmanate*, because its leader, Pavlo Skoropadskyi, styled himself after the Cossack hetmans) between April and December 1918 further complicates affairs.

These attempts failed due to a multitude of factors. Both the UNR and Hetmanate were client states of the German empire and lacked internal cohesion and popular support. What made things worse, was that multiple parties contested the territory of Ukraine in several conflicts: the Russian Civil War (1917-1922), the Ukrainian-Polish War (1918-1919), the Ukrainian Soviet-War (1917-1921), and the Polish-Soviet War (1919-1921). When Poland and both the Russian and Ukrainian Soviet republics signed the Treaty of Riga in 1921, all attempts at establishing an independent Ukrainian state ended inconclusively. The treaty divided the territory of Ukraine between Poland and the future Soviet Union (founded in 1922). As a consequence, the territories of today's Ukrainian state witnessed both Polish anti-Ukrainian policies and Soviet oppression. This meant that Ukrainians had very different experiences of the interwar period: Those in the West encountered a policy of polonization, while those in the East encountered a policy of Soviet state-building (the Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic within the framework of the Soviet Union), later followed by anti-nationalist Soviet policies.⁹

Ukraine as a Victim? The Man-Made Famine of 1932-1933

Soviet rule in Ukraine, as in any part of the Soviet Union, could hardly be described in solely positive terms: The Bolsheviks initially supported the development of Ukrainian culture and language as part of the general *Korenizatsia*-policies that were geared towards accommodating national minorities within the structure of the Soviet Union. However, during the late 1920s, Joseph Stalin grew increasingly wary of the possibility of a Ukrainian nationalist challenge to Soviet rule. In 1929, a crackdown on Ukrainian intellectuals by the Soviet security services ensured the end of this supportive attitude to a separate Ukrainian identity.¹⁰

Ukraine also became the subject of Stalin's forced industrialization campaigns. These implied a radical uptake of agricultural production as of 1928. The Ukrainian Soviet Republic included key agricultural areas with fertile *chernozem* (black earth). Together with Northern

9 This complicated episode of Ukrainian history can also be described as a history of subsequent and/or concurrent colonial occupations by the Russians, Central Powers, Poles, Whites and Bolsheviks, as John-Paul Himka has done. He has also used this same framework for the subsequent rule by the Soviets and Germans. See: Mark von Hagen, "Wartime Occupation and Peacetime Alien Rule: 'Notes and Materials' toward a(n) (Anti-) (Post-) Colonial History of Ukraine," in *The Future of the Past. New Perspectives on Ukrainian History*, ed. Serhii Plokhyy (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2016), 143-184. George O. Liber has written about these same episodes from the viewpoint of projects of integration and fragmentation, and how under these ever-changing circumstances, Ukrainians have defined themselves and how others have defined them. See: George O. Liber, "Ukraine, Total Wars, and the Dialectics of Integration and Fragmentation, 1914-1954," in *The Future of the Past. New Perspectives on Ukrainian History*, ed. Serhii Plokhyy (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2016), 119-142.

10 Plokhyy, *The Gates of Europe*, 230-235.

Kazakhstan and the Kuban (in the Northern Caucasus), the republic was to supply the bulk of the agricultural products needed. Stalin argued that to produce the required quantities peasants had to collaborate in huge industrial collective farms, the so-called *kolkhozy* (Ukr.: *kolkhosp*) or in state-led farms known as *sovkhozy* (Ukr.: *radhosp*). Unsurprisingly, Ukrainian peasants, who were used to other, more low-key forms of agricultural production, were not keen on joining these enterprises, protested, and even rebelled. Because Stalin considered collectivization the key to the success of the first five-year plan, such protests – especially in a strategic border republic – were unacceptable. Opponents were labelled as *kulaks* (Ukr.: *kurkul*), a term that previously denoted well-off peasants, but its definition was continuously enlarged to include more and more peasants.¹¹

The collectivization of agriculture was not unique to the Ukrainian Soviet Republic.¹² However, it was in Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and the Kuban that it had a devastating impact: a major famine in 1932 and 1933. An increasing number of (recent) studies argue that the famine was unnecessary and wilfully created by Stalin's regime to force his policies on the Ukrainian peasants.¹³ That the famine occurred is not a politically contested question, but the role of the Stalin regime is still disputed, as well as the death toll. Estimates on the number of victims of this famine vary greatly: from at least 1.8 million to 12 million. Some of the divergences on the death toll can be ascribed to differences in the demographic methodologies that were used. However, the higher the numbers get, the more likely it is that it represents a more outspoken political point of view.¹⁴ Questions about the number of victims are not the most contested; instead, the more contentious discussions have been on the regime's motives for creating the famine. Did Stalin seek to eradicate all Ukrainians (as simultaneous attacks on Ukrainian intellectuals might suggest) and should it, therefore, be categorised as a genocide? Alternatively, was the elimination of the kulaks as a social class on the agenda? On the other hand, should the famine be seen as a political instrument to force peasants into submission without regard to their ethnic, national, or social identity?¹⁵ In the Ukrainian SSR, the famine was not limited to the ethnic Ukrainians, but other groups also suffered, such as the Mennonites in Southern Ukraine.¹⁶

11 Ibid., 249–250.

12 Both collectivization and industrialization are major themes in Russian history as well, as its discussion in the *Cambridge History of Russia* indicates: David R. Shearer, "Stalinism, 1928–1940," in *The Twentieth Century*, ed. Ronald Grigor Suny, The Cambridge History of Russia 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 194–198.

13 See for instance, Robert Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivisation and the Terror-Famine* (London: Pimlico, 2002), 326; Anne Applebaum, *Red Famine: Stalin's War on Ukraine* (London: Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, 2017), 189–208, 354.

14 For instance, Robert Conquest, who has written the first international study on the famine, has estimated the number of victims to be 5 million. John Paul Himka has written an introduction to the discussion on the number of victims. He keeps to the number of 2.5–3.5 million. Ukrainian president Viktor Yushchenko regularly used a figure of 10 million, as a political expression. Cf. Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow*, 306; John-Paul Himka, "How Many Perished in the Famine and Why Does It Matter?," *BRAMA*, last modified February 2, 2008, accessed December 13, 2016, http://www.brama.com/news/press/2008/02/080202himka_famine.html.

15 These questions arose in both international and Ukrainian historiography. In both, there has been a shift to include an ethnic or national component in the Kremlin's reasons for initiating the famine. Two examples of this trend are: Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow*, 329; Applebaum, *Red Famine*, 354. The historian Valeriy Vasil'ev has written an extensive introduction to these discussions in Ukrainian historiography: Valerij Vasil'ev, "Zwischen Politisierung und Historisierung," *Osteuropa. Zeitschrift für Gegenwartsfragen des Ostens* 54, no. 12 (2004): 165–182.

16 As farming communities, the Mennonites in Southern Ukraine were subject to the same collectivization policies as Ukrainian peasants. Whereas the death toll in Ukrainian villages in 1932 and 1933 was 6% to 18.8%, Mennonites had a better chance of survival: their settlements' population declined with 3% to 8%. Several factors, such as a higher degree of mobility within the Soviet-Union, the availability of food-packages and monetary aid from Germany and the United States contributed to higher survival rates. In addition, regions with Mennonite villages were less famine-stricken. For an overview of the Mennonite experience of the famine, see: Colin Peter Neufeldt, "The Fate of Mennonites in Ukraine and the Crimea during Soviet Collectivization and the Famine (1930–1933)" (University of Alberta, 1999), 237–262, accessed June 13, 2019, <http://www.nlc-bnc.ca/obj/s4/f2/dsk3/ftp04/nq39574.pdf>.

In the subsequent years of Soviet rule, the regime covered up the issue of the famine, but the Ukrainian diaspora in North America kept its memory alive.¹⁷ Diaspora Ukrainians have remembered the famine as the *Holodomor*, a term that combined the word for hunger or famine *holod* with the verb *moryty* (to kill), and thus means something like ‘to kill by hunger’. During the perestroika era, such notions were transported to Ukraine and influenced both political and historiographic debates. In this study, we will demonstrate that Ukrainian politicians debated this topic vigorously.

Ukrainian Heroes? Ukrainian Radical Nationalism in the 1930s and 1940s

The failure of independent Ukrainian republics in the wake of the First World War fuelled a radicalization of Ukrainian nationalism: veterans from the UNR's and ZUNR's armed forces formed the *Ukrainian Military Organization (Ukrayinska Viyskova Orhanizatsiya; UVO)*. The UVO became the springboard for the *Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (Orhanizatsiya Ukrayinskykh Natsionalistiv; OUN)*. Dmytro Dontsov, a disillusioned Marxist who had turned to extreme nationalism, influenced the OUN's ideology. Dontsov held that that the previous attempts of establishing an independent Ukrainian state, led by socialists such as Mikhaïlo Hrushevskiyi, had been a significant failure. Their democratic and socialist ideology would not give the Ukrainian nation the chance to establish their state. A select group of valorous Ukrainians would now have to take the future into their own hands and start a radical struggle for the creation of a state by the entire nation, led by a strong leader (note the similarity to the Nazi creed of ‘*Ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Führer*’; NAKvE). Other radical nationalist thinkers such as Mykola Mikhnovskiyi and Stepan Rudnytskyi also held racist views on the composition of a future Ukrainian state and influenced the OUN's ideology. Dontsov held that the Ukrainians should consider their national culture as something sacred and needed to protect it with everything in their power. His ideology was by no means democratic, and neither was the OUN.¹⁸

The OUN was mainly active in Eastern Galicia, which after the Treaty of Riga became part of Poland. Although Ukrainians in Poland did not have to face the whims of a totalitarian system like their compatriots in the Soviet Union, the Polish government subjected the Ukrainians to various anti-Ukrainian policies that aimed at polonization. For instance, there were restrictions on Ukrainian education and their *de facto* national church in Galicia, the Greek Catholic Church. These anti-Ukrainian policies in interwar Poland further fuelled the radicalization of Ukrainian nationalism (although some expressions of Ukrainian nationalism stressed the importance of collaboration between Ukrainians and Poles). The OUN's ideology considered both the Poles and Soviets oppressors and occupants of Ukrainian lands and the OUN operated with a terrorist *modus operandi*. The OUN thus undertook a campaign of assassinations of Poles and those Ukrainians whom they perceived as traitors to the Ukrainian cause. Most noteworthy was the killing of the Polish Minister of Internal Affairs, Bronisław Pieracki, in 1934.¹⁹

In 1938, the OUN's founding father and leader, Yevhen Konovalets was assassinated by the Soviet secret police, the NKVD. A struggle over the leadership of the OUN ensued. Older members, who resided in exile, designated Andriy Melnyk as leader. Radical younger nationalists in Galicia favoured Stepan Bandera as head. Bandera, who had led the OUN ‘Homeland Executive’ from 1933 onwards, was sentenced to death by a Polish court for

17 Heorhiy Kasianov, “Holodomor and the Politics of Memory in Ukraine after Independence,” in *Holodomor and Gorta Mór. Histories, Memories and Representations of Famine in Ukraine and Ireland*, ed. Christian Noack, Lindsay Janssen, and Vincent Comerford (London and New York: Anthem Press, 2012), 179–170, 172.

18 Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe, *The Fascist Kernel of the Ukrainian Genocidal Nationalism*, The Carl Beck Papers in Russian and East European Studies, June 4, 2015, 9–11; Wilson, *The Ukrainians*, 131–132.

19 Plokhly, *The Gates of Europe*, 239.

his involvement in the Pieracki assassination and was convicted for terrorism in a second trial (his death sentence was changed into life imprisonment).²⁰ The split between OUN-M (after Melnyk) and OUN-B (after Bandera) became final in 1940.

Both factions shared a fascist ideology. Some scholars have preferred the term 'integral nationalism' to describe the OUN's ideology, because unlike 'fascism' it had no political propaganda function (during the Cold War, the Soviet Union used 'fascism' to label its political opponents).²¹ However, it is better to describe the OUN as a fascist organisation: Its ideology and organisation held many of the attributes that we, today, would consider fascist: it was anti-liberal, conservative, and anti-communist. It stuck to the ideas of an armed party, was totalitarian, and affirmed a strong *Führerprinzip* (with Bandera and Melnyk claiming to be the nation's *Providnik* or *Vozhd*). It also shared the Nazi worldview and was as much committed to a new European order as any other fascist movement. The OUN expressed its admiration for fascism and saw itself as a part of a family of European fascists. Besides showing these general characteristics of fascism, the OUN also had a radical antisemitic ideology.²²

Before the Second World War, the OUN had contacts with the German *Abwehr* (military intelligence service). Both interwar Germany and the OUN were revisionists: both were unhappy with and wanted to revise the settlement of the First World War. The Treaty of Versailles (1919) greatly diminished the German state and put severe restrictions on its military and economy, while the Treaty of Riga left no room for the Ukrainian state that the OUN wanted to establish. Therefore, the collaboration of both OUN factions with the Nazi occupants during the Second World War should not surprise. Members of both OUN-B and OUN-M served in German uniforms in the *Nachtigall* and *Roland* battalions of the German *Abwehr* (and participated in Operation Barbarossa), the *Schutzmannschaften* (auxiliary police) and the *Galizien* (Halychyna) volunteer division of the SS. While the OUN-M collaborated with the Germans in view of creating a Ukrainian state, the OUN-B took matters in its own hands: after the city of Lviv came under German control (in which the Ukrainian *Nachtigall* battalion participated), it announced the establishment of an independent Ukrainian state under its control. In their view, this state would be an ally of Nazi-Germany. Yaroslav Stetsko, the OUN-B operative who issued the proclamation or *Akt of June 30, 1941*, became the head of government of this fascist-style state. The *Akt* proclaimed Stepan Bandera as Ukraine's *Providnik*. The Germans, who wanted to turn Ukraine in a German agricultural colony, could not accept such a move. They subsequently incarcerated many members of the OUN-B leadership, including Bandera. This notwithstanding, the Nazis gave Bandera special treatment as a *Sonderhäftling/Ehrenhäftling* (Special- or Honourable prisoner) in the *Zellenbau* section of the Sachsenhausen concentration camp. His wife could visit him there, and he could receive packages and communicate with other Ukrainian nationalists to a limited degree. Like all prisoners in the *Zellenbau*, he enjoyed the luxury of a private prison cell.²³

20 Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe, *Stepan Bandera: The Life and Afterlife of a Ukrainian Nationalist. Fascism, Genocide, and Cult* (Stuttgart: Ibidem-Verlag, 2014), 147–148.

21 The American scholar John Armstrong is the most notable proponent of this argument. John A. Armstrong, *Ukrainian Nationalism*, 2nd ed. (Littleton: Ukrainian Academic Press, 1980), 19–22, 280–282; John A. Armstrong, "Collaborationism in World War II: The Integral Nationalist Variant in Eastern Europe," *The Journal of Modern History* 40, no. 3 (1968): 400–401; See also: Rossoliński-Liebe, *Stepan Bandera*, 455–456.

22 Per. A. Rudling, *The OUN, UPA and the Holocaust: A Study in the Manufacturing of Historical Myths*, The Carl Beck Papers in Russian & East European Studies (Pittsburgh: The Center for Russian and East European Studies, November 2011), 3; Rossoliński-Liebe, *The Fascist Kernel*, 2–3; Rossoliński-Liebe, *Stepan Bandera*, 454–456. Rossoliński-Liebe also mentioned other problems with Anderson's work on the Ukrainian nationalist movement: for instance, Armstrong does not cover atrocities committed by both branches of the OUN and the UPA (the military wing of the OUN-B). He also relied extensively on the memoirs of, and interviews with, members of the OUN or UPA (who, we now know, have doctored their narratives to fit a 'democratic world' at the end and after the Second World War). He also did not utilise any testimonies of victims of the OUN and UPA.

23 The German word *Zellenbau* actually refers to a specialised building with prison cells.

During the German occupation, OUN members assisted in or even initiated the slaughter of Jews in violent pogroms. One particularly violent example of this was the Lviv pogrom that took place concurrently with the *Akt*. It is known that OUN members participated in and organised the pogroms. However not all participants were members of the organisation, also non-nationalist Ukrainians, Poles and thrill-seekers without a political persuasion committed themselves to violence. At that time, Ukrainian blue-yellow flags decorated the city to celebrate the establishment of the OUN-B Ukrainian state. Although there is no hard evidence that members of the *Nachtigall* battalion took part in these atrocities, members of the battalion were off-duty at the time and thus had the opportunity and perhaps motive to participate.²⁴ A particularly strong catalyst for the Lviv pogrom, and other pogroms in June and July 1941 was the terror unleashed upon Western Ukraine after its incorporation into the Ukrainian Soviet Republic following the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact (1939). After the German invasion, the Soviet NKVD executed political prisoners (many of them Ukrainian nationalists), to prevent them from aiding and abetting the German forces. Whenever the Germans took control of a larger town, they would find prisons packed with the remains of these political prisoners.²⁵ Both branches of the OUN also fought each other: in August 1941, for instance, the OUN-B killed the prominent OUN-M leader and previously theorist of the – still united – OUN, Mykola Stsiborskyi.²⁶

The Germans soon disbanded both the *Nachtigall* and *Roland* battalions, because both were initiatives of the OUN-B, which had fallen out of grace after the *Akt*. Nevertheless, many of its members, as well as other OUN members, continued to serve in a German uniform and joined the *Schutzmannschaften*. Roman Shukhevych was a prominent example: He served in the 201st *Schutzmannschaft* battalion, which was active in occupied Belarus and responsible for atrocities against Jews and Poles and in anti-partisan warfare.²⁷ In 1940, the OUN-B formed its security forces, the *Sluzhba Bezpeky* (*Security Service*; SB), which were led by Mykola Lebed.²⁸ The SB played a role in next mass murders and did not hesitate to use violence against Ukrainians who did not share the OUN-B's views. In 1943, with an eye set on the foreseeable end of the war, the OUN-B created the *Ukrainian Insurgent Army* (*Ukrayinska Povstanska Armiya*; UPA). Dmytro Klyachkivskiyi (pseudonym: Klym Savur) and Roman Shukhevych (pseudonym: Taras Chuprynka) led this new outfit. Many of the Ukrainians serving in German uniform defected and joined it. UPA was an anti-Bolshevik, antisemitic, and anti-Polish formation and strove to create an ethnically pure Ukrainian heartland. The OUN-B formed the core of UPA, and other Ukrainians of non-nationalist convictions joined (for instance, to evade forced labour in Germany as *Ostarbeiter*). In the later stages of the war (1943), the UPA fought for control over Volhynia and Galicia and hunted down Jews who hid in the forests. It now also directed ethnic violence at the Polish population of Volhynia. The UPA did not shy away from using violence to force Ukrainians to aid them or to eliminate Ukrainian opponents. It claimed to fight both Nazi-Germany and the Red Army. In reality, the organization focused on attacking the Red Army.²⁹ UPA remained active as a localised anti-Soviet guerrilla force until the early 1950s.³⁰

24 John-Paul Himka, "True and False Lessons from the *Nachtigall* Episode.," *Brama*, last modified March 19, 2008, accessed June 23, 2016, http://brama.com/news/press/2008/03/080319himka_nachtigall.html.

25 John-Paul Himka, "The Lviv Pogrom of 1941: The Germans, Ukrainian Nationalists and the Carnival Crowd.," *Canadian Slavonic Papers / Revue Canadienne des Slavistes* 53, no. 2-3-4 (2011): 210–211.

26 Rudling, *The OUN, UPA and the Holocaust*, 10.

27 Per Anders Rudling, "The Cult of Roman Shukhevych in Ukraine: Myth Making with Complications.," *Fascism* 5, no. 1 (May 26, 2016): 37–41.

28 Rossoliński-Liebe, *Stepan Bandera*, 272, 275, 263; Rudling, *The OUN, UPA and the Holocaust*, 10–11.

29 The reign of violence and ethnic cleansing campaigns have been documented by several scholars. Of particular mention are: Timothy Snyder, *The Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569-1999* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2003), 154–178; Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin* (London: Bodley Head, 2010), 194–195, 326–327; Karel C. Berkhoff, *Harvest of Despair: Life and Death in Ukraine under Nazi Rule* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), 285–297, 299–300.

30 Plokhoy, *The Gates of Europe*, 295–296.

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The participation of Ukrainians in the Holocaust and their collaboration with the Germans must not be overrated: The number of Ukrainians that actively participated in the murder of Jews ranged between 30.000 and 40.000. Nevertheless, many more Ukrainians contributed to the Holocaust indirectly, and an even larger number profited (materially) from the destruction of the Jews. Similarly, we must not overstate the number of Ukrainians serving in German uniform either. About 100.000 Ukrainians served in the auxiliary police or fire brigades.³¹ The number of participants in the Holocaust and collaborators in German service represented only a small minority of the overall population of Ukraine; yet, we must also admit that without their collaboration and participation in mass murder, the Germans could not have killed so many Jews in Ukraine.³²

Given all this, it is clear why Ukrainian nationalism in the 1930s and 1940s still affects Ukrainian society to this day. On the one hand, its history fits in with the post-Soviet Ukrainian nationalist view on history: it supports the presentation of a Ukrainian nation that heroically fought for its independence and existence after centuries of Polish, Russian and Soviet suppression. On the other hand, both OUN and UPA fought for a mono-ethnic and fascist Ukrainian State. This remains a black stain on the Ukrainian historical record.

The history of the OUN and UPA does not only blemish Ukraine's history but also causes problems between different groups in contemporary Ukraine. Both the OUN and UPA fought against the Soviet state and the Red Army and saw themselves as the only legitimate representatives of the Ukrainian nation. However, millions of Ukrainians fought in the Red Army, compared to 20.000 to 23.000 who fought in the ranks of the UPA.³³ During the post-war Soviet era, the Ukrainian Red Army veterans were included in a narrative that gave them a prominent place in Ukrainian history: The Red Army 'reunified' Russia and Ukraine not only once, but twice: in 1939 and 1944.³⁴ This necessarily causes tensions between veterans of the nationalist movement and the Red Army: both claim to have fought for Ukraine during the war, yet, they also were each other's opponents. So to say, each group has a memory of the war that excludes the other and places themselves centre stage in this crucial episode of Ukrainian history. The question of how to deal with this is highly political and it has divided Ukraine throughout its existence as an independent state.

Between Europe and Russia: History and Identity

Whether Ukraine belongs to the Western or Russian sphere of influence is a question open to debate. Many scholars, foreign and Ukrainian alike have sought to use geopolitical theory to do so.³⁵ For instance, the famous American political scientist Samuel P. Huntington claimed that Ukraine belonged neither to the Western (Christian) civilization nor to the Orthodox Christian civilization. On the contrary, it was cleft between the two.³⁶ On the other hand, Mikhailo Hrushevskyy, the father of modern Ukrainian historiography, has present-

31 Dieter Pohl, "Ukrainische Hilfskräfte beim Mord an den Juden," in *Die Täter der Shoah. Fanatische Nationalsozialisten oder ganz normale Deutsche?*, ed. Gerhard Paul, Dachauer Symposien zur Zeitgeschichte 2 (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2002), 210–211, 219; John-Paul Himka, "The Reception of the Holocaust in Postcommunist Ukraine," in *Bringing the Dark Past to Light. The Reception of the Holocaust in Postcommunist Europe*, ed. John-Paul Himka and Joanna Beata Michlic (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2013), 629, 631.

32 Pohl, "Ukrainische Hilfskräfte," 224.

33 Ivan Katchanovski, "Terrorists or National Heroes? Politics and Perceptions of the OUN and the UPA in Ukraine," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 48, no. 2–3 (June 2015): 220.

34 Wilfried Jilge, "The Politics of History and the Second World War in Post-Communist Ukraine (1986/1991–2004/2005)," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 54, no. 1 (2006): 52.

35 The chapter 'Imagining Ukraine: Towards a Theory of Ukrainian Geopolitics' by Andrew Wilson is a particularly instructive introduction to Western, Ukrainian and Russian geopolitical thinking on Ukraine. See: Wilson, *The Ukrainians*, 279–310.

36 Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (London: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 137.

ed the idea that Ukraine was the *antemurale* of the West: it was the last European country before Asia began.³⁷

Such theories generally use either external classifications or internal – identity-based – categories. For instance, Huntington's religious classification is external: religion predisposes a country for a particular classification. Hrushevskyy instead relied on identity: Ukrainians' self-perception makes them different from Russians. In this study, we will adopt an internal viewpoint. The main question when dealing with identity is whether the Ukrainian government and/or society perceive Ukraine as a European country or as a part of the Russian World. Nevertheless, a distinct third possibility cannot be ruled out: Ukraine could also place itself in an intermediary position between the two. We will use the perceptions of history that Ukrainian policymakers have advanced to evaluate the underlying identity. We will employ three models to engage with this question. The first is the Western-European model that has supported the process of European integration. It sees Nazi crimes and especially the Holocaust as the lowest point in European history and requires a deep introspective self-critical approach to history. Ever since the 2004 Eastern enlargement of the European Union, politicians and historians from the new member states have challenged the established Western European model. They sought to introduce notions of communist crimes as equal to Nazi crimes and to extend the moral concern Europe gives more to the latter than to the former. Such attempts will serve as the second model of this study. A distinct third model is formed by a Russian and (neo)-Soviet model of history: this model does not view the interwar period and the Second World War as a deplorable tragedy, instead it views it as a history that led to the supposedly glorious Soviet victory in what it coins the '*Great Patriotic War*'.

All Ukrainian governments have paid homage to the idea of Ukraine as a member of the European family of nations.³⁸ 'Europe' as a concept, has many different meanings. For instance, one can speak of a 'European culture' as an aggregate of common elements in the cultures of European nations. In this study, 'Europe' is understood as a political project, namely European integration. European integration started after the Second World War and is rooted in two phenomena: First, the reconstruction of Western Europe and, second, the idea that cooperation between countries in Europe was the solution to prevent another destructive war. From the outset, two different interpretations of cooperation have shaped European integration and have led to two different international organizations: first, there is the 'intergovernmental' idea, according to which states cooperate as strict equals and keep their sovereignty. The *Council of Europe*, founded in 1949 embodies this doctrine of European integration, as does the *European Free Trade Association* founded in 1960. The second idea, that of 'supranationalism' stretches even further. According to it, states not only cooperate but transfer sovereignty to a higher decision-making body. The *European Union*, which traces its roots to the *European Coal and Steel Community*, founded in 1952, started as a supranational project and currently mixes supranational and intergovernmental modes of cooperation.³⁹ Although the *Council of Europe* and the *European Union* work from very

37 See for instance: Plokhy, *Ummaking Imperial Russia*, 85–86.

38 During Kravchuk's administration, Ukraine's foreign policy was often phrased as a '*return to Europe*' (a notion also used by Ukrainian nationalists). Kuchma also pushed for the inclusion of Ukraine in Europe. (See: Wilson, *The Ukrainians*, 290.) After the Orange Revolution in 2004, president Yushchenko explicitly claimed Ukraine's willingness to join Europe, and surprisingly even president Yanukovich pushed for European integration. (See: Paul Kubicek, "Ukraine and the European Neighborhood Policy: Can the EU Help the Orange Revolution Bear Fruit?," *East European Quarterly* 41, no. 1 (Spring 2007): 2; Tony Vogel, "Yanukovich in Brussels on First Foreign Trip," *Politico*, last modified March 1, 2010, accessed March 22, 2018, <https://www.politico.eu/article/yanukovich-in-brussels-on-first-foreign-trip/>.) The Euromaidan was a protest against Yanukovich's unwillingness to sign an association agreement with the EU, and the subsequent regime has also stressed Ukraine's European ambitions.

39 For the more traditional intergovernmental and the more innovative supranationalist ideas of European integration, see: P. J. A. N. Rietbergen, *Europe: A Cultural History* (London: Routledge, 2015), 510–511; Ole Wæver, "Europe since 1945: Crisis to Renewal," in *The History of the Idea of Europe*, ed. Kevin Wilson and Jan van der

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different principles, both organisations embody the post-World War II spirit for European cooperation. Both also share a commitment to essential human rights and freedoms. All members of the European Union are also members of the Council of Europe, but not vice versa: all European countries (47), except for Belarus and the Vatican City have joined the council. As of 2020, the European Union on the other hand only has 27 member states.

In this study, 'European integration' is used to refer to the more exclusive 'European Union'.⁴⁰ This is because, when Ukrainian politicians discuss their integration with Europe, they have the European Union in mind. In addition, the 2013-2014 *Euromaidan* protests were caused by president Yanukovich's decision not to sign the *Association Agreement* with the European Union. The treaty would have been a major step for Ukraine's integration with the European Union.⁴¹ The agreement was subsequently ratified by Ukraine's new government and parliament in 2014 and partially entered into force in November 2014 and January 2016. It fully came into force in September 2017.⁴² The entry into force of the association agreement meant that Ukraine was now committed to integration with the European Union. Such integration could lead to membership of the European Union (although this seems unlikely in the near future). At least, it implies very close cooperation between the EU and Ukraine and entails severe structural institutional, economic, and social reforms in Ukraine. The country must demonstrate its commitment to European integration, by complying with large segments of the accumulated body of European legislation, the *acquis communautaire* and by showing its ability to compete on the single European market. These actions would take years, if not decades to be fully completed.

The European Union is not only an economic or political entity, but it is also a community of values and principles. One of its core values is the principle of free trade. The values of human dignity, human rights, freedom, democracy, equality, and the rule of law are also equally important parts of the Union's core values. All these principles and values stem from the desire to prevent another destructive war between the European powers that became prevalent after the Second World War.⁴³

The idea to avoid another war was not new: already after the First World War, there were international attempts to make war an illegal enterprise under international law. The League of Nations was meant for the peaceful resolution of conflicts between states, and in 1928, all major powers even renounced war as a political instrument in the Kellogg-Briand Pact (or Paris Peace Pact).⁴⁴ Nevertheless, these instruments proved to be ineffective in preventing war. The Second World War can be understood as a confrontation between the Allies (who believed that a new world order that outlawed war had been established) and the Axis powers (who believed that the old world order, in which war was legal, was still valid).⁴⁵ The Allied victory and subsequent Nuremberg and Tokyo Trials of Nazi and

Dussen, Revised edition., *What is Europe?* 1 (Milton Keynes, London and New York: The Open University and Routledge, 1995), 163–171.

40 Nevertheless, at some point in the study, evaluations of some of the Council of Europe's institutions on Ukraine's history policies are used as a source. This can easily be justified: the judgements made by the Council's institutions are based on the same essential human rights and freedoms that the European Union has placed at its core.

41 Although the agreement does not lead to membership of the Union, it is a major step in the integration of Ukraine because its implementation requires Ukraine to conform to important parts European legislation and because it strengthens all kinds of institutional and political bonds between the Union and Ukraine.

42 The agreement covers areas in which the EU has exclusive competence (for instance trade), but also areas over which the EU shares authority with its member states. Therefore, the agreement could only enter into force after all member states ratified the treaties conformant to their own constitutional requirements.

43 Rietbergen, *Europe*, 511.

44 Oona Anne Hathaway and Scott Shapiro, *The Internationalists: How a Radical Plan to Outlaw War Remade the World*, First Simon & Schuster hardcover edition. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2017), 105–106, 128.

45 The *Atlantic Charter*, an agreement by the United States and the United Kingdom (1941) and the *Declaration by the United Nations* (1942) were policy statements based around the notion of the illegality of war. On the other hand, the Axis Powers Germany, Japan, and Italy violated the peace pact and each resented the outlawry of

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Japanese war criminals subsequently vindicated the first notion: War was indeed illegal since 1928 and even was a criminal offence.⁴⁶

After the Second World War, it seemed that outlawing war was not enough and that countries needed to cooperate to prevent war. The United Nations are the primary example of an international organisation founded for this purpose. Free trade as envisioned in the *General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade* (GATT, later renamed to *World Trade Organisation* or WTO), was also one of the new supports for a world order without war.⁴⁷ The European Union's predecessors, which initially focussed on free trade between its members can also be seen from this same angle: they were meant to create institutions to take away the necessity for war.

This anti-war sentiment also changed how Europeans looked at their history. It has essentially constructed a historical narrative in which the destruction of the European Jewry, and in extension, Nazi oppression are depicted as the apex of evil in (human) history.⁴⁸ At least in Western Europe, this has resulted in the formation and institutionalization of a consensus. Since the fall of communism in 1989, the enlargement of the European Union resulted in the inclusion of countries with very different historical experiences. Many of the new member states that have acceded in 2004 have experienced both Nazi and Soviet oppression and challenge the Western-European consensus.⁴⁹ It stands to reason that the European consensus on history will change accordingly, but this is still an ongoing process. Some countries, such as Poland and Hungary are currently challenging the European consensus. Nevertheless, because such countries have in the past engaged with the European consensus it stands to reason that if Ukraine integrate in the European Union, it will have to answer for some of the dark pages in its history, since this is one of the core ideas of the European model (as will be argued).

The European narrative of history is neither uncontested nor unproblematic. Neither is the Russian or Soviet alternative, which offers yet another take on the most dramatic part of Europe's twentieth century. Initially, Soviet leader Joseph Stalin was not eager to discuss the subject of the Second World War. It was only under one of the later Soviet leaders, Leonid Brezhnev, that the commemorative cult (as in a tradition of symbols, rituals and mnemonic commonplaces) known as the '*Great Patriotic War*' came into full swing. The *Great Patriotic War* is a hybrid of Russian nationalism (explicitly referring to the Russian victory in the Napoleonic Wars or the '*Patriotic War*' as Russians call it) and Soviet communism. It has its own 'sacred' holiday: May 9 (Victory Day), which became the most important public holiday, even more important than the remembrance of the October Revolution (November 7) and had its own symbols like the *Banner of Victory* (the Soviet military banner that was raised on the Reichstag in Berlin on May 1, 1945). The narrative's main tenet is that the Soviet Union fought a struggle against the German invader as one single united entity. The victory over fascism was only thanks to the Red Army's struggle. This was the common merit of all Soviet peoples. The Soviet leadership used this notion to bind the different peoples of the Soviet Union together. This came at the expense of other narratives with different focal points, such as the notion of the Holocaust as a Jewish tragedy or a narrative of Ukrainian and other minorities in the former Soviet Union suffering at the hands of the Soviets.

war for their own reasons. See: *Ibid.*, 191–192.

46 *Ibid.*, 290–292.

47 *Ibid.*, 332–333, 342, 345, 368.

48 See for example: Tony Judt, *Postwar. A History of Europe Since 1945* (London: Vintage Books, 2010), 803; Klaus Eder, "Europe's Borders: The Narrative Construction of the Boundaries of Europe," *European Journal of Social Theory* 9, no. 2 (May 2006): 255–271; Cecilie Felicia Stokholm Banke, *The Legacies of the Holocaust and European Identity after 1989*, DIIS Working Paper 36 (Copenhagen: Danish Institute for International Studies, DIIS, 2009).

49 Maria Mälksoo, "The Memory Politics of Becoming European: The East European Subalterns and the Collective Memory of Europe," *European Journal of International Relations* 15, no. 4 (2009): 653–680.

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As mentioned earlier, in recent years the Russian government started to promote the concept of the *Russkiy Mir* (Russian World). Its central ideological premise is that Russia forms its special civilizational unit, to which Ukraine and Belarus also belong. Besides the *Russkiy Mir*'s medieval historical roots, the supposed victory in the *Great Patriotic War* is also one of its key components.⁵⁰ The *Russkiy Mir* is a project for the (re)integration of the post-Soviet space based on a robust national interpretation of Russianness. Since the ideology sees Ukraine as an integral part of the Russian world, Ukraine could also choose to engage with it. Similar to European integration, integration in the *Russkiy Mir* also requires a certain historical outlook. This would mean that there would be no room for a Ukrainian view on the history of the 20th century, nor for narratives of other minorities with their views on 20th-century history, such as those of the Crimean Tatars (who suffered post-War deportation because of their supposed collaboration with the German invaders).

Methodology: Politics of History

Ukrainian political elites usually focus on their own economic and political interests, but also engage with historical affairs. Their aim is not so much as to change the historical outlook of Ukrainian society, but to use history as a tool to pursue their political goals. In the end, the effect is the same: Ukrainian perceptions of history have changed, and they will continue to do so. The Russian historian Alexei Miller has coined the term '*politics of history*' to describe such policies.⁵¹

I will argue that Miller's concept is a variant of the framework of the *politics of memory* that since the 1980s has become the standard approach for studying how societies appropriate their history. In this study, we will use the concept of *politics of history* as a lens. According to Miller, politicians engaging in politics of history use a distinct number of institutions to impose their view of history on society. For instance, the educational system produces textbooks with historical narratives, and politicians in their politics of history have employed these. Politicians in Central and Eastern Europe have also created so-called '*institutes of national remembrance*', which administer the records of the former secret police and therefore have greater opportunities for publishing than academic and private research centres. Documents produced by such an institution provide sources for study. Politicians have also patronised museum expositions and monuments to further their cause. These expositions, monuments, and publications provide a useful entrance to politics of history. Finally, politicians have also sought to instrumentalise the law to enforce their partisan view on history, and these laws and legal documents proceeding from them are a tool for researching politics of history.

This study mainly investigates the instrumentalisation of the law, patronage over museum expositions and the *Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance*, which was founded in 2006. The use of the education system will only be discussed when it has caused significant political controversies. This is due to the already extensive nature of the other three instruments of politics of history, but also because systematically studying textbooks requires an extra layer of interpretation: a scholar who analyses them not only needs to look at the narratives they present but also take into account the didactical strategies the textbook writers employ to convey them. Furthermore, the subject of changing education programmes on history in the 1990s has already been studied extensively. Textbooks published afterwards

50 A preliminary survey of the ideological roots of the concept of the *Russkiy Mir* has been given by Michał Wawrzonek in: Michał Wawrzonek, "Ukraine in the 'Gray Zone' Between the 'Russkiy Mir' and Europe," *East European Politics and Societies* 28, no. 4 (November 1, 2014): 760–766.

51 The translator of Miller's original Russian language article translated this as '*historical politics*', which is a too literal translation of the Russian *Istoricheskaya politika*. In this research project the wording, '*politics of history*' is used instead, as an analogy to the '*politics of memory*' of which it considers them a variant.

also show a great deal of continuity with previous editions.⁵²

Research Scope and Structure

Post-Soviet Ukraine is hardly unique in the large-scale political usage of history by politicians. One can practically pick any country in Central and Eastern Europe and find similar political strategies.⁵³ The case of Ukraine is especially relevant because of the ongoing Ukrainian crisis. That the onset of this crisis was unexpected, demonstrates that Ukraine is an understudied and not well-understood country in Europe. Ukrainian politics of history are furthermore interesting because the Ukrainian case challenges both the traditional European consensus of history (which is subject to change because of the challenge from the new member states) and the Russian and (neo)-Soviet narrative. The case of Ukraine can thus give us much more insights in the major fault lines running through the European continent.

Because the politics of history approach presumes the primacy of political expediency behind policy changes, this research project will follow significant turning points in Ukraine's political development. Therefore, we will use the following periodization: the initial post-Soviet period (1991-2005) during which president Leonid Kravchuk and Leonid Kuchma sought to initiate different nation-building schemes. Ukrainian politics changed drastically with the Orange Revolution in 2004, which brought a new regime to power. The Orange Revolution's leader, Viktor Yushchenko, (2005-2010) actively tried to promote an overtly nationalist view on history, while his adversary and successor, Viktor Yanukovych (2010-2014), mainly kept quiet and tried to repeal measures taken by Yushchenko. After the Yanukovych presidency ended in the *Euromaidan revolution*, another epoch started, in which nationalist narratives again came to the fore.

This study's description of the politics of history in Ukraine could not have been composed without ideas and data gathered by other scholars. Historians and social scientists such as Karel Berkhoff, Johan Dietsch (Öhman), Petro Dolhanov, John-Paul Himka, Jan Germen Janmaat, Wilfried Jilge, Heorhiy Kossianov, Ivan Katchanovski, Volodymyr Kravchenko, Taras Kuzio, David Marples, Alexander Motyl, Eleonora Narvselius, Serhii Plokhly, Anatoly Podolsky, Andriy Portnov, Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe, Per Anders Rudling, Andreas Umland, Andrew Wilson, Serhy Yekelchik, and Tatiana Zhurzhenko have greatly inspired this

52 For instance, Jan Germen Janmaat has conducted an extensive study: Jan Germen Janmaat, *Nation-Building in Post-Soviet Ukraine: Educational Policy and the Response of the Russian-Speaking Population* (Utrecht; Amsterdam: Royal Dutch Geographical Society; Faculty of Social and Behavioral Sciences, University of Amsterdam, 2000). See also: Johan Dietsch, "Textbooks and the Holocaust in Independent Ukraine: An Uneasy Past," *European Education* 44, no. 3 (October 2012): 67–94; Jan Germen Janmaat, "History and National Identity Construction: The Great Famine in Irish and Ukrainian History Textbooks," in *Holodomor and Gorta Mór: Histories, Memories and Representations of Famine in Ukraine and Ireland*, ed. Christian Noack, Lindsay Janssen, and Vincent Comerford (London: Anthem Press, 2012), 77–102; Nancy Popson, "The Ukrainian History Textbook: Introducing Children to the 'Ukrainian Nation,'" *Nationalities Papers* 29, no. 2 (June 2001): 325–350; Wilfried Jilge, "Nationale Geschichtsbilder in ukrainischen Geschichtslehrbüchern. Am Beispiel der Darstellung der Kiever Rus'," *Osteuropa. Zeitschrift für Gegenwartsfragen des Ostens* 50, no. 12 (2000): 1233–1253.

53 For instance, Poland is one of the better-known examples for this: On April 10, 2010, the Polish President Lech Kaczyński perished in a tragic plane crash near Smolensk, Russia. Afterwards, Polish politicians, especially his twin-brother Jarosław, eagerly contextualised his death within the commemorative framework of the Katyń massacre of Polish prisoners-of-war by the Soviets in 1940. Likewise, debates on the Holocaust in Poland and Polish complicity in it have been politically explosive. See, for instance: Joanna Nizyńska, "The Politics of Mourning and the Crisis of Poland's Symbolic Language after April 10," *East European Politics and Societies* 24, no. 4 (November 1, 2010): 467–479; Antony Polonsky and Joanna B. Michlic, *The Neighbors Respond: The Controversy over the Jedwabne Massacre in Poland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); Joanna Beata Michlic and Małgorzata Melchior, "The Memory of the Holocaust in Post-1989 Poland. Renewal - Its Accomplishments and Its Powerlessness," in *Bringing the Dark Past to Light. The Reception of the Holocaust in Postcommunist Europe*, ed. John-Paul Himka and Joanna Beata Michlic (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2013), 403–450.

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study's thinking. The extensive body of footnotes will give them credit where this is due, even though they might not always agree with this thesis' objectives or with the particular way their ideas are used.

We will present this study's results in the following structure: In the first section, I will introduce the concept of politics of history and contextualise that within the generally accepted framework of the politics of memory. The second section will present the Western European consensus on history and its new post-communist challenger from the new member states, as well as the Russian and (neo-Soviet) conception of the *Great Patriotic War*. In the third section, the research will then turn to the Ukrainian politics of history. Its four chapters will delve into the politics of history in each of the periods of Ukraine's existence as an independent state. Each of these chapters will be structured similarly: Because the politics of history are highly dependent on contemporary political developments, the chapters will start with an overview of the political changes and characteristics of the period under discussion. This is done as concise as possible, but sometimes it is necessary to have an understanding of broad and extensive political contexts to fully comprehend the politics of history in Ukraine. After such an introduction, the chapters contain sections devoted to the actual politics of history on the Holodomor and Ukrainian nationalism. After these chapters, the conclusion will bring all research strands together in a final evaluation of Ukraine's politics of history in relation to the three ideal types of Europe's twentieth-century history. This evaluation will provide a partial answer to the question that has occupied Ukrainian studies since 1991: *'Quo Vadis Ukraine?'*

Section I. The Politics of Memory & History: Studying the Political use of History

Chapter 1. The Inseparability of Politics and History

This study uses the concept of politics of history, developed by Alexei Miller as a lens to guide the reader towards sources on the political appropriation of history. The concept presupposes that politicians seek to establish interpretations of history, not because they are convinced of their veracity, but because they are politically expedient.¹ If politicians succeed in their efforts, these interpretations will become entrenched in society and will shape its community.

The idea that the past shapes part of the present is well established. For instance, in 1983, Benedict Anderson published his classic and influential study on the formation of modern nations. In it, he asserted that all nations are ‘*imagined communities*’ and that history is one of their key binding elements.² These concepts have since influenced many studies on the formation and functioning of nations and the concept of the nation as an imagined community is hardly disputed. If this is the case, we can conclude that the past and present are intrinsically linked. Narrations about the past, e.g. histories, often tell more about the context that conceived them than the past about which they narrate.³

1.1. Collective Memory: Identity and Social Structure

If history is a binding element within a community, it sustains the latter. This is often used to claim that besides a person’s individual memory, society also has a ‘*collective memory*’. The French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs has first proposed the existence of collective memory (*mémoire collective*) in 1925.⁴ According to him, all memory forms within social structures: every person is a member of one or more groups. Remembrance is a communicative process within those groups. At the same time, they allow an individual to remember, and because memories are collective, they allow the group to exist.⁵

Halbwach’s concept deals with memory and not with history. He drew a thick line between the two and favoured the former over the latter. For Halbwachs, history was a static structure; it is written down and ultimately demarcates time. On the other hand, memory only retains what can sustain the consciousness of a group. It is dependent on the group’s structure and is dynamic and changing. Because cultural memory forms the foundation of a group, Halbwachs considered it more authentic than history. This is because Halbwachs saw history as a purely descriptive phenomenon, without a social function. Thus, while history represents the past as a given phenomenon, memory uses the past to create social cohe-

1 Алексей Миллер, “Россия: власть и история,” *Pro et Contra*, no. май-август (2009): 9.

2 Benedict Anderson first coined this concept in 1983: Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso Editions and NLB, 1983); For the most recent edition, see: Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 2006), 155–162.

3 For instance, Jess Gilbert, influenced by the American sociologist C. Wright Mills, claimed that history is a statement about the present and future: Jess Gilbert, “Democratizing States and the Use of History,” *Rural Sociology*, no. 74 (2009): 4–5.

4 He first did this in: Maurice Halbwachs, *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1925).

5 Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980), 23, 25–26, 31; Astrid Erll, “Cultural Memory Studies: An Introduction,” in *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ed. Astrid Erll, Ansgar Nünning, and Sara B. Young (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 2008), 6; Aleida Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume: Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses*, C.H. Beck Kulturwissenschaft (München: C.H. Beck, 1999), 131; Aleida Assmann, *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit: Erinnerungskultur und Geschichtspolitik* (München: C.H. Beck, 2006), 25.

sion. Instead, Halbwachs claimed that cultural memory is more lively and changeable.⁶ On their part, since the nineteenth century historians have preferred their method of working with documents and establishing facts, because they considered memory easily distorted.⁷

Nevertheless, history and memory have grown closer to each other since the 1980s.⁸ History has attained some of the characteristics of memory: the field of oral history has gained coinage and has given memory a place in historiography. According to Aleida Assmann, this is a point of consensus: Historians and social scientists nowadays see both history and memory as subjective interpretations of the past and a constituent element of identities. It is therefore better to describe history and memory as two different modes of social memory, which are neither the same nor each other's opposites.⁹

This change has been significant and opened a new subfield of memory studies. The latter does not describe memory itself. On the contrary, it describes how collective memories establish themselves. The so-called '*politics of memory*' have become a particularly important framework for interpretation. It focusses on the contestation of the past and poses the question of how the (historical) truth is best conveyed. Collective memories lay claims on the past, but these are not acceptable to everybody, and actors in society, therefore, contest them. Both memory and history are located in a specific context and are, by definition, not neutral, but political.¹⁰ Given their nature, it is useless to ask which interpretations of the past, be they historical or mnemonic, are correct, but rather how they establish themselves.

Since politics of history are about establishing historical truths in society, they are just another form remembering within the politics of memory. To be more precise, they constitute a top-down method for studying how politicians invoke and disseminate the historical interpretations that one can use.

Such a top-down view is permissible, because, the politics of memory have shown that indeed (political) power is in play when establishing memory in society. To understand how this works, it is necessary to explain the concept of *cultural memory* (*kulturelles Gedächtnis*), which was introduced by the German scholars Jan and Aleida Assmann. Its core concept is that cultures connect individual subjects via a '*connective structure*'.¹¹ Shared norms and stories (about the past) shape it. The communicative (*kommunikatives Gedächtnis*) and cultural memory transmit them. At first, a memory is part of the former and only becomes part of the latter under some specific conditions. Initially, communicative memory is limited to one generation. When the memories contained in it are fixated in cultural memory, they become part of the memory of generations that follow the first.¹² The holders of the in-

6 Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, 80–81.

7 Kerwin Lee Klein, "On the Emergence of Memory in Historical Discourse," *Representations*, no. 69 (2000): 130.

8 An example of this is the concept of the '*Lieux de Mémoire*' (*Places of Memory*) by the French historian Pierre Nora. This concept has been particularly influential in the French-speaking world. Nora's theory holds that 'social memory' can form around certain places (e.g. common places). These places can be geographical, but also immaterial (such as certain legal documents, declarations etc.). Like the concept of 'cultural memory', it is an equally valid conception of 'social memory'. It is, however, more ambiguous and is difficult to translate to transnational contexts. See: Pierre Nora, "Entre Mémoire et Histoire. La problématique des lieux," in *Les Lieux de Mémoire*, ed. Pierre Nora, vol. I-La République (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), XVII–XLII; Also published in English translation as: Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," *Representations*, no. 26 (1989): 7–24; See also: Pim den Boer, "Loca Memoriae - Lieux de Mémoire," in *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ed. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 19–25.

9 Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume*, 133–134; Assmann, *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit*, 47.

10 Katherine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone, "Introduction. Contested Pasts," in *Contested Pasts. The Politics of Memory* (London: Routledge, 2003), 1,5.

11 Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen*, C.H. Beck Kulturwissenschaft (München: C.H. Beck, 1992), 18.

12 Dietrich Harth, "The Invention of Cultural Memory," in *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ed. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 86.

itial memory do not only communicate their memories amongst their ranks but also share them with people from other generations with whom they are familiar. At a given moment in time, 2-4 generations of people may coexist. This all implies that communicative memory is mainly biographical and factual and lasts for a maximum of approximately eighty years. However, when holders of the communicative memory grow older, they seek to institutionalize the memories that they hold dear. They do so in different ways: for instance, in books, archives, rituals, commemoration, or performances. This institutionalization fixes the memory, and it, therefore, becomes valid for all generations. Via this process of institutionalization, it becomes cultural memory on which society's connective structure is based.¹³

This process of institutionalization in cultural memory is not instant. The transition from communicative to cultural memory takes place in different stages: the first stage is codification within the cultural memory. After being stored in the cultural memory (the second stage), it can then be retrieved at will (the third stage).

Culture is not tangible and has no natural memory of its own. While people store their memories in their brains, external storage is required before a society can use cultural memories. Even if persons store certain cultural memories in their own brains, there needs to be some sort memory device that is external to the persons that share them. This is because if multiple persons have the same memories, they are still their individual memories. It is necessary for memories to be mediated through an external memory device before they become true cultural memories. Such an external memory device is used to codify, store and retrieve cultural memories. Jan Assmann used the term 'medium' to describe them.¹⁴ Assmann is an Egyptologist and coined the concept of cultural memory, based on studies of highly developed ancient societies. Writings produced in such societies are about the only sources we have left about them. It is therefore that Assmann relied on writing as the main medium for the codification, storage and retrieval of cultural memories.¹⁵ In modern societies, other forms of external memory also exist: for instance, photography, motion pictures, and digital encoding of information. With the aid of writing and those more modern means, the cultural memory creates a canon of mnemonic commonplaces that all members in society will recognize.¹⁶

Our word 'canon' comes from the ancient Greek '*kanōn*' (κανών), meaning 'measuring rod'.¹⁷ Nowadays this word is often associated with religious texts: It is used to describe the canonical books of the Hebrew and Christian bibles. During the early history of the Jewish and Christian religions, certain texts have been deemed to truly speak the word of God, while others have been left out of this set of sacred texts. The Muslim Quran has a similar history, and it was only written down after the Prophet Muhammad's death in 632. These religious texts are fixed: one can write about them, but most Jews, Christians and Muslims cannot conceive of changing even one *iota*. Such canons are generally immutable and sacrosanct.¹⁸ Canons can take different forms and shapes: this religious form is only one example. For instance, especially after the Renaissance, Western societies have relied on the 'Classics of Antiquity'. They now serve as intertextual examples for Western culture.¹⁹ Laws, in the form

13 M. Hirsch, "The Generation of Postmemory," *Poetics Today* 29, no. 1 (March 1, 2008): 110; Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, 50–51.

14 Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, 22, 23.

15 *Ibid.*

16 *Ibid.*, 18.

17 The Ancient Greeks themselves borrowed the word in this meaning from one of the Semitic languages where it means 'reed'. In the form *cane* the word entered modern English vocabulary in its original meaning as well (cf. Akkadian *qanū*, Hebrew קנה *qanē*).

18 Assmann explained this religious form of the canon in: Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, 93–97.

19 Assmann argued that indeed such works of literature and art can become canonized. After the process is completed, they embody the universally valid norms, are therefore a measuring stick, and provide the provisions for what is considered esthetically good in future creations. See: *Ibid.*, 110, 119.

of a constitution, can also be a canon (one only has to look at way most Americans revere the US constitution as a sacrosanct document).²⁰ In all cases, the canon cannot be changed (save for revolutions that shake the very cores of society). The canon forms a sacred collection of texts, rules and values that form the foundation of a collective identity. There is simply no alternative to the canon: if one does not abide by it, one places himself beyond the boundaries of what is deemed acceptable in a society.²¹ Memories can also function in the same way and become sacrosanct and immutable: this is precisely what occurs when a memory enters the cultural memory.

1.2. Canonization: Institutionalizing Memories

This leaves the question of how societies canonize memories and how the cultural memory takes shape. This process depends on political power(s). Aleida Assmann demonstrated this in her work. She divided the cultural memory into different sub-memories: the national/political or functional (*Funktionsgedächtnis*) and the archival/storage (*Speichergedächtnis*) memory.²² There are clear tensions between the two forms of cultural memory: Functional memory is about symbolic practices, traditions and rites and the canonisation of artefacts, while the storage memory is about material representations of the past, about books, images and films as well as libraries, archives and museums.²³ The functional memory has a political claim (hence the alternative name of 'political memory'): it is implicated in the building of identities and is the active working memory that defines and supports cultural identity. Storage memory is its counterpart: From it, functional memory can take concepts and ideas, but it can also serve as a counterbalance that can curtail the reductive and restrictive drive that is inherent in the canon.²⁴

This implies that all interpretations of the past, both historical and mnemonic, are contemporary. Groups in society, which have their interests, seek to favour one interpretation over another. This leads to the logical conclusion that what we remember as part of the functional and storage memory is often a function of the exercise of power. This is similar to what the French thinker Michel Foucault has claimed, namely that the dominant classes in society form these kinds of self-evident truths. They shape and transmit them via institutions such as universities, writing, and the media.²⁵ Those dominant groups and classes are more than merely those who are in charge of a country: for instance, one can also think of established opposition movements, groups within society, or other social stakeholders. We should consider that national memory is an expression of the functional memory. Recent debates in the field of memory studies have uncovered the importance of interactions between people. They both reflect and reinforce the dominant discourses within a society. Elites and counter-elites shape such discourses. Both make efforts to justify themselves and further their own political, economic, and social position. This means that the social formation of memory is both a bottom-up (social) process and a top-down (political) process.²⁶

The top-down process is often more influential in establishing memories than the bottom-up

20 Assmann argued that ordinary laws cannot be part of a canon, while constitution can. This is because they function as the measuring stick against which all other laws are evaluated. See: *Ibid.*, 116.

21 *Ibid.*, 18, 119, 127.

22 The German word *Speicher* translates as either archive or storage.

23 Assmann, *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit*, 58.

24 Aleida Assmann, "Canon and Archive," in *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ed. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 106; Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume*, 140.

25 See for instance: Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon, trans. Colin Gordon et al., 1st American ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 131-132.

26 Richard Ned Lebow, "The Memory of Politics in Postwar Europe," in *The Politics of Memory in Postwar Europe*, ed. Richard Ned Lebow, Wulf Kansteiner, and Claudio Fogu (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006), 4, 13.

process. This becomes clear if we consider that the act of ‘forgetting’ and not ‘remembering’ is the main mode of operation. Memory and forgetting enable each other and are intertwined. Forgetting is, as such, an existential part of remembering.²⁷ Aleida Assmann stated that remembering is the exception. To remember something requires costly precautions: it requires the institutions of active memory (i.e. the institutionalization in cultural memory) and a passive memory that preserves the past (i.e. the storage memory).²⁸ The nexus of forgetting and remembering is also the point where the exercise of power becomes involved.

The Assmanns’ concept of cultural memory shows that collective memories go beyond the horizon of mere contemporary events. The concepts of cultural, functional and storage memory explain why most memories a person encounters during his lifetime never become part of the collective memory, while simultaneously the collective memory remembers events one did not witness and may have occurred long before the individual’s lifetime.²⁹

1.3. Politics of History: a Toolkit

Politics, history, and memory are thus inseparable. Therefore, we have to conclude that the political use of history is just another mode of memory. It is one of the modes for establishing the canon. It is thus important within the concept of cultural memory. We now are familiar with its place in the construction of images of the past, but still unsure how to study the phenomenon. It is for this purpose that I propose the concept of ‘*politics of history*’. Because the politics of history are a political enterprise, they are highly dependent on the political environment. Therefore, there is no one-size-fits-all-approach to study them. I will introduce two different, yet, highly similar variants of the politics of history. The first has been coined by the German historian Edgar Wolfrum and is more suited for democratic environments. The second concept has been proposed by the Russian historian Alexei Miller and is more useful for democratizing and/or post-communist societies.³⁰ It is important to take notice that both Wolfrum’s and Miller’s concept eventually derive their nomenclature from the policies enacted by the West-German Kohl-administration in the 1980s, the so-called *Geschichtspolitik*.³¹ Both Miller and Wolfrum have coined their concepts independently of each other and there has not (yet) been an exchange between them. Nevertheless, their differences are only superficial and mainly related to the different context in which their authors coined them.³²

27 Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume*, 30, 411. See also: Peter Burke, “Geschichte als soziales Gedächtnis,” in *Mnemosyne. Formen und Funktionen der kulturellen Erinnerung*, ed. Aleida Assmann and Dietrich Harth (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1991), 297. The French thinker Paul Ricoeur proposed a similar link between ‘forgetting’, ‘the phenomenology of memory’ and ‘the epistemology of history’. See: Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 412.

28 Assmann, “Canon and Archive,” 98.

29 Claudio Fogu and Wulf Kansteiner, “The Politics of Memory and the Poetics of History,” in *The Politics of Memory in Postwar Europe*, ed. Richard Ned Lebow, Wulf Kansteiner, and Claudio Fogu (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006), 300.

30 Wolfrum coined his concept in a German language monograph: Edgar Wolfrum, *Geschichtspolitik in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland: der Weg zur bundesrepublikanischen Erinnerung 1948-1990* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1999). Miller first coined his concept in a public lecture: Алексей Миллер, “«Историческая политика» в Восточной Европе: плоды вовлеченного наблюдения,” Полит.ру, last modified July 5, 2008, accessed March 4, 2016, <http://polit.ru/article/2008/05/07/miller/>. He further developed and published ideas in an article: Миллер, “Россия: власть и история.” This article has subsequently been translated and published in English: Alexei Miller, “Russia: Power and History,” in *Engaging History. The Problems and Politics of Memory in Russia and the Post-Socialist Space*, vol. 2, Working Papers (Moscow: Carnegie Moscow Centre, 2010).

31 That this is the case for Wolfrum needs little explanation: the German *Geschichtspolitik* are also the object of his study. However, Miller also puts forward a link between his concept and the German *Geschichtspolitik*: A call by Polish politicians in 2004 that Poland needed its own variant of the German *Geschichtspolitik* served as Miller’s inspiration to coin his concept. See: Миллер, “Россия: власть и история,” 8–9.

32 Nevertheless, after Miller learned of Wolfrum’s concept he duly noted its existence in: Alexei Miller, “Historical Politics: Eastern European Convolutions in the 21st Century,” in *Convolutions of Historical Politics*, ed. Alexei Miller and Maria Lipman (Central European University Press, 2012), 2 (note 3).

A linguistic problem immediately shows itself: both the English and Russian language (in which Miller proposed his concept) lack a direct analogue for this originally German term. Therefore, translators have used a myriad of different translations.³³ In this study, we will settle on the translation of 'politics of history' as an analogy to 'politics of memory' of which I consider them part. There is yet another linguistic problem that needs some explanation: the German word '*politik*' and the Russian word '*politika*' can be translated into English as either 'politics' or 'policy'. Those two words have slightly different meanings in English: the former is an intangible social phenomenon, while the latter is more concrete and describes a principle or action adopted or proposed by an organisation or an individual. We, therefore, arrive at the following definitions: 'politics of history' denotes the phenomenon that is the object of this study and 'history policies' denotes the activities of the politicians and institutions involved in this phenomenon'.

1.4. Politics of History in a Democracy

According to Wolfrum, his concept of the *politics of history* is an analytical tool to study the political use of history by politicians and other actors involved in political processes. He claims that it is important not to charge the concept with pejorative connotations because this would bias all observations made using it. Instead, one should use it as an analytical tool openly and functionally. It is, therefore, necessary to accept that the concept has both progressive (i.e. explanatory and emancipatory) and regressive (legimatory and traditional) functions. If the concept is used in the way Wolfrum intends, it only serves the progressive functions; however, if politicians use it, the concept serves the regressive functions.³⁴

Wolfrum sees interpreting the past as a political enterprise. Therefore, history is political. In this aspect, Wolfrum differentiates his approach from the politics of memory: it is a political project first and foremost and not a function of the creation of collective memory. According to Wolfrum, the general problem of politics of history is located in three basic interrelated questions: First, how politicians use the past in their politics of history. Second, which frameworks and intentions they employ to captivate history for contemporary political demands, and third, what the consequences of these politics of history are.³⁵

Because the politics of history want to install historical consciousness, one could say that they want to 'educate the people' about the 'correct' interpretation of history. They are a political-pedagogical exercise. To study the politics of history is to study how politicians change interpretations of history with their policies.³⁶

Wolfrum applied his concept in a study of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Germany. This has everything to do with the contested debates about the German past in the twentieth century.³⁷ From its founding in 1949, the Federal Republic has been a democratic state. Therefore, Wolfrum argues that his concept is only applicable to democracies. He goes even further by specifying the type of democracy in which it operates: a competitive democracy (*Konkurrenzdemokratie*). Such a democracy is characterised by a public sphere in which different political interests compete. All political statements, including those about the past, are transmitted in this public sphere. In essence, the politics of history are a battle for hegemony over discourse on and explanations of the past.³⁸ Because these (morally)

³³ These include 'historical politics' and 'history politics'.

³⁴ Wolfrum, *Geschichtspolitik*, 10, 26–27.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 26.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 27.

³⁷ We will discuss some main lines of these German social and political debates in "2.3. The EU's Acquis Historique", page 42.

³⁸ Wolfrum, *Geschichtspolitik*, 27–28.

charged conflicts are fought out in public, they can lead to a stabilisation of values.³⁹ This is hardly a surprising conclusion: the politics of history result in the establishment of collective memory. As argued by Hallbwachs, collective memory stabilizes groups, such as societies.

Who then participate in these policies according to Wolfrum? He has used a wide range of actors in his study: they are politicians, journalists, intellectuals, and scientists (by which he undoubtedly means professional historians). In general, they are people who have and exercise a certain power.⁴⁰ The politicians' policies leave traces in a wide variety of sources. In his study, Wolfrum identified and subsequently used both archival materials (such as private archives of those involved) and public sources (such as news media, public opinion polls, parliamentary records, leaflets, and works by publicists and contemporary scientific analyses).⁴¹

1.5. Politics of History as a Problem of Post-Communism

Like Wolfrum, Miller also sees the politics of history as an analytical concept. Unlike him, Miller does not agree that the concept needs to be neutral. Instead, Miller is less a traditional positivist historian and a more socially engaged scholar: he not only uses the concept to study the political use of history but also is concerned with the outcomes of politics of history in post-communist societies. He fears that these outcomes will have negative consequences for public discussions of history and the freedom of expression in these societies.

In a fashion similar to Wolfrum, Miller describes the politics of history as a primary political enterprise. In his words, they are '*an interpretation of history based on selective political (partisan) motives and an attempt to convince society of the truthfulness of that interpretation*'.⁴² This means that Miller also sees strong differences between the 'politics of memory' and the 'politics of history'. However, he has not been entirely consistent in this insistence. During a lecture in 2008, Miller had no clear answer to the question what the differences between the two phenomena: he simply responded that the politics of history were about politically establishing certain interpretations of the past as the truthful interpretation through '*brainwashing*' and '*indoctrination*'.⁴³ In 2009, he gave a more elaborate explanation: the politics of history differed from the politics of memory because the latter are concerned with the social practices that establish collective memories. Politics of history were a new phase in the politics of memory and politicization of history that needed their separate description, analysis, and terminology.⁴⁴ In 2012, Miller added that the politicization of history, such as the politics of history, was increasingly becoming a global phenomenon because politicians are more and more prone to loan political concepts, techniques, and forms across borders. Besides, that politics of history is a political phenomenon and not a function of memory formation makes it a unique process.⁴⁵

Given Miller's changing positions, I would like to argue that the opposition between 'politics of history' and 'politics of memory' is not as great as the former authors suppose. It is possible to view it in another way: the politics of memory study the construction of social memory, which is a political enterprise. Politics of history studies the political construction of history. Both seem thus interested in the same: namely, how power influences the construction of narratives and images of the past. The main difference between the two is that scholars of the politics of memory are more interested in a much wider process: they are

39 Ibid., 28..

40 Ibid., 25–26.

41 Ibid., 9–10.

42 Миллер, "Россия: власть и история," 9.

43 Миллер, "«Историческая политика»."

44 Миллер, "Россия: власть и история," 6, 8.

45 Miller, "Historical Politics," 2.

interested in the bottom-up construction of social memory. Those who use the concept of politics of history seem to be interested in the top-down variant. This means that any opposition between the two concepts is false. Instead, they are merely two different and equally valid approaches for researching how societies create recollections of the past. This can also be supported by Miller's insistence that the politics of history influence identity formation.⁴⁶ This closely fits the concept of cultural memory: politicians establish interpretations of history in a society's connective structure and therefore influence the identity of individuals.

The political context shapes the politics of history. Therefore, Miller described them as a post-communist phenomenon. The political changes in the former communist countries in Central and Eastern Europe have shaped the politics of history. According to Miller, politicians in these countries have engaged in them. Politicians in the former communist countries could no longer rely on the tools of the communist era. Authoritarian use of political force to establish interpretations of history no longer worked, because these societies were democratizing and became pluralist. During the communist era, the political establishment could force a particular interpretation on society. Following the collapse of communism, there was much more space for multiple concurrent, and competing interpretations of history and politicians were unable to monopolize history to the same extent as in the past. Miller even stated that, under these conditions, the proponents of politics of history do not consider the (re)-establishment of authoritarian control over history their ultimate goal.⁴⁷ The history policies that politicians enacted in their history politics were a problem of post-communism; the transition from a communist society to a more pluriform society was an essential element.

Likewise, the political scientist Alexander Astrov contextualized the politics of history as a post-communist phenomenon. He claimed that this results from a joint socialization process of post-communist countries. Many of these countries have been on a track that led to membership of NATO or the European Union. Astrov claimed that politics of history were a response to that process. Some of these countries joined both NATO and the European Union or closely cooperated with these international organizations. The EU and NATO are not only political organisations, but they also express the values shared by their members. Joining or cooperating with the EU and NATO also meant sharing their outlook on history and identity. This essentially froze contentious debates about the essence and comparability of Communism and Nazism for about two decades. These questions directly pertained to the identity of post-communist states. Once in the European and Trans-Atlantic communities, politicians began to pose these questions and to create a new consolidating discourse.⁴⁸ This might be very well true in the case of Estonia (Astrov's case study) and several other countries that integrated into both the European and Trans-Atlantic communities.⁴⁹ Such an explanation is nevertheless insufficient because politics of history also became apparent in countries whose integration in both communities are less obvious or even non-existent. These countries include both Ukraine and Russia.

The Ukrainian state has indicated its willingness to integrate into the European and Trans-Atlantic communities after its independence. The sincerity of this claim is disputable because progress has been slow. From a European perspective, the Russian willingness to integrate into the EU or NATO was even smaller. Nevertheless, Russian politicians have also engaged in historical policies. If politics of history are a response to a joint socialization

46 Ibid., 8.

47 Миллер, "Россия: власть и история," 9–10; Miller, "Historical Politics," 4.

48 Alexander Astrov, "The 'Politics of History' as a Case of Foreign-Policy Making," in *Convolutions of Historical Politics*, ed. Alexei Miller and Maria Lipman (Central European University Press, 2012), 118, 137–138.

49 These debates, as well, as the post-European integration element of their essence will be discussed in "2.4. Appropriating a Difficult Past in Post-Communist Europe" and "2.5. New Totalitarianism after the 2004 EU Enlargement", on page 44 and further.

process, something different from European and Trans-Atlantic integration must have been at stake: it is here that I would like to emphasize the context of post-communist transition. There has been another process of joint socialization: that of the transition to a functioning market economy. Of course, it is evident that the process of post-communist transition has been following a long and winding path that has been far from clear: some countries have been abler and/or willing to take on the reform process (Poland being a more – economic – success story, while Ukraine and Russia have often failed to undertake successful reforms). The crux of the matter is that the post-communist transition has shown a large path-dependency: the legacy left by the communist system in the economy has been tremendously significant for the outcomes of the post-communist transition. If we, like Miller, see politics of history as a consequence of the post-communist transition, then it seems logical that legacies from the communist era have also formed part of politics of history and resulting history policies. For instance, the Holocaust remains as little known in Russia: many view it as uneventful, just as during the communist era.⁵⁰

For Miller, the plural nature of society enables politics of history. It is here that the main difference between Miller's and Wolfrum's concept arises: While the latter requires the existence of a fully-fledged and competitive democracy, the former is content with the existence of democratizing political systems with some degree of pluralism. This is important: politics of history can only take place when interpretations of history and their political advancement can compete in a public sphere. While the existence of a fully democratic system and society makes it more likely that politics of history occur, it is already possible to do so if a country has a degree of pluralism in public discourse.⁵¹

We have already shown that Wolfrum sees the establishment of hegemony over discourse and explanations of the past as the result of politics of history. Miller describes the result in strikingly similar terms: If politicians manage to establish their interpretations of history, it means that they destroy the social space for discussion on the past. Therefore, you are either fully on the side of the politicians' politics of history or against them. Thus, there is a middle ground. As a more socially engaged scholar Miller laments this outcome.⁵²

Once a certain interpretation of history is established, it used to advance political projects unrelated to the politics of history. For instance, it can be utilized to attain a better compromise in international negotiations. The insistence by former Polish prime minister, Jarosław Kaczyński that Poland was entitled to a larger voting weight in the EU because the Germans murdered so many Poles during the Second World War is an example of this kind of use.⁵³

Politicians can also employ history as a weapon in domestic politics. For instance, it can be politically expedient to reveal certain things about a political opponent's past or claim that he (supposedly) collaborated with totalitarian regimes. For example, during the 2005 Polish presidential elections there were two main candidates: the conservative Lech Kaczyński (Jarosław's twin brother) and the liberal Donald Tusk. On the campaign trail, Kaczyński's campaign leader used the fact that the opponent's father had served in the German *Wehrmacht* during the Second World War in order to discredit Tusk's patriotic credentials.⁵⁴ His

50 Miller pointed to such taboos in: Miller, "Historical Politics," 2–3. For the existence of these taboos in the Soviet-Union and present day Russia, also see "Chapter 3. The Great Patriotic War: Legitimizing Regimes with Victory in the Soviet Union and Russia", especially on page 59.

51 Miller identified politics of history in the Baltic States, Poland, Ukraine, and Russia. If these countries have different degrees of democracy and pluralism, with Poland and the Baltic States being the most democratic, Ukraine having a place somewhere in between, and Russia being on the other side of the spectrum. In matter of pluralism in the public sphere, Ukraine has high degree, while Poland and the Baltic States are probably less pluralist (in terms of their political system). Russia again has the least pluralist society.

52 Миллер, «Историческая политика».

53 "Polish Prime Minister Brings World War Two Into EU Vote Debate," *Deutsche Welle*, last modified June 21, 2007, accessed March 23, 2016, <http://dw.com/p/AzCl>.

54 Konrad Schuller, "Polen: Tusks schwieriger Großvater," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, October 17, 2005, ac-

tory policies can also be used to argue for the creation of 'national unity', since foreigners advance interpretations of history that are detrimental to national interests.⁵⁵ For example, the Russian president Dmitriy Medvedev made such an appeal to historians when he created a presidential commission 'to counter attempts at falsifying history that go against the interests of Russia' in 2009.⁵⁶ The video blog in which Medvedev announced the creation of the commission, explicitly referred to foreign attempts at undermining the idea of Russia's victory in the 'Great Patriotic War'.⁵⁷

Since the consequences of politics of history are far-reaching, it is necessary to consider the reasons politicians give for their enactment. Miller identified four different ideological foundations.⁵⁸ Firstly, the politicians argue that history and memory are important arenas for the political struggle with both internal and external rivals. Therefore, the subject is too important to be left to historians alone. Secondly, politicians argue that history is a normal arena for political struggle. In fact, everybody around them is doing it, so why should not they be doing it as well?⁵⁹

A third ideological pillar is the claim that (foreign) rivals are advancing interpretations that are detrimental to the national interest. Historians, therefore, must show solidarity with their policies (This demand for solidarity, is one of the elements that leads to the establishment of a hegemonic interpretation of history).⁶⁰ Similarly, to Miller, the French sociologist Georges Mink described how politicians in Central and Eastern Europe have undertaken history policies in 'partisan memory games'.⁶¹ He also described the role of historians in

cessed March 23, 2016, <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/ausland/polen-tusks-schwieriger-grossvater-1280356.html>.

- 55 Miller elaborated on these three usages of politics of history in his lecture: Миллер, «Историческая политика».
- 56 Д. Медведев, Указ Президента Российской Федерации №549/2009 о Комиссии при Президенте Российской Федерации по противодействию попыткам фальсификации истории в ущерб интересам России (№ 549), 2009.
- 57 Д. Медведев, «О Великой Отечественной войне, исторической истине и о нашей памяти», *Видеоблог Дмитрия Медведева*, last modified May 7, 2009, accessed March 27, 2012, <http://blog.kremlin.ru/post/11/transcript>.
- 58 Given the highly ideological nature of politics of history and the fact that this study is largely indebted to Miller, it is necessary to account for his ideological position. Someone once told this author that he met a Russian historian named Alexei Miller who was supportive of the ideology of Vladimir Putin's regime and the Russian variant of politics of history. I sincerely doubt we had the same Alexei Miller in mind. Firstly, because Miller is not only concerned with the results of politics of history in general, but especially for its Russian implementation. Miller fears, that because of the country's political structure and lack of political pluralism, the effects for Russia would be detrimental. He ended his 2009 article with a staunch warning: 'Russia has demonstrated on enough occasions in the past that it can take ideas and methods borrowed from abroad to absurd levels.' (The ideas Miller refers to cannot be other than communism; see: Миллер, «Россия: власть и история», 13, 21.) Secondly, because Miller, in an answer to questions during a public lecture, told his audience how he himself has become a victim of both the Russian and foreign politics of history (as a response to his own work regarding nineteenth century history; See: Миллер, «Историческая политика».) However, even if Miller was ideologically implicated in the Russian politics of history, this does not have to pose a problem for the usage of (parts of) his concept of politics of history as an analytical framework. This is because we are using it as an analytical framework and not as a moral judgement per se. If Miller does himself participate in politics of history, the concept can also be used to study his involvement.
- 59 Миллер, «Россия: власть и история», 11–12.
- 60 According to Heorhiy Kasianov, this creates a uniform 'objective history', which has several generic features: ethnic exclusiveness, a confrontational orientation, elements of xenophobia, a preponderance of ideological forms over scientific ones, accentuating the martyr's mission of one's own nation, considering one's own ethnic torments to have a sacred nature, the equation of the nation to a human body, the domination of moralistic rhetoric and the justificatory paths that delegates the main responsibility of historical harm that was sustained to external factors (especially to Russian communism). See: Георгій Касьянов, *Danse macabre. Голод 1932-1933 років у політці, масовій свідомості та історіографії, 1980-ті - початок 2000-х* (Київ: Інформаційно-аналітична агенція наш час, 2010), 209–212.
- 61 Mink uses the term 'historical policies', but the basic premises of his concept are basically identical to Miller's: politicians use them with the aim to mobilize the electorate of a given party or coalition around symbolic identity demands and use the claim that previous governments have neglected the past. These history policies do not aim at the establishment of certain interpretations of history per se, but are used to advance other political

them: the appeal made to historians leads to the growth of a group of ‘supporting historians’ that have no inhibitions about showing partisanship in their scholarly works. They actively use a kind of hybrid status – using their authority as experts combined with partisanship – to advance a political agenda. On the other hand, a non-supportive group also has to exist. The politicians’ appeal effectively separates this group from non-conformant groups who increasingly try to salvage history as a scientific discipline. Nevertheless, because opposition to politics of history and history policies is also a political statement, they also become involved in them.⁶² Thus because of this ideological foundation, politics of history politicize historiography in general.

The politicians thus explicitly appeal to patriotism to enlist historians for their politics of history. This appeal also supports the fourth ideological pillar that Miller discerned: the politicians’ claim that the country is in short supply of patriotism and that history education is in a dire state.⁶³

According to Miller, the actors involved in the politics of history use a wide range of instruments (often in the form of institutions) to advance their interpretations of history (These instruments are used to implement history policies). Since we are dealing with a political process, it only seems logical that political leaders and parties are involved (thus far, nothing new compared to Wolfrum). So explained Miller, in their urge to engage in politics of history, the actors create new institutions that will aid them. First, they bring mass media under their control. Secondly, politicians often create museums under direct political patronage that advance their political interpretation of history. Throughout the region, politicians have established commissions to investigate the crimes of the communist past. These commissions can also be seen as an institution involved in politics of history. Non-governmental organisations (often related to the politicians that are conducting politics of history) are sometimes also involved. Those who oppose the historical interpretations of politics of history are often silenced by instrumentalizing the law: certain interpretations of the past are outlawed by either criminalizing them or through administrative regulations. The school curriculum also becomes subsumed in politics of history and the content of history education is brought in line with the prescribed interpretation of politics of history.⁶⁴

These interventions through institutions affect the work of opponents of politics of history and historians in general (who might also be opponents themselves). The so-called ‘*institutes of national remembrance*’ comprise very specific new institutions. These are organisations that combine control over archives (often of the former communist security apparatus) with both primary research on the sources held in those archives and more (judicial) investigatory services. They are thus tasked with keeping relevant documents, researching them, but also in the process of lustration (e.g. exposing and keeping out of power those who collaborated with the communist security apparatus in the past).

People employed by these institutes are mainly historians, yet they are civil servants in nature: with all the advantages and obligations of such a status. Their position is quite similar to historians who in the 19th century entered government service in archives, museums, and historical seminars and helped nation-states support their historical claims.⁶⁵ They

gains. See: Georges Mink, “Between Reconciliation and the Reactivation of Past Conflicts in Europe: Rethinking Social Memory Paradigms,” *Sociologický časopis/Czech Sociological Review* 44, no. 3 (2008): 469–490.

62 Since the author of this study is not immune to this phenomenon, it is necessary to reflect on his position: the choice of the subject matter of this study is certainly activated by politics of history/historicising policies in the communist successor states, as well as by a concern for the process of European integration. In that sense, he is also a participant in political agendas. For the role of historians, see: *Ibid.*, 478.

63 For these four ideological postulates see: Миллер, “Россия: власть и история,” 11–13; Miller, “Historical Politics,” 13–14.4

64 Миллер, “Россия: власть и история,” 10–11.

65 In fact, during the national awakenings in the 19th and early 20th centuries, historians, both ‘regular’ (e.g. uni-

are both ascribed with the authoritative power of an expert historian and invested with judicial powers: a very peculiar combination of powers. This is not all: the employees of the institutes have greater access to the relevant archives as their regular colleagues. Backed with government funds, they often have more opportunities to publish their findings. As civil servants, their staff is not only privileged in terms of access to the archives and the publishing press but also likely to be in a higher paygrade than historians employed by a university.⁶⁶

The institutes of national remembrance are a kind of archive. If we consider that, politics of history are a sub-form of the politics of memory, these are thus involved in the creation of the canon that forms the background to collective memory. Aleida Assmann argued that the archive plays a vital role in the formation of both the functional and the storage memory. She explained that the control over archives means control over memory. Political power is often exercised by controlling both archives and memory (archives, therefore, have a function between functional and storage memory). Which function it fulfils depends on whether the archive serves as an instrument of power (as often witnessed in totalitarian countries) or as a mere depot of knowledge (as often seen in democratic states).⁶⁷

Alexei Miller claimed that the institutes of national remembrance function as ‘*ministries of memory*’. If this is the case, the archive serves as an instrument of power and not as a depot of knowledge.⁶⁸ Miller is quick to draw such a far-stretching conclusion in an article that merely explains a concept and is not a primary empirical study. It might be that his assertion is right, but this still needs to be proven, based on the track record of the institutes. Much depends on how accessible the archives administered by the institutes are for researchers that are not affiliated with them. We cannot rule out that these institutes indeed served as ‘*ministries of memory*’, but the opposite is also a possibility. It is also highly unlikely that all institutes of remembrance served exactly the same role in their respective countries. This is because the circumstances in which they operate are simply too different to allow for such a general conclusion. However, we may conclude after Miller that the institutes and their affiliated historians have an advantage in establishing their historical agenda thanks to the power the state imbues on them. Besides, through the institutes of national remembrance, politics of history sometimes also involve the institutions of regular historiography. This happens when, for instance, the national academies of science’s historical institutes become the subject of political control.⁶⁹

Because these post-communist politics of history are a contemporary phenomenon, a scholar who studies them lacks access to archives and memoirs on which Wolfrum relied in his study of German *Geschichtspolitik*. The contemporaneous nature of the subject automatically limits the availability of sources. Nevertheless, Miller’s concept of the politics of history provides some guidance for a researcher. The institutions that politicians use to introduce their politics of history leave a record of documents. These include (but not exclusively): official publications, laws, legal judgements, museum expositions and catalogues, textbooks and teachers manuals.⁷⁰ Besides relying on other literature and news coverage, this study

versity employed or independent) and those employed by state institutions have been influential in establishing national historical narratives. It is for this reason that the influential British historian Eric Hobsbawm, who has shaped contemporary thinking on nationalism in various ways, claimed that ‘*historians are to nationalism what poppy-growers in Pakistan are to heroin addicts: we supply the essential raw material for the market*’. See: E. J. Hobsbawm, “Ethnicity and Nationalism in Europe Today,” *Anthropology Today* 8, no. 1 (1992): 3.

66 Миллер, “Россия: власть и история,” 12.

67 Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume*, 344–345.

68 As he argued in: Миллер, “Россия: власть и история,” 12. In this last sense, Georges Mink has also voiced his concern about the institutes created to manage former security apparatus archives in communist successor states. They are prone to be instrumentalized as political tools, and if used in such a manner historians will be reduced to being the prosecutor’s assistant (See: Mink, “Between Reconciliation and the Reactivation,” 486–487.)

69 Miller, “Historical Politics,” 7.

70 As explained in the introduction, this study will mainly focus on museums and monuments, the *institute of na-*

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will focus on these kinds of sources.

tional memory and the instrumentalization of the law, because of the extra didactical interpretative framework needed to analyze textbooks and because in the case of Ukraine these have already been extensively studied. See page 13.

Section II. Living with Difficult Pasts: Contested Political and Historiographical Narratives of the Second World War

Chapter 2. Contested Centrality of Traumatic Experiences: Western and Post-Communist Europe

In 2004, Sandra Kalniete, a former Latvian foreign minister, who would become Latvia's European commissioner after the country's accession to the EU later that year, opened the Leipzig Book Fair. Her speech caused quite a controversy: several people in the audience left the room, after Salomon Korn, the then president of the German Central Council of Jews rushed out in protest, remarking that he could '*not bear to hear it*'.¹ In her speech, Kalniete opposed the current discourse that presented Europe as divided between the 'old' and 'new' Europe. This division supposedly became visible in their respective positions in the ongoing international hot-topic of Iraq and weapons of mass destructions. With some exceptions, the Western European countries did not support the American call for intervention, while 'new' Europe (mainly post-communist future EU members) did. Kalniete protested and claimed that such thinking was offensive to many in the 'new' Europe.

As an alternative, Kalniete proposed to let harmony and balance dictate Europe's future. Therefore, a new outlook on European history was necessary:

*For 50 years the history of Europe was written without our (i.e. Eastern European; NAKvE) participation, and the history of the victors of World War II has, typically enough, separated everyone between the good and the bad, the correct and the incorrect. It has only been since the collapse of the Iron Curtain that researchers have finally accessed archived documents and the life stories of victims. **These confirm the truth that the two totalitarian regimes - Nazism and Communism - were equally criminal. There must never be a gradation between those two philosophies just because one of them participated in the victory over the other** (My emphasis; NAKvE). The battle against Fascism cannot be seen as something which will forever exculpate the sins of the Soviet system which oppressed countless innocents in the name of the ideology of class. I am firmly convinced that it is the duty of our generation to reverse this mistake. The losers must also write their history, because it deserves a firm place in the overall history of the Continent. Without this, the broader history will remain unilateral, incomplete and dishonest.²*

After calling for a revision of European history, Kalniete continued to provoke by claiming that the end of the Second World War in 1945 only meant the end of totalitarian rule and oppression in Western Europe. Kalniete argued that after 1945 a new totalitarian regime, of communist nature, took control over Eastern Europe and dominated the region in the following decades. She saw no difference between Nazi and Soviet totalitarian rule and even accused the Soviets of '*continuing to commit genocide against the peoples of Eastern Europe and, indeed, against its own people*' (it was precisely at this point of the speech that Salomon Korn left the room in protest).³

1 Eckhard Fuhr, "Leipziger Buchmesse eröffnet mit Eklat," *Die Welt*, last modified 2004, accessed November 26, 2015, <http://www.welt.de/print-welt/article302424/Leipziger-Buchmesse-eroeffnet-mit-Eklat.html>.

2 Sandra Kalniete, "Old Europe, New Europe," *Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk*, last modified 2004, accessed November 9, 2015, <https://web.archive.org/web/20051226121912/http://www.mdr.de/DL/1290734.pdf>.

3 Ibid.

The equation of Nazi and Soviet crimes made Kalniete's speech controversial. She effectively opposed the central tenet of discourse on history in Western Europe, namely that Nazi crimes are the worst crimes committed in European history. Not only that, but her assertion of a 'Soviet genocide' that complements genocide committed by the Nazis contrast sharply with a notion that has established itself in Western Europe, since the 1960s, namely the idea that the Holocaust was a unique phenomenon and constituted the cardinal sin of European history.

Kalniete hardly stood alone in her revisionism. Since the end of communism, a whole range of politicians from former Soviet-dominated states in Europe has asserted similar claims.⁴ Similarly, historians, both from and outside of these countries, have shown that Nazism and Soviet communism shared significant structural features and are more equal to each other than Western European discourse asserted. Most notably the American scholar of Eastern Europe, Timothy Snyder has written a history of mass killing committed by the Nazis and the Soviets between 1933 and 1945 in a region he calls the *bloodlands* (Poland, Ukraine, Belarus, the Baltic States, and Western-Russia). In his history, Snyder refused to view the crimes of one totalitarian regime to stand above those of another, because both systems ruled in a similar way: they both relied on utopian transformative radical ideologies and used groups of society as scapegoats. It is from this policy of scapegoating that eventually, all mass atrocities stemmed.⁵

Such assertions trouble European integration, due to the fact that this process is based on the reigning Western European discourse. Since the expansion of the European Union into former communist countries in 2004, clashes between idea's similar to Kalniete's and Western European historical narratives have caused several political controversies and conflicts. The outcomes of this ongoing discussion and/or redefinition of the historical premises of the European project also have consequences for countries that are seeking to join the European Union or that want to integrate into European structures otherwise. These problems are central to this chapter. We will first explain how Western and Eastern European countries started with similar anti-fascist connotations in their views of the Second World War. We will then continue by showing how European integration and such conceptions of history are linked and how the Holocaust has become paramount to them. Then we will show how politicians from the new member states established notions and attempts to assert their views of history in a European context and have caused clashes. Finally, we will suggest that the outcomes of historiographical discussions based on the work of the aforementioned Timothy Snyder can provide an interim solution for discussions on European history and European integration.

2.1. The Anti-Fascist Consensus: Western and Eastern European Regimes after the Second World War

After the Second World War, in Europe, the notion of anti-fascism dominated both Western and Eastern Europe. The British historian Dan Stone asserted that this notion has formed the backbone of historical interpretations in both Eastern and Western Europe from 1945-

4 I will discuss these attempts later in this chapter. Several scholars have written their analyses of these attempts. They include: Siobhan Kattago, "Agreeing to Disagree on the Legacies of Recent History: Memory, Pluralism and Europe after 1989," *European Journal of Social Theory* 12, no. 3 (2009): 375–395; Annabelle Littoz-Monnet, "Explaining Policy Conflict across Institutional Venues: European Union-Level Struggles over the Memory of the Holocaust," *Journal of Common Market Studies* 51, no. 3 (2013): 489–504; Mällsoo, "The Memory Politics"; Maria Mällsoo, "Criminalizing Communism: Transnational Mnemopolitics in Europe," *International Political Sociology* 8, no. 1 (2014): 82–99.

5 Snyder's work will be extensively discussed below. See also: For Snyder's conclusions, see: Snyder, *Bloodlands*, 383, 387–389.

1989.⁶ Anti-fascism started as stories of heroism and resistance to Nazi rule. Policymakers used it to aid post-war reconstruction: European nations had resisted fascism and this achievement had to be secured during the reconstruction. Ideas of wartime suffering were instrumentalized to re-establish social stability. The creation of a welfare state aimed at this very same goal and was also initiated from the anti-fascist consensus. Not only did European economies recover quickly, but the initial thirty years following the Second World War displayed unprecedented economic growth and prosperity (known as the ‘*trentes glorieuses*’).⁷ This all coincided with the onset of the Cold War, in which the communist block of countries, led by the Soviet Union soon became the new enemy for the Capitalist West. From this context, it did not seem outlandish to make a comparison between the former fascist enemy and the new communist menace in Eastern Europe. Socially engaged scholars such as Jacob Talmon, the duo Carl Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski, and Hanna Arendt developed the concept of ‘totalitarianism’. Their theories differed in some aspects but agreed on the element that Nazism and Soviet communism were both totalitarian systems. Politicians who favoured a strong stance against the Soviet Union used such theories to argue for their position.⁸

However, in the 1960s the anti-fascist consensus in Western Europe changed in radical ways: a new young generation, later known as the generation of 1968, started to ask questions to their parents about the war. This generation considered the evasive answers they received an insufficient explanation and no longer believed that blaming the Germans for all wartime hardships was feasible.⁹ At the same time, the state of Israel started to employ the history of the Holocaust (or the *Shoah* as it is called in Hebrew) as a memory to found an Israeli national community that was ready to defend itself at any time against those forces who wanted to wipe the young state from the map. The trial of Nazi bureaucrat and organiser of the final solution Adolf Eichmann in 1961 was meant to support this move. Since it was broadcast all over the world, the eye whiteness accounts of the horrors of the Holocaust started to reverberate not only in Israel but also in Europe.¹⁰

The cultural revolutions led by youngsters in the 1960s put serious pressure on established interpretations, and these soon started to change. Fascism remained an evil of European history that could not be surpassed, simple stories about heroism, wartime resistance, and suffering were soon replaced by notions of *Auschwitz*, the Holocaust and a duty to remember. The Holocaust came to be seen as the lowest point in European history. In a sense, Western-European societies have become obsessed with the fact that a modern society could have produced a horror such as the Holocaust and how their nations have also played a part in that.¹¹

6 Dan Stone, *Goodbye to All That? The Story of Europe since 1945*, First Edition. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 8–11.

7 *Ibid.*, 81–86.

8 See for instance: Ian Kershaw and Moshe Lewin, “Introduction. The Regimes and Their Dictators: Perspectives of Comparison,” in *Stalinism and Nazism. Dictatorships in Comparison*, ed. Ian Kershaw and Moshe Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 3–4; R. J. B. Bosworth, *Explaining Auschwitz and Hiroshima History Writing and the Second World War 1945–1990* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 20–24. For the works of the aforementioned theorists of totalitarianism, see: Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew K. Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1956); J. L. Talmon, *The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy*. (New York: Praeger, 1952); Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York, NY: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1951).

9 Stefan Berger, “A Return to the National Paradigm? National History Writing in Germany, Italy, France, and Britain from 1945 to the Present,” *The Journal of Modern History* 77, no. 3 (2005): 635, 643–650; Bosworth, *Explaining Auschwitz and Hiroshima*, 3, 28–29.

10 Bosworth, *Explaining Auschwitz and Hiroshima*, 27. The trial of Adolf Eichmann was made famous by Hannah Arendt’s coverage for the *New Yorker*, later also published as Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem a Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Viking Press, 1963). In her writings on the trial, Arendt coined her famous concept of the ‘Banality of Evil’.

11 Stone, *Goodbye to All That?*, 44–77, 83–86, 112–120. See for instance also: Bosworth, *Explaining Auschwitz and Hiroshima*, 5; Dan Stone, *The Holocaust, Fascism, and Memory. Essays in the History of Ideas* (Houndmills, Bas-

The theories of totalitarianism coined during the 1950s hardly seemed compatible with these new notions about the Holocaust that gained prominence. The new ethical force of the Holocaust did not fit well into theories that saw little difference between Nazism and communism.¹² Furthermore, the left-wingers of the 1968-generation felt a certain attraction to communism as a left-wing ideology (some expressively identified as communists) and refused to see communism on an equal footing with fascism. Also, the late 1960s and the 1970s could be described as a *détente* in Cold War tensions, and this made it less logical to stick with the notion of totalitarianism and to equate Nazism and communism as similar systems.¹³

After the 1973 Oil Crisis, the economic toolbox that fuelled recovery and the thirty golden Post-War years no longer seemed to work. Policymakers started to employ the neo-liberal ideas of low government involvement in the economy and a bare minimum of social welfare provisions in order to enable an economic uptake. This shift in economic policy went hand in hand with mainstream politicians openly questioning aspects of the anti-fascist consensus (for instance the open call for a positive reevaluation of German history by the Kohl-administration) and the rise of several radical right-wing movements (for instance France's *Front National* and the Flemish *Vlaams Blok*). One can speak of a partial breakdown of the anti-fascist consensus in Western Europe during the late '70s and '80s.¹⁴ This partition breakdown also gave room for those who did not share the anti-fascist consensus from the outset to further their cause like the German *Bund der Vertriebenen*.¹⁵ That it became possible, and even more common, to discuss the Second World War from other vantage points did not mean that the post-war anti-fascist consensus disappeared completely. To this day, it remained an important ethical force and still forms the most common discourse on Europe's twentieth century.

The Cold War division of Europe has equally influenced the formation of historical narratives in Eastern Europe.¹⁶ While Western Europe has gained more self-critical notions and has started to emphasize the Holocaust, and the need to remember, communist Eastern Europe ventured on another path. Here, a 40 years' period of silence began: it became impossible to discuss many aspects of the war because the authorities in the communist countries sought to enforce their own ideologically informed or simply pro-Soviet interpretations of history on their populations.

In Western Europe, the anti-fascist consensus was a social convention, which could be criticized from time to time. In Eastern Europe, it was a state ideology enforced by oppressive communist regimes. These regimes used it to legitimize their policies: the redistribution of land and businesses from supposed 'fascist collaborators' (mainly landowners, property-owners, businessmen, and professionals). The 'Victory of the Red Army over fascism' became an instrument to enforce and legitimize radical social transformations with the promise of a better future for all who in the past were oppressed by the 'fascists'.¹⁷ The concept of 'anti-fascism' also legitimized the communist regimes in another way: they soon started to brand opponents as 'fascists', although many of the anti-communists had taken part in

ingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 17.

12 See also: Bosworth, *Explaining Auschwitz and Hiroshima*, 21–25.

13 *Ibid.*, 25–26; Jeffrey C. Isaac, "Critics of Totalitarianism," in *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century Political Thought*, ed. Terence Ball and Richard Bellamy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 194–195.

14 Stone, *Goodbye to All That?*, 161–167, 179–195.

15 The *Bund der Vertriebenen* (Federation of Expellees) is a German organisation that promotes the interests of Germans that have fled their homes in Central and Eastern Europe or were expelled from those regions after the Second World War.

16 Karl Schlögel, "Orte und Schichten der Erinnerung," *Osteuropa. Zeitschrift für Gegenwartsfragen des Ostens* 58, no. 6 (2008): 17.

17 Stone, *Goodbye to All That?*, 8–9.

the anti-German resistance during the Second World War.¹⁸ The regimes also instrumentalized the accusation of fascism in the cold war context: the old wartime allies (and especially Western Germany) were depicted as the new ‘fascists’ (hence the East-German propaganda name for the Berlin Wall, the ‘anti-fascist protection wall’). The communists claimed that the old allies were now collaborating with the fascists in order to destroy communism and the promise of a better future.¹⁹

The regimes increasingly made accusations of ‘fascism’ to cover-up their (economic) failures. The promise of a better future did not materialize (while the West had unprecedented economic growth). These failures and the resentment they caused, as well as Stalin’s death in 1953 eventually fueled events such as the 1956 Hungarian Revolution and 1968 Prague spring.²⁰ After these events, the communist regimes went in survival mode and the party leadership intended to keep their privileged positions and power. Since the regimes could no longer keep their economic promises, the idea of anti-fascism remained one of the main and the most important supports for their legitimacy.²¹

Because ‘anti-fascism’ was such a significant (ideological) support for the communist regimes, the collapse of communism went hand in hand with the delegitimation of the notion of anti-fascism and with a renaissance of anti-communist thinking in the region.²² The communist regimes might have tried to force their interpretation of the anti-fascist consensus on their respective countries; one cannot stop people from having memories of their own. In private, people remembered things very differently from the official communist lines of history: They, for instance, remembered how during the interwar years Poles misbehaved against Ukrainians, or how Romanians treated Hungarians as unwelcome citizens. These private and the official ideologically charged memories of the Second World War and its immediate preceding years have caused severe distortions of memory in Eastern Europe. This has meant that there has not been the same kind of critical introspection as in the West and that Eastern European societies leave many questions such as (tacit) collaboration with both Nazi and communist regimes undiscussed.²³ While recollections of the Second World War in Eastern Europe emphasize crimes committed by the Nazis, the systematic destruction of the Jews figures less prominently in them.²⁴

In short, the anti-fascist consensus has had very different outcomes in Eastern and Western Europe: in the West, it has led to a notion that the Holocaust stands at the apex of evil and the assertion of a need to commemorate these horrors. Furthermore, Western societies do not only ascribe guilt for the destruction of the Jews to the Nazis and/or Germans but also to Western European societies. In Eastern Europe, the anti-fascist consensus has solidified the notion that Eastern European societies are the victims of others and that their victimhood is the most important. This has given little room for critical introspective approaches of history.

18 Ibid., 16. Anne Applebaum also explained how the accusation of ‘fascism’ became a legitimizing force for the regime and was used to force out internal opposition against the regime and to accuse the West of conspiring with the ‘fascists’. See: Anne Applebaum, *Iron Curtain: The Crushing of Eastern Europe, 1944-1956* (London: Allen Lane, 2012).

19 Stone, *Goodbye to All That?*, 38.

20 Ibid., 135; Applebaum, *Iron Curtain*, 462–489.

21 Stone, *Goodbye to All That?*, 157, 208.

22 Ibid., 267.

23 Tony Judt, “The Past Is an Other Country: Myth and Memory in Postwar Europe,” in *The Politics of Retribution in Europe. World War II and Its Aftermath*, ed. István Deák, Jan T. Gross, and Tony Judt (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000), 308–309.

24 Judt, *Postwar*, 822–823.

2.2. History, European Integration and the Holocaust

At present, the Second World War and the Holocaust occupy a significant place in the (political) identities of both nations and supranational entities in Western Europe. The countless examples of politicians who refer to the Second World War to underwrite their political positions in public debates demonstrate this. For instance, during the European Refugee Crisis, Austrian Chancellor Werner Faymann compared the treatment of asylum seekers in Hungary to the Holocaust.²⁵ Also, during the 2009 ceremony commemorating the 70th anniversary of the beginning of the Second World War, German Chancellor Angela Merkel remarked that ‘*Nobody can undo the horrors of the Second World War. But we can shape the future in the awareness of our continuing responsibility. In this way, Europe has emerged from a continent of terror and violence to become a continent of liberty and peace. Germany’s partners in the east and the west paved the way for this, thanks to their will for reconciliation.*’²⁶

In Western Europe, the Holocaust has gained such a moral force that it has become impossible to deny that it happened or to belittle its victims. It is in this sense that the well-known British historian Tony Judt exclaimed that ‘*Today’s pertinent European reference is not baptism.*’²⁷ *It is extermination. Holocaust recognition is our contemporary European entry ticket.*’²⁸ Judt claimed that the remembrance of the Holocaust determines what is morally acceptable in Europe. For instance, it is simply impossible to deny or downplay the Holocaust. When politicians do so, like the French politician Jean Marie Le Pen, they place themselves outside the boundaries of acceptable, civilized public discourse. Consequently, most mainstream politicians will refuse to work with them.²⁹ Judt claimed that countries seeking to join the European Union must acknowledge the Holocaust as the constituent event in Europe’s twentieth-century history (and thus underwrite the Western European version of the anti-fascist consensus; NAKvE). Judt even inferred that the denial of any past act of mass extermination will impede European integration. As a logical consequence, the persistent Turkish denial of the 1915 Armenian Genocide and similar denial of mass murder by Serbs in the Yugoslav Wars (1990s) does not expedite the European integration of these countries.³⁰

That the Holocaust nowadays is important as an ‘*entry ticket*’ for membership of the European Union is logical, because conceptions of history were important for starting the process of European integration in the first place.

History might have played an important role in European integration. The Holocaust was initially of little concern to European politicians. They were concerned with reconstruction. This took the form of a process of dual reconstruction, both physical and moral. For the contemporaries of the immediate post-war period, it was clear that another even more devastating war had to be prevented. To avoid another war, it was necessary account for the war’s causes. Why could such a civilized continent as Europe produce such a destructive and inhumane conflict? The most straightforward answer would have been to repeat the tactic followed the First World War: to blame it on the losing side and put the burden

25 Michelle Martin and Anna McIntosh, “Austria’s Faymann Likens Orban’s Refugee Policies to Nazi Deportations,” *Reuters*, last modified September 13, 2015, accessed September 23, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/09/13/us-europe-migrants-idUSKCNORCOGL20150913>.

26 The English was taken from: Angela Merkel, “I Bow before the Victims,” *Bundeskanzleramt*, last modified September 1, 2009, accessed September 25, 2015, <http://www.bundeskanzlerin.de/ContentArchiv/EN/Archiv17/Reiseberichte/pl-danzig-zweiter-weltkrieg.html>; For the German original, see: Angela Merkel, “Ich verneige mich vor den Opfern,” *Bundeskanzleramt*, last modified September 1, 2009, accessed September 25, 2015, <http://www.bundeskanzlerin.de/ContentArchiv/DE/Archiv17/Reiseberichte/pl-merkel-in-danzig.html>.

27 Here Judt referred to an often-quoted remark by the German poet Heinrich Heine that baptism to Christianity was the price Jews had to pay to enter European modernity and to become fully accepted members of European societies (Heine himself converted from Judaism to Christianity in 1825).

28 Judt, *Postwar*, 803.

29 *Ibid.*, 804.

30 *Ibid.*

on Germany. The trials of Nazi leaders at Nuremberg (1945-1946) did so. But it seemed too simple to only blame the Germans. Therefore, intellectuals and policymakers realized that another answer needed to complement the German guilt for the war: Europe as a continent also bore (some) guilt. Europe, the continent of enlightenment values and the idea of human progress, had lost sight of these European core values and needed to return to that intellectual legacy. In short: Europe needed moral reconstruction.³¹

Europe's 'founding fathers', Jean Monet, Robert Schuman, Paul Henri Spaak, and Alcide de Gasperi, conceived Europe to secure the post-war reconstruction. Cooperation seemed the most sensible way to avoid the return of chauvinism and nationalism that caused so much death and destruction. It also was a method to counter the perceived threat of Stalinist Bolshevism to the security of the Western European capitalist states. Since economic competition would most likely cause a new war, the founding fathers considered the creation of an overarching economic system a logical step. In practice, it proved difficult to eradicate old national ways of thinking, and it became apparent that mere supranationalism was not enough. The search for a (new) European identity was on.³²

Building an identity is inherently a historical exercise. European policymakers now faced a challenge that resembled those of the elites in nation-states during the nineteenth century.³³ They followed the proverbial '*We have united Europe. Now we must create the Europe*'.³⁴ That history played a role in this is not surprising, since Europe in this sense is as much an *imagined community* as nations are.³⁵ Such imagined communities are highly dependent on history.³⁶

Whether European policymakers managed to create an overarching European identity is highly questionable. The growing tendency of Euroscepticism in several European countries seems to point to the opposite. The French '*non*' and Dutch '*nee*' in their respective referendums on the proposed EU constitution in 2005 were a clear indication. The growth of movements such as *Alternative für Deutschland* (Alternatives for Germany), the *UK Independence Party* and the Dutch *Partij voor de Vrijheid* (Freedom Party), as well as the Brexit, were even further indications. Euroscepticism seems to indicate that progress towards a historically informed European identity has been slow. Europeans still do not share a common identity. Nevertheless, the European Union has established an (institutional) identity of its own. Representations of the Second World War (and since recent years the Holocaust) have been important to that identity.

2.3. The EU's *Acquis Historique*

The European Union enshrined its historical outlook in what Fabrice Larat and Chiara Bottichi called the *acquis historique comunaux*. They identified it in the EU's institutional remembrance or institutional narrative (law texts, policy documents and other declarations), public remembrance (aesthetic expressions and public discourse) and pedagogical remembrance (history textbooks).³⁷ Larat and Bottichi modelled the concept after the *ac-*

31 Rietbergen, *Europe*, 510.

32 *Ibid.*, 511–512.

33 Pieter Huijstra, Marijn Molema, and Daniel Wirt, "Political Values in a European Museum," *Journal of Contemporary European Research* 10, no. 1 (2014): 131; Cris Shore, *Building Europe: The Cultural Politics of European Integration* (London: Routledge, 2000), 32.

34 After the Italian statesman Massimo d'Azeglio. In his memoirs, he remarked '*We have made Italy. Now we must make the Italian*'. By this, he alluded to the difficulties faced by the Italian politicians after the success of the *Risorgimento*.

35 Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*.

36 Shore, *Building Europe*, 41. See also remarks by the British Marxist historian Eric Hobsbawm for the role of history and historians in the formation of nations: Hobsbawm, "Ethnicity and Nationalism in Europe Today," 3.

37 Fabrice Larat, "Presenting the Past: Political Narratives on European History and the Justification of EU Inte-

acquis communautaire, the accumulated body of European legislation, legal acts, and court decisions. The full implementation of the *acquis communautaire* is a precondition for the successful integration in the European Union. Therefore, the *acquis historique* also has consequences for European integration: Although it has no binding legal force, it is a fundamental prerequisite for European integration and the acceptance of a country within the European Union.³⁸

The *acquis historique* enshrined the political notions voiced by the European founding fathers, namely that Europe was ‘born out of war’ and that Europeans had the historical obligation to preserve peace and stability, as well as to protect democracy, human rights, and freedom, and to overcome divisions within Europe.³⁹

What does the European Union’s *acquis historique* constitute? An answer might come from the European Parliament’s 2007 initiative to create a ‘House of European History’ in Brussels, which would function as a kind of ‘European History Museum’. A long and complicated process led to the conceptual basis for its main exposition.⁴⁰ This conceptual basis focussed on two narrative structures:⁴¹ First, Europe’s common foundations in antiquity that left a common substrate for Europe’s future cultural development.⁴² Second, teleological narrative of a shared common European destiny: Europe’s shared heritage of progress and civilization was both lost and recovered during the 20th century. The mass destruction during the First and Second World Wars was the ‘loss’, European integration constituted the ‘recovery’ of Europe’s perceived ‘natural’ state.⁴³ These narrative structures have also been observed in other statements by European politicians and institutions and in post-war European historiography.⁴⁴

But, how should countries that aspire to integrate with the European Union engage with the *acquis historique*? It is hard to operationalize because it is neither concrete nor legally enforceable. An example may come from Germany. Many have lauded the way Germany dealt with its dark past. The British historian Timothy Garton Ash even argued that the country set the standard for dealing with a problematic history.⁴⁵ He claimed that while many countries, worldwide, have engaged in dealing with difficult pasts (several South American nations, as well as Spain, Greece, Ethiopia and Cambodia), none have done it as comprehensively as Germany. Germany also engaged with this process not only once, but twice: once after Nazism (post-1945) and once after communism (post-1989).⁴⁶ The way Germany dealt with its painful past was complicated and embedded in both domestic and international contexts. Also, Germany was initially not keen on atoning for its wrongdoing,

gration,” *German Law Journal* 6, no. 2 (2005): 237, 274, 278; Chiara Bottici, “Europe, War and Remembrance,” in *The Search for a European Identity. Values, Policies and Legitimacy of the European Union*, ed. Furio Verutti and Sonia Lucarelli (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 47–48.

38 Larat, “Presenting the Past,” 288.

39 Bottici, “Europe, War and Remembrance,” 278, 288; Chiara Bottici, “European Identity and the Politics of Remembrance,” in *Performing the Past. Memory, History, and Identity in Modern Europe*, ed. Karin Tilmans, Frank van Vree, and Jay Winter (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 345–347.

40 Committee of Experts House of European History, *Conceptual Basis for a House of European History* (Brussels, 2008), accessed September 25, 2015, http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2004_2009/documents/div/745/745721/745721_en.pdf.

41 Huistra, Molema, and Wirt, “Political Values in a European Museum,” 135.

42 *Ibid.*, 131.

43 *Ibid.*, 132–133.

44 As noted by: Shore, *Building Europe*, 57–60; Stefan Berger, “History and Forms of Collective Identity in Europe: Why Europe Cannot and Should Not Be Built on History,” in *The Essence and the Margin. National Identities and Collective Memories in Contemporary European Culture*, ed. Laura Rorato and Anna Saunders (Amsterdam and New York: Editions Rodopi, 2009), 29–30; Stuart Woolf, “Europe and Its Historians,” *Contemporary European History* 12, no. 3 (2003): 325–326.

45 Timothy Garton Ash, as cited in: Stefan Troebst, “Jalta versus Stalingrad, GULag versus Holocaust: Konfliktierende Erinnerungskulturen im größeren Europa,” *Berliner Journal für Soziologie* 15, no. 3 (2005): 384.

46 Timothy Garton Ash, *History of the Present: Essays, Sketches and Despatches from Europe in the 1990s* (London: Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, 1999), 295.

ings or making far-reaching conclusions about its national polity based on the Nazi past. Instead, German politicians and historians tried to salvage Germany's national record from Nazi crimes.⁴⁷ There is however one important caveat: the example of Germany is so comprehensive that it is almost impossible to repeat elsewhere; the case of Germany is simply too unique. Nevertheless, it is worthwhile to think about what Germany can teach us about dealing with difficult pasts.

Like in the rest of Europe, the main shift started in the 1960s. At that time, the West-German generation of 1968, supported by intellectual heavyweights as Theodor Adorno and Karl Jaspers called for a straightforward reckoning with the past, i.e. *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (lit. dealing with the past). Proponents of this idea placed Nazi crimes, especially the Holocaust, on the apex of evil.⁴⁸ In the 1980s, during the so-called *Historikerstreit*, the generation of 1968 tried to save the notion of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* from right-wing attacks (Chancellor Kohl promoted the idea that Germany still needed a national identity based on history and that Germans could once again be proud about their history).⁴⁹ The *Historikerstreit* also reasserted the notion that Nazi crimes had primacy over communist crimes.⁵⁰

After German reunification in 1990, a new challenge came to the fore: dealing with the communist dictatorship in Eastern Germany. Some heated debates followed, but eventually, a new historical consensus was established: Communist crimes should not relativize Nazi crimes, but the latter should also not trivialize the former.⁵¹ This reversed the outcomes of the *Historikerstreit* to a certain degree: it became possible to compare communism and Nazism in German politics, research and journalism, but this did not mean that one could place both systems and their crimes on an equal footing. Nazi crimes retained a stronger moral force than communist crimes.⁵² Germans also gained (limited) opportunity to discuss their own victimhood during the Second World War. For instance, they could discuss how Red Army Soldiers raped German girls and misbehaved against the civilian population as soon as they entered German territory in 1945. It is because Germany has dealt so comprehensively with its dark past that it has gained enough moral force to speak about its victimhood as well.⁵³

Nevertheless, it hardly seems fair to argue that a country that wants to join the European Union and wants to introduce the *acquis historique* has to copy the German example verbatim. The German situation was unique and it is impossible to repeat its example. Nevertheless, we may conclude that atonement for one's negative role in history is a crucial element of the *acquis historique*. Together with Second World War commemoration and the notion of Nazi crimes and the Holocaust as the lowest point in history it forms the baseline for the *acquis historique*.

47 For instance: Friedrich Meinecke, *Die deutsche Katastrophe: Betrachtungen und Erinnerungen* (Zürich und Wiesbaden: Aero-Verlag und Brockhaus, 1946); Gerhard Ritter, *Europa und die deutsche Frage: Betrachtungen über die geschichtliche Eigenart des deutschen Staatsdenkens* (München: Münchner Verlag, 1948).

48 See: Norbert Frei, "From Policy to Memory: How the Federal Republic of Germany Dealt with the Nazi Legacy," in *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes in Europe. Legacies and Lessons from the Twentieth Century*, ed. Jerzy W. Borejsza and Klaus Ziemer (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2006), 485–456.

49 Patrick Dassen and Ton Nijhuis, "Geschiedenis, identiteit en taboe. De tegenwoordigheid van het verleden in de Bondsrepubliek," in *Gegijzeld door het verleden. Controverses in Duitsland van de Historikerstreit tot het Sloterdijk-debat*, ed. Patrick Dassen and Ton Nijhuis (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Boom, 2001), 16; Richard J. Evans, *In Hitler's Shadow. West German Historians and the Attempt to Escape from the Nazi Past* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1989), 15–16.

50 Evans, *In Hitler's Shadow*, 84–88.

51 Andrew H. Beattie, "The Victims of Totalitarianism and the Centrality of Nazi Genocide: Continuity and Change in German Commemorative Politics," in *Germans as Victims*, ed. Bill Niven (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), 159–160.

52 *Ibid.*, 160.

53 See for instance: Stefan Berger, "On Taboos, Traumas and Other Myths: Why the Debate about German Victims of the Second World War Is Not a Historians' Controversy," in *Germans as Victims*, ed. Bill Niven (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), 218.

2.4. Appropriating a Difficult Past in Post-Communist Europe

Official propaganda dictated how history could be discussed in communist Europe. Only a handful of dissidents dared to oppose it. Only after the collapse of the communist system in 1989 could Eastern European societies discuss their histories more freely. Eastern European societies feverishly reinterpreted history. Therefore, the period after 1989 has been called the ‘*real post-war era*’ and the subsequent historical discussions have been interpreted as ‘*the return of history*’, a ‘*release of Cold War constraints*’, or a ‘*Box of Pandora of contested memories*’.⁵⁴

According to Tony Judt, 1989 opened up the European past for discussion and new post-Cold War foundation myths are currently in the making. Historical thinking in Europe is currently in an *interregnum*: old versions of the past became redundant or unacceptable in both Western and Eastern Europe, but no generally accepted viewpoints have formed yet. In any case, the former communist countries of Europe faced the same process that West Germany went through Eastern Europe is in for its own *Historikerstreit*; a quest to understand the region’s multi-layered pasts.⁵⁵

Nevertheless, a distinctive post-communist narrative of history has formed in Eastern Europe. Before we can delve into it, one caveat is necessary: there is no single post-communist narrative that is generally shared between and within Eastern European societies. Countries of the region have ample historical animosity and within them, different social groups disagree about history. Judt had even claimed that ‘*too much memory*’ has gripped the region. While the communist regimes have sought to brush away exiting historical enmities between the countries to enforce a communist fraternity amongst Eastern European countries and the Soviet Union, they have not succeeded. Because of this failure, people kept their own interpretations of history and there was far less harmony between nations and within their societies than communist regimes claimed.⁵⁶ These tensions have come to the fore after the end of communism. Nevertheless, narratives of histories that formed after the fall of communism shared several structural features. Therefore, we can speak about an overarching post-communist narrative. Different national and/or post-communist ideological narratives shared its main lines.

What are these common features? In essence, it all boils down to the assertion that during the twentieth century the Nazis and the communists ruled over the region oppressively and destructively, using a totalitarian ideology. The crimes committed by both regimes were of similar quality: Red equalled Brown. In a sense, this strain of thought rehabilitated the notions of totalitarianism that Western scholars developed in the 1950s. Eastern Europe has revived the theory of totalitarianism.⁵⁷

An important aspect of the post-communist narrative is that since the Nazis and Soviets were both occupiers, the true post-war era only started in 1989 or 1991. Soviet Rule was just another round of occupation. Proponents of such a view often put some of the blame on the West: the latter region bared some responsibility for post-1945 communist dictatorship because the Western allies accepted the division of Europe at the 1945 Yalta conference. They speak of a ‘*Betrayal of Yalta*’. Therefore, Europe has the moral obligation to re-

54 Stone, *The Holocaust, Fascism, and Memory*, 147; Stone, *Goodbye to All That?*, 256–264, 291–294. Jan-Werner Müller, “The Power of Memory, the Memory of Power and the Power over Memory,” in *Memory and Power in Post-War Europe. Studies in the Presence of the Past*, ed. Jan-Werner Müller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 1–35; Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe’s Twentieth Century* (Penguin Books, 1999), 402–403. Emma De Angelis, “The EU’s Historical Narrative and Enlargement to Eastern Europe,” in *Debating European Identity. Bright Ideas, Dim Prospects*, ed. Branislav Radeljić, (Bern: Peter Lang, 2013), 82.

55 Judt, “The Past Is an Other Country,” 313, 315.

56 *Ibid.*, 307.

57 Isaac, “Critics of Totalitarianism,” 200–201.

member communist rule. Furthermore, they claim that an imbalance between memory of Nazi and Soviet rule needs to be restored. They categorically reject any difference in status between victims of Nazi and Soviet rule.⁵⁸

By addressing a perceived imbalance, the post-communist narrative swung to the other side: it resulted in a rather single-sided interpretation of history that gave much more attention to communist than Nazi crimes. Almost without exception, it always presented Eastern European nations at the receiving end of history: as a victim. Combined with the large emphasis on communist crimes this resulted in a rather apologetic tendency: anti-communist have become the heroes of the post-communist narratives and are glorified. This completely disregarded that such individuals have often played dubious roles: they instated right-wing totalitarian regimes, collaborated with the Nazis, or were co-perpetrators of the Holocaust in the region. (For example, Romania's authoritarian dictator during the Second World War, Ion Antonescu, is one of these troubled new national heroes).⁵⁹

Another structure of the post-communist narrative that collides with Western European historical discourse, forms the place given to the Holocaust. As a rule, the post-communist narrative does not deny that the Germans exterminated Jews. But, it almost always contextualizes the Holocaust outside of national history. It was not a part of Polish or say Romanian history, but part of Jewish and German history. It reduces the Holocaust to something external with little relevance in domestic contexts. This leaves little room for the kind of critical introspection and the moral weight attached to the Holocaust as seen in Western Europe.⁶⁰

Many proponents of post-communist narratives see the Western European insistence on the Holocausts uniqueness and its usage as one of the foundation myth for the EU as a form of paternalism and orientalism.⁶¹ Nevertheless, the post-communist narrative has a double attitude to the Holocaust: while it laments its importance and denounces its uniqueness, it sees the tradition of Holocaust remembrance and its ethical force as a template for remembering communist rule in Eastern Europe.⁶²

Often, the post-communist narrative displays an argument that can be called the 'double genocide'. It further underlines that Nazi and communist crimes in Eastern Europe were of equal nature because both regimes committed genocidal acts; the Germans exterminated the Jews and directed their fury at various other nationalities, the Soviets committed genocide by deporting entire peoples and suppressing nationalist movements.⁶³

Genocide is a rather contested concept and its precise definition varies depending on the context. Even the definition given in the 1948 *UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide* is not universally accepted.⁶⁴ It is thus hard to define whether Soviet crimes in Eastern Europe constituted a genocide. But, what should interest us, is that proponents of the 'double genocide' use the notion solely to form a cult of national victimhood in which there is no critical introspection: Eastern Europeans were only victims.

58 Mälksoo, "The Memory Politics," 622.

59 Ibid.

60 Kattago, "Agreeing to Disagree," 384.

61 Troebst, "Jalta versus Stalingrad," 388.

62 Mälksoo, "Criminalizing Communism," 88.

63 Stone, *The Holocaust, Fascism, and Memory*, 178–179.

64 For different definitions and conceptualizations of the concept of genocide, see: Scott Straus, "Contested Meanings and Conflicting Imperatives: A Conceptual Analysis of Genocide," *Journal of Genocide Research* 3, no. 3 (November 2001): 349–375. In this light I also want point to discussions and political actions that either claim of disclaim that the 1932-1933 artificial famine in Ukraine were a genocide of the Ukrainian people. These arguments are discussed in chapters 4-8 of this study.

2.5. New Totalitarianism after the 2004 EU Enlargement

The clash between the post-communist narrative and its notion of totalitarianism with established notions in Western Europe became a political problem after the 2004 expansion of the European Union. Since then, politicians from the new member states promoted a post-communist narrative of history and its variant of totalitarianism within EU contexts.⁶⁵ Politicians from Poland, the Baltic States, and the Czech Republic have taken the lead in these developments. In 2009, an informal parliamentary group under the name *'Reconciliation of European histories'* has been formed under the leadership of Sandra Kalniete (by then a member of European Parliament for the European People's Party). Most of the group's members came from the new member states and included parliamentarians from all major European political families. The group's agenda focused on communist crimes and lobbied within the European Parliament and with the European Commission to obtain better resources for their remembrance.⁶⁶

In February 2010, politicians and intellectuals from Central and Eastern Europe demanded that Europeans would rethink their approach to both Nazi and communist totalitarian regimes and would give equal attention to the memory of communist and Nazi crimes. These politicians and intellectuals gathered in the Czech capital Prague to issue their demands, known as the *'Prague declaration'*.⁶⁷ The equal status for communist and Nazi crimes was the main argument of the declaration. To this notion, it attached the demand that Europeans would draw the same moral conclusion they had drawn from their judgement of Nazi crimes. Europe needed a new common understanding. Most of the declaration's demands simply copied Western European commemorative practices related to Nazi crimes and extended them to communist crimes (for instance, giving attention to them in the education system). The declaration also proposed new measures, such as the establishment of August 23 (the day of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact's signing) as *'Pan-European Day of Remembrance for the Victims of Nazi and Communist Totalitarian Regimes.'* Other measures included the establishment of several commissions, museums, institutes, and conferences to develop the notion of equality of Nazi and communist crimes further and to entrench that in European societies.⁶⁸

Twenty-seven politicians and intellectuals, most of them from the Czech Republic, initially signed the declaration. Many political heavyweights from former communist countries also joined. They included the former Czechoslovak and Czech president Václav Havel, the former German Federal Commissioner for the Stasi Archives (and future Federal President of Germany, 2012-2017) Joachim Gauck, and Vytautas Landsbergis, former president of Lithuania.⁶⁹ The fact that so many prominent figures from post-communist countries signed the declaration indicates the important weight of its arguments for Eastern-European propositions. In essence, the declaration was a political program that would be put forward in policy discussions in the EU.

Before we can touch the outcomes of some of these European policy debates, we have to discuss a particular poignant characteristic of the Eastern European demands. Besides requesting certain policies, they also insisted that the post-communist narrative of history should be taken seriously. This displayed that the Eastern Europeans still felt insecure about their status in the EU, and the acceptance of their take on history would indicate a broader

65 Málksoo, "Criminalizing Communism," 95.

66 Littoz-Monnet, "Explaining Policy Conflict," 495.

67 Anne Wæhrens, "Is Soviet Communism a Trans-European Experience? Politics of Memory in the European Parliament, 2004-2009," *Baltic Worlds* 7, no. 4 (2014): 22-23.

68 "Prague Declaration on European Conscience and Communism," last modified 2008, <http://web.archive.org/web/20120604091713/http://www.praguedeclaration.eu/>.

69 Ibid.

acceptance in the union.⁷⁰ If Eastern European politicians succeeded in their propositions, it would lead to a redefining of the historical narrative of the European Union, which, given that narratives of history form one of the cores for the EU project, would also redefine some aspects of European integration.⁷¹

The Eastern European politicians raised high stakes and therefore triggered subsequent policy debates, which warrants further review. Since discussions about policy continue to this day, our conclusions cannot be but preliminary.

Within the European Union institutions, there have been three policy debates on the equality of Nazi and communist crimes. Proponents of the post-communist narrative have had mixed results: sometimes they were successful, sometimes they failed. The structure of the debate seemed the decisive factor. If the debate was framed as a discussion of identity, right-wing Western European politicians often joined the Eastern European side, because the post-communist perspective gave them an opportunity to condemn communist crimes in a way unavailable until then.⁷² Western European politicians were divided on the issue themselves: the right wanted an outright condemnation of communism, while the left was unwilling to do so and emphasized a negative appraisal of fascism.⁷³

The first policy debate predated the 2010 *Prague Declaration* and was conducted in the European Council on Justice and Home Affairs (JHA). A Framework decision that would ensure that racism and xenophobia were punishable as criminal offences in all EU member states was the issue at hand. This debate was already ongoing before the 2004 EU enlargement. The main point of contention was freedom of speech. Some Western European countries, like Germany, have established a legal practice of banning Nazi symbols such as the swastika, in other countries such a prohibition is seen as an infringement of the freedom of speech (predominantly in the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Scandinavian member states). After the enlargement of the European Union, the new Eastern member states sought to broaden this discussion. By demanding an equation of Nazi and communist crimes they tried to turn a technical and legal debate into a discussion of identity. Seen from the bureaucratic perspective of the Council on Justice of Home Affairs it was inappropriate to discuss identity in this forum. Western European participants therefore objected to the Eastern European proposals. In the end, this caused the failure of the attempt to reframe the debate. Eventually, the German EU presidency mediated a compromise in 2007: Holocaust denial would be an offence only if it were likely to incite hatred, while the outright ban on Nazi symbols was scrapped. The compromise displayed some give and take on both sides of the 'freedom of speech' debate: the proponents of freedom of speech had to give in and criminalize Holocaust denial in some instances, while those insisting on a ban of Nazi symbols had to give way. A political declaration that condemned Stalin's mass murders and an intention to organize public hearings on communist crimes meant to appease the Eastern European politicians. The framework decision reinforced the Western narrative of the Holocaust: it only recognized genocides that fell under the scope of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (which draws heavily on the Holocaust).⁷⁴

Another failed attempt by Eastern European member states took place in 2010 when the European Commission rejected calls made by Lithuania, Latvia, Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, and the Czech Republic to criminalize the denial of crimes perpetrated by communists in a manner similar to existing anti-Holocaust denial laws. The European Commission cit-

70 Litoz-Monet and Maria Mälksoo have proposed likewise arguments. See: Mälksoo, "The Memory Politics," 654–655; Litoz-Monnet, "Explaining Policy Conflict," 490.

71 Mälksoo, "The Memory Politics," 654–655.

72 Litoz-Monnet, "Explaining Policy Conflict," 492.

73 Wehrens, "Is Soviet Communism a Trans-European Experience?," 22.

74 Litoz-Monnet, "Explaining Policy Conflict," 497–500.

ed the lack of a legal framework as a reason for their refusal. According to Maria Mälksoo, these legal arguments obfuscated the real reasons for the rejection: the clash between the Holocaust centric Western European narrative and Eastern European new totalitarianism. Critics outside of the European Parliament, for instance, the American-Lithuanian-Jewish scholar Dovid Katz, claimed that the request was in fact a veiled attempt to mitigate Eastern European complicity in the Holocaust. Within the debate in the European parliament, critics voiced their concern about the request ‘*diluting the unique nature of the Nazis crimes*’.⁷⁵

The outcomes of both the JHA debate and the European Commission’s 2010 refusal indicated that Western Europe wanted to hold on to its assertion that Nazi crimes were Europe’s twentieth century’s original sin and that the Holocaust stood at the apex of evil. It also displayed a rather lacklustre attitude to Eastern European demands. Notwithstanding Western European objections, Eastern Europeans have successfully promoted their views in one particular forum: the European parliament. The two clashing discourses on Europe’s history have successfully come together in the 2009 ‘*Resolution on European Conscience and Totalitarianism*’.⁷⁶

In the resolution, the European Parliament recognized Eastern European suffering at the hand of totalitarian regimes. Nevertheless, it maintained the uniqueness of the Holocaust. Furthermore, it called for the proclamation of August 23 as ‘*Pan-European Day of Remembrance for the Victims of All Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes*’.⁷⁷ August 23 explicitly meant to complement the already established *International Holocaust Remembrance Day* on January 27 (the anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camps by Soviet troops in 1945). The idea of proclaiming such a day of remembrance first saw public discussion during the Slovenian EU presidency in 2008, but the Prague declaration also mentioned it.⁷⁸ The Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE also supported the idea to proclaim August 23 in its Vilnius declaration.⁷⁹ The latter declaration likewise acknowledged the uniqueness of the Holocaust and at the same time reminded the OSCE’s participants of their commitment to an unequivocal condemnation of all forms of totalitarianism (incl. communism).⁸⁰

The EP resolution was a compromise between the Western European and Eastern European narratives on European history. It intended to foster a more inclusive memory in the European Union, one that would include both the memory of victims of (Soviet) communism, the Holocaust/National Socialism and those of dictatorships in Spain, Portugal, and Greece. However, it is questionable whether the resolution succeeded in these aims: the declaration overtly emphasized Eastern European experiences and was rather a-symmetrical in its approach to Nazi and Soviet crimes: of its 31 considerations and stipulations one referred to the Holocaust, two referred to Communism, the Holocaust and Nazism, while five referred to Communism alone. Anne Wæhrens has claimed that this had meant that the 2009 resolution was not a compromise but a failed balancing act. It is therefore relevant that the Western European participants also missed the opportunity to condemn crimes committed by authoritarian regimes in Greece, Spain, and Portugal (to which only referred to in one consideration).⁸¹

75 Mälksoo, “Criminalizing Communism,” 82–83.

76 Kattago, “Agreeing to Disagree,” 385–386. For the resolution adopted by the European Parliament, see: European Parliament, “European Parliament Resolution of 2 April 2009 on European Conscience and Totalitarianism,” *European Parliament*, accessed December 16, 2015, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//NONSGML+TA+P6-TA-2009-0213+0+DOC+PDF+V0/EN>.

77 Kattago, “Agreeing to Disagree,” 385–386.

78 Wæhrens, “Is Soviet Communism a Trans-European Experience?,” 21.

79 Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE, “Vilnius Declaration of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly,” last modified June 3, 2006, accessed December 16, 2015, <http://www.oscepa.org/documents/all-documents/annual-sessions/2009-vilnius/declaration-6/261-2009-vilnius-declaration-eng/file>.

80 Mälksoo, “Criminalizing Communism,” 94.

81 Wæhrens, “Is Soviet Communism a Trans-European Experience?,” 22.

Strong proponents of the traditional Western European interpretation in which Nazi crimes are given a different status than communist crimes have severely criticized the adoption of the resolution. One of the clearest opponents was the well-acclaimed Israeli Holocaust scholar Yehuda Bauer. He saw the ongoing movement to commemorate victims of Stalinism together with the victims of the Nazis as a trivialization and relativization of the Holocaust and as a mendacious revision of history. He claimed that, while the Soviet regime and other communist regimes in Eastern Europe ruled by murderous oppression, the rule of the Nazis was still worse, because communists have not enacted a genocidal policy like the Holocaust. Eastern European post-communists claim that the Soviets occupied their country in 1939 after the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact and again in 1944/1945 after the liberation from Nazism. Bauer described this view as untrue and argued that the Soviet Union liberated Eastern Europe. According to him, the Soviet Union saved the lives of many Estonians, Latvians, Poles, Ukrainians, and Czechs whom the Nazi extermination machine would have targeted at a later stage.⁸² Bauer's criticism was an indication of strong opposition to the Eastern European argument about the equality of Nazi and communist crimes.

Western European engagement with this debate on the equality is rather lacklustre: an indication for this is that Eastern Europeans hardly ever observe August 23 each year. It remains a rather Eastern European phenomenon.⁸³ The Western European disinterest on August 23 does not necessarily mean that the notion of Holocaust centrality will remain fixed in its current Western European form. Like all social constructs, it is subject to change, especially after significant political or social changes. In fact, there is a need to readjust European memory and to forge a pan-European memory in which Western and Eastern European nations (and especially their policymakers) find common ground. Without any doubt, the European Union is a community founded upon memories. If we take into consideration that, seen from theories of social memory discussed in chapter 1 of this study, the structure of a social group determines what is contained in social memory. The European Union's *acquis historique* is, in fact, a form collective memory, and it is therefore only logical that it should change after the Eastern enlargement of the European Union.⁸⁴ In essence: the very fact that Eastern European countries have joined the European Union means that the memories of Soviet communism have become a part of the Union's shared past.⁸⁵

Since debates are ongoing, it is hard to predict what a changed European historical narrative should look like. Some scholars have suggested that we should refrain from such efforts. For instance, Maria Mälksoo has emphasized that she preferred a continuing struggle about memory to institutionalizing a collective memory that would instil a hierarchy of victimhood and ideals over others.⁸⁶ Similarly, Stefan Berger claims that history divides Europeans more than it can unite them; European history is about war, genocide, mutual hostilities, and exclusions. Therefore, it would be difficult for Europeans to find common ground in it. Nevertheless, he argued that the current standard centred on Nazi crimes is unsustainable. Instead of looking for new common ground in history, European policymakers should seek to gain support for European integration based on a promise of higher living standards (which the European Union's economic integration has undoubtedly helped to create).⁸⁷

82 Yehuda Bauer, "Remembering Accurately on Int'l Holocaust Remembrance Day," *Jerusalem Post*, last modified 2010, accessed November 27, 2015, <http://www.jpost.com/Features/In-Thespotlight/Remembering-accurately-on-Intl-Holocaust-Remembrance-Day>.

83 Wæhrens, "Is Soviet Communism a Trans-European Experience?," 22.

84 This argument relies on Maurice Halbwach's concept of collective memory. See also "1.1. Collective Memory: Identity and Social Structure" on page 19.

85 An argument also put forward by Wæhrens. See: Anne Wæhrens, *Shared Memories? Politics of Memory and Holocaust Remembrance in the European Parliament 1989-2009*, vol. 6, DIIS Working Paper (Copenhagen: Danish Institute for International Studies, DIIS, 2011), 16–17, 19.

86 Mälksoo, "The Memory Politics," 671–672.

87 Berger, "History and Forms of Collective Identity," 29, 33.

Berger's idea is part of a much broader school of thought, which we could call post-conventional. This school of thought goes beyond defining on which ideas Europe, as a community, should be constructed. Its proponents also apply such thought to individual nation-states: they hold that modern societies and/or supra-national organizations should base their collective identity on certain constitutional and social-economic promises.⁸⁸ Such ideas are highly interesting from a philosophical viewpoint, and they might influence definitions for the basis for Europe as a community. However, it is unlikely that this will happen in the short-term. Communities that have used history to create internal cohesion have been dominant in the modern era, and it seems doubtful that this will change any time soon. Therefore, it is necessary to reach an interim conclusion, and this necessitates an adjustment of how Europe looks at its history. As a consequence, Western Europeans should seriously consider Eastern European demands. That does not mean that (Western) Europe should accept what Eastern Europeans claim. Nevertheless, they have to reflect critically on arguments and develop new ideas in which both Western and Eastern Europeans can recognize themselves.

How would this look like? One possible solution is an agreement to disagree. Stefan Troebst reasoned that this could lead to a more widely accepted mnemonic culture, one that is based on constructive disputes about what can be collectively remembered. Siobhan Kattago has argued that there is a need for more pluralism and empathy: the Holocaust's unique place in history needs to remain, but the crimes of communism also need recognition. Pluralism is the key to move beyond a settling of historical scores and to use history for short-term political gains. Such pluralism would also entail acceptance of a notion about communist crimes in the West and the Holocaust in the East. Kattago adds to this that since the Holocaust happened in both Eastern and Western Europe, it should be part of a Pan-European history.⁸⁹

An agreement to disagree will satisfy neither party. I propose that Europeans need to enter into discussions about the past and will need to build a new common narrative the East and West can share. In this sense, Jan-Werner Müller has asserted that European politicians should tread a fine line between recognizing the dignity of collective historical experiences and vindicating myths about ancient quarrels and or blessing collective amnesia.⁹⁰ Karl Schlögel has reasoned likewise, and that in this rethinking of European History Europe needs to include the victims of Stalin's terror and 'the Gulag'. A history that does not also include communist crimes is unconvincing and not very European.⁹¹ One can also extend this reasoning to Eastern Europe: If Western Europeans have to digest what communist rule has meant for Eastern Europeans, the latter have to understand what the meaning of Nazi rule and crimes have had for Western Europeans. Only in this way, we can overcome existing divisions in Europe and build a new understanding of history that is genuinely European. Again, such an attempt needs to be undertaken critically: critical introspection and atonement for things one has done wrong are elements from the Western European narrative that should remain important elements. They are essential elements of a healthy social discourse that can support democratic institutions.

88 The German philosopher Jürgen Habermas coined the notion *Verfassungspatriotismus* (constitutional patriotism) during the *Historikerstreit*. It then also found its way in thinking about nation states in general, for instance in the work of Joep Leerssen, a cultural historian of nationalism. Cf. Jürgen Habermas, "Eine Art Schadensabwicklung. Die apologetischen Tendenzen in der deutschen Zeitgeschichtsschreibung," in *Historikerstreit. Die Dokumentation der Kontroverse um die Einzigartigkeit der nationalsozialistischen Judenvernichtung* (München und Zürich: Piper, 1987), 75–76; Joep Leerssen, *National Thought in Europe: A Cultural History*, 3. print. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam Univ. Press, 2010), 248–249. The British sociologist Gerald Delanty, has proposed similar idea's for the construction of a post-conventional European identity, see: Gerard Delanty, *Inventing Europe. Idea, Identity, Reality* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 160–163.

89 Kattago, "Agreeing to Disagree," 385, 387, 390.

90 Müller, "The Power over Memory," 10–11.

91 Schlögel, "Orte und Schichten der Erinnerung," 20.

2.6. New Historiographical Approaches: The Bloodlands Controversy

This leaves open the question of how such a shared European outlook should look. Similar debates about the comparability and moral equivalency of Nazism and communism have also taken place in historiography. I want to argue that one such a debate, the one on the book *Bloodlands. Europe between Hitler and Stalin* published by the well-known American historian Timothy Snyder provides useful ideas.⁹²

Snyder used a spatial approach and staked the claim that in the so-called ‘Bloodlands’ (Central Poland, Western Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and the Baltic States) Hitler and Stalin killed 14 million people.⁹³ Snyder’s main innovation was the claim that mass murder in the ‘30s and ‘40 could only take place because of the interplay between Nazism and Soviet communism. For instance, the collaboration of Ukrainians and inhabitants of the Baltic States in Germany’s final solution could only be fully understood because of the previous persecutions of the Soviet NKVD security forces in area’s annexed by the Soviet Union after the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact with Germany. It would be a too simple answer to blame the Holocaust on Nazi-Germany alone.⁹⁴

What follows from Snyder’s history of intertwined mass killing in Europe is that the Holocaust has no moral standing beyond that of the Soviet atrocities.⁹⁵ Instead, keeping to a moral imperative,⁹⁶ Snyder argued that:

These atrocities shared a place, and they shared a time: the bloodlands between 1933 and 1945. To describe their course has been to introduce to European history its central event (My emphasis, NAKvE). Without an account of all the major killing policies in their common European historical setting, comparisons between Nazi-Germany and the Soviet Union must be inadequate. Now that this history of the bloodlands is complete, the comparison remains.⁹⁷

If neither Stalinism nor Nazism stands at the apex of evil, what is the result of this comparison? According to Snyder, it needs to explain the crimes, but also needs to embrace the humanity of all those concerned, be they victims, perpetrators, bystanders, or leaders. In the end, it does not need to seek closure of some inexplicable historical event, but it needs to answer the question of how it could have happened.⁹⁸

As discussed, Snyder blamed Nazi and Soviet mass murders on the utopian nature of their ideologies. As both dictatorships sought to transform society in authentic and radical ways and when things did not go as planned, they sought out groups as ‘scapegoats’. They found them in different groups: In the 1930s, Stalin initially sought out (Ukrainian) peasants, but later he scapegoated Poles and other national groups during the repressions of 1937-1938. The Jews were Hitler’s scapegoats. However, in both systems, the mass murder of these ‘scapegoats’ slowly replaced the foreseen utopian victory.⁹⁹

Ideologically, both systems opposed liberalism and democracy and based themselves on the concept of one-party rule. Both excluded outsiders and branded one or more groups in society as superfluous and harmful. Economically both systems valued the agrarian ques-

92 Snyder, *Bloodlands*.

93 *Ibid.*, xiii.

94 *Ibid.*, 393–394.

95 *Ibid.*, x.

96 *Ibid.*, xix.

97 *Ibid.*, 380.

98 *Ibid.*, 383.

99 *Ibid.*, 387–389. See also: page 36 of this study.

tion as the root cause for economic backwardness: there were more countryside-dwellers than necessary. However, Stalinism and Nazism wanted to remove different inhabitants from the countryside: Stalinism considered peasants superfluous, while the Nazis only wanted to replace Slavic peasants with German farmers in the newly conquered *Lebensraum*. In the end, both systems relied upon collectives that controlled certain social groups and extracted their resources, be it labour or possessions (these collectives could be the collective farm, the Gulag/Concentration camps, and the Ghettos). Notwithstanding these similarities, Stalinism and Nazism had very different visions for the future: the Soviet system wanted to establish equality, while Nazism saw inequality as inherent and desirable (e.g. the notion of a ruling master race). While Stalin undertook his killings as a defence of socialism, the Nazis had a colonial scheme that was outwardly aggressive. The final difference was that while Nazi-Germany generally killed non-Germans, the Soviet-Union mostly raged against its own citizens.¹⁰⁰

Snyder's insistence that the Nazi and Soviet mass murders are part of one interwoven history and that this history should be at the centre of European history, certainly implies that Snyder to some extent agreed with the position of the Eastern European politicians in the debate on European identity. However, Snyder is hardly a friend of Eastern European nationalists.¹⁰¹ He even warned that a good history of the mass killings is necessary because otherwise the past could return with a vengeance and could support national cults of victimhood that might wreak political havoc.¹⁰² Given the countless ways in which Snyder revised standard explanations of twentieth-century history, it is hardly surprising that critics have either lauded Snyder for his 'good-natured revisionism' or have blatantly renounced him as a 'dangerous revisionist'. This warrants further review.¹⁰³

Some of the criticism of Snyder's *Bloodlands* expressed historiographical concerns. For instance, they criticized Snyder for his spatial/geographic approach.¹⁰⁴ Others objected against revisionism of the Holocaust's history, such as the notion that when it became evident that Germany would lose the war against the Soviet Union, Hitler started to perceive the *Final Solution* as an *Ersatz*-victory.¹⁰⁵ Other scholars attacked Snyder's history of the interaction of two totalitarian regimes in the Bloodlands. Some, such as Anne Applebaum consider it

100 Ibid., 389–391, 393–394.

101 See, for instance, Snyder's careful deconstruction of the foundations for modern day Ukrainian, Lithuanian, and Polish nationalism: Snyder, *The Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569-1999*.

102 Snyder, *Bloodlands*, 402.

103 Snyder's Bloodlands are part of two broader historiographical developments in the Cold War era, a so-called 'Eastern Turn' of twentieth century European historiography. These include new revelations on the Holocaust, such as the research project by the French Catholic priest Patrick Desbois and have exposed the non-modern nature of the Holocaust in the East. See: Patrick Desbois, *The Holocaust by Bullets: A Priest's Journey to Uncover the Truth behind the Murder of 1.5 Million Jews* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); For the original French edition, see: Patrick Desbois, *Porteur de mémoires: sur les traces de la Shoah par balles: un prêtre révèle la Shoah par balles* (Neuilly-sur-Seine: Lafon, 2007). Bloodlands is also a representative of a geospatial turn in (Eastern) European historiography. Another prominent work that arose from it is: Alexander V. Prusin, *The Lands between: Conflict in the East European Borderlands, 1870-1992* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

104 For criticisms on the spatial/geographic approach, see, for instance: Doris L. Bergen, "The Loneliness of the Dying: General and Particular Victimization in Timothy Snyder's Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin," *Journal of Modern Russian History and Historiography* 4, no. 1 (2012): 241; Omer Bartov, "Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin by Timothy Snyder," *Slavic Review* 70, no. 2 (2011): 425, 426; Dietrich Beyrau, "Snyders Geografie," *Journal of Modern European History* 12, no. 4 (2014): 309; Richard J. Evans, "Who Remembers the Poles?," *London Review of Books* 32, no. 4 november 2010 (2010): 21, 22; Dan Diner, "Topography of Interpretation: Reviewing Timothy Snyder's Bloodlands," *Contemporary European History* 21, no. 2 (2012): 126–127; Manfred Hildermeier, "Montagen statt Mehrwert," *Journal of Modern European History* 12, no. 4 (2014): 292–295; Mark Mazower, "Timothy Snyder's Bloodlands," *Contemporary European History* 21, no. 02 (2012): 120, 121, 123.

105 Bartov, "Bloodlands," 425; Conelly in: John Connelly et al., "Timothy Snyder, Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin," *Journal of Genocide Research* 13, no. 3 (2011): 316; *ibid.*, Roseman in: 324; Evans, "Who Remembers the Poles?," 21–22.

as a major historiographical innovation.¹⁰⁶ Nevertheless, some researchers claimed that it was an unfounded notion.¹⁰⁷ Others criticized Snyder's exclusion of killings committed by third parties or accused Snyder of *Polonocentrism*.¹⁰⁸

Such historiographical criticisms did not make *Bloodlands* controversial. Snyder's history of interconnected Nazi and Soviet crimes and his dismissal of the notion of the Holocaust's centrality in European history did. Several critics have complained that he removed the 'unique label' from the Holocaust. Some have done so without too much of an accusatory undertone, such as Dan Diner.¹⁰⁹

Others, such as Dovid Katz and Efraim Zuroff, have done so in a more polemic way. According to Zuroff, the combination of the Holocaust and Soviet mass murders in one narrative is unjustified. Even if they coincided in time and space, they were not equivalent. This is because the Stalinist massacres missed one key ingredient of the Holocaust: a specialized murder machinery. According to Zuroff, Snyder's presentation of his narrative relativized the Holocaust in a way that is incompatible with the definition of genocide.¹¹⁰ Dovid Katz also objected to this equation. He argued that Snyder avoided the uniqueness of the Holocaust because it ran against the spirit of the book.¹¹¹ Dan Diner regarded the downgrading of Auschwitz in Snyder's *Bloodlands* as one of its main weaknesses. He claimed that it compromised the concept of the Bloodlands in two distinctive ways: firstly, it showed that there is a different historical topography in twentieth-century history (that of Western and Southern European Jews deported by the Nazis the Bloodlands before killing them). Secondly, a different kind of historical epistemology permeates this alternative topography. It understands mass killings differently: the inclusion of the Holocaust and Soviet mass murders in one narrative is a weakness, not by itself, but because Snyder rejected any distinction between victims of politically motivated violence and therefore upset established Western European narratives.¹¹² On the other hand, Dariusz Stola lauded Snyder's contextualization of the Holocaust in a larger history of mass killing. According to Stola, Snyder still showed some key aspects of the particularity (uniqueness) of the Holocaust but simultaneously contextualised it. He did so without marginalising the losses of others, e.g. victims of Stalinism.¹¹³

What are we to make of such divergent interpretations of *Bloodlands*' regarding its treatment of the Holocaust's uniqueness and its position *vis-à-vis* Stalinist mass murders? Firstly, it has to do with different perspectives; Stola (b. 1963) is a relatively younger historian compared to Zuroff (b. 1948) and Katz (b. 1956). Secondly, Zuroff and Katz are representatives of the old 'Auschwitz'-consensus, while Stola, as a Pole, is certainly less attracted to such a

106 Anne Applebaum, "The Worst of the Madness," *The New York Review of Books*, last modified 2010, accessed December 9, 2015, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2010/11/11/worst-madness/>.

107 Jörg Baberowski, "Once and for All: The Encounter between Stalinism and Nazism. Critical Remarks on Timothy Snyder's *Bloodlands*," *Contemporary European History* 21, no. 02 (2012): 146–147; Beyrau, "Snyders Geografie," 312; Michael David-Fox in: Connelly et al., "Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands*," 332; Hildermeier, "Montagen statt Mehrwert," 297; Thomas Kühne, "Great Men and Large Numbers: Undertheorising a History of Mass Killing," *Contemporary European History* 21, no. 02 (2012): 136–137; Wendy Lower, "Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin," *Journal of Genocide Research* 13, no. 1–2 (2011): 167; Mark Roseman in: Connelly et al., "Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands*," 324.

108 For criticism on the exclusion of third-party killings, see: Dariusz Stola, "A Spatial Turn in Explaining Mass Murder," *Journal of Modern European History* 12, no. 4 (2014): 303. For accusations of *Polonocentrism*, see: Bartov, "Bloodlands," 425; Diner, "Topography of Interpretation," 125; Kühne, "Great Men and Large Numbers," 139, 142–143; Mark Roseman in: Connelly et al., "Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands*," 321; Mazower, "Timothy Snyder's *Bloodlands*," 119–120.

109 Diner, "Topography of Interpretation," 128–129.

110 Efraim Zuroff, "The Equivalency Canard," *Haaretz Books*, no. May 2011 (2011): 4.

111 Dovid Katz, "The Detonation of the Holocaust in 1941: A Tale of Two Books," *East European Jewish Affairs* 41, no. 3 (2011): 208; Dovid Katz, "Why Red Is Not Brown in the Baltics," *The Guardian*, last modified 2010, accessed March 1, 2013, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/cifamerica/2010/sep/30/baltic-nazi-soviet-snyder>.

112 Diner, "Topography of Interpretation," 128–129.

113 Stola, "A Spatial Turn," 301.

narrative. It might also have to do with the fact that Snyder is in reality highly ambivalent in his treatment of the Holocaust, as Dan Diner pointed out: Bloodlands is *Shoah*-centric history. According to Snyder, the military muster against the Soviet Union provided the context for the Holocaust. The Holocaust also still amounted to a deplorable climax. However, Snyder objected to the generally accepted perception of the Holocaust as a primary industrial killing.¹¹⁴ In responses to his critics, Snyder also emphasised that he kept the Holocaust as a central element in European history and that the narrative of the Bloodlands only underwrote that position. Also, the fact that Snyder attached the label of genocide to other mass killings (for instance, the proposed starvations of Slavs after a German victory against the Soviet Union) did, not imply that he equated the Holocaust with them at all.¹¹⁵

Katz and Zuroff were quite harsh in their judgement on Snyder. For instance, Katz opened one of his criticisms with the following line: *‘That a truly great historian of our times can, on very rare occasions, stumble into a meticulously laid trap is no more than to say that we are human and fallible.’*¹¹⁶ The crucial point is that if Snyder had written his *Bloodlands* at another time, he would have opened a new historiographical round of discussion. But, within the current timeframe, in which the idea of Holocaust centrality and uniqueness are under attack from politicians in Eastern Europe, defenders of those concepts had no other option but to rage against Snyder with such a feverous demeanour. These critics saw the congruity of Snyder’s work with political attempts by Eastern Europeans as the main problem.

Zuroff has even called *Bloodlands* *‘the bible of Holocaust distorters in post-communist Eastern Europe’*.¹¹⁷ Snyder’s revisionism on centrality and uniqueness of the Holocaust combined with the lack of local agency and Snyder’s emphasis on the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact play into the hands of the Eastern European political project. According to Katz, the first element provided those politicians with a historiographical basis for their equation of communism and Nazism (in what he called *‘Red-equals-Brown-history’*).¹¹⁸ The lack of local agency and the description of Eastern Europeans as chess pieces in the hands of Hitler and Stalin make it easier to consider Eastern Europeans as mere victims instead as co-perpetrators of mass violence.¹¹⁹ In this context Thomas Kühne has argued that the political use of Snyder’s *Bloodlands* is partly due to a deliberate misreading of his work, but also due to his implicit *‘theory of great men’* that leaves little room for local agency.¹²⁰ Third, Snyder’s model of interaction in the *Bloodlands*, explicitly build upon the idea that the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact was the original sin of the twentieth century and that all other mass killings stemmed from it. This provides the Eastern European politicians with a scholarly basis for their politics.¹²¹ Zuroff shared this criticism but also stressed that Snyder’s interpretation of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact ignored the broader context behind the outbreak of the Second World War (there was more that came in to play than just Hitler and Stalin, for instance, the role played by the United Kingdom and France in the foreplay to the Second World War).¹²²

It would be unfair to accuse Snyder of conspiring with Eastern European right-wing nationalists. Anyone familiar with Snyder’s work must know that right-wing nationalists in post-communist Europe despise him because his work has often been less than flattering

114 Diner, “Topography of Interpretation,” 129.

115 Timothy Snyder, “The Causes of the Holocaust,” *Contemporary European History* 21, no. 02 (2012): 150; Timothy Snyder, “The Fatal Fact of the Nazi-Soviet Pact,” *The Guardian*, last modified 2010, accessed December 7, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/cifamerica/2010/oct/05/holocaust-secondworldwar>; Donald A. Yerxa, “Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin: An Interview with Timothy Snyder,” *Historically Speaking* 12, no. 5 (2011): 29.

116 Katz, “Why Red Is Not Brown.”

117 Zuroff, “The Equivalency Canard,” 4.

118 Katz, “The Detonation of the Holocaust in 1941,” 209–211.

119 *Ibid.*, 214; Katz, “Why Red Is Not Brown.”

120 Kühne, “Great Men and Large Numbers,” 137–138.

121 Katz, “The Detonation of the Holocaust in 1941,” 214; Katz, “Why Red Is Not Brown.”

122 Zuroff, “The Equivalency Canard,” 4.

to their historical claims. Furthermore, Snyder also publically objected to their political projects on multiple occasions.¹²³ We have to agree with Anne Applebaum that Snyder did open our eyes to new historiographical interpretations and complicated our understanding of twentieth-century history. Snyder has exposed a nerve in Western societies; the painful realization that European liberation in 1945 came at the cost of enslaving Eastern Europe at the Yalta conference.¹²⁴ For specialists in the field of Eastern European history this cannot be an astonishing conclusion, but the fact that Snyder opened up a large-scale academic and social discussion outside of that specialism is indicative of the fact that Western Europe knows relatively little about the fate of its Central and Eastern European neighbours in the twentieth century.¹²⁵ Already back in 2009, before he published *Bloodlands*, Snyder alluded to this:

*The national histories of East European societies raise uncomfortable questions about the contemporary history of Europe, and especially about the Second World War. Once East European experiences are taken into account, the history of German atrocities, and of resistance to the German occupation, looks completely different. East European political leaders also have a certain tendency to speak about history and to remind other Europeans of the particular experiences of their societies with communism. This may seem like an irritant; in fact it is an opportunity. The European Union is stuck now in an immovable logjam of traditional national histories. The forced introduction of some dozen new histories can break the logjam. It provides the possibility, although of course not the certainty, of the emergence of a common European history.*¹²⁶

The Bloodlands controversy complicates the Western-European historiographical consensus. First, it showed that the notion of the uniqueness of the Holocaust is no good basis for transnational history. In the end, the notions of Holocaust centrality and uniqueness are due for revision. The same is true for the notion that Nazi crimes are at the apex of evil. It will remain a powerful narrative in the West for years to come. In short, if a country seeks to be European, it will have to align its mainstream historical narrative with that of the European Union. The main problem is that that narrative is currently contested at its core, and it is unclear in what direction the winds will shift. It would be impossible for a post-communist country to engage with the established model. Alternatively, it can engage with the ongoing debate on historical narratives in Europe. However, it must include one aspect of the general European consensus: self-criticism and local agency. This would show that a society affirms one aspect of Europeanness in the more institutional sense and it would prove that a society is capable of showing a deeply rooted self-critical attitude that characterizes an open and democratic society. It also implies that, while Western Europe needs to take the historical plights of Eastern Europe into account, it does not have to play ball with those Eastern European nationalist politicians who focus mainly on oppression by the Soviets and Nazis and who tend to forget or silence their role in crimes during the 20th century. Europe thus needs a new interpretation of its history, which focusses on both the Soviet and Nazi past, but keeps a moral notion attached to the crimes committed by both regimes.

123 For such an objection, see: Snyder, "The Fatal Fact of the Nazi-Soviet Pact."

124 Applebaum, "The Worst of the Madness."

125 Even Omer Bartov, who strongly opposes Snyder's historiographical approach, has argued that Eastern European history needs to be better understood within Holocaust historiography: 'Linking research on the Holocaust in Eastern Europe to general work on this event, and at the same time linking the history of the Holocaust to local histories of East European countries, is the challenge to a new generation of historians.' See: Omer Bartov, "Eastern Europe as the Site of Genocide," *The Journal of Modern History* 80, no. 3 (2008): 591.

126 T. Snyder, "The Ethical Significance of Eastern Europe, Twenty Years On," *East European Politics and Societies* 23, no. 4 (November 1, 2009): 460.

Snyder's *Bloodlands* can provide a starting point for the creation of such a narrative since it is very Holocaust centric. At the same time, it is of no use for Eastern European nationalists in their political projects. It revises both Western and Eastern European narratives. In the course of this process, many of Snyder's historiographical findings might be proven false or insufficient. For the sake of Europe's future, we have to engage in such a pan-European debate. It is time for Western and Eastern Europeans to leave their comfort zones, to stop pointing fingers at each other and to be constructive instead.

Even if *Bloodlands* is a good starting point for such a discussion, the latter's outcomes transcend what Snyder's work offers. The *Bloodlands*-narrative puts much emphasis on adverse outcomes of European history: the rise of totalitarian regimes in both Germany and the Soviet Union, their destruction of human life and dignity in the 1930s and 1940s, the horrors of the Second World War and the Holocaust as the most horrible and deplorable outcome of their mutual interaction. By focusing on these results, we also blind ourselves for some of its causes. While Nazism and Stalinism were most destructive in the late '30s and during the Second World War, their use of political violence against (perceived) enemies is much older. Political violence was especially virulent in the Soviet Union, where the Bolsheviks resorted to terror already quickly after the October revolution. They used the state apparatus to create a reign of terror. The Nazis did the same, but at a much later date because they came to power only in 1933. Nevertheless, political violence inflicted by the Nazi party's *Sturmabteilung* (SA) militia against the Nazi's political opponents (mainly the German communists) was an important part of the Nazi's rise to power.¹²⁷

If mass murders committed by totalitarian regimes are the twentieth century's main vices, as Snyder claims, Europe not only needs to discuss them but also consider their causes. In *Bloodlands*, Snyder already gave an important clue: the utopian ideas that lay at the basis of both Nazi and Bolshevik and Stalinist ideologies.¹²⁸ It would not be far-fetched to claim that both Nazism and Bolshevism were answers to the problems arising from the liberal political system that had taken shape in nineteenth-century Europe. These were the great social tensions within states, the conflicts over natural resources and access to markets and the continuing clashes between nationalism and imperialism. All these can be seen as causes to the First World War, the largest and most destructive war in history before the Second World War.¹²⁹

2.7. The European Civil War: a revaluation of a controversial concept

This implies that both Nazism and Bolshevism and the First World War are intrinsically linked phenomena: without the First World War, there would have been neither a communist Soviet Union nor a fascist Nazi Germany. If the ascendancy of such regimes is partially caused by existing tensions in Europe's political system and the First World War, it does not seem far-fetched to describe the era from 1914 to 1945 as a kind of European Civil War. In this Civil War, two political families competed for dominance. The notion of a European

127 Snyder is well aware that both the Nazis and Bolsheviks used political terror well before the 1930s and discusses their use of political violence in their political ascendancy at length.

128 As discussed earlier in this chapter, see page 36 and page 51.

129 The causes for the First World War are infinitely complex and are discussed here as they have attained an extensive historiography of their own. Such debates are also intensive, mainly because they have laid the guilt for the war's commencement on one or another nation. However, leaving all contentious arguments aside, most histories of the War's beginning nowadays point to a complex interplay of domestic and international politics; both systemic reasons as well as choices made by individual politicians play a role. For the systemic causes discussed here, see, for example: Enzo Traverso, *Fire and Blood. The European Civil War 1914-1945*, trans. David Fernbach (London and New York: Verso, 2016), 36–38; Eric J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire: 1875 - 1914*, History of Civilization (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1987), 11–12, 317–318, 321, 324, 332, 334. Traverso's book was originally published in French: Enzo Traverso, *À feu et à sang: de la guerre civile européenne 1914-1945* (Paris: Stock, 2008).

Civil War is controversial, mainly because its most important proponent was the conservative German historian Ernst Nolte. He used this concept to attempt liberating Germany from the political constraints imposed on (West)-German society after the Second World War. Of course, Nolte was one of the historians whose work initiated the *Historikerstreit* in the late 1980s with his call for the normalization of German history and national consciousness, as well as his claims that Auschwitz (i.e. the Holocaust) was not unique as claimed.¹³⁰ Nolte's *Der Europäische Bürgerkrieg*, in which he first proposed the concept of the European Civil War, is a further elaboration on his contributions to the *Historikerstreit*.¹³¹

Nolte claimed that this Civil War arose from a deep rift in European society: that between the heirs of the Enlightenment and the old order. Communism was an ideology founded upon the Enlightenment ideas of equality and progress in human history. On the other hand, fascism was a conservative ideology that questioned both the idea of equality and progress. Enlightenment philosophies aimed at establishing what Nolte called the 'transcendence', i.e. the emancipation of the individual and their liberation from their traditional roles in society.¹³² For Nolte, Bolshevism was the Enlightenment philosophy that put the idea of transcendence to its extreme.¹³³ In this sense, Bolshevism stood in the tradition of the French revolution era Jacobins, who established an authoritarian state and unleashed terror to protect their Enlightenment values.¹³⁴

The idea of a clash between enlightenment philosophies and fascism as anti-enlightenment was not the main problem of the concept of a European Civil War. Other reputable historians have also used similar concepts. They include the British Marxist historian Eric Hobsbawm and the French historian François Furet (whose main expertise is the French Revolution). Both historians described the epoch spanning from the First to the Second World War as a severe pan-European ideological conflict between bourgeois (i.e. liberal) society, communism, and fascism and called it a European Civil War.¹³⁵

The central objection to Nolte's work is that his particular interpretation of the European Civil War could lead to a partial exculpation and maybe even justification of Nazi crimes. According to Nolte, mass murder was not invented by the Nazis, but by the Soviets: their aim of exterminating the bourgeoisie (their way of achieving the full transcendence of society) was the original crime. The Nazis only undertook their crimes as an answer to that: they feared they would be destroyed by Bolshevik class extermination and therefore copied the Soviets methods of destruction and perversely perfected them (by adding the method of gassing as an efficient way to kill as many people in a short amount of time).¹³⁶

130 Nolte did this most famously in Ernst Nolte, "Vergangenheit, die nicht vergehen will. Eine Rede, die geschrieben, aber nicht gehalten werden konnte," in *Historikerstreit. Die Dokumentation der Kontroverse um die Einzigartigkeit der nationalsozialistischen Judenvernichtung* (München und Zürich: Piper, 1987), 39–47. It was the publication of this article to which Habermas responded, which sparked the beginning of the *Historikerstreit*: Habermas, "Eine Art Schadenabwicklung."

131 Ernst Nolte, *Der Europäische Bürgerkrieg 1917-1945. Nationalsozialismus und Bolschewismus* (Frankfurt am Main: Propyläen, 1987).

132 In fact, Nolte already noted this in his earlier work on Fascism: Ernst Nolte, *Der Faschismus in seiner Epoche: die Action française: der italienische Faschismus: der Nationalsozialismus*, Sonderausgabe. (München und Zürich: R. Piper, 1979), 515–521; Also translated as: Ernst Nolte, *Three Faces of Fascism: Action Française, Italian Fascism, National Socialism*. (New York: Mentor, 1963).

133 Nolte, *De Europäische Bürgerkrieg*, 22, 537; See also: Charles S. Maier, *The Unmasterable Past. History, Holocaust, and German National Identity* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 1997), 26–27.

134 Nolte, *De Europäische Bürgerkrieg*, 345. A notion also underwritten by Eric Hobsbawm and Francois Furet: Eric J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, 1914-1991* (London: Abacus, 1995), 385–386; François Furet, *The Passing of an Illusion. The Idea of Communism in the Twentieth Century*, trans. Deborah Furet (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), 63–64, 235; Originally published in French: François Furet, *Le Passé d'une Illusion: Essai Sur l'idée Communiste Au XXe Siècle* (Paris: R. Laffont: Calmann-Lévy, 1995).

135 Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes*, 145, 147; Furet, *The Passing of an Illusion*, 19, 22, 174–175.

136 Nolte, *De Europäische Bürgerkrieg*, 25; See also: Evans, *In Hitler's Shadow*, 27–29.

The claim that the Nazi extermination machinery is a direct copy of the Soviet Gulag is shaky at best, as the outcomes of the German *Historikerstreit* proved. That Nolte seemed to accept one of the Nazis' propaganda devices as a reality made things even worse: He claimed that the Nazis feared destruction by the Bolsheviks and equated Bolshevism with Judaism-Zionism. Therefore, the Nazis transported the fear of destruction by the former onto the latter; Nazi extermination of the Jews must be understood as an act of self-defence. The fact that the main Zionist leader of the time, Chaim Weizmann, issued a kind of declaration of war against Germany and called on all Jews to join the war on the British side in 1939, made Jews according to Nolte a legitimate target.¹³⁷

Snyder's history of mass killing in the Bloodlands does not necessarily lead to giving Eastern European right-wing nationalists a licence to deny local participation in the Holocaust or other crimes. Similarly, the concept of a European Civil War between two political families does not have to lead to an apologia of crimes committed by either of them. Even if fascism was a reaction to Bolshevism, that does not automatically lead to the conclusion that crimes committed by the Nazis are justified or even that Germany has to carry less guilt for these crimes. For instance, Furet also described fascism as a reaction to Soviet Bolshevism but also gave Nolte a reprimand for his apologetic arguments.¹³⁸

Similarly, the Bloodlands controversy also showed that writing a single history of crimes committed by both totalitarian regimes does not necessarily mean that these crimes are of equal standing. The same is also true for the concept of the European Civil War. The concept does allow us to gain an even better understanding of how ideologies and political systems interacted in twentieth-century European history. The latter is what the Italian historian Enzo Traverso undertook in his study of the European Civil War. In it, he explained how intellectuals in Europe on both sides of the Civil war's political divide perceived their struggle against each other.¹³⁹

The concept European Civil War offers an elegant solution for creating a shared narrative of European history, which not only includes the destruction of the Second World War and the immediately preceding period but also leaves room for other historical experiences. These include, for instance, the Spanish Civil War, authoritarian dictatorship in Greece and Portugal, the October Revolution and other left-wing political revolutions following the collapse of European empires at the end of the First World War (e.g. Germany, Hungary etc.). A European narrative based on the concept of the European Civil War is suited to include experiences of all Europeans instead of serving only Western Europe. In that case, the *Bloodlands* would be an Eastern European theatre of the European Civil War.

The European Civil War can also serve another function: it can teach us something important about the Enlightenment values that have shaped our modern European societies. They have both positive and negative sides to them: the ideas of equality and progress can be used to do good. Nevertheless, if left to the wrong hands, they can also be used to support oppressive rule and to legitimate mass murder. It should remind us of the fact that our modern liberties and emancipation are fragile achievements.

137 Nolte, *De Europäische Bürgerkrieg*, 25, 317–318.

138 Furet, *The Passing of an Illusion*, 162, 518–519 (endnote 13). This reprimand has resulted in an exchange of letters between Furet and Nolte on the nature of Communism and Fascism. See: François Furet and Ernst Nolte, *Fascism and Communism*, trans. Katherine Golsan (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2001).

139 See Traverso, *Fire and Blood*.

Chapter 3. **The Great Patriotic War: Legitimizing Regimes with Victory in the Soviet Union and Russia**

In present-day Russia, the Soviet-German front of the Second World War is called the *Great Patriotic War* (*Velikaya Otechestvennaya Voyna*), a name it already received during the war. It is a historical narrative that contrasts sharply with common narratives in Western and Eastern (i.e. post-communist) Europe.¹ While the latter two share a tragedy at their core, the narrative of the *Great Patriotic War* underlines a triumph: it celebrates the victory over Nazi-Germany. Like the Western and Eastern European narratives, the *Great Patriotic War* is not without major social and historiographical controversies. These resulted from active political efforts to manage history, this differentiates the *Great Patriotic War* narrative from the other two concepts.

Because of the *Great Patriotic War*'s triumphal nature, it is often claimed that it was a different war than the Second World War.² Just like European narratives on the Second World War, it has united some people in a polity and excluded others. The Soviet people supposedly rose in defence of their Socialist motherland and defeated the evil of (German) fascism as a single united entity. This left little room for non-Soviet victims, such as Jewish Holocaust victims and other (national) minorities. Although Soviet accounts of the war recognized that the Germans killed Jewish Soviet citizens, they did not mention the essential quality of their deaths (i.e. that they were killed because they were Jewish). Instead, they held that they were killed because they were Soviet citizens. In this sense, the narrative of the *Great Patriotic War* contained a trace of Holocaust denial. Several factors can explain this: First, antisemitism was an everlasting element of Soviet politics (which the Soviet populace generally accepted). Second, there was a kind of '*psychological economy of suffering*'; the victimhood of the Soviet people could not be shared with others. Because the Soviet narrative emphasized that the Germans envisioned the horrible fate of destruction and slavery for the Soviet people, it was impossible to give any official recognition to other groups of victims (such as Jewish Holocaust victims). The Soviet regime monopolized victimhood and could not share it with others.³

Another core of the *Great Patriotic War* narrative was that it was a war of justified self-defence.⁴ Western Europeans usually claim that the Second World War started in 1939 (the German invasion of Poland) or in 1940 (the German attack on France, Belgium and the Netherlands) and ended in 1945 (the fall of Berlin). Central and Eastern Europeans might also point to 1938 (the Munich conference and the subsequent annexation of the Sudetenland) as the war's starting point. The Soviet narrative has a clear alternative interpretation: the *Great Patriotic War* only started on June 22, 1941 (the German invasion of the Soviet Union). Previous Soviet operations, such as the annexation of Eastern Poland and the Baltic States, were not part of that war. The Soviet narrative essentially denies that the Soviet Union invaded Eastern Poland in 1939.⁵

1 Alternatively, it can be translated as Great Fatherland War. Both translations are common in English literature.

2 Bosworth, *Explaining Auschwitz and Hiroshima*, 142; See also: Stefan Troebst, "1945, ein (gesamt-)europäischer Erinnerungsort?," *Osteuropa. Zeitschrift für Gegenwartsfragen des Ostens* 58, no. 6 (2008): 69. Ludmila Lutz-Auras, *Auf Stalin, Sieg und Vaterland: Politisierung der kollektiven Erinnerung an den Zweiten Weltkrieg in Russland* (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2013), 45.

3 Nina Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead: The Rise and Fall of the Cult of World War II in Russia* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 49–50.

4 Lutz-Auras, *Auf Stalin*, 45.

5 Mark von Hagen, "From 'Great Fatherland War' to the Second World War: New Perspectives and Future Prospects," in *Stalinism and Nazism. Dictatorships in Comparison*, ed. Ian Kershaw and Moshe Lewin (Cambridge:

Micromanagement by the government and security services also made the Soviet narrative unique. Civil society and non-state actors have not influenced it. It is not that there have been no attempts to challenge the official version, but these were ineffective and did not permeate into public consciousness. The reasons for this are subject to scholarly debate. Two schools of thought gave different explanations: One pointed to crude propaganda management of public consciousness, the other recognized that the war had transformed Soviet society.⁶ Nina Tumarkin is the foremost exponent of the first school.⁷ Amir Weiner represents the second school: he claimed that the war was a watershed event for identity perception and politics within the Soviet Union. What he calls the '*myth of the war*' had become a point of departure for self-identification. Not in the least, because victory could eclipse many unsavoury memories of the 1920s and 1930s such as the Russian Civil War, the collectivization of agriculture, forced industrialisation and mass terror.⁸ In other words, the war could instil the Soviet populace with a positive memory that could offset those divisive and painful memories.⁹

These schools of thought do not necessarily oppose each other. They can also be complementary: one could argue that the official propaganda narrative was so successful because the war was so important for ordinary Soviet citizens. Also, because propaganda was so effective, those subjected to it might have internalized it. For them, the propaganda effectively replaced reality. This study views the *Great Patriotic War* narrative as propaganda-driven because it is mainly concerned with the war's political instrumentalization. This does not imply that the war was not a transformative experience, or that studying it in that way is not worth the effort.

The Soviet regime used the narrative of the *Great Patriotic War* to legitimate itself. Keeping the country together proved difficult: Countless nationalities, the legacy of mass terror, and reduced material circumstances did not favour the regime. According to a recent study by Graeme Gill, the Soviet Union presented its people with a clear overarching ideological 'metanarrative' substantiated by a set of six myths. 1) The myth of the regime's founding (e.g. the October revolution). 2) The myth of building socialism (e.g. the regime promised a better future and presented a clear path toward its development). 3) The myth on the nature of the leadership (why the party's leaders were best qualified to lead society to the communist utopic and classless society.) 4) The myth of internal opposition to the party's course (the right and left opposition). 5) The myth of external opposition to the party's course (Nazi-Germany, Japan, Imperialism, Capitalism, etc.). 6) The Soviet Victory in the *Great Patriotic War*.¹⁰ Many other scholars have also claimed that victory served as an ideological foundation for Soviet power.¹¹

As a consequence of the *Great Patriotic War*'s hagiographic character, many of its aspects could not be discussed. This created many 'blank spots'. For instance, the denial of the supplementary secret protocols to the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, the denial of the mass murder of Polish prisoners of war near Katyń (which was blamed on the Germans), the post-war incarceration of Soviet prisoners of war in the Gulag and the deaths caused by Stalin's ruth-

Cambridge University Press, 1997), 243–244.

6 Teddy J. Uldricks, "War, Politics and Memory: Russian Historians Reevaluate the Origins of World War II," *History and Memory* 21, no. 2 (October 2009): 60.

7 Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead*.

8 Amir Weiner, "The Making of a Dominant Myth: The Second World War and the Construction of Political Identities within the Soviet Polity," *The Russian Review* 55 (October 1996): 638,640.

9 *Ibid.*, 640.

10 Graeme Gill, *Symbols and Legitimacy in Soviet Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 4–5.

11 See for instance: Bosworth, *Explaining Auschwitz and Hiroshima*, 148; Lutz-Auras, *Auf Stalin*, 45; David R. Marples, "Historical Memory and the Great Patriotic War," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 54, no. 3–4 (September 2012): 278; Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead*, 49–50; von Hagen, "From 'Great Fatherland War' to Second World War," 237–238. This list is hardly exhaustive.

less wartime leadership. These are only four of the countless number of taboos.

In contemporary Russia, the *Great Patriotic War* still dominates Russian collective memory. It is currently impossible to delegitimize the narrative and there is a broad consensus among specialists that it will remain so for the years to come.¹² Nevertheless, the Soviet and later Russian narrative of the *Great Patriotic War* was neither monolithic nor static. To get a better grip on its inner workings and social consequences it is necessary to give a short overview of its development. Naturally, this followed the general course of Soviet and Post-Soviet Russian politics.¹³

3.1. Great Stalin, Soviet History, and the Great Patriotic War.

History in the Soviet Union was always political. Directly after they seized power, the Bolsheviks considered history the most ideologically biased and most political of all sciences. They avoided it and took it out of school curricula during the 1920s. In the 1930s, the leadership felt a need for history to legitimize the Party's leading position. Therefore, the Central Committee reinstated history as a part of the (secondary education) curriculum in 1931. Two years later, it also ordered a new history textbook.¹⁴ In 1933-1934, Stalin got himself involved in these presentations of history.¹⁵

The Soviet Union was a revolutionary society: it was building socialism, i.e. a new world. Finding a way in which Soviet citizens could express their national belonging and their revolutionary predicament proved a difficult challenge. The internationalism of the communist ideology and nationalism opposed each other: at the very least, nationalism was an expression of bourgeois suppression of the proletariat. However, after the collapse of the Russian empire in 1917-1918, many non-Russian nations sought to realize their national states, republics or other entities. The establishment of union republics along national lines (the Ukrainian SSR, the Byelorussian SSR etc.) meant to accommodate national identities because, despite the anti-nationalism of communist ideology, national identity would remain influential. To win over national elites for communism, the Bolsheviks even promoted a limited form of national consciousness among non-Russians. By giving cultural autonomy and institutions to non-Russian nations in the union, they sought to disarm nationalism as a potent opposition force.¹⁶

In reality, the Soviet Union was not a federal but a unitary state: this created tensions between the countless national minorities and the majority Russian population. In order to use nationalism amongst the various minorities, Russian national self-expression had to be downplayed.¹⁷ In the 1930s, Soviet leader Stalin realized that Russian patriotism was a potent force that the regime could exploit. At the same time, minority national conscious-

12 Amir Weiner, "In the Long Shadow of War: The Second World War and the Soviet and Post-Soviet World," *Diplomatic History* 25, no. 3 (2001): 456.

13 Several scholars have proposed different periodizations for the development of the *Great Patriotic War* narrative. They all agree on the major turning points: The war itself, the initial post-war years under Stalin, Stalin's death and the rise of Khrushchev, Brezhnevite stagnation, Gorbachev's *perestroika*, the chaotic Yeltsin years and Putin's Russia. See: Arkady B. Tsfasman, "Stalin in Soviet and Russian History Textbooks from the 1930's to the 1990's," in *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes in Europe. Legacies and Lessons from the Twentieth Century*, ed. Jerzy W. Borejsza and Klaus Ziemer (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006), 566-567; Alexei Miller, "The Communist Past in Post-Communist Russia," in *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes in Europe. Legacies and Lessons from the Twentieth Century*, ed. Jerzy W. Borejsza and Klaus Ziemer (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006), 518; Uldricks, "War, Politics and Memory," 60-61; Gill, *Symbols and Legitimacy*, 162-163.

14 Bosworth, *Explaining Auschwitz and Hiroshima*, 146-148.

15 Gill, *Symbols and Legitimacy*, 116-117.

16 Therefore, Terry Martin called the Soviet Union an 'Affirmative Action Empire'. See: Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939*, The Wilder House series in politics, history, and culture (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2001), 1-4.

17 Ibid., 394.



Figure 1: Russian Nationalism in Wartime Soviet Propaganda: 'We have beaten, we are beating and we will beat'

The poster depicts both Aleksandr Nevskiy's victory on the Teutonic knights on Lake Peipus in 1242 and the current war against Nazi Germany. Source: Били, бьем и будем бить, n.d., accessed January 21, 2019, https://pbs.twimg.com/media/DZ_SubEwSAA_h0.jpg.

ness could threaten the Soviet system. This coincided with the general paranoid trend of Stalinist terror: The Soviet people were made to believe that internal enemies of the Soviet state (Trotskyists, etc.) and external enemies (foreign capitalists) actively collaborated in a counterrevolutionary effort to destroy Soviet power. Not only did the Soviet propaganda implicate national minorities in collaborative efforts by internal and external enemies, but it also reevaluated the role of the Russians.¹⁸ They became the leading force: Propaganda now depicted the union as a single entity in which all nationalities lived in harmonious friendship under Russian guidance. These developments coincided with the creation of a myth of national defence at the end of the 1930s: it emphasised the power and capacity of the Soviet military forces and the close unity between the people and the armed forces.¹⁹ Such depictions returned a model created in the 19th century in Czarist Russia: the so-called *Patriotic War of 1812* (i.e. Russia's defence against Napoleon's invasion of Russia). Russia won this war, supposedly because the Russians unified under the leadership of an orthodox Czar in a selfless struggle against foreign invaders and domestic traitors.²⁰

In the interwar years, fascism became the main counterrevolutionary enemy that Soviet propaganda identified. Foreign fascists and internal opposition collaborated to destroy Soviet communism. Soviet propaganda depicted fascism as a monster. The conclusion of the Molotov Ribbentrop pact in 1939 meant a sudden end to such propaganda.²¹

After the German invasion in 1941, negative depictions of fascism returned. Simultaneously the regime further emphasized Russian nationalism to stage its defence of the Soviet Union. The Russian Orthodox Church, which had been severely suppressed in the early stages of communist rule, was suddenly restored and given a position within Soviet society.²² Several pre-revolutionary regimental banners and pre-revolutionary (military) traditions were also restored. Furthermore, it showed itself in 'a return of (pre-revolutionary) Russian history'. Stalin's speech on November 7, 1941, celebrating the anniversary of the October revolution was a prime example: In it, Stalin called on past heroes from Russian history to further support the Soviet war effort. He included Aleksandr Nevskiy (a 13th cen-

18 For instance, during and after the great terror there were several 'national operations' against, among others, Poles, Ukrainians and Koreans. Timothy Snyder discusses such operations in: Snyder, *Bloodlands*, 89–107.

19 Gill, *Symbols and Legitimacy*, 122 & 130.

20 Alexander M. Martin, "Russia and the Legacy of 1812," in *Imperial Russia, 1689-1917*, ed. Dominic Lieven, The Cambridge History of Russia 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 145–162; Wim Coudeny, *Het geheugen van Rusland: een geschiedenis*, 1. dr. (Leuven: Acco, 2014), 105, 127–129.

21 Gill, *Symbols and Legitimacy*, 110–111.

22 For the restoration of the Russian Orthodox Church and the new Church-State relations after the German invasion, see: Thomas Bremer, *Kreuz und Kremlin: kleine Geschichte der Orthodoxen Kirche in Russland* (Freiburg: Herder, 2007), 130–133. It is noteworthy that after the war some repressive measures returned, but never to the pre-war extent; it seemed as if the state and church had found a mode of coexistence (see: *Ibid.*, 135–136.)

tury Prince of Novgorod, who fought against the Teutonic Knights), Dmitri Donskoi (a 14th century Grand Prince of Moscow, who gained the first military victory against the Tatars of the Golden Horde), Mikhail Kutuzov (a commanding officer during Napoleon's invasion of Russia in 1812) and Alexandr Suvorov (a commanding officer in the War of the Second Coalition against revolutionary France).²³ The name *Great Patriotic War* also referred to the *Patriotic War* of 1812.²⁴ It meant to mobilise all Soviet nationalities for the war effort.²⁵

From the onset of the war, the myth of the *Great Patriotic War* focussed on three central themes: 1) Hatred and ridicule of the invader; 2) The heroism of the individual soldier and the collective; 3) Patriotism showed by the defenders of the Soviet Union. Their unity forms the narrative's core: the military and home fronts supposedly had a strong relationship. The war effort was a true people's war; every Soviet citizen ought to participate in the Motherland's defence.²⁶

Initially, the Soviet Union was on the retreat. After chances in the war turned and the Red Army advanced to the West, propaganda also changed: From 1944, the usage of Socialism as a propaganda element was reinforced. The retreat of the German army demonstrated the success of the Soviet economy, to which all Soviet workers, irrespective of their nationality, contributed. Nevertheless, an emphasis on Russian nationalism remained: According to Stalin, the Russians were the leading force amongst all the nationalities. Military success (especially after the 1942-1943 iconic and symbolic battle of Stalingrad) also increased Stalin's importance: he was increasingly depicted as a strategic and military genius whose leadership was vital for the coming victory in the war. Stalin, a Georgian, became one of the – maybe even the most important of all – Russian heroes.²⁷

Victory in the war (*Victory Day*, May 9, 1945) necessitated even further changes to propaganda narratives. Of course, victory was celebrated, but at the same time, there was little commemoration of the war's many victims and both civilian and military hardships. Only the heroism of those who gave their lives was important. Newspapers praised Stalin and thanked him for his benevolent leadership of the Party and the Soviet people. He supposedly enabled the victory.²⁸

Stalin himself set out the lines of this memory of the war in several speeches. The Soviet Union was inherently a peaceful nation; it had aimed towards the establishment of an anti-Nazi collective security agreement with England and France. Since the Soviet Union was not invited at the Munich conference, it had no other option but to enter into a non-aggression pact with Nazi-Germany. The non-intervention of England and France in the Spanish Civil War, the failure of popular front politics and the Munich conference of 1938 necessitated an accommodation with Nazi-Germany to protect the Soviet Union. After the Soviet Union fell victim to German aggression in 1941, the success of the Soviet war effort demonstrated the success of collectivisation and industrialisation. Stalin's policies prepared the Soviet Union for its successful defence; his genius led the people to victory. In the end, the victory showed that the Socialist system was superior to all other social systems.²⁹

During the initial post-war years, heroic images of Stalin dominated the *Great Patriotic War*

23 Bosworth, *Explaining Auschwitz and Hiroshima*, 151–152; Gill, *Symbols and Legitimacy*, 145–146; Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead*, 63.

24 Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead*, 63 (An observation made by many other scholars as well).

25 Lutz-Auras, *Auf Stalin*, 44. The evocation of the motherland is rather complex and did not venture into a full-scale praise of the Russian nation. See: Karel C. Berkhoff, *Motherland in Danger: Soviet Propaganda during World War II* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2012), 201–222, 272.

26 Gill, *Symbols and Legitimacy*, 141, 143–144.

27 *Ibid.*, 151–152.

28 Nina Tumarkin, "The Great Patriotic War as Myth and Memory," *European Review* 11, no. 04 (October 2003): 596.

29 Lutz-Auras, *Auf Stalin*, 127–128; Uldricks, "War, Politics and Memory," 61–62.

narrative. Nevertheless, the strong emphasis on wartime heroism did not fade entirely. To reinforce his own heroism, in 1952 Stalin demoted other wartime leaders such as Marshal Georgiy Zhukov and Admiral Nikolay Kuznetsov.³⁰ The war also became less important: In 1947, the regime demoted *Victory Day*: it was no longer a state holiday but a regular working day.³¹ The need for (economic) reconstruction was the reason for this: it was not the time to remember the war's horrors or to celebrate victory; contemporary challenges were more important. It was necessary to look forward.³²

The onset of the Cold War was also a reason for deemphasizing victory. While tensions with the West increased, Soviet propaganda started to espouse an old propaganda motive: foreign and domestic enemies of the Soviet system were again conspiring to destroy the Soviet Union and to prevent the successful establishment of communism. This time, there was a new twist: the former (Capitalist) Allies had secretly conspired with Nazi-Germany during the war and continued to do so as they now turned against the Soviet Union. Although the Soviet Union had beaten the evil of fascism once (i.e. the victory in the *Great Patriotic War*), mortal danger still loomed in the form of the fascist 'Capitalist-Imperialists' from the West. Therefore, it was necessary to concentrate on this new challenge, instead of celebrating the victory.³³ Unlike the pre-war examples it resembled, propaganda now had something extra to boast; the war actually gave it more credence: during the war, a threat had come from the West.³⁴

3.2. Discrediting Stalin: Nikita Khrushchev and the Great Patriotic War

Stalin's cult of personality also fulfilled a social function: his role as a leader eased tensions between incompatible elements of the Soviet metanarrative. Stalin could bridge individualism and collectivism within Soviet society, nationalism and the internationalist character of socialism, the party's professed egalitarianism and the existing hierarchy and elitism.³⁵ Therefore, his death on March 5, 1953, inevitably caused problems for the regime's legitimization.³⁶

The new Soviet leader, Nikita Khrushchev, had to cope with a legitimacy crisis while asserting his own power over the party. He legitimized himself, by dissociating his person from the brutal aspects of Stalin's rule; on February 25, 1956, at the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party, he gave his infamous '*secret speech*' in which he denounced both Stalin and the personality cult.³⁷ The war was one of the central elements: Khrushchev blamed Stalin for not anticipating the German invasion in June 1941 and Stalin systematically neglected warnings about it and left the Soviet Union unprepared for the upcoming war. Khrushchev also claimed that Stalin's ungrounded purges of the military top brass between 1937 and 1941 caused much damage to the Soviet war effort because the Red Army leadership missed the military experience gained during the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) and the War in the Far East (1932-1939).³⁸ Essentially, Khrushchev blamed Stalin for the war's many hardships.³⁹ Of course, Khrushchev and Georgiy Zhukov (who aided Khrushchev in coming to

30 Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead*, 101–104.

31 *Ibid.*, 104.

32 Gill, *Symbols and Legitimacy*, 155.

33 Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead*, 103–104; Tumarkin, "The Great Patriotic War," 597.

34 Cf. Gill, *Symbols and Legitimacy*, 36–37; Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead*, 103–104.

35 Gill, *Symbols and Legitimacy*, 163.

36 *Ibid.*, 164–165.

37 The speech was entitled 'On the Cult of Personality and Its Consequences', see also: Н.С. Хрущёв, "О культе личности и его последствиях. Доклад XX съезду КПСС," *Викитека*, last modified February 25, 1656, accessed January 29, 2016, [https://ru.wikisource.org/wiki/О_культе_личности_и_его_последствиях._Доклад_XX_съезду_КПСС_\(Н.С._Хрущёв\)](https://ru.wikisource.org/wiki/О_культе_личности_и_его_последствиях._Доклад_XX_съезду_КПСС_(Н.С._Хрущёв)).

38 *Ibid.*

39 Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead*, 107–108.

power and supported destalinization), were themselves no less innocent of crimes than Stalin and his main henchmen, Viacheslav Molotov, Georgiy Malenkov and Lazar Kaganovich (whom Khrushchev indicted during a session of the Communist Party plenum in 1957).⁴⁰

Since the attempt to discredit Stalin hinged on his wartime leadership, Khrushchev was obliged to come up with his version of the war. Khrushchev chose to highlight the unity of the party, the army, and the people. It was not Stalin's genius leadership that had won the war, but a common effort by the party and the people.⁴¹ The shift to party and people also enabled the formation of some elements of the cult of the *Great Patriotic War*: While *Victory Day* remained a working day and commemoration remained informal, most symbols that later Soviet leaders would use to support the celebration were institutionalized. Amongst these were the frequent usage of the Banner of Victory (the Red banner that was flown over the ruins of the Reichstag building in Berlin on May 2, 1945) and a new official number of Soviet war victims (which was now fixed at 20 million, to blame Stalin).⁴² Khrushchev's views subsequently entered historiography and history textbooks as well.⁴³ Having attained power, Khrushchev also rid himself of his aid Marshal Georgiy Zhukov in October 1957 and he had him removed removed from the Presidium of the Central Committee and his position as Minister of Defence. The official reason was that he 'violated Leninist party principles' by limiting the Parties role in the army and by supposedly propagating a 'Zhukov cult'.⁴⁴ It seems as if Zhukov's image as a hero of the *Great Patriotic War* had become a political risk to Khrushchev.

3.3. The Great Patriotic War Centre Stage: Legitimating the Regime under Brezhnev and during the Stagnation.

In 1964, a conspiracy of high party leaders removed Khrushchev from power. The chairman of the Supreme Soviet, Leonid Brezhnev, replaced him. After this move, the official stance towards the War and Stalinism again shifted. The regime's propaganda and Soviet school-books again emphasized Stalin's role in the war, but never with the same level as during Stalin's lifetime. The regime still officially condemned the cult of personality.⁴⁵

Khrushchev's policies tarnished Stalin's record and the late dictator could not regain a legitimacy force. The *Great Patriotic War* narrative served as an alternative. Although Khrushchev initiated this process, his successor Brezhnev made it the most prominent myth.⁴⁶ This newly laid emphasis on the *Great Patriotic War* represented a kind of trade-off: Soviet citizens were fully aware that they lacked the same liberties as in the West and that their economic situation was not as good as official propaganda claimed. The achievements of the war served as an alternative source of pride. During the war, the Soviet Union became a superpower and attained military glory.⁴⁷ The regime's usage of the *Great Patriotic War*

40 David Satter, *It Was a Long Time Ago, and It Never Happened Anyway. Russia and the Communist Past* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 142–143.

41 Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead*, 107–108; Bosworth, *Explaining Auschwitz and Hiroshima*, 158.

42 Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead*, 110; Tumarkin, "The Great Patriotic War," 597–598.

43 For instance, they also became apparent in a new 'complete' multi-volume official history of the war entitled *History of the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union 1941–1945*. It also mentioned Stalin's name mainly with a negative undertone. There was even some room for discussion of other black pages, such as how Soviet POW's were sent to the Gulag after returning to the Soviet Union after the war. Similarly, history textbooks were rewritten to deemphasize Stalin. See: Lutz-Auras, *Auf Stalin*, 130–392–393; Tsfasman, "Stalin in Soviet and Russian History Textbooks," 558.

44 Gregory L. Freeze, "From Stalinism to Stagnation, 1953–1985," in *Russia. A History*, ed. Gregory L. Freeze, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 423.

45 Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead*, 129–130; Tsfasman, "Stalin in Soviet and Russian History Textbooks," 560–561.

46 Gill, *Symbols and Legitimacy*, 198–199.

47 Satter, *It Was a Long Time Ago*, 105–106.

Section II Living with Difficult Pasts: Contested Political and Historiographical Narratives of the Second World War

served seven functions: 1) to provoke patriotic feelings. 2) To legitimize foreign policy decisions. 3) To inspire respect for the Soviet armed forces. 4) to present the Soviet Union as a peacemaker. 5) To raise self-esteem. 6) To inspire confidence in the socialist economy and to inspire hard work. 7) To present a moral message: without the Soviet war effort, the world would be enslaved by fascism.⁴⁸

The official narrative of the war again changed to support these seven functions. It kept several ideas, such as that the policies of collectivization and industrialization enabled the Soviet war effort. The claim that the war enabled the Soviet Union's status as superpower was the main addition. In essence, the twenty million war dead were necessary for the Soviet state's formation. Their heroism was therefore equal to that of the martyrs of the October revolution and the Civil War.⁴⁹ The regime also created a cult to support the narrative of the *Great Patriotic War*. This cult's rituals and symbols signified the narrative's importance and demarcated the official line of memory. Like any cult, it gained its pantheon of 'saints' (e.g. the fallen) and 'sacred relics' (such as the Banner of Victory).⁵⁰

The year 1967 was one of the key moments in establishing a new cult of the *Great Patriotic War*. That year, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at the Moscow Kremlin's wall was inaugurated. It contained the remains of unknown soldiers who fought during the Battle for Moscow. Besides the grave stood red porphyry blocks with the names of the so-called 'hero cities' (sites of important battles or other significance for the Soviet war effort).⁵¹ The most striking feature was the eternal flame. Such eternal flames are common features at Tombs of the Unknown Soldier (e.g. in Paris or Brussels). However, the source of this particular flame was significant: it originated from the eternal flame on Leningrad's *Marsovo Pole*

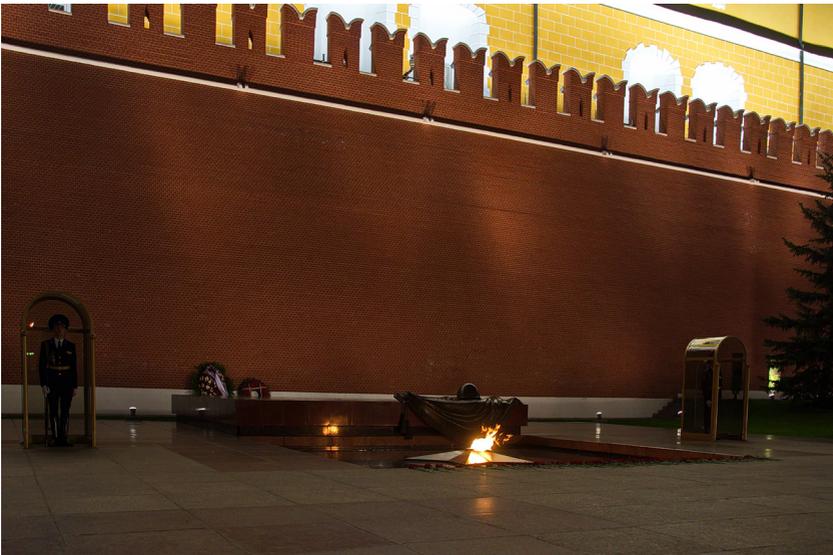


Figure 2: The Monument for the Unknown Soldier, Moscow

Source: Uwe Brodrecht, File:0436 - Moskau 2015 (26126878990).Jpg, September 30, 2015, Wikimedia Commons, accessed January 21, 2019, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:0436 - Moskau 2015 \(26126878990\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:0436_-_Moskau_2015_(26126878990).jpg); Licensed as CC-BY-SA 2.0

48 Nina Tumarkin, "Myth and Memory in Soviet Society," *Society* 24, no. 6 (1987): 40.

49 *Ibid.*, 70.

50 Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead*, 136.

51 They are Leningrad, Kiev (Kyiv), Stalingrad, Odessa (Odesa), Sevastopol, Minsk, Kerch, Novorossiysk, Tula, Brest, Murmansk and Smolensk.

(The Field of Mars). The Leningrad eternal flame honoured fallen heroes of the February Revolution of 1917 and some of the early Soviet leaders. This gesture transferred the status of these revolutionary heroes to those of the *Great Patriotic War*. At the dedication ceremony, Brezhnev lit the flame and said that the war heroes served their country in life, in death and after death. Because of them, the Soviet Union was spared fascist enslavement. Soviet citizens had an obligation to emulate their valour and devotion to country and party. In a sense, the whole founding moment of the Soviet polity changed: The Soviet Union no longer based itself on a progressive ideology and revolution, but on the triumph of the war. The official Soviet narrative became one of conservatism; it no longer embodied the enlightenment philosophy of communism.⁵² At this moment, the cult also became monolithic. This made it an oppressive force: Officially, the narrative's slogan read '*No one is forgotten, nothing is forgotten*' (*Nikto ne zabyt, ничто не забыто*). Nevertheless, the official narrative left many silences on painful and often divisive wartime events⁵³: The early wartime losses, the Soviet invasion of Poland in 1939, the annexations of the Baltic States and the deportations of entire nationalities within the Soviet Union are only a few examples. The narrative essentially obliterated entire segments of the collective memory.

Throughout the Soviet Union, other grandiose monuments remembering Soviet heroism were erected. These included the monument at the Belorussian town of Khatyn (whose inhabitants were murdered by German forces and Nazi collaborators in 1943) and the impressive Mother Motherland (*Rodina Mat*) monument at Stalingrad's Mamayev Kurgan.⁵⁴ Despite all these efforts, Moscow lacked a grandiose monument (as the tomb for the Unknown Soldier was mainly a commemorative and not celebratory site). In 1957, the government decided to build a memorial at *Poklonnaya Gora* (*Hill of Prostrations*). It was at this site that Napoleon overlooked Moscow in 1812 and in vain awaited the handover of the city's keys. This highly symbolic location signalled that the *Great Patriotic War* was indeed part of a long tradition in Russian history. No monument was built, because of all the fluctuations in the Soviet discourse on the *Great Patriotic War*. Nevertheless, in 1979, it was again decided to construct a grand memorial that would house a monument and a museum. A series of open competitions were organised to choose a design for the site. Because of *glasnost* and *perestroika* in the second half of the 1980s, no memorial was built during Soviet times.⁵⁵ It would not be until after the collapse of the Soviet Union that a monument would be built.⁵⁶

Historiography also helped to establish the cult of the *Great Patriotic War*. The regime tasked historians with creating a historiographical basis for the narrative. Countless historians published similar works on the *Great Patriotic War*.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, some historians, such as Roy Medvedev, challenged the ruling narrative. Most of these works were published as *tamizdat* (thus published outside of the Soviet Union) and therefore were uninfluential.⁵⁸ For now,

52 Tumarkin, "Myth and Memory," 70; Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead*, 128; Tumarkin, "The Great Patriotic War," 598–599; Gill, *Symbols and Legitimacy*, 199–200, 212–213.

53 Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead*, 50–51.

54 *Ibid.*, 134.

55 Tumarkin, "The Great Patriotic War," 606.

56 Kathleen E. Smith, *Mythmaking in the New Russia: Politics and Memory during the Yeltsin Era* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 106–108, 112, 127; Graeme Gill, *Symbolism and Regime Change in Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 206.

57 Their main product was a new 12-volume history of the *Great Patriotic War*. It is often characterized as bulky, lengthy and counting many words, but empty in contents. The new standard history was unapologetic and did not mention Stalin's failures, repressions and their consequences any more. Besides this new history, there was an enormous boom in *Great Patriotic War* books with more than 20,000 titles published on the war, its main battles and heroes. The new multi-volume history was published as: *История второй мировой войны: 1939–1945, в 12-ти томах*. (Москва, 1973). See also: Lutz-Auras, *Auf Stalin*, 131–132, 939; Jonathan Brunstedt, "The Soviet Myth of the Great Fatherland War and the Limits of Inclusionary Politics under Brezhnev: The Case of Chalmavist Literature," *Nationalities Papers* 41, no. 1 (2013): 146–165.

58 Roy Medvedev published his book *Let history judge* in 1971 (it could only be published in the Soviet Union in 1988). His work was an attack on Stalin and his role in Russian history. In his treatment of the Second World War, Medvedev still walked the party line. Nevertheless, he was ousted from the party after the book's publi-

the narrative of the *Great Patriotic War* dominated over other narratives of Soviet history.

3.4. Delegitimizing the Union: The Great Patriotic War and the Disintegration of the Soviet Union

The Soviet Union was in stagnation: the economic situation was not as rosy as propaganda claimed. This reality was the main cause for the Soviet Union's disintegration. Changing discourse on Soviet history and the war also played an important role. During the late 1970s, dissidents increasingly voiced opposition to the regime's historical claims. After Brezhnev's death in 1982 and the short reigns of Yuri Andropov and Konstantin Chernenko, the much younger Gorbachev became secretary-general of the Communist Party in March 1985. Gorbachev, who was only ten years old when the war began, was the first Soviet leader who did not participate in the *Great Patriotic War*. He also had no background in the military or security services.⁵⁹ Gorbachev was convinced that major economic and systemic changes were necessary for the Soviet Union, to survive and to recover from the preceding years of stagnation. A new overall atmosphere of *glasnost* (openness) should support *perestroika* (reconstruction). Only a Party guided by a culture of open discussion could lead a successful Soviet Union. This necessitated dealing with Soviet history's dark pages to remove all distortions of Socialism. The party should face its history and should not impose limitations on the discussion of history.⁶⁰

To support his reformist agenda, Gorbachev reemphasised the person of Lenin. The late Bolshevik leader again became one of the central pillars of (official) Soviet ideology. Due to the lessened constraints on historiography, it became harder and harder to invoke Lenin. Historians uncovered unsavoury policies enacted by Lenin and Stalin no longer got the sole blame.⁶¹ Free discussion also made it harder to legitimize the leading role of the Communist Party. Especially in the Western Soviet periphery, revelations about Soviet history also delegitimized the Soviet Union. Such revelations pertained to the number of Soviet war dead, the collaboration of parts of the population with the German occupation, the war-time and post-war deportations of ethnic and national minorities, the excessive use of violence (against the civilian population) by the Red Army and the Katyń massacre.⁶²

Gorbachev even enabled this trend of delegitimation by using revelations to discredit his conservative opponents. For instance, he repeatedly raised the official number of war dead to an eventual high number of twenty-six to twenty-seven million.⁶³ While these new statistics were political weapons, they were more realistic.⁶⁴ The Congress of Peoples' deputies also passed a declaration admitting the existence of the secret protocols to the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact and condemned them.⁶⁵

cation abroad. See: Bosworth, *Explaining Auschwitz and Hiroshima*, 159; Uldricks, "War, Politics and Memory," 63. For Medvedev's work, see: Roy A. Medvedev, *Let History Judge: The Origins and Consequences of Stalinism*, ed. David Joravsky and Georges Haupt, trans. Colleen Taylor (New York: Knopf, 1971).

59 Bosworth, *Explaining Auschwitz and Hiroshima*, 162.

60 Gill, *Symbols and Legitimacy*, 226, 233–244.

61 *Ibid.*, 241.

62 Lutz-Auras, *Auf Stalin*, 133.

63 Tumar'kin, "The Great Patriotic War," 603–304.

64 A demographic survey by Michael Ellman and S. Maksudov showed that Gorbachev's estimates of the number of dead were indeed more truthful. However, certain demographic caveats should be made (for instance the demographic study also include net migration from the territory of the Soviet Union during the War); See: Michael Ellman and S. Maksudov, "Soviet Deaths in the Great Patriotic War: A Note," *Europe-Asia Studies* 46, no. 4 (1994): 667.

65 This condemnation was ambiguous: on the one hand, it recognized that they destroyed the sovereignty and independence of several countries. On the other hand, the congress declared that the pact itself had conformed to contemporary international law (ignoring that the pact omitted a crucial, but customary clause that it was invalid in case of aggression by one of the parties) See: Miller, "The Communist Past," 521–522; Uldricks, "War, Politics and Memory," 64.

Revelations raised ethnic tensions and fostered strong nationalist currents within several peripheral republics (especially within the Baltic States and Ukraine). From the summer of 1988 onwards, the myth of a voluntary union of the people was no longer tenable.⁶⁶ The war became a divisive element instead of a binding force. It no longer had the same sacred place in society. A whole spectrum of different voices and opinions replaced the monotonous pre-*perestroika* narrative. This functioned as a prism that reflected the disintegration of the Soviet Union.⁶⁷ Such negative discourses in the peripheral republics were nothing new; they existed as '*Kitchen table talk*'. Now they could for the first time be discussed out in the open.⁶⁸ As a response to the nationalist surge in the periphery, Russian nationalism also gained traction. Several Russian nationalist groups, of which *Pamyat (Memory)* was the main example, rose to prominence in the late '1980s and early 1990s.⁶⁹

Gorbachev proclaimed that Stalin had committed many errors during and before the war, but that he still was the great commander-in-chief who played an important role in the victory. Nevertheless, Stalin did not win the war, but the Soviet people that came together.⁷⁰ Gorbachev's 'old fashioned' interpretation of the *Great Patriotic War* was no longer tenable. Since the *Great Patriotic War* was one of the elements that made Soviet symbols appealing, its untenability contributed to their declining power. Of course, this was part of a much wider process: revelations about the terror in the 1930s contributed to an even larger degree.⁷¹ Soviet symbols did not totally lose their appeal: delegitimation was much stronger in the non-Russian peripheral republics than in the Russian heartland. Because of the fact that the *Great Patriotic War* kept some appeal in the Russian Soviet Republic, the narrative was essentially russified by 1990.⁷²

At the same time, historians published revisionist works on the *Great Patriotic War*. They debated whether crimes, repressions, and failures during the Stalinist era were due to structural failures of the system or intentionally caused by Stalin.⁷³ The hegemony of the *Great Patriotic War* was broken.⁷⁴

3.5. The Less Important Great Patriotic War during the Yeltsin Presidency

To get a grasp on how the *Great Patriotic War* regained prominence in the Russian Feder-

66 Gill, *Symbols and Legitimacy*, 241.

67 Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead*, 187–789. Richard Bosworth also stated that the resurgence of nationalism undermined the narrative of the *Great Patriotic War*. Bosworth, *Explaining Auschwitz and Hiroshima*, 164.

68 Miller, "The Communist Past," 517.

69 Bosworth, *Explaining Auschwitz and Hiroshima*, 164–165; Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead*, 192.

70 Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead*, 197–198.

71 For revelations about terror in the 1930s, see: *Ibid.*, 165.

72 Gill, *Symbols and Legitimacy*, 260.

73 von Hagen, "From 'Great Fatherland War' to Second World War," 286, 293–307; Miller, "The Communist Past," 517; Bosworth, *Explaining Auschwitz and Hiroshima*, 164–165; Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead*, 192, 197–198, 202, 209–212; Gill, *Symbols and Legitimacy*, 260; Tsfasman, "Stalin in Soviet and Russian History Textbooks," 561. Important participants in these discussions were Roy Medvedev and Yuri Afanasyev, as well as Dmitry Volkogonov. The most provocative revisionist was Viktor Suvorov (pseud. of Vladimir Rezun), who held the thesis that Stalin had deliberately sought the outbreak of the Second World War and wanted to use the Nazi party and Adolf Hitler in Germany to bring about the World Revolution that failed in 1918. (See: Viktor Suvorov, *Icebreaker: Who Started the Second World War?*, trans. Thomas B. Beattie (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1990). Roy Medvedev's influence stems from his earlier work, *Let history Judge* that could now also be published in Russian. Medvedev was also politically active, and served as a member of the Congress of People's Deputies and a member of the Supreme Soviet. Afanasyev was also politically active and was involved in the founding of the *Memorial Society* (which focused on exposing Stalin's atrocities and commemorating their victims). Volkogonov published an unflattering biographical sketch of Stalin in 1989: Дмитрий Волкогонов, *Триумф и Трагедия. И.В. Сталин. Политический портрет*, vol. 1, 2 vols. (Москва: Агентство печати "Новости", 1989); Дмитрий Волкогонов, *Триумф и Трагедия. И.В. Сталин. Политический портрет*, vol. 2, 2 vols. (Москва: Агентство печати "Новости", 1989).

74 Bosworth, *Explaining Auschwitz and Hiroshima*, 166.

ation, we must now look at developments in post-Cold War Russia. In a historiographical sense, the developments under *glasnost* and *perestroika* continued: historians were no longer obliged to keep to the maxims of communist historiography. History was no longer a tool for Soviet ideologues and historians could now approach it professionally.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, 'orthodox' interpretations of Soviet history remained influential.⁷⁶

In the final years of the Soviet Union, the president of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic and Gorbachev's nemesis, Boris Yeltsin, championed more radical reforms than the Soviet leader would and could realize. He also asserted Russian sovereignty (within the framework of the Soviet Union). As president of an independent Russian state, he continued its consolidation and introduced radical reforms. This was no easy task: a strong (conservative) communist party dominated the legislature. Therefore, symbols and ideology were not Yeltsin's main concern. Instead, he focussed on building a democratic Russia with a functioning market economy. Only a Russian *Rechtsstaat* (constitutional state) could help Russia escape its past.⁷⁷ There were enough elements for a legitimacy crisis since the new Russian leaders all had a past within the former communist leadership (including Yeltsin himself). The country's leaders needed to introduce systemic changes and explain why they remained in power.⁷⁸

Staunch anticommunism was Yeltsin's answer. As a response to the 1991 August coup, he suspended the Communist Party and seized its assets. This eventually led to a case before the constitutional court in 1992. During the trial, Yeltsin and the 'liberal' side argued that the party was an unconstitutional element throughout its existence: it had seized power in a violent coup in 1917 and tried to do so again in 1991. Even its wartime conduct was unconstitutional because of the extrajudicial punishments, the replacement of state organs by organs of the party and the violation of rights of entire nations.⁷⁹ The court partially lifted the ban: it ruled that an interdiction on local level party organisations was unconstitutional. It is interesting that both supporters and opponents of the Communist Party invoked the war. That both sides exploited the war as an argument to their own advantage, showed that it remained an important experience for many Russians.

Yeltsin once again invoked the war during the 1993 constitutional crisis. The division of power between parliament and the president and the president's economic reforms were the issue at stake. Yeltsin resorted to military force to settle the issue and forced the adoption of a new constitution that enhanced his powers. During the conflict, he discredited and denigrated his opponents and called them criminals, hoodlums, gangsters, and thugs. Above all, the president claimed that they were involved in an armed rebellion. A coalition of communist revanchists, fascist ringleaders, and former Soviet deputies and representatives supposedly organized it. Yeltsin followed the Soviet-style of designating his opponents as fascist. After parliament surrendered, he claimed that '*fascist and communists, the swastika and the hammer and sickle had come together in a dark deed.*'⁸⁰

75 Lutz-Auras, *Auf Stalin*, 135; von Hagen, "From 'Great Fatherland War' to Second World War," 237; Uldricks, "War, Politics and Memory," 66.

76 The historians Andrey Mertsalov and Ludmila Mertsalova distinguished three kinds of developments in post-Soviet historiography in the initial years after the collapse of the Soviet Union: orthodox historiography, revisionist historiography and "wait-and-see" historiography. See: The Mertsalovs, as cited in: Lutz-Auras, *Auf Stalin*, 134.

77 Gill, *Symbolism and Regime Change*, 28.

78 *Ibid.*, 8.

79 The party defended itself by invoking the war and the support the people gave the party during the war. It claimed that it could not have been an anti-popular element because of its large-scale membership (that according to the defenders amounted to nineteen million) and the victory in the war. If the party had been anti-popular, the people would certainly not have rallied around the party and the Soviet victory in the *Great Patriotic War* should have been impossible. The party also prided itself with the success of post-war economic revival and the Soviet Union's technological achievements (mainly in space flight). See: Smith, *Mythmaking in the New Russia*, 18, 24; Gill, *Symbolism and Regime Change*, 144.

80 Gill, *Symbols and Legitimacy*, 33.

As Yeltsin did not consider Soviet symbols important, he cared little for *Victory Day*, although it remained popular and many people interpreted the celebration of the day as a show of patriotism.⁸¹ In 1992, Yeltsin handled *Victory Day* in a less grandiose and less triumphant way than had been the case in the Soviet Union. He merely laid a wreath at the tomb of the Unknown Soldier and subsequently mingled with veterans at Moscow's Gorky Park. The Soviet rites of the *Great Patriotic War* would return in later commemorations because the opposition criticized the president because of his lack of engagement with this war celebration. Both the extreme nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy (Liberal Democratic Party) and the communist Gennady Zhuganov made such accusations. Because Yeltsin could not let the opposition monopolize *Victory Day*, he had to organize a commemoration in 1993. While the opposition laid wreaths at the tomb of the Unknown Soldier and organized a *Victory Day* rally in downtown Moscow (clearly referring to the former large-scale military parades), Yeltsin participated in a ceremony at *Poklonnaya Gora* (where the president finally unveiled a monument). Two years later, at the 50th anniversary of *Victory Day*, Yeltsin even organized a military parade on Red Square and permitted veterans to use Soviet symbols such as the Red Victory Banner. Nevertheless, *Victory Day* and the *Great Patriotic War* continued to divide the president and the opposition. Zhuganov, in particular, accused Yeltsin of doing exactly what Hitler planned to do with the Soviet nation, i.e. to destroy it. Democrats and liberals, on the other hand, blamed Yeltsin because his new policies pretended that the Soviet-Union had not disintegrated.⁸²

In 1996, political technologists – spin-doctors, Russian-style – secured Yeltsin's re-election against the background of a possible communist backlash. They presented the Soviet past in a strongly negative way. Yeltsin directly implored the Russian electorate not to vote communist to give Russia a better future. Russia should not return to the past. On the other hand, could not fully distance himself from positive views of Soviet history, probably because for many ordinary Russians, memories of the Soviet era were not solely negative. He no longer claimed that the USSR was a historical aberration and now held the view that the union had some kind of *raison d'être*.⁸³

After his re-election, Yeltsin shortly nurtured the (unconstitutional) idea of creating a new national ideology. This meant that Yeltsin now laid less negative emphasis on the Soviet past. For instance, the official holiday celebrating the October Revolution of 1917 (November 7) remained a non-working day, although it was no longer a state holiday. Yeltsin now rechristened it as the *Day of Concord and Reconciliation* (*Den soglasiya i primireniya*). The regime no longer condemned the communist past outright and even underlined certain past achievements, in particular, the *Great Patriotic War* (although, Yeltsin claimed that it was the People's achievement for which the Bolsheviks had stolen the credit). Nevertheless, Yeltsin never rehabilitated communism.⁸⁴

We must, therefore, conclude, as Graeme Gill has done, that Yeltsin was unable to integrate the Soviet past into a narrative that gave Russians a convincing explanation for the country's recent history and its current situation. He could not give the communist past (and therefore the victory in the *Great Patriotic War*) a place in a coherent historical narrative, because at times he also used negative depictions of Soviet history for political purposes.⁸⁵ Simply put, Yeltsin had little real political objectives vis-à-vis the Soviet past. Similarly, Alexei Miller remarked that Russia only passed halfway out of communism because the

81 Miller, "The Communist Past," 520; The remaining popularity has also been noted by: Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead*, 33.

82 Smith, *Mythmaking in the New Russia*, 85–91.

83 Gill, *Symbolism and Regime Change*, 41–42.

84 *Ibid.*, 42–43, 45–46.

85 *Ibid.*, 47–48.



Figure 3: An Overview of Poklonnaya Gora

The main sculpture by the sculptor Zurab Tsereteli represents victory, the church on the left is dedicated to St. George the Dragonslayer. At the time that Yeltsin opened Poklonnaya Gora, much work was still in progress. The main monument and the church would not be finished until 1995. Source: Anton Denisov, File:RIAN Archive 350236 Views of Moscow, October 9, 2008, Wikimedia Commons, accessed January 25, 2019, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:RIAN_archive_350236_Views_of_Moscow.jpg; Photo is licensed as CC-BY-SA 3.0

regime often sacrificed moral imperatives for immediate political interests.⁸⁶ Russia had not reckoned with the Soviet past and the *Great Patriotic War* in the first decade after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, the Soviet past was also not fully reaccepted. These trends set the tone for future developments.

3.6. The Great Patriotic War again Centre Stage: A Recycled National Myth under Putin and Medvedev

At the turn of the millennium, the oppressive Soviet system was gone and Russians had more freedoms than ever before. Nevertheless, Yeltsin's reforms had dramatic consequences for ordinary Russians: inflation was rampant and – with the exception of 1997 – the GDP continuously fell sharply until 1998 (and only surpassed 1989 figures in 2007).⁸⁷ In these circumstances, average life expectancy fell, and the total number of deaths surpassed the number of births.⁸⁸ An only relatively small minority of Russians profited from radical changes in society.⁸⁹ Russia also was no longer an international superpower: the former

⁸⁶ Miller, "The Communist Past," 523–524.

⁸⁷ According to the data released by the World Bank, Russian GDP stood at \$1,457,617,898,121,41 in 1989, after years of decline it stood at \$ 846,668,151,314,11 in 1996. In 1997, there was only a little growth (\$858,521,505,427,09) with subsequent decline in 1998 (\$813,019,865,650,69). These figures have been stabilized at 2010 dollar values. See: World Bank, "World Development Indicators," accessed October 23, 2018, <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/home.aspx>.

⁸⁸ In 1992, the death rate (12.2/1000 inhabitants) first surpassed the birth rate (10,7/1000). It would not be until 2010 that the two figures reached an equilibrium (13.3/1000 inhabitants). See: Ibid.

⁸⁹ Inequality rose during the 1990s as those who accumulated capital during the transition from Communism to

adversary NATO expanded eastwards and unilaterally intervened in the Yugoslav Civil War (1994) and Kosovo crisis (1999). Many Russians felt neglected.⁹⁰ They associated these negative experiences with Yeltsin, whom they perceived as a weak leader (he also suffered from ill health and alcoholism). On the last day of the millennium, a visibly tired and worn-out Yeltsin announced his resignation. Vladimir Putin, who was relatively unknown when Yeltsin named him prime minister in August 1999, was ready to take over. Russia's new (interim) president presented himself as *the* future for Russia. He fostered the image of a 'strong leader'. He actively involved and associated himself with the re-claiming of Russian sovereignty in the Second Chechen War (August 1999 – April 2009) and offered the ordinary Russian a sense of security in the midst of a bomb scare (the government blamed Chechen insurgents, but there were vague indications for involvement of the security services).⁹¹

The new president not only used contemporary political conflicts to present himself as a strong leader: He also associated himself with the *Great Patriotic War* to bolster his image. Putin did so in six different ways: 1) He actively sought contact with *Great Patriotic War* veterans. 2) He explicitly referred to his own family story of the 900-day blockade of Leningrad (from September 8, 1941, until January 27, 1944). 3) He frequently visited war memorials. 4) He participated in parades celebrating the victory. 5) He instituted new military uniforms linked to either 1812 or 1945. 6) He opened a new military boarding school for girls, with serious patriotic undertones.⁹² Putin's basic narrative was that Russia was a great nation because of its wartime history and that Putin was a great leader for Russia because of his association with this *Great Patriotic War*. Putin also closely associated himself with *Victory Day* (during Putin's tenure as president its celebration has become more elaborate with each passing year).⁹³

Putin's vision for Russia's future also played an important role in the increased emphasis on the *Great Patriotic War*. According to Putin, Russia was not a Western-style democracy, but a so-called '*sovereign democracy*'. Russia supposedly experienced a distinct path of development, and a strong state had always been part of Russian society. Putin's claims about *sovereign democracy* stood in a tradition of Russian claims about its distinctiveness and unique development. It was a new incarnation the concept of a Russian *Sonderweg*.⁹⁴ Such discussions have characterized Russian social discourse since the 18th century, but more prominent since the 1840s. That decade initiated a clash between proponents of a 'European' Russia (the Westernizers or *zapadniki*) and those who claimed that Russia constituted a distinct civilization (the Slavophiles or *slavyanofily*).⁹⁵

a capitalist free market could use that capital and their connections to gain more capital. In essence, an elite of *nouveau riches* (oligarchs) formed. A small and nascent middle class also formed. However, most ordinary Russians profited little from economic transition. See: Gregory L. Freeze, "A Modern 'Time of Troubles'. From Reform to Disintegration, 1985-1999," in *Russia. A History*, ed. Gregory L. Freeze, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 480–482.

90 *Ibid.*, 484–486.

91 Gill, *Symbolism and Regime Change*, 97.

92 Elizabeth A. Wood, "Performing Memory: Vladimir Putin and the Celebration of World War II in Russia," *The Soviet and Post-Soviet Review* 38, no. 2 (September 1, 2011): 175.

93 *Ibid.*, 176, 198.

94 The term *Sonderweg* is originally from discussions about German history. The main question at hand is whether the course of German history fits in a general European (i.e. French or British) pattern or has known its own distinct German development. The concept can be employed positively (emphasizing German economic development) or negatively (emphasizing German imperialism and claiming that Nazism was only a logical endpoint for German history). For an introduction to different variants of the *Sonderweg*-thesis, see an article by Jürgen Kocka. Although Kocka is as one of the strongest proponents of the negative German *Sonderweg* and his article argues against anti-*Sonderweg* developments in German historiography in the 1980s, he summarizes the viewpoints of both proponents of opponents of the concept in a fair way. See: Jürgen Kocka, "Der 'deutsche Sonderweg' in der Diskussion," *German Studies Review* 5, no. 3 (October 1982): 365–379.

95 For discussions the idea about a Russian *Sonderweg* as a constituent part of Russian historical discourse, see: Coudenys, *Het geheugen van Rusland*, 12–13, 20–21. The main contenders in the *westernizers vs. slavophile* debate in the 19th century were the westernizers Piotr Chaadayev, Vissarion Belinskiy, Timofei Granovskiy, Sergei Solovyev, Konstantin Kavelin, Aleksandr Herzen and Mikhail Bakunin, and the *slavophiles* Aleksey Khomyakov.



Figure 4: Russian soldiers marching on Red Square in historical uniforms.

Source: Kremlin.ru, File:Victory Day Parade 2005-7.jpg, 2005 2005, Wikimedia Commons, accessed January 21, 2019, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Victory_Day_Parade_2005-7.jpg; Licensed as CC-BY 3.0.

By claiming a specific path of Russian history, Putin placed himself in the latter group, contrary to Yeltsin, who always emphasised the need to follow Western standards to build a democratic system. Putin paid far less attention to such external standards. In 2000, Putin launched his strategy for the future of Russia. Officially, Putin claimed that he did not want to establish an official state ideology, but called for a civic consensus. This consensus had to be found in both the acceptance of supranational values (e.g. freedom of expression, travel, fundamental political rights, human liberties, and property ownership) and the Russian ‘*primordial traditional values*’ (such as patriotism, the claim to great-power status and stated social solidarity). Combined with patriotism, statism (*gosudarstvennost*) was the most important traditional value: a strong state was the central element of Russian history; the state had always guaranteed order, and initiated, and drove changes.⁹⁶

Putin used the myth of the *Great Patriotic War* to legitimate the existence of a strong state. He continuously referred to the mass mobilisation during the *Great Patriotic War*. The war was the mortar to create social consensus because it was a moment of pride that all Russians could share.⁹⁷ The *Great Patriotic War* was indeed a driver for consensus and forged bonds within Russian society. Most Russians agreed (and still agree) that the war was the central event of Russia’s (twentieth-century) history. Russian society also strongly rejects tendencies in neighbouring countries to blame the Soviet Union (or Russia) for negative historical experiences (e.g. the post-Cold War new totalitarianism discussed in chapter 2).⁹⁸

The emphasis on the strong state coincided with praise of both Russian and Soviet histor-

ov, Ivan Ivan Kireyevskiy, Konstantin Aksakov. For their ideas and contributions, see also: Gary M. Hamburg, “Russian Political Thought, 1700–1917,” in *Imperial Russia, 1689–1917*, ed. Dominic Lieven, The Cambridge History of Russia 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 126–130.

96 Lutz-Auras, *Auf Stalin*, 136.

97 *Ibid.*, 395.

98 Marlène Laruelle, “Negotiating History: Memory Wars in the Near Abroad and Pro-Kremlin Youth Movements,” *Demokratizatsiya* 19, no. 3 (2011): 233, 249.

ical leaders. It once again became a fundamental part of the official perception of Russian history.⁹⁹ In this light we should see Putin's infamous 2005 remark that the dissolution of the Soviet Union was the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century as a hint to the official perception of Russian history promoted by the Russian president.¹⁰⁰ Such praise of the Soviet past went hand in hand with a re-appreciation of Soviet symbols: in 2000, Putin re-instated the Soviet anthem, albeit with a new text.¹⁰¹ At that occasion, Putin remarked that the Soviet past might be painful for some, due to the horrible acts committed by Soviet leaders, but that major cultural and scientific achievements nevertheless justified their re-adoption.¹⁰² Putin also approved the Victory Banner as an official flag of the Russian Army (Yeltsin had merely condoned its use on *Victory Day*).¹⁰³ Russia's state symbols now represent a compromise between Russian nationalist and Soviet symbols (for instance, the flag and seal of Russia are clear references to Russia's imperial history).¹⁰⁴

The Putin regime also influenced the objectives and content of history education. In the 1990s, the number of textbooks titles published rose to great heights. These textbooks reflected different views and received government accreditation.¹⁰⁵ A kind of 'perestroika consensus' guided such textbooks. They agreed that the victory of the *Great Patriotic War* was no proof for the effectiveness of the Soviet system. The victory was only achieved at the price of unreasonable losses and the personal sacrifices made by people despite of the communist system. Likewise, such textbooks concluded that government power was not an inherent driver of Russian history. They also agreed that history was a topic open to differences of opinion.¹⁰⁶

Those who supported the introduction of a national idea and patriotic history had little use for such pluralism.¹⁰⁷ The influential historian Aleksandr Chubaryan, head of the Russian Academy of Sciences' Institute for Global History, has been one of this drive's supporters. Much like the regime, he claimed a role for the state as the driving force in Russian history. The state's role was both necessary and logical because of the way Russia developed as a state and as a society.¹⁰⁸ Although Chubaryan acknowledged crimes committed by Stalin and claimed that such crimes were inadmissible, he nevertheless argued that there were many achievements under Stalin's rule.¹⁰⁹

99 Satter, *It Was a Long Time Ago*, 208–209.

100 Putin remarked: 'Above all it has to be recognized that the disintegration of the Soviet Union was the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century. For the Russian people it became a true drama. Tens of millions fellow citizens and fellow countrymen now ended up beyond the limits of Russia's territory. The epidemic of disintegration also stretched out to Russia itself'. For the full address, see: В.В. Путин, "Послание Федеральному Собранию Российской Федерации," *Президент России*, last modified April 25, 2005, accessed February 5, 2016, <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/22931>.

101 The original text had been de-stalinized in 1977; Yeltsin had used 'A patriotic song' by the composer Mikhail Glinka, without any text as Russia's anthem.

102 Gill, *Symbolism and Regime Change*, 52.

103 *Ibid.*, 82.

104 Miller, "The Communist Past," 520.

105 Владимир Берелович, "Современные российские учебники истории: многоликая истина или очередная национальная идея?," *Неприкосновенный запас* 24, no. 4 (2002), accessed January 18, 2019, <http://magazines.russ.ru/nz/2002/4/brel.html>.

106 The historian Nikita Sokolov has summarized the consensus. See: Никита Соколов, "Век сурка, или Краткая история коловращения российских учебников истории," *Полит.ру*, last modified October 15, 2008, accessed January 18, 2019, <http://polit.ru/article/2008/10/15/history/>.

107 Берелович, "Современные российские учебники истории."

108 Сергей Лесков, "Александр Чубарьян, директор Института всеобщей истории РАН: Государственность - общая черта всех режимов в России," *Известия*, last modified October 18, 2007, accessed January 18, 2019, <https://iz.ru/news/329822>; See also: Татьяна Медведева, "Александр Чубарьян: История тесно связана с политикой и идеологией," *Газета Культура*, last modified October 11, 2016, accessed January 18, 2019, <http://portal-kultura.ru/articles/history/140494-aleksandr-chubaryan-istoriya-volnuet-menya-stolknoveniem-lyudskikh-kharakterov/>.

109 Медведева, "Александр Чубарьян"; See also: Jonathan Brent, "Postmodern Stalinism. Revisionist Histories Help Revive His Reputation in Russia," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, September 21, 2009, accessed January 18, 2019, <https://www.chronicle.com/article/Postmodern-Stalinism/48426>.

The government required history textbooks that resembled Chubaryan's statements. In 2001, Prime Minister Mikhail Kasyanov called for a patriotic history textbook. Subsequently, the Ministry of Education organized a competition that sought the best 'patriotic' textbook. Although the government would express a preference for a certain textbook, other textbooks would officially not be subject to a ban.¹¹⁰ The competition had to find a textbook that aided patriotic education and raised pride in Russian history but also helped Russia democratize, raised the spirit of tolerance and respect for other views and convictions.¹¹¹ The competition's goals were incoherent and hard to reconcile with one another. The participating textbooks did not satisfy the supporters of patriotic history and an uncritical representation of Russian and Soviet history. It also failed to deliver on the promise to create a 'universal' textbook.¹¹²

At the same time as the government tried to introduce patriotic textbooks, the Ministry of Education withdrew its endorsement of a textbook that was critical of the Soviet past. This textbook, written by Igor Dolutskiy, explicitly described history as a dialogue between different viewpoints and the reader. It did not see the state as the main actor of Russian history, nor did it view Stalin as the leader that won the war. Dolutskiy claimed that the Soviet Union had occupied the Baltic States in 1939.¹¹³ The withdrawal of this textbook's endorsement clearly showed a tightening of control over history by the government.

The reassessment of the Soviet past in Putin's first term (2000-2004) continued along lines set out in the second half of the 1990s. During his second term in office (2004-2008), Putin only further tightened the regime's grip on public discourse and history. The emphasis on the victory in the *Great Patriotic War* (and in extension Soviet history) increased as well.¹¹⁴ From 2007 onwards, Putin became more adamant in safeguarding Russia's cultural uniqueness and strengthened the emphasis on its native cultural and moral values: He strongly spoke out against reinterpreting the history and the results of the *Great Patriotic War* that were '*unacceptable and insulting to the Russian nation*'.¹¹⁵ The Russian regime did not accept any responsibility for the Soviet past. It deflected such foreign demands and calls by pointing to the many Russians who were also victims of the Soviet regime.¹¹⁶ Nevertheless, Putin kept a double standard regarding Stalin: while he generally praised him in domestic contexts, he often used negative wordings to refer to Stalin in international contexts.¹¹⁷

The drive to create new school textbooks also continued. Since the outcomes of the 2001 competition did not satisfy the regime's needs, further actions were required. In 2007, the historian Alexandr Filippov published a manual for history teachers.¹¹⁸ The author did not hide that the manual was an initiative by Presidential Administration and the Ministry of Education.¹¹⁹

The manual was neither the only available nor the officially prescribed one. Nevertheless, it was influential. Critics accused the manual of whitewashing Stalin and downplaying per-

110 Берелович, "Современные российские учебники истории."

111 The government's decision, as cited by: Ibid.

112 The winning textbook was written by a team headed by Nikita Zagladin. This textbook was a 'catechism' and it treated the *Great Patriotic War* in a way that showed that the government's guidance ensured victory. See also: Соколов, "Век сурка."

113 И.И. Долуцкий, *Отечественная история. XX век: учебник для 10-го класса средней школы*. (Москва: Мнемозина, 1994); For the decision to withdraw endorsement for the textbook and a summary of its contents, see: Satter, *It Was a Long Time Ago*, 209–210; Соколов, "Век сурка."

114 Laruelle, "Negotiating History," 234.

115 Gill, *Symbolism and Regime Change*, 59–60.

116 Miller, "The Communist Past," 521.

117 Wood, "Performing Memory," 179, 198.

118 А.В. Филиппов, *Новейшая история России 1945-2006 гг. книга для учителя* (Москва: Просвещение, 2007).

119 Анна Качуровская, "Исторический припадок," *Коммерсантъ Власть*, last modified July 16, 2007, accessed January 18, 2019, <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/782464>.

secutions and overtly emphasizing external influences. For instance, it lamented the Soviet Union's disintegration but paid almost no attention to Stalin's purges. In fact, its treatment of Stalin was ambiguous: although the manual considered the Soviet leader a controversial figure, it praised him for the Victory in the *Great Patriotic War* and his role in Russia's(!) successful modernisation. Stalin's dictatorial rule also fitted in existing Russian traditions. Stalin centralized the Soviet Union because the war with Germany was inevitable. Stalin's personal (and psychological) peculiarities had no role in his dictatorship. Stalin was a rational manager who won the war: This outcome justified his actions. The manual presented the Soviet Union as an inherently just society and staked the bold claim that the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact was a justified. Furthermore, the manual underwrote one of the basic tenets of Putin's foreign policy: Russia was entitled to a zone of privileged interests, which included the former Soviet Republics because the Soviet Union liberated these areas during the war.¹²⁰ Furthermore, the textbook also supported Putin's domestic policies: it contained a chapter on 'Sovereign Democracy' that displayed the regime's propaganda narrative about this model for Russia's development.¹²¹ Simultaneously, student textbooks that were apologetic about Stalin were also published.¹²²

During his tenure as president of Russia (2008-2012), Dmitri Medvedev continued the trend initiated by Putin. Medvedev's tone of voice was slightly different: he emphasised the same elements as Putin but with some nuance. Medvedev stressed the importance of modernizing the economy. He claimed that the *rule of law* was important and rejected previous models for the modernisation, including communist attempts. Instead, Russia should modernize democratically. Nevertheless, Medvedev also underlined the need for a strong Russian state and claimed that Russian history was controversial, complex, and ambiguous. Although it was necessary to remember the victims of communist crimes, achievements by the communist regime mitigated these troubling aspects: victory in the war, and the supposed (but very disputable) 'fact' that Russia never sought to enslave small nations (as opposed to Nazi-Germany).¹²³

Medvedev never substantiated his words with actions. Instead, Medvedev created a commission to '*counteract falsification of history against the interests of Russia*' in 2009.¹²⁴ This commission consisted of government employees and professional historians and meant to counter versions of the *Great Patriotic War* (or Second World War) that did not conform to the regime's narrative. Soon afterwards, a parliamentarian from the governing United Russia party submitted a bill to the Duma. If adopted, it would have prohibited the rehabilitation of Nazism. This proposal effectively banned all criticism on Soviet tactics during the war.¹²⁵ The bill never became law. Likewise, the commission was disbanded after only a few years.¹²⁶ According to Chubaryan, who was one of its members, the commission had simply fulfilled its goals and was no longer needed. Other Russian specialists, such as Viktor Pleshkov (director of the Russian Academy of Science's St. Petersburg Institute of History) and Mikhail Piotrovskiy (director of the State Hermitage Museum) claimed that the commission was unnecessary from the beginning.¹²⁷ Given that the commission's creation was

120 Филиппов, *Новейшая история*, 81–82, 90, 93–94, 485; See also: Gill, *Symbolism and Regime Change*, 164–167; Satter, *It Was a Long Time Ago*, 211–216.

121 Филиппов, *Новейшая история*, 420-482 (in particular: 444–447).

122 For instance, textbooks by A.S. Orlov et al., V.I. Moriaikov et al. and V.A. Shestakov. For an analysis of its contents, see: Gill, *Symbols and Legitimacy*.

123 *Ibid.*, 63–67.

124 The commission was installed by presidential decree: Медведев, *Указ Президента Российской Федерации №549/2009*.

125 Satter, *It Was a Long Time Ago*, 347 (Both the commission and the draft law are mentioned in note 55).

126 В. Путин, *Указ Президента Российской Федерации № 1000/2012 об утверждении состава Комиссии при Президенте Российской Федерации по формированию и подготовке резерва управленческих кадров (№ 1000)*, 2012, accessed January 18, 2019, <http://kremlin.ru/acts/bank/35725>.

127 Юлия Кантор, "Без фальсификаций. «Историческая» комиссия при президенте распущена." *Московские новости*, last modified March 24, 2012, accessed January 18, 2019, <http://web.archive.org/web/20120324071833/>

announced with a large media offensive¹²⁸, it was indeed remarkable that almost nothing was heard about its work afterwards. Pleshkov and Piotrovskiy might have had a point, on the other hand, it might also have just been extraordinarily hard to actually identify and fight 'falsifications' of history.¹²⁹ The creation of the commission did set the tone; the idea that the government could and should (!) control history was established. Likewise, the idea of creating a single textbook for history education has not been forgotten.¹³⁰

In present-day Russia, the *Great Patriotic War* is the historical subject that is most prone to such tendencies, because of its importance for the regime. In essence, it has turned full circle: it is once again the main narrative of Russian history.¹³¹ Its triumph and victory now serve to legitimate Putin's regime. Almost all of its delegitimation and desacralization has been undone. The regime's version of the war has no room for experiences of victims, prisoners, forced labourers and pre- and post-war Soviet repressions. The regime promotes a simplistic and mythological representation of the victory over Nazism that appeals to mass consciousness. Furthermore, it presents Stalin as a genius war leader and not as a perpetrator of mass terror. Simultaneously, Stalin's popularity in opinion polls has increased since 2000.¹³² Like in Soviet times, the regime also uses the *Great Patriotic War* to mask the economic, political, and social weaknesses.¹³³ During the era of *glasnost* and *perestroika* there have been alternatives to the official myth, but since then Russian and international interpretations of the war diverged.¹³⁴

Overall, it has increasingly become impossible to review the Soviet past. That there has never been any legal conviction of Stalinist crimes partly explains Stalin's remaining popularity.¹³⁵ Putin's regime exploits the lack of a judgement of Stalinist crimes eagerly. The regime claims that Russia is a great power and uses the Soviet past and its achievements to support this claim. This required a history in which Russians can seek pride. The historian Vladimir Medinskiy, who has been Russian Minister of Culture since 2012, repeatedly argued for a single history that stressed the unity of the people and state.¹³⁶ Russians needed it to feel part of a greater collective entity and to feel pride in their history. The state had to take the lead in the formation of such a history: Medinskiy even said that he would like to be part of an editorial team (*avtorskiy kolektiv*) as an overseer of a 'state ideology'.¹³⁷

http://mn.ru/society_history/20120319/313741427.html.

128 Medvedev announced the commission's creation in a propagandistic videoblog entitled 'About the Great Patriotic War, historical truth and about our memory'. See: Медведев, "О Великой Отечественной войне."

129 As suggested by: Coudenys, *Het geheugen van Rusland*, 208.

130 For instance, Sergey Shakhrai, jurist, bureaucrat and the president of the board of the Russian Historical Society proposed the creation of such a textbook using *Wikipedia* technology in 2013. See: Сергей Шахрай, "Напишем историю вместе," Газета.Ru, last modified February 27, 2013, accessed January 18, 2019, https://www.gazeta.ru/comments/2013/02/27_x_4989565.shtml.

131 A generally accepted viewpoint in the field of Russian Studies, see for instance: Marples, "Historical Memory," 228; Wood, "Performing Memory," 174.

132 Lutz-Auras, *Auf Stalin*, 397.

133 A point alluded to by David Marples and Ludmila Lutz-Auras: Marples, "Historical Memory," 228; Lutz-Auras, *Auf Stalin*, 400.

134 Lutz-Auras, *Auf Stalin*, 398.

135 *Ibid.*, 397; Miller, "The Communist Past," 518.

136 On his own website, Medinskiy explicitly mentions his doctorate in historical sciences (2011). He also holds a doctorate political sciences (1999). His reputation as a scholar is shaky at best: he has been accused of plagiarism in his 2011 dissertation. In October 2017, an advisory body to the Russian Higher Attestation Commission (*Vysshaya Attestatsionnaya Komissiya*), which oversees awarding of advanced academic degrees recommended rescinding Medinskiy's doctorate, because of his unscholarly work. Nevertheless, later that month, the commission decided not to do so. See: Tom Balmforth, "Russia's 'Myth'-Busting Culture Minister Embroiled In Doctoral Thesis Scandal," *RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty*, last modified October 3, 2017, accessed October 24, 2018, <https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-medinsky-culture-ministry-thesis-scandal/28771952.html>; "Russia's Culture Minister Vladimir Medinsky Keeps PhD, Despite Plagiarism Allegations," *The Moscow Times*, last modified October 20, 2017, accessed October 24, 2018, <http://themoscowtimes.com/news/russias-mnister-of-culture-vladimir-medinsky-keeps-phd-59326>.

137 See remarks made by the minister in the following two interviews: Владимир Мединский, "Единый подход к истории задается либо государством, либо кем ни попадя," in *Россия никогда не сдавалась. Мифы войны*

Achievements from the communist past, for instance in the field of space flight, were a key element of history. They showed that throughout Russian history, people and state have always been united in order to be successful. The Soviet victory in the *Great Patriotic War* represented the greatest of all the Russian nation's accomplishments. With his activities, the minister sought to guard its legacy: Medinskiy even published a book 'debunking' foreign-produced 'myths' that diminished Russian heroism and the accomplishment of victory during the war. According to Medinskiy, such 'falsifications of history' eventually aimed at gaining territorial or monetary claims against Russia. After discussing what a 'true history' of the war should look like, he concluded that there are three lessons to learn from the *Great Patriotic War*: 1) The Russian people won the war; the Western allies only aided in attaining victory. 2) Red Army soldiers have not committed wide-scale atrocities. 3) The victory in the *Great Patriotic War* was the Russian people's greatest achievement in twentieth-century history, and its legacy needs active protection.¹³⁸ Such claims were highly dubious on their merits alone, but they are even more noteworthy because Medinskiy sought to support the second claim by citing a work by the well-known British Holocaust denier David Irving as a reputable source.¹³⁹

Medinskiy's claims were only one example of how the Russian regime used the *Great Patriotic War* to underline Russia's uniqueness and specificity. It also tallied with the general trend of promoting Russia as a specific civilization: the concept of the *Russkiy Mir* (*Russian World*). It is a form of neo-imperialist self-identification. Its main tenet is that the *Russkiy Mir* is isolated from the West and is part of the consolidation of an authoritarian regime. The ideology combines the ideas of the Victory in the *Great Patriotic War*, Russian Orthodoxy, and Russianness. In 2007, a presidential decree founded the *Russkiy Mir Foundation* (*Fond Russkiy Mir*) with the aim to promote the Russian language and culture, to maintain ties with the Russian diaspora, to foster a favourable public opinion for Russia (abroad) and to spread knowledge about Russia (again abroad). The Foundation and the Russian Orthodox Church closely cooperate (the Church also has a major role in the project of the *Russkiy Mir*). The main constituent parts of the *Russkiy Mir* are Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, and Kazakhstan. The ideology supposes that their common historical roots in Kievan (Kyivan) Rus (9th – 13th C.) and the Russian language's role in intercultural exchange are the *raison d'être* of this distinct civilizational unit. In essence, it is a project for the (re) integration of the post-Soviet space as one civilizational community based on a strong *national* interpretation of Russianness.¹⁴⁰ The *Russkiy Mir* extends beyond the borders discussed above. For instance, the places with large (locally raised) Russian minorities (such as the Baltic States) are also areas in which the *Russkiy Mir Foundation* is very active. Also, communities of Russian emigrants (such as in Israel or the United States) should also be considered a constituent part.

This all implies that the *Great Patriotic War*, besides a domestic political instrument, has also become an instrument of foreign policy for the Russian regime. The Kremlin has itself stated that history is a foreign policy instrument: in its 2008 *Foreign Policy Concept*, the regime claimed that the West used history, especially the Second World War, as a political instrument to 'contain' Russia. It identified this trend as a risk and proposed 'open and fair' discussions and the involvement of professional historians counter it. Such ideas are still part of Russia's foreign policy. According to the latest foreign policy concept

и мира (Москва: ООО «ЛитРес», 2016); Владимир Мединский, "Мифы Войны и Мира," in *Россия никогда не сдавалась. Мифы войны и мира* (Москва: ООО «ЛитРес», 2016).

138 Владимир Мединский, *Война. Мифы СССР. 1939-1945*, e-book edition. (ОЛМА Медия, 2018). Unfortunately, the e-book edition of the book does not offer any precise page numbering.

139 Medinskiy cited Irving to question why there is little discussion on atrocities committed by the western allies (such as the bombing of German cities).

140 A preliminary survey of the ideological roots of the concept of the *Russkiy Mir* has been given by Michał Wawrzonek in: Wawrzonek, "Ukraine in the 'Gray Zone' Between the 'Russkiy Mir' and Europe," 760-766.

Section II Living with Difficult Pasts: Contested Political and Historiographical Narratives of the Second World War

(2016), the country had *'to counter firmly... attempts at falsifying history and using history to inflame confrontation and revanchism in international politics, attempts at revising the outcomes of the Second World War, [My emphasis; NAKvE] and to promote depolitisation of historical discussions'*.¹⁴¹

We have to conclude that the *Great Patriotic War* is being subsumed in new post-Soviet ideological contexts. Although the political imperatives changed, the main tenets of unit-edness, victory, and glory have remained the same.

141 Cf. "Концепция внешней политики Российской Федерации," *Президент России*, last modified July 15, 2008, accessed October 19, 2018, <http://kremlin.ru/acts/news/785>; "Концепция внешней политики Российской Федерации утверждена указом президента Российской Федерации от 30 ноября 2016 г. № 640," last modified November 30, 2016, accessed October 19, 2018, <http://static.kremlin.ru/media/events/files/ru/ZIR5c-3NHwMKfbxUqKvNdqKhkA4vf3aTb.pdf>.

Recapitulation: At the Crossroads of Europe – Ukraine between Different Narratives of the Second World War

We will soon turn to a qualitative analysis of the politics of history in Ukraine and the history policies enacted by Ukrainian politicians. Before we can do that it is necessary to concisely recapitulate some of the main preliminaries of this thesis as expounded in the previous chapters.

Sandwiched between the European Union and Russia, Ukraine occupies a unique and strategic area. The ongoing international and domestic conflict in Ukraine involves many factors. Propaganda, ideological frameworks, images, and perceptions of history play a significant role. Proponents of Ukraine's European integration promote a narrative of a victimized country (by Muscovite, Russian, and/or Soviet aggression) and claim that the country is European. Politicians with their power base in the Russified East of the country have promoted close integration of Ukraine in a Russia-dominated post-Soviet space. Both camps favour different narratives of the Second World War. The latter identify with the narrative of the *Great Patriotic War*; the former use arguments similar to Eastern European 'post-communist totalitarianism'. Questions of identity have strongly divided the country since the second half of the 1990s.

Because interpretations of Second World War history are the cornerstones for the European Union, its new member states and the *Russkiy Mir*, Ukraine's future orientation will not only be decided on the battlefield in the Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts or global superpower interplay, but also in the political interpretations on the Second World War.

As explained in the introduction, the Western European engagement with the Second World War, Eastern European 'post-communist totalitarianism' and the *Great Patriotic War* serve as ideal types to measure the kind of Ukraine envisaged by the country's political elites. Ukraine's past and current leaders claim that the country wishes to integrate into the European Union. A significant portion of the population has made a similar assertion. If Ukraine's European engagement is sincere, the country will have to conform to the basic codex of human rights and the EU's *acquis communautaire*. It will also have to foster an image that fits the EU's perception of the Second World War's history.

The ongoing (pan-)European discussion on the comparability of Nazi- and Soviet crimes also pertain to Ukraine: it has also suffered at both the hands of the Nazis and Stalinism/communism. As argued afore, it would be senseless to expect Ukraine to integrate fully within the Western European notion of self-criticism and Holocaust uniqueness/centrality. However, as we can learn from the political struggle over memory between the 'old' and 'new' Europe and the *Bloodlands* controversy a country that seeks to Europeanise itself it will have to conform to a historical narrative that is currently developing: a mix between the narrative favoured in Western Europe and the narratives favoured by the new member states. Such a mix should nevertheless include one key aspect of the Western European narrative: that of self-criticism and local agency because these elements are necessities to secure an open and democratic society (which is a clear entry condition for the European Union). A choice for the Russian narrative of the *Great Patriotic War* would indicate a choice for authoritarianism and a move away from the European Union (autocratic regimes have used the narrative for their legitimation, it also lacks the notion of a tragedy that the other European narratives share). Besides a possible mix of Western and new member state nar-

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ratives, a third possibility cannot be ruled out: a distinct Ukrainian narrative that co-opts elements from interpretations from the new member states and the *Great Patriotic War*. The *Great Patriotic War* to this day resonates with a segment of the Ukrainian population.¹

In any case, it is important to realize that these narratives are only ideal types. They indicate general directions and are not explicit models by themselves. They offer a partial viewpoint to Ukrainian identity questions and the issue of foreign policy orientation. Nevertheless, it is worthwhile to utilize them in qualitative research, because these questions relate to larger pan-European questions on identity and security: it is of great importance to understand these issues and to gain insight into the politico-historical problems of Eastern Europe. The current and unexpected international crisis over Ukraine shows that there is an apparent lack of knowledge about the events.

¹ Ukraine has, as a former Soviet republic that was also one of the main battlefields in the *Great Patriotic War*, occupied a significant place within the myth of the *Great Patriotic War*. Many veterans of the *Great Patriotic War* were Soviet citizens the Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic and they or their children and (great-)grandchildren are currently Ukrainian citizens.

Section III. Ukraine and its Histories

Chapter 4. Nation Building and Post-Communist Transition: Appropriating Ukraine's Pasts (1991–2004)

4.1. Political Context: the Consequences of Independence without Regime Change and the Political Quest for a Ukrainian Identity

Ukraine's independence came as a surprise to many. The declaration of independence, adopted by the Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic's parliament (the *Verkhovna Rada* or Supreme Soviet) cited the abortive coup by communist hardliners in Moscow as motive.¹ At closer inspection, Ukraine's independence can hardly be a surprise: already in June 1990, the Rada adopted the so-called '*Declaration of State Sovereignty*'. This document declared the precedence of Ukrainian laws over all-union laws. It also asserted the right to maintain armed forces and a national bank.² Furthermore, a referendum on December 1, 1991, confirmed independence. 92.32% of the voters supported it. There was also a majority in the now troubled regions of Luhansk (83.86%), Donetsk (83.90%), and the Crimea (54.19%).³

Gorbachev's policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika* enabled the growth of a prominent nationalist movement: the *People's Movement of Ukraine* (*Narodnyi Rukh Ukrayiny*). *Rukh* consistently argued that Ukraine was a nation in its own right and not just Russia's 'little brother' (as Soviet propaganda asserted).⁴ The political struggle between the nationalist opposition and the communist establishment laid the groundwork for independence.⁵

Nationalism was not the only important factor. The ruling communist elite had a large stake in proclaiming independence. As a consequence, there was no radical regime change: a section of Ukraine's Communist Party, the so-called 'national communists', decided the outcome of the vote.⁶ Simultaneously with the referendum, presidential elections were held. The national communists' leader, Leonid Kravchuk, won them. He received 61.59% of the votes, while his main opponent, *Rukh*'s leader, Vyacheslav Chornovyl, only received

1 Л. Кравчук, *Постанова Верховної Ради Української РСР № 1427-XII/1991 про проголошення незалежності України*, 1991, accessed June 30, 2016, <http://zakon1.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1427-12>.

2 *Декларація про державний суверенітет України* (№ 55-XII), 1990, accessed June 30, 2016, <http://zakon1.rada.gov.ua/laws/main/55-12>.

3 For the independence referendum results, see: Taras Kuzio, *Ukraine: Perestroika to Independence*, 2nd ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 200.

4 The Soviet narrative of Ukrainian history argued that the Russians and Ukrainians were in essence a united people in which the Russians held the dominant leading role. The Russians, Ukrainians and Belarusians were three expressions of one people. Several events in history were a 'return' to or 'reunification' with Russia: the 1648-1657 Cossack Uprising and the Treaty of Pereyaslav, the annexation of Western Ukraine to the Ukrainian SSR in 1939 and the liberation of Ukraine in 1944. Everything that could undermine this specific conception of Ukrainian history was suppressed. This included attempts to establish a Ukrainian state after the First World War (the Ukrainian People's Republic) and its unification with the Western Ukrainian People's Republic (comprised of former Austrian Galicia), as well the *Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists* (OUN) and the *Ukrainian Insurgents Army* (UPA). Ukrainian history was not even an independent scholarly discipline in the Soviet Union due to ideological reasons. See: Wilfried Jilge and Stefan Troebst, "Divided Historical Cultures? World War II and Historical Memory in Soviet and Post-Soviet Ukraine: Introduction," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 54, no. 1 (2006): 2; Kataryna Wolczuk, "History, Europe and the National Idea: The Official Narrative of National Identity in Ukraine," *Nationalities Papers* 28, no. 4 (December 2000): 673; David R. Marples, *Heroes and Villains: Creating National History in Contemporary Ukraine* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2007), 82; Mark von Hagen, "Does Ukraine Have a History?," *Slavic Review* 54, no. 3 (1995): 664.

5 This argument has been put forward in a - now classic - interpretation of the development of Ukrainian independence: Taras Kuzio and Andrew Wilson, *Ukraine: Perestroika to Independence* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994). Please note that since then, a second edition has been published by Kuzio alone: Kuzio, *Ukraine*.

6 Kuzio, *Ukraine*, 183–184.

23.3%. Kravchuk's vote share indicated the communist establishment's role.⁷ Chornovyl's electoral base was limited to Western Ukraine, and nationalism was only a '*minority faith*'.⁸

The collaboration between democratic nationalists and national communists is often called the Right's (i.e. the nationalists') '*Grand Bargain*'. Because nationalism had such a small appeal, the nationalists could only achieve independence with the support of the communist establishment. The two political forces struck a deal: the nationalists would not challenge the national communists' hold on political power as long as the latter supported Ukraine's independence. They would also become a constructive opposition force.⁹ For the national communists, the deal provided a lifeline: the coup in Moscow threatened their position of power and an independent Ukrainian state enabled them to retain a privileged position. They used nationalism to halt the economic reforms and the democratic transition that the nationalists wanted to achieve.¹⁰

The '*Grand Bargain*' explains the large continuity between Soviet and independent Ukraine: the administrative structure remained largely intact, as well as most government institutions. The Soviet constitution even remained in force until 1996. The first two presidents also embodied this continuity: Kravchuk (1991-1994), had served as the Ukrainian Communist Party's chief of ideology. His successor, Leonid Kuchma (1994-2005), also had a successful career in Soviet times. He was an exponent of the Soviet system (and had served as director of Ukraine's largest missile factory).

To keep his part of the '*Grand Bargain*', president Kravchuk undertook a policy of ukrainization. In place of communist symbols, he introduced Ukrainian national(ist) ones and switched government communication from Russian to Ukrainian.¹¹ If the former communist elites wanted to secure their power, they also had to consolidate Ukraine as a single polity. The formation of the Ukrainian state (i.e. state-building) went hand in hand with nation-building. In a country riddled by ethnic, linguistic, religious, and social divisions, this was no easy task. Since the nation, as an *imagined community*, is dependent on a shared conception of history, the political elite also needed to foster new interpretations of history that all Ukrainians shared.

Nation-building raised difficult questions. The composition of the Ukrainian nation proved to be the hardest. Some argued that because Ukrainians were the titular ethnicity, they would be more loyal to the state. Therefore, their language and culture should define the nation. Others argued that citizenship should define who was Ukrainian. The former position was known as an ethnic nation, the latter as a civic nation.¹² A too broad civic definition of Ukrainianness would break the '*Grand Bargain*' and would detach the Ukrainian nationalists from the former communist elite, while a too narrow ethnic definition would only be attractive to the West of the country.

Nation-building policies had anti-Soviet self-assertion at its core. Nevertheless, it also had Soviet foundations. They were enacted by a state that depended on Soviet structures and institutions. Soviet nationality policy had also created Ukraine as a political entity: the Bolsheviks established a Ukrainian Soviet republic in 1919 to enlist support for their project. In 1945, the Ukrainian republic even became a founding member of the United Nations.

7 Ibid., 197.

8 The term *minority faith* was coined by Andrew Wilson in his classic: Andrew Wilson, *Ukrainian Nationalism in the 1990s: A Minority Faith* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

9 Wilson, *The Ukrainians*, 174.

10 Mikhail A. Molchanov, "Post-Communist Nationalism as a Power Resource: A Russia-Ukraine Comparison," *Nationalities Papers* 28, no. 2 (June 2000): 277-279.

11 Wilson, *The Ukrainians*, 183.

12 Orest Subtelny, *Ukraine: A History*, 4th ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 605.

This Ukrainian political entity was insignificant until the *perestroika* era.¹³ As a consequence, there also were tensions between Ukrainian nationalism and a Soviet incarnation of Ukrainian identity.

The Old-New Elite Envisioning a New Nationalised Ukraine.

The '*Grand Bargain*' influenced how Ukrainian politicians presented the Ukrainian nation's history. The nationalists denounced the Soviet past *a priori*. As former Soviet functionaries, the ruling elite could not do that. Nevertheless, the regime was in no sense nostalgic for the Soviet Union; that view of history remained limited to the political left (mainly the Communist party).¹⁴

Both the government and mainstream nationalists shared the axiom of civic nationalism.¹⁵ The new national symbols reflected this: They included nationalist symbols, such as the blue and yellow flag and the national anthem (*The glory and freedom of Ukraine have not yet perished*). Both the revolutionary era Ukrainian People's Republic and the OUN and UPA used these symbols previously. They mainly resonated in the West. Nevertheless, the new national symbols did not entirely exclude the East: the great seal depicted a Ukrainian Cossack, a symbol that was accepted in the East.¹⁶

The image of a struggling Ukrainian nation was central to ukrainization policies. Kravchuk and his government borrowed the cornerstone of their official ideology from the nationalists and initiated a paradigmatic shift. Previous Soviet conceptions of Ukrainian history were no longer valid and government policies replaced them with the standard nationalist model of Ukrainian history. The historian Mikhaïlo Hrushevskiy (1866-1934) was the founding father of this model. He was also one of the key figures in the Ukrainian People's Republic and a leading cultural figure in the Ukrainian SSR in the 1920s.¹⁷ According to Hrushevskiy, Ukraine had a legitimate claim to an independent nation- and statehood. The medieval state of Kyivan Rus was the Ukrainian nation's cradle. Several events that the Russian (and later Soviet) narrative of Ukrainian history described as reunification with Russia were actually reassertions of a Ukrainian national state (for instance the Khmelnytskyi Cossack rebellion of 1648-1654). Hrushevskiy viewed Ukraine's experiences under tsarism negatively and stated that the Russians consistently suppressed Ukrainians. The central tenet of the Hrushevskiy model is a long '*thousand-year tradition of statehood*' and an inherent democratic tradition.¹⁸

We will discuss extensively how Ukraine's new nation-builders would extend Hrushevskiy's model to Ukraine's twentieth-century history. Victimhood was essential for this extension: Ukraine was a victim of the communist regime (it shows characteristics of a post-communist narrative as discussed in chapter 2). This victim's narrative laid specific accents on the famine of 1932-1933, the Soviet political repressions (which, supposedly hit Ukraine excessively hard), the nuclear accident at Chernobyl and the needless deaths of (Ukrainian)

13 This is argued by Serhy Yekelchuk. The argument that the previous Soviet entity of the Ukrainian SSR was important for later nation building is similar to Benedict Anderson's reasoning that some aspects of colonial administration, such as existing borders, have been essential in shaping post-colonial nationalism. Cf. Serhy Yekelchuk, *Ukraine: Birth of a Modern Nation* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 178; Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 163-185.

14 Taras Kuzio, "Ukraine: Coming to Terms with the Soviet Legacy," *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 14, no. 4 (December 1998): 9.

15 Yekelchuk, *Ukraine*, 194.

16 Wilfried Jilge, "Exklusion oder Inklusion? Geschichtspolitik und Staatssymbolik in der Ukraine," *Osteuropa. Zeitschrift für Gegenwartsfragen des Ostens* 53, no. 7 (2003): 986, 991; Wilson, *The Ukrainians*, 223.

17 Recently a biography of Hrushevskiy was published: Plokhyy, *Unmaking Imperial Russia*.

18 Taras Kuzio, "History, Memory and Nation Building in the Post-Soviet Colonial Space," *Nationalities Papers* 30, no. 2 (June 2002): 251.

soldiers in the Afghan war (1979-1989).¹⁹ Many nationalists were outspoken in indicating a culprit for these moments of Ukrainian victimhood: Russia was to blame. However, the government refrained from explicitly laying all blame on Russia.²⁰

The Kravchuk administration's ukrainization policies influenced further political developments: because nationalism was only a 'minority faith', ukrainization policies raised strong resentment. Many in the East and South favoured other non-national identities, either of Soviet or regional nature.²¹ As a consequence, the administration's history policies were constrained by a force field: the struggles between civic and ethnic nationalism, the West, East and South, nationalism and other identities, and Ukrainian and Soviet historical narratives, shaped them.

Kuchma's Scaled-Down Ukrainization

Leonid Kravchuk lost the 1994 presidential elections to his former Prime Minister Leonid Kuchma with a slim minority (45.2% vs. 52.3%). It is generally considered that a few factors contributed to this: the lack of economic reforms and prospects were two of them. Many voters, especially in the South and East were also opposed to Kravchuk's ukrainization policies. Kuchma's election campaign offered this disenchanted group of voters something else: he promised to stop ukrainization policies and to give the Russian language an official status. A look at the map is rather revealing: In 1991 Kravchuk received his support in the East, South and Centre, while the nationalist Vyacheslav Chornobyl received a majority of the votes in the West. By 1994 the map almost reversed: The Centre was split between Kravchuk and Kuchma, the West supported the incumbent, while the East and South voted for his challenger. Since voters in all regions felt the lack of reforms in similar ways, both candidate's stance on ukrainization seems to have been an important deciding factor. The growth of left-wing parties in parliamentary elections hinted in the same direction. The hard-line Communist party led by Petro Symonenko and the 'reformed' Socialist party led by Oleksandr Moroz, were the main examples of such parties. The communists even won most seats in parliament (121/450 seats).²²

Kuchma was in a difficult situation. On the one hand he had to stop ukrainization policies: not only was it an electoral promise, but such a move was also required to impede further growth of the political left. On the other hand, he was now the head of a state that required ukrainization policies to legitimate its existence. Kuchma also was an opportunistic politician: his administration lacked a genuine collective identity and was not truly interested in either Soviet, Russian or Ukrainian identity. Logically Kuchma could not keep his campaign promise: he did not end ukrainization but merely scaled it down to impede further growth of the left. However, the basic policy outlined by Kravchuk was kept in place.²³ Likewise, Kuchma did not make Russian an official language. By instead focussing on much-needed economic reforms Kuchma's administration could mitigate the negative fall-out of not keeping its promises.

Kravchuk had never been able to adopt a new post-Soviet constitution for Ukraine because it was still unclear whether a constitution would cater to a *civic* or *ethnic* nation-state. Be-

19 Владимир Кравченко, "Бой с тенью: Советское прошлое в исторической памяти современного украинского общества," *Ab Imperio*, no. 2 (2004): 339.

20 Rawi Abdelal, "Memories of Nations and States: Institutional History and National Identity in Post-Soviet Eurasia," *Nationalities Papers* 30, no. 3 (September 2002): 469.

21 *Ibid.*

22 Yekelchuk, *Ukraine*, 201; Wilson, *The Ukrainians*, 202; Wolczuk, "History, Europe and the National Idea," 679; Subtelny, *Ukraine*, 607.

23 Yekelchuk, *Ukraine*, 201; Alexander Motyl, "State, Nation, and Elites in Independent Ukraine," in *Contemporary Ukraine. Dynamics of Post-Soviet Transformation*, ed. Taras Kuzio (Armonk and London: M.E. Sharpe, 1998), 6-8.

cause Kuchma was less occupied with ideology, he was able to force a compromise on the quibbling lawmakers. It referred to both civic and ethnic variants of nationhood.²⁴ The adoption of the constitution demonstrated a key aspect of Kuchma's rule: his lack of ideological profile meant that he sought the path of least resistance and made compromises.

As a former communist, Kuchma needed identity politics as much as his predecessor. At the occasion of the fifth anniversary of Ukrainian independence in 1996, Kuchma presented an official taxonomy of Ukraine's 'heroic state-builders'. His list of 'heroes' started with the Kyivan Rus Prince Volodymyr the Great (who brought Eastern Christianity to Kyiv) and ended with Mikhailo Hrushevskiy. By doing so, he claimed that Ukraine had a long tradition of statehood that started in the middle ages. Kuchma also claimed that there were three attempts for a revival of the Ukrainian state: the Cossacks (17th century), the Revolutionary states (1917-1921) and the contemporary Ukrainian state (post-1991). Kuchma's taxonomy emphasised episodes that were more distant and avoided toxic subjects such as the OUN and UPA. This also gave him room to present the Ukrainian SSR as a predecessor to independent Ukraine (an idea that is not without merit). It also enabled him to avoid a direct re-evaluation of the Soviet past.²⁵

Kuchma's Second Term: Ambivalence and Autocratization

The continuing appeal of left-wing politics in the East also indicated a more positive view of the Soviet past in that region. The results of the 1999 presidential elections illustrated this: During the first round, none of the thirteen candidates, representing the entire spectrum of political persuasions and oligarchical clan interests, gained the required 51% majority. A constitutionally required runoff between Kuchma (36.49% in the first round) and the communist leader Symonenko (23.24%) ensued. In this second round, Kuchma won a majority of 56.25% (vs 37.8% for Symonenko).²⁶ In the East, only his home region of Dnipropetrovsk (renamed to Dnipro in 2016) and one other region supported the incumbent. Even in these regions, a significant proportion of the population voted for Symonenko. The almost unanimous support for Kuchma in the West secured his re-election. A choice many in the nationally conscious West made reluctantly as Kuchma was simply the lesser of two evils.

After his re-election, Kuchma relied on a more eclectic pantheon of historical representations. He combined the 'best bits' of Soviet and Ukrainian history: He referred both to the idea of a national liberation struggle and the notion of Soviet heroism. He also started to cater to different histories for different audiences.²⁷ Kuchma had integrated parts of the industrial elites from the Eastern Donbass region in his administration because they could threaten the state-building process. Since the nation-building policies were unpopular in the Donbass, the regime's enthusiasm and support for them declined²⁸ and Soviet history regained importance.²⁹

24 Subtelny, *Ukraine*, 607. The long process of drafting a constitution has been described and analysed in: Kataryna Wolczuk, *Moulding of Ukraine: The Constitutional Politics of State Formation* (New York, NY, USA: Central European University Press (CEU Press), 2001).

25 Wolczuk, "History, Europe and the National Idea," 681–683.

26 The election results can be found on the website of the Central Elections Committee: "Єдиний загальнодержавний одномандатний виборчий округ. Результати виборів 31.10.1999 року," accessed July 1, 2016, <http://www.cvk.gov.ua/pls/vp1999/webvp1.webproc110?kodvib=100>; "Єдиний загальнодержавний одномандатний виборчий округ. Підсумки голосування 14.11.1999 року," accessed July 1, 2016, <http://www.cvk.gov.ua/pls/vp1999/webvp1.webproc110?kodvib=200>.

27 Wilson, *The Ukrainians*, 221, 227; Jilge, "The Politics of History," 69.

28 Subtelny, *Ukraine*, 607.

29 Ярослав Грицак, "Десять років незалежності з погляду історика," *СвітЮА*, last modified August 29, 2001, accessed June 3, 2016, http://web.archive.org/web/20061119020146/http://www.svitua.com/ukr/news/look_news.php?id=243&menu_id=101&bmenu_id=88.

Creeping autocratization also characterized Kuchma's second term.³⁰ The infamous 'Kuchmagate scandal' of 2000-2001 exposed these tendencies. In 2000, one of Kuchma's bodyguards leaked recordings of the president's private conversations. These exposed Kuchma's willingness to use violence against political opponents. They also confirmed that the president ordered the kidnapping of Georgiy Gongadze, a critical journalist. In September 2000, Gongadze disappeared. His decapitated body was later found in a forest outside Kyiv.³¹ Because of these revelations, several opposition forces (nationalists, communists, and socialists) organised a monthslong protest campaign 'Ukraine without Kuchma'.

The Role of the Historian: Feeding the Politician

Ukrainian politicians were not the only actors involved in nation-building. Established historians assisted them. Some did so explicitly and collaborated in history policies. Others worked in the background and ukraininized history as an academic exercise (and coincidentally aided the politicians). Some of these historians did not realize that they fulfilled a partisan political program. Instead, they considered their efforts part of a process of general decommunization.³²

Efforts by historians also showed the remaining importance of Soviet institutions. Like the national communists, established historians realized that they had to remain relevant to keep their employment. To do so, they shifted the focus of their historiography. Just as the politicians, historians at universities and the Institute of Ukrainian History of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences started to use the Hrushevskiy model of Ukrainian history. Ukrainization of historiography was 'change in stability'.³³

One specific historian stood out: Stanislav Kulchytskyi. He was the highest-ranking of all the historians involved and worked at the Institute of Ukrainian History of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences since the 1960s. He was its deputy head and the chief researcher of its department 'Ukraine in the 1920s and 1930s'.³⁴ He greatly influenced debates on the famine of 1932-1933. He has also been a leader for ukrainization of other historical subjects.³⁵

Historians reformed their historiographical institutions straightforwardly: Chairs of 'party history' were simply renamed to chairs of 'Ukrainian history'.³⁶ Historians relied on the structures of the previous Soviet paradigm as a mould for new nationalist content. As a consequence, they transferred several of its characteristics to a new national Ukrainian historiography.³⁷ These included an overblown emphasis on the linear development of history,

30 The notion of increased authoritarianism during Kuchma's second term in office, is hardly controversial. It is even discussed in the main English language handbook for Ukrainian history: See: Subtelny, *Ukraine*, 653.

31 Gongadze was of Georgian origin and the ukrainized version of his name (Heorhyi Honhadze) is also common.

32 Георгий Касьянов, "Современное состояние украинской историографии: методологические и институциональные аспекты," *Ab Imperio*, no. 2 (2003): 511.

33 von Hagen, "Does Ukraine Have a History?," 664.

34 Marples, *Heroes and Villains*, 48-49.

35 Examples of this are the historians Volodymyr Potulnytskyi and Iaroslav Isayevych. The latter has offered an infuriated response to Mark von Hagen's proposal that Ukrainian historians should quit their nationalizing historiographies and instead use Ukrainian history as a means to construct transnational historiography: cf. von Hagen, "Does Ukraine Have a History?"; Iaroslav Isayevych, "Ukrainian Studies - Exceptional or Merely Exemplary?," *Slavic Review* 54, no. 3 (1995): 702-708. Potulnytskyi has claimed that the quest to find a national Ukrainian perspective and to counter the predominant Russo- and Polonocentric views of Ukrainian history was the most important task for Ukrainian historiography after the country's independence: Volodymyr Potulnytskyi, "Das ukrainische historische Denken im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert: Konzeptionen und Periodisierung," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 45, no. 1 (1997): 2.

36 von Hagen, "Does Ukraine Have a History?," 664-666. See also: Serhy Yekelchuk, "A Long Goodbye: The Legacy of Soviet Marxism in Post-Communist Ukrainian Historiography," *Ab Imperio*, no. 4 (2012): 402-407; Andriy Zarynchuk, "On the Importance of Location and the Dangers of Self-Recognition," *Ab Imperio*, no. 2 (2003): 482.

37 Касьянов, "Современное состояние," 498; Ярослав Грицак, "Українська історіографія: 1991-2001. Десятиліття перемем," *Ab Imperio*, no. 2 (2003): 437-438.

ethnic exclusivity, determinism, and (obligatory) patriotism.³⁸ The most significant change was the introduction of national victimhood as the main motive of Ukrainian history. Historians contrasted it with a story of heroism in a tragic struggle for national independence.³⁹

In the Soviet era, the government had a monopoly on (Ukrainian) history. Ukrainization never achieved such a status. Alternative voices existed. For instance, the Academy of Science's Institute of Ukrainian History also employed non-nationalist historians, such as Heorhiy Kasianov.⁴⁰ Elsewhere in the country, at Lviv's Ukrainian Catholic University, the liberal historian Yaroslav Hrytsak opposed the new national narrative.⁴¹ Nevertheless, their contributions remained marginal and did not influence the mainstream.⁴²

Because Soviet institutions shaped the new Ukrainian national historical narrative, the legacy of Soviet communism was not seriously discussed.⁴³ This enabled some to claim that Ukraine needs to be fully decommunized, while others insisted that the nationalisation went too far. These two lines of reasoning started to influence history policies around the year 2000 when Ukrainian politics became more volatile.

4.2. A Tragedy for Ukraine: The Man-Made Famine of 1932-1933

Political Appropriation of the Holodomor: Legitimation through Genocide

The famine of 1932-1933 first became a political topic during the *perestroika* era. At that time, the nationalist opposition used it to discredit the communist regime. Simultaneously, foreign scholars gave much attention to the famine: Robert Conquest published his seminal *Harvest of Sorrow* in 1986.⁴⁴ That same year the US Congress ordered a study on the famine topic (its findings were published in 1988).⁴⁵ These domestic and foreign developments forced the communist establishment to recognise the existence of the famine in 1987. Any discussion of the famine's causes remained impossible.⁴⁶ The regime's need for nation-building policies changed that situation after independence.

38 Касьянов, "Современное состояние," 498.

39 In 1995, Mark von Hagen, posed the notion of victimhood and heroism as foundations for Ukrainian history as one of the possibilities for the development of Ukrainian historiography, and warned for its consequences. Von Hagen noted that this would result in imposing in Ukraine a history, which was developed in the diaspora. Such a narrative would also see the establishment of a Ukrainian state as a 'teleological triumph of an essentialist, primordial Ukrainian nation'. See: von Hagen, "Does Ukraine Have a History?," 665.

40 Serhy Yekelchuk, "Bridging the Past and the Future: Ukrainian History Writing Since Independence," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 53, no. 2-4 (June 2011): 572.

41 Hrytsak is well known for being the co-author to the medievalist Nataliya Yakovenko in the project *Narys z istoriyi Ukrainy* (Overviews of Ukrainian History), in which he was responsible for the volume on modern history. This project provided an alternative to the historiography based on the national model and sought to deconstruct the linear teleological narrative of Ukrainian national history by using anthropological and thematic approaches to history as used in Western historiography. See: Ярослав Грицак, *Нариси історії України: формування модерної української нації XIX-XX ст* (Київ: Генеза, 1996), accessed July 20, 2016, <http://history.franko.lviv.ua/PDF%20Final/Grycak.pdf>.

42 Грицак, "Українська історіографія: 1991-2001. Десятиліття перемін," 448.

43 Yaroslav Hrytsak, "On Sails and Gales, and Ships Sailing in Various Directions: Post-Soviet Ukraine," *Ab Imperio*, no. 1 (2004): 248.

44 Robert Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-Famine* (London: Hutchinson, 1986).

45 Commission on the Ukraine Famine, *Investigation of the Ukrainian Famine, 1932-1933: Report to Congress* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1988).

46 Wilfried Jilge, "Holodomor und Nation. Der Hunger im ukrainischen Geschichtsbild," *Osteuropa. Zeitschrift für Gegenwartsfragen des Ostens* 54, no. 12 (2004): 150.

Walking the Tight-Rope between Delegitimation and Exploitation: Kravchuk's 1993 Holodomor Anniversary

Most famine-related history policies were introduced during major anniversary years. The first of these was the 60th anniversary in 1993. That year, politicians and historians sought to include the *Holodomor* in the national foundational myth.⁴⁷

President Kravchuk significantly shifted the official interpretation of the famine. He moved beyond the 1987 recognition and stressed that the famine was artificial, and even denounced it as a genocide. According to the president, the Soviet system did not allow for a discussion of the famine. This enabled the Soviet regime to implement a starvation policy.⁴⁸ This was a bold statement: the idea that the famine was a genocide was still a minority position. Although historians had been studying the famine since 1987, they had not (yet) reached such a conclusion.⁴⁹ The structure of Kravchuk's argument revealed his intentions: he meant to legitimize his regime. Because Ukraine was now a democracy, it would be impossible to hide the famine from the population as Stalin did. Thanks to Kravchuk, it was impossible to repeat such a crime.⁵⁰

Kravchuk also condemned the *Holodomor* as a symptom of 'illicit totalitarianism'.⁵¹ The use of the term 'totalitarianism' was important: it gave the regime an easy method to distance itself from Soviet rule. It also served as a means to bind the country together. The

47 Kasianov, "Holodomor and the Politics of Memory," 172. This study is indebted to Kasianov for its reading of Holodomor-related history policies. It is therefore appropriate to make a note on his position on the Holodomor. Kasianov is, by far, the most prominent scholar on the topic of Holodomor-related history policies and one of their most ardent opponents. His main work on such policies contained a disclaimer that his work was not related to any political discussions and that he did not intend his book to be used in politics. (See: Касьянов, *Dance macabre*, 4.) This position is commendable on the one hand, but unrealistic on the other: unfortunately, history policies involve historians, whether they want to or not. We also have to account for Kasianov's own position in the genocide question; Kasianov has claimed that Stalin's collectivization policies have caused the famine. The famine affected Ukraine more than other regions of the Soviet Union, because the republic relied on grain production. This ruled out that the Holodomor was a genocide. On the other hand, Kasianov argued that the famine had a national aspect and that it was a conflict between the the Kremlin and the social-cultural elite in the Ukrainian republic. Kasianov sees the famine as an important variant of the all-union famine and refuses to denote it as a genocide. He believes that Ukrainian historiography internalized the notion without any critical analysis and that it has become an ideological cliché instead of an object of scholarly analysis (See also: John-Paul Himka, "Encumbered Memory: The Ukrainian Famine of 1932–33," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 14, no. 2 (2013): 421.)

48 Jilge, "Holodomor und Nation," 155.

49 In 1991, Kulchytskyi published a monograph in which he used the word *Holodomor* and described the famine as caused by the state: С.В. Кульчицький, *Ціна «великого перелому»* (Київ: Україна, 1991). A joint study by Kulchytskyi, Danylenko and Kasianov from the same year pointed to (in)action by the Soviet leadership as a cause for the famine: В.М. Даниленко, Г.В. Касьянов, and С.В. Кульчицький, *Сталінізм на Україні: 20–30-ті роки* (Київ: Либідь, 1991). While the notion of a genocide has since then taken ground in Ukrainian historiography, it is still not generally accepted in international historiography. Most notably, Robert William Davies and Stepen Wheatcroft argue that Stalin did not purposefully create the famine, but could have prevented it: R. W. Davies and Stephen G. Wheatcroft, "Stalin and the Soviet Famine of 1932 – 33: A Reply to Ellman," *Europe-Asia Studies* 58, no. 4 (2006): 625–633. More recently, Norman Naimark, argued that the famine had 'genocidal qualities', because Stalin explicitly created victim groups out of political enemies: Norman M. Naimark, *Stalin's Genocides, Human rights and crimes against humanity* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2012), 69–79, 136. In 2017, Anne Applebaum demonstrated, that the very notion of a genocide is much more complicated (and maybe even needs a revision). She underlined that resolving the issue of Ukrainian nationalist identity in the Soviet Union was one of Stalin's intentions when he initiated the famine. Nevertheless, he did not seek to eliminate all Ukrainians, and Ukrainians were complicit in the famine's execution as well. Applebaum also stressed that the Holodomor does not meet the legal definition of a genocide (the 1948 UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide), because the famine was not intended to kill *all* Ukrainians. She also showed that the UN had narrowed down this legal definition of genocide so that it did not include the extermination of a 'political group'. If the latter had been the case the Soviet Union's actions against the *Kulaks* would have been a genocide (and therefore also the Holodomor). See: Applebaum, *Red Famine*, 354, 356–357. For the changes in thinking about the Holodomor in Ukrainian historiography between 1987–1993 see: Vasil'ev, "Zwischen Politisierung und Historisierung," 169–170.

50 Jilge, "Holodomor und Nation," 155.

51 Kasianov, "Holodomor and the Politics of Memory," 168.



Figure 5: The Holodomor Monument at St. Michael's Square in Kyiv

Photo: Nicolaas A. Kraft van Ermel, August 3, 2013

Holodomor had affected the East and South of the country. Nevertheless, memory of the famine was strongest in the West. This gave a chance to integrate different regions in one historical narrative.⁵²

Public commemorations in September 1993 supposed to create more consciousness of the tragedy that had befallen Ukraine. Their main tenet was that Moscow caused the famine.⁵³ They were extensive and meant to educate. For instance, on September 12 (the so-called *Day of Sorrow*) the president took part in a solemn procession from Kyiv's *St. Sophia square* to *St. Michael square* and unveiled a monument to the *Holodomor's* victims. Representatives from almost every Ukrainian oblast placed wreaths at this monument, while others placed soil from the famine-stricken areas.⁵⁴ The monument was simple, but plaintive and quietly displayed its message.⁵⁵ It was relatively small and depicted a mother and child whose silhouettes formed the shape of a cross. As part of these commemorations, the authorities also installed public expositions along Kyiv's main avenue, the *Khreshchatyk*. They provided the public with information about the famine and soon became 'places of pilgrimage': people put flowers, fruit, and bread in honour of the victims besides them.⁵⁶

Kravchuk could not exploit the famine fully: he had to thread a thin line. Too much condemnation (i.e. more political, legal and policy consequences) would de-legitimize Kravchuk's regime, because it was comprised of many former communists. On the other hand, too little condemnation of the Holodomor contained the risk that right-wing nationalists could criticize the regime and proclaim the end of the '*Grand Bargain*'.⁵⁷

52 Andreas Kappeler, "Das historische Erbe der Ukraine. Schichten und Elemente: Ein Essay," *Osteuropa. Zeitschrift für Gegenwartsfragen des Ostens* 60, no. 2-4 (2010): 27-30.

53 Catherine Wanner, *Burdens of Dreams: History and Identity in Post-Soviet Ukraine*, Post-Communist Cultural Studies (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), 155.

54 *Ibid.*, 156-157.

55 *Ibid.*; Wilson, *The Ukrainians*, 227.

56 Wanner, *Burdens of Dreams*, 156.

57 Georgii Kas'ianov, "The Holodomor and the Building of a Nation," *Russian Politics and Law* 48, no. 5 (2010): 31;

Some nationalists opposed the government with more outspoken claims. For instance, poet and former dissident Ivan Drach explicitly blamed Russia for the famine. His criticism carried some weight in Ukrainian society because he was the leader of Rukh at that time. He also demanded Russian repentance and acknowledgement of its past wrongs. The government could not join such statements since it did not want to antagonize relations with Russia. Drach also refused to support the government's attempts at legitimization: he also blamed Ukrainian communists. The Kremlin might have ordered the famine, but the Ukrainian Communist Party executed it.⁵⁸ Nationalist criticism notwithstanding, the Holodomor commemorations earned Kravchuk much credit. He gained significant support from the national democratic side.⁵⁹

Nevertheless, Kravchuk's *Holodomor* commemorations were rhetorically empty. They left almost no institutional legacy related to the famine. Kravchuk's main instrument for the famine commemorations was the presidential decree entitled '*On measures in connection with the 60th anniversary of the Holodomor in Ukraine*'.⁶⁰ It was rather short and bureaucratic and was devoid of any real political or ideological statements.⁶¹ The decree mainly arranged some practical affairs for the organisation of the *Day of Sorrow*.⁶² It was mainly important because it used the more politically charged word *Holodomor* extensively and gave a kind of legal credibility to the notion that the famine was artificial and meant to '*kill by hunger*'.⁶³

A special committee organized the *Day of Sorrow*. Deputy Prime Minister Zhulinskyi chaired it, and many representatives of the 60s-generation of dissidents, members of Rukh, James Mace (the main researcher of the US commission of inquiry), Robert Conquest, and diaspora Ukrainians participated as well. Stanislav Kulchytskyi was also one of the committee's key members.⁶⁴ By co-opting nationalists and their foreign partners in the organisation of the *Day of Sorrow*, the regime could neutralize or weaken their potential criticism of the commemoration. Kravchuk could not let them hijack the commemorations.

During these commemorations nationalists also demanded a Nuremberg-style trial of the Holodomor's perpetrators. Of course, this demand came from a particular niche in Ukraine's political landscape. Kravchuk did not give in to this pressure. This was a further indication that Kravchuk was not concerned with the famine's memory, but its political instrumentalization.⁶⁵ This strategy might have worked in the short-term, but demands for a trial did not fade and would resurface during the administration of Viktor Yushchenko.⁶⁶

Kravchuk also faced the real risk of a communist backlash: the parliament was formed in 1990 before Ukraine became independent. Many parliamentarians were (past) members

Kasianov, "Holodomor and the Politics of Memory," 168.

58 Wanner, *Burden of Dreams*, 155–156.

59 Georgiy Kasianov, "The Great Famine of 1932-1933 (Holodomor) and the Politics of History in Contemporary Ukraine," in *Postdiktatorische Geschichtskulturen im Süden und Osten Europas*, ed. Stefan Troebst and Susan Baumgartl (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2010), 620–621.

60 Л. Кравчук, Указ Президента України № 38/93/1993 про заходи у зв'язку з 60-ми роковинами голодомору в Україні, 1993, accessed July 22, 2016, <http://zakon3.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/38/93>.

61 Kas'ianov, "The Holodomor and the Building of a Nation," 31.

62 The Cabinet of Ministers provided further funds to organize the *Day of Sorrow*: Л. Кучма, Розпорядження Кабінету Міністрів України № 589-р/1993 про виділення Міністерству культури коштів для проведення Днів Скорботи і Пам'яті жертв голодомору в Україні у 1932 - 1933 роках, 1993, accessed July 22, 2016, <http://zakon3.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/589-93-%D1%80>; Л. Кучма, Розпорядження Кабінету Міністрів України № 770-р/1993 про виділення коштів дирекції Оржкомітету з підготовки та проведення заходів у зв'язку з 60-ми роковинами голодомору, 1993, accessed July 22, 2016, <http://zakon3.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/770-93-%D1%80>.

63 Kas'ianov, "The Holodomor and the Building of a Nation," 31.

64 Jilge, "Holodomor und Nation," 154; Kasianov, "Holodomor and the Politics of Memory," 170. Кравчук, Указ Президента України № 38/93/1993.

65 Kas'ianov, "The Holodomor and the Building of a Nation," 620–621.

66 See also "5.3. Unifying the Nation with the Holodomor: A Process of Commemoration and Judicialization", page 140 and further.

of the Communist party. The Communists were also one of the most prominent opposition forces and specifically opposed ukrainization (especially during the 1994 parliamentary elections). When Deputy Prime Minister Zhulinskyi proposed to organise a parliamentary hearing on the famine in 1993, there was little chance of success. Many parliamentarians had little reason to give the president a platform. Still wanting to associate himself with the Holodomor, Kravchuk addressed a historical conference instead. His speech called for the 're-establishment of historical truth' and re-affirmed his commitment to the genocide thesis.⁶⁷

The 1993 *Day of Sorrow* was a one-day event with little long-term effects. Ukrainian history textbooks reflected this. They still had rather diverse presentations of the famine: some described it as an (ethnic) genocide, others as a sociocide (e.g. the famine was aimed at the kulaks as a social class because they opposed Stalin's collectivisation campaigns). At least, all textbooks agreed that the Ukrainians were victims.⁶⁸ It does not seem like politicians explicitly used the education system to promote one single post-communist narrative and state ideology regarding the Holodomor.⁶⁹

The Holodomor as an Instrument in Political Struggle: Kuchma and the Holodomor

As outlined above, Kravchuk had initiated the first Holodomor-related history policies as part of his Ukrainization policies. Since Kuchma scaled down ukrainization it is only logical that government policy vis-à-vis the Holodomor also changed: Kuchma only instrumentalized the Holodomor when it gave him an advantage in a particular political situation or conflict.⁷⁰ As a consequence, Holodomor-related efforts were initially less extensive. Because of the anti-Soviet ideas embedded in the notion of a famine-genocide Kuchma refrained from using that overtly. Simply said: Kuchma had to avoid sources of social discontent between different regions. The famine was a prime example of such sources.⁷¹

The famine did not entirely fade from government policy, but it became less important. During the 65th anniversary of the famine (1997-1998), Kuchma reiterated the government's position: the famine was a genocide. The government-sponsored a historical conference to assert that claim. This conference even established the notion of a famine-genocide as the orthodox interpretation.⁷² From then on, the idea of a famine-genocide would shape history policies.

During these commemorations, the Kuchma regime also established many of the commemorative practices still in place today. For instance, it instituted the so-called '*Day in Memory of the Victims of the Holodomor*' on the fourth Saturday of November. This was even Kuchma's main famine-related legacy.⁷³ Quickly after its institution, Kuchma pluralized the name of the Remembrance Day (e.g. *Day in Memory of the Victims of the Holodomors*). The new plural form further emphasized Ukrainian victimhood: the country was the victim of

67 Kasianov, "Holodomor and the Politics of Memory," 170–171; Kasianov, "The Great Famine of 1932-1933," 622.

68 For this line of reasoning see: Jilge, "Holodomor und Nation," 156. The whole notion of an ethnic genocide was promoted in the popular textbook of Fedir Turchenko: Ф.Г. Турченко, *Новітня історія України* (Київ: Генеза, 1995), 225.; The argument that social background was important in the famine was voiced in a textbook authored by a collective of which Stanislav Kulchytskyi was the main author: С.В. Кульчицький, М.В. Коваль, and Ю.О. Курносів, *Історія України. Пробний підручник для 10-11 кл.*, 2nd ed. (Київ: Освіта, 1994).

69 Janmaat, "History and National Identity Construction: The Great Famine in Irish and Ukrainian History Textbooks," 97.

70 Kas'ianov, "The Holodomor and the Building of a Nation," 30.

71 Jilge, "Holodomor und Nation," 156-157.

72 *Ibid.*, 157-158.

73 Kuchma did this with the following decree: Л. Кучма, *Указ Президента України № 1310/98/1998 про встановлення Дня пам'яті жертв голодоморів*, 1998, accessed July 22, 2016, <http://zakon3.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1310/98>.

a series of famines (1921-1923, 1932-1933, and 1946-1947), which formed a consistent (Muscovite) anti-Ukrainian policy.⁷⁴

Why did Kuchma suddenly feel the urge to institute *Holodomor*-related policies, when the famine was less important to him? It all came down to timing: Kuchma's first term ended in 1999. As we know, his re-election was secured based on a Western Ukrainian electorate and playing the 'anti-communist card'. Kuchma thus needed a token to present himself as the alternative to renewed communist rule over Ukraine. Association with the *Holodomor* gave him the means to do so.⁷⁵

After the 1997-1998 anniversary, the famine again faded from Ukrainian politics, only to return during Kuchma's second term in office. It returned against the background of Kuchma's increasing authoritarianism and the unified '*Ukraine without Kuchma*' opposition movement. The *Holodomor* became one of the main issues of contention between the regime and the opposition.

Kuchma's main decree on the *Holodomor* dated from 2002. It ordered the government to build a memorial for the victims of the *Holodomors* (plural is in the original decree) and political repressions and to organize a concourse for this project. During official visits, foreign dignitaries would also lay wreaths at this monument. The decree also ordered the government to propose a law on the evaluation of the tragedy in Ukrainian history to the Rada and to develop an annual ritual for the *Day in Memory of the Victims of the Holodomor* (singular is in the original decree) and *political repressions*. Furthermore, Kuchma ordered the government to work with the National Academy of Sciences to found a scientific research centre devoted to the study of the *Holodomors* (plural according to the decree) and to for international recognition of the famine, to request religious organisations to organize memorial services for the victims of the famine and political repressions.⁷⁶ None of these measures was new and they repeated earlier practices or suggestions. This illustrated Kuchma's intention: association with the *Holodomor* would prevent the opposition from taking the initiative. That Kuchma did not realize much of his measures further underlined this. For instance, the regime never built the monument it suggested to build.⁷⁷

In February 2003, the regime and the opposition fought each other in a parliamentary hearing on the famine. Opposition leader Yushchenko proposed this venue. Again, Kuchma could not allow the opposition to take the initiative. He attempted to use the hearings to drive a wedge between different opposition parties. Both the national democratic opposition and the communists accused the present administration of totalitarianism. The *Holodomor*-issue strongly divided the Communist party and the rest of the opposition. Recognizing the *Holodomor* as genocide was also an accusation against the (Soviet-era) Communist party. Its contemporary namesake could therefore not support recognition.⁷⁸

Kuchma's setup worked: During the hearing, only the non-communist opposition parties used the *Holodomor* to accuse the present government of totalitarianism. The administration instrumentalized the famine in much the same way; it accused the national democratic opposition of working with the Communist party. How could the opposition join forces with the representatives of the *Holodomor*'s perpetrators and the former oppressors of the Ukrainians? Deputy Prime Minister Dmytro Tabachnyk made a clear connection between the *Holodomor* and the present: the famine caused the current situation in the country and

74 Kasianov, "Holodomor and the Politics of Memory," 173.

75 Jilge, "Holodomor und Nation," 157-159.

76 Л. Кучма, *Розпорядження Президента України № 393/2002-рп/2002 про додаткові заходи у зв'язку з 70-ми роковинами голодомору в Україні*, 2002, accessed July 22, 2016, <http://zakon3.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/393/2002-%D1%80%D0%BF?test=e/mMfe2sm7muvjxkZi5A4JplH4nUs80msh8Ie6>.

77 Kasianov, "Holodomor and the Politics of Memory," 173; Kasianov, "The Great Famine of 1932-1933," 622-623.

78 Jilge, "Holodomor und Nation," 159; Kasianov, "The Great Famine of 1932-1933," 174.

society had yet to recover from its consequences. This was also the narrative presented by the national-democratic opposition. Neither the government nor the opposition was sincere in these claims: they mainly meant to discredit each other with such arguments. The communists claimed that one could not use the *Holodomor* for such aims: Instead, Symonenko raised another (far-fetched) accusation: the government used the *Holodomor* to hide its own criminal (and genocidal) policy.⁷⁹

Because the administration and significant parts of the opposition agreed on the evaluation that the *Holodomor* was a genocide, the Rada issued an affirmative declaration during a short session:

We, the participants of the special session of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine on May 14, 2003, held today, recognize the Holodomor of 1932-1933 as an act of genocide against the Ukrainian people, according to the diabolical plan of the Stalinist regime.

We believe that the qualification of that catastrophe for the Ukrainian nation as genocide is essential for the stabilization of socio-political relations in Ukraine. It is an important factor in the restoration of historical justice, the moral healing of terrible social stress of several generations and the irrefutable proof of the irreversibility of the democratization of society and that attempts to establish a new dictatorship in Ukraine neglect the most important human right: the right to life.⁸⁰

Politically the declaration served both the government and the opposition: they could use it to accuse the other of totalitarianism. The document was also important from a legal perspective: it was the first normative legal document that referred to the famine as genocide.⁸¹ It firmly established the notion of genocide in the legislature.⁸²

Initiatives in 2003 went beyond recognition of the *Holodomor* as a genocide. The Rada also recommended the Cabinet of Ministers to propose a bill that would offer a 'political-judicial valuation of the *Holodomor* of 1932-1933, its consequences for the Ukrainian people and the status of the victims of the *Holodomor*'.⁸³ Parliament also made other recommendations: the founding of a research centre and the publication of memorial books (with lists of all the victims). It also recommended the organization of a competition for the building of a national *Holodomor* memorial in Kyiv and the erection of monuments outside of Ukraine. It also suggested other branches of government to raise the awareness of the famine through mass media, and a documentary in Ukrainian, English, German, and French. The Ministry of Education was advised to conduct research and to publish its results and use the education system to increase the remembrance of the victims. The Ministry of Foreign affairs had to seek international recognition of the *Holodomor* as a genocide.⁸⁴

79 Kas'ianov, "The *Holodomor* and the Building of a Nation," 34–35; Jilge, "Holodomor und Nation," 160.

80 В. Литвин, *Постанова Верховної Ради України № 789-IV/2003 про звернення до Українського народу учасників спеціального засідання Верховної Ради України 14 травня 2003 року щодо вшанування пам'яті жертв голодомору 1932-1933 років*, 2003, accessed July 22, 2016, <http://zakon3.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/789-15>.

81 Петро Долганов, "Формування та імплементація меморального законодавства України у сфері вшанування пам'яті жертв геноцидів і подолання їхніх наслідків," *Голокості Сучасність* 13, no. 1 (2015): 14–15.

82 Kasianov, "Holodomor and the Politics of Memory," 175.

83 В. Литвин, *Постанова Верховної Ради України 607-IV/2003 про рекомендації парламентських слухань щодо вшанування пам'яті жертв голодомору 1932-1933 років*, 2003, accessed July 22, 2016, <http://zakon0.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/607-15>.

84 В. Литвин, *Постанова Верховної Ради України 258-IV/2002 про 70-ті роковини голодомору в Україні*, 2002, accessed July 22, 2016, <http://zakon3.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/258-15>.

Such recommendations copied many aspects of Holocaust commemoration and applied them to the *Holodomor*. For instance, the Rada declaration stated the importance of remembrance of the *Holodomor* to prevent re-occurrence. This echoed the standard for Holocaust remembrance set at the *Stockholm Forum on the Holocaust* (2000).⁸⁵ This was not an indication that Ukrainian politicians learned the importance of Holocaust remembrance, but merely showed that Western standards served as an example.⁸⁶ The proposal to found a study centre and to produce books with lists of victims was another example. It was similar to the activities of the Israeli national Holocaust remembrance centre *Yad Vahsem* (which combined a museum, monuments, and mentioning and safekeeping of names).⁸⁷

Back in 2000, just shortly before the mass protests of ‘Ukraine without Kuchma’ began, the President rechristened the national day of remembrance to *Day in memory of the Victims of the Holodomor and Political Repressions*.⁸⁸ Kuchma widened the scope of *Holodomor* commemorations. This made it easier for him to discredit the opposition because he contextualized the *Holodomor* within totalitarianism (e.g. ‘political repressions’). Interestingly, during the struggle for Kuchma’s succession between Viktor Yanukovych and Viktor Yushchenko, Kuchma reinstated the plural in the name of the official commemoration day.⁸⁹ The reasons for the latter action remain unclear.

4.3. A Story of Heroism: Ukrainian Radical Nationalism during the 1930s and 1940s

Troubling Ukrainization during the Kravchuk Presidency

Politicians and historians presented the Holodomor as a moment of tragedy in a victim’s narrative. They used the legacy of Ukrainian nationalism in the twentieth century to give Ukrainian history a complementary ‘positive’ element: the narrative of a suppressed nation that fought for its survival, freedom, and independence. The OUN and UPA were central to this effort. As with *Holodomor*-related policies, the government’s efforts caused tensions between the Western and Eastern Ukraine. They were a source of animosity between veterans of the nationalist movement and the Red Army. Debates on the legacy of the OUN and UPA were generally more contentious than those on the famine.

The creation of a cult around the OUN and UPA necessitated a reevaluation of the role of the Red Army in Ukrainian history. Until 1991, it was given the key role: it reunited the Ukrain-

85 The *Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust* (2000) standardized the pan-European notion of guilt in the Holocaust (e.g. that not only Germans were responsible). The declaration adopted during this conference stressed the importance of Holocaust remembrance to ensure that future generations could understand it. Concurrently, the international community gave itself the responsibility to fight the evils of genocide, ethnic cleansing, racism, antisemitism, and xenophobia. Commemoration of, and education on the Holocaust were important means to carry out this duty. See: International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, “Declaration of the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust,” *International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance*, last modified 2000, accessed November 25, 2015, <https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/about-us/stockholm-declaration>. This particular analogy has been suggested in Долганов, “Формування та імплементація меморального законодавства,” 14–15.

86 Johan Dietsch, *Making Sense of Suffering. Holocaust and Holodomor in Ukrainian Historical Culture* (Lund: Lund University, 2006), 218.

87 *Yad Vashem*’s ‘hall of names’ has enough space for six million pages of testimony. These testimonies preserve the names and memories of as many Holocaust victims as possible; currently, more than four and a half million names are preserved. *Yad Vashem*’s website provides some basic information about the Hall of Names: “Hall of Names,” *The Holocaust History Museum - Yad Vashem*, accessed July 22, 2016, http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/museum/hall_of_names.asp.

88 Kasianov, “Holodomor and the Politics of Memory,” 173.

89 Л. Кучма, Указ Президента України № 797/2004 про внесення змін до Указу Президента України від 26 листопада 1998 року №1310, 2004, accessed July 22, 2016, <http://zakon3.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/797/2004>.

ian lands in 1939 and 1944 and defeated the evil of fascism. The Kravchuk regime halted the outright heroization of Red Army veterans. Ukrainian society and historiography were not ready for such a radical change. Reinterpreting the history of Ukrainian nationalism was not simply a case of *'what was right in the past is now wrong'* and *vice versa*. Society was still confused about which events and organisations should be included in the national narrative.⁹⁰ Nevertheless, the most outspoken proponents of a nationalist narrative negatively inverted the Soviet narrative of Ukrainian history.⁹¹ Outspoken presentations of the OUN's and UPA's history now carried much more weight in Ukrainian society.

The Difficulty of Integrating Contested Memories: Developments during the Presidency of Leonid Kravchuk

The government had the initiative on OUN- and UPA-related policies, because right-wing nationalism was relatively weak. The right never built up political momentum. Instead, the perestroika-era opposition movement split into several factions: some continued to favour Rukh's former moderate line. Others claimed a direct lineage to the OUN and proposed radical policies. The North-American Ukrainian diaspora greatly influenced such organisations. One of these was the *Congress of Ukrainian Nationalists (Kongres Ukrayinskykh Natsionalistiv, KUN)* led by Yaroslava Stetsko (the widow of Yaroslav Stetsko, who headed the OUN-B government in 1941). The Ukrainian National Assembly (*Ukrayinska Natsionalna Asambleya, UNA*) and its paramilitary militia the *Ukrainian People's Self Defence (Ukrayinska Narodna Samooborona, UNSO)* were also influential. The final prominent movement was the right-wing *Social-National Party of Ukraine (Sotsial-Natsionalna Partiya Ukrayiny; SNU)*. The latter used the Nazi *Wolfsangel* as its main symbol and had contacts with other extreme right-wing movements throughout Europe.⁹²

Government efforts to create new national symbols continued 'civil society' initiatives that started as a local Western Ukrainian movement during *perestroika*. Especially in Galicia activists toppled communist monuments. After local administrations came under their control, they also renamed streets after nationalist heroes.⁹³ After independence, this strategy spread to other regions. For instance, in Kyiv streets were named after Prylyp Orlik (a close associate of the 17th/18th century Cossack Hetman Ivan Mazepa), Olena Teliha (a Ukrainian nationalist poetess and OUN-M member executed by the Germans in 1942), and Vasyl Stus (a 1960s' dissident poet). Most prominently, the former October Revolution Square was renamed Independence Square (*Maidan Nezalezhnosti*). Outside Galicia, the renaming was less thorough: Informally, many still referred to these places with their old Soviet names. Furthermore, several streets devoted to Soviet heroes and Soviet monuments remained.⁹⁴ Also, the enormous Soviet *Mother Motherland (Batkivshchina-Mat)* statue on top of the *Museum of the Great Patriotic War*, remained one of the most prominent features of Kyiv's skyline.⁹⁵

We already discussed that the new state symbols (flag, coat of arms, and anthem) were also closely linked to the legacy of the OUN and UPA.⁹⁶ The Kravchuk regime did try to down-

90 David R. Marples, "Anti-Soviet Partisans and Ukrainian Memory," *East European Politics and Societies* 24, no. 1 (February 1, 2010): 39.

91 Rossoliński-Liebe, *Stepan Bandera*, 476.

92 Taras Kuzio, "Nation Building, History Writing and Competition over the Legacy of Kyiv Rus in Ukraine," *Nationalities Papers* 33, no. 1 (March 2005): 42; See also: Rossoliński-Liebe, *Stepan Bandera*, 465–467.

93 Андрей Портнов, "Упражнения с историей по-украински (заметки об исторических сюжетах общественно-политических дебатов в постсоветской Украине)," *Ab Imperio*, no. 3 (2007): 98.

94 *Ibid.*, 99; Rossoliński-Liebe, *Stepan Bandera*, 493–494.

95 Wilson, *The Ukrainians*, 223.

96 Also discussed earlier in "4.1. Political Context: the Consequences of Independence without Regime Change and the Political Quest for a Ukrainian Identity", page 87.

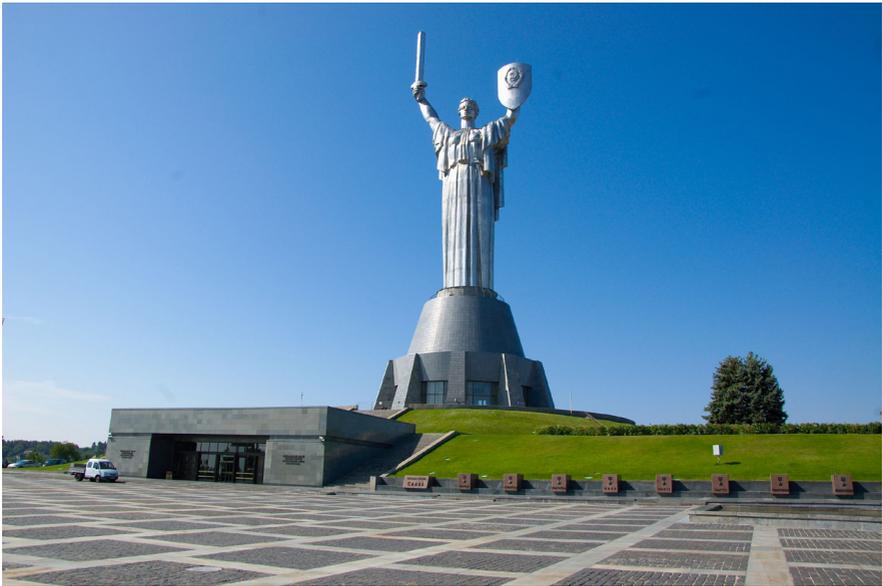


Figure 6: The Mother-Motherland Statue in Kyiv
Photo: Nicolaas A. Kraft van Ermel, August 12, 2013

play its connection with the OUN and UPA. This proved to be difficult because of years of Soviet propaganda: Many strongly associated these symbols with the OUN, the UPA and their atrocities.⁹⁷

The Thorny Issue of Rehabilitation of OUN Members and UPA Fighters

There were more divisive issues than the new national symbols. Since the *perestroika*-era, nationalists demanded the rehabilitation of former OUN members and UPA fighters (the last death sentence for a UPA member was pronounced as late as 1987!).⁹⁸ Kravchuk was unable to resolve this thorny issue.

An amnesty, i.e. the cancelling of previous sentences, was the most limited form of rehabilitation. Such a measure did not satisfy the nationalists. For them, rehabilitation also meant the recognition of veterans from the OUN and UPA as ‘*veterans of the struggle for independence*’. In Ukraine, like in many other former Soviet republics, Red Army veterans from the *Great Patriotic War* receive certain benefits. These include a veterans’ pension, free public transport, free entrance to museums. After independence, the government and nationalists alike claimed that UPA fighters had fought for Ukrainian independence and freedom. Therefore, such privileges should be extended to them.

97 Jilge, “The Politics of History,” 58; Wilfried Jilge, “Nationale Geschichtspolitik während der Zeit der Perestroika in der Ukraine,” in *GegenErinnerung. Geschichte als politisches Argument im Transformationsprozeß Ost-, Osmittel- und Südosteuropas*, ed. Helmut Altrichter and Elisabeth Müller-Luckner (München: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2006), 125.

98 Gorbachev had already launched his *perestroika* and *glasnost* in 1985. Nevertheless, R. Didukh was tried as a collaborator. He confessed that he joined the OUN in 1941 and claimed that the OUN operative Ivan Stetsiv had recruited him. He also claimed that Stetsiv had ordered him to execute Soviet activists and to torture two young girls, kill a young man, burn an entire family to death, massacre twenty-one Polish families, and collaborate with the German police. Didukh was sentenced to death. Since Stetsiv lived in Canadian exile, the Soviet government petitioned for his extradition. See: Marples, *Heroes and Villains*, 81–82; Rossoliński-Liebe, *Stepan Bandera*, 460.

Initial rehabilitation efforts only resulted in an amnesty. Shortly before independence, the Rada passed the Law *'On the Rehabilitation of Victims of Political Repressions in Ukraine'*. It applied to several categories, including the so-called *bandosposobnyky*, i.e. 'those who aided or abetted the 'bandits'' (Soviet speak for civilians who collaborated with the UPA). Rehabilitation of UPA fighters themselves was still a step too far. Captured UPA fighters were sentenced for *'betraying the motherland, spying, diversions, sabotage, and terrorist activities'*. Those crimes were explicitly excluded from rehabilitation. The same was true for former members of the OUN: the Ukrainian SSR's criminal code considered membership of the OUN treason and that crime was also ineligible for rehabilitation.⁹⁹

After independence, the government further extended rehabilitation efforts to UPA fighters. Kravchuk's efforts did not aim at replacing the memory of the Red Army veterans with that of UPA fighters. Unlike the nationalists, the president still considered Red Army veterans a legitimate part of Ukrainian history (In 1992, Kravchuk even called for an increased status of Red Army veterans). The Kravchuk administration proposed and enacted a law that further rehabilitated UPA fighters and OUN members in 1993. This law also meant to reconcile competing groups of veterans.¹⁰⁰

The law conditionally recognized them as 'veterans', as long as they had been active between 1941 and 1944 and had not committed any crimes against peace or humanity. In practice, this meant that UPA fighters who continued to fight as anti-Soviet insurgents after 1944 were ineligible for rehabilitation.¹⁰¹ The law also raised a different standard for UPA fighters than for Red Army veterans: the latter group's status did not depend on whether they committed any crimes.¹⁰² Because of these conditions, the law did not solve anything.¹⁰³ Instead, it created new points of political contention: nationalists claimed that the bill did not go far enough, while veterans' organizations and left-wing parties vehemently opposed it. The law only further exacerbated the conflict between nationalists and Red Army veterans. Because of all the contentions, the Rada (and its presidium) decided to study the issue.¹⁰⁴ It ordered several ministries, as well as the National Academy of Sciences to weigh in on the matter. Parliament requested legal and historical rulings from them to settle the matter.¹⁰⁵ The decision to study the issue meant that it remained unsettled during Kravchuk's presidency. The 1993 law remained the sole explicit legislation on OUN members and UPA fighters for years to come.

The Remaining Relevance of the Great Patriotic War

Barring satisfactory official rehabilitation of UPA fighters, the regime accommodated their memory in other ways. For instance, in 1994, at the occasion of the 50th anniversary of Ukraine's liberation, Kravchuk issued a special commemorative badge (*Пам'ятний знак '50 років визволення України*). This badge mixed Soviet and nationalist elements: The libera-

99 Л. Кравчук, Закон Української Радянської Соціалістичної Республіки № 962-ХІІ/1991 про реабілітацію жертв політичних репресій на Україні, 1991, accessed September 2, 2016, <http://zakon2.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/962-12/ed19910417>. See also: Oxana Shevel, "The Politics of Memory in a Divided Society: A Comparison of Post-Franco Spain and Post-Soviet Ukraine," *Slavic Review* 70, no. 1 (2011): 148.

100 Dietsch, *Making Sense of Suffering*, 70.

101 Л. Кравчук, Закон України № 3551-ХІІ/1993 про статус ветеранів війни, гарантії їх соціального захисту, 1993, accessed September 2, 2016, <http://zakon3.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/3551-12/ed19931022>.

102 Jilge, "The Politics of History," 58.

103 Ibid.; Shevel, "The Politics of Memory," 149–150.

104 І. Плющ, Постанова Президії Верховної Ради України № 2677-ХІІ/1992 до питання про перевірку діяльності організації ОУН - УПА, 1992, accessed September 2, 2016, <http://zakon3.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2677-12>; І. Плющ, Постанова Президії Верховної Ради України № 2964-ХІІ/1993 до питання про перевірку діяльності ОУН-УПА, 1993, accessed September 2, 2016, <http://zakon3.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2964-12/ed19930201>; See also: Jilge, "The Politics of History," 58–59.

105 Jilge, "The Politics of History," 58–59.

tion of Ukraine in 1944 was an explicitly Soviet occasion to commemorate. Such badges also had clear Soviet precedents. The shape and imagery copied Soviet examples, but the colour scheme included both the Red Army's crimson, as well as the Ukrainian nationalist light blue and yellow. A range of Soviet heroes, from Red Army veterans to besieged citizens of Leningrad received the decoration. Most importantly, the list also included *'fighters of the Ukrainian Insurgents Army, who took part in combat against the German-Fascist invaders in the territory temporarily occupied by them between 1941 and 1944'*.¹⁰⁶

Kravchuk obviously meant this as a reconciliatory gesture. Nevertheless, the decoration left many issues unresolved: In the first place, the narratives of UPA insurrection and the *Great Patriotic War* were mutually exclusive, since both groups of veterans fought for different Ukraines. In the second place, many UPA fighters were ineligible for the badge because it was awarded under the same legal conditions as rehabilitation. The badge showed how difficult it was to appease different interpretations of Ukraine's history.

Kravchuk's attempts to establish a new commemorative calendar displayed the same difficulties. Throughout the year 1992, Kravchuk created new state holidays to replace Soviet ones. November 7 (October Revolution), October 9 (Constitution Day), February 23 (Defenders of the Fatherland Day, which is related to the *Great Patriotic War*) were no longer official holidays. He kept some Soviet holidays, such as New Year's Day (January 1), International Woman's Day (March 8) and Victory Day (May 9, celebrating the Victory in the *Great Patriotic War*). The latter was the single ideological holiday that Kravchuk kept, as many considered Victory Day important. Nevertheless, Kravchuk scaled down its official commemoration.¹⁰⁷

That Victory Day remained important, indicated that the myth of the *Great Patriotic War* still carried much weight. As a consequence, the regime could not fully discredit it; many felt that the victory in the *Great Patriotic War* was a significant achievement of the Soviet era. Nostalgia for the old order, especially amongst the elderly was still widespread. Discrediting the Soviet narrative would also put Ukraine on a collision course with Russia.¹⁰⁸ As with the Holodomor, there was a large regional divide: in Western Ukraine, the narrative of the *Great Patriotic War* was fully discredited, but in other regions, it remained relevant.¹⁰⁹ Because of all these reasons, Kuchma plotted a course between the Scylla of not satisfying the Ukrainian nationalists and the Charybdis of infuriating Red Army veterans.

There seemed to be one exception to this rule: the education system. In textbooks, a Ukrainian nationalist account of history replaced Soviet narratives. New history textbooks shifted emphasis from the *Great Patriotic War* to the Second World War. The most widely used textbook in Ukraine, written by Fedir Turchenko, presented the Ukrainian nationalist movement as an important vehicle in Ukraine's struggle for independence.¹¹⁰ There might have been collaboration with the Germans, but this was justifiable given the aims of the nationalist movement. The textbook depicted the *Akt* of 1941 in a positive light, and there was little mention of the fascist nature of the state that the OUN-B intended to form. The textbook argued that the subsequent arrests and imprisonment of OUN-B members proved that the nationalists had been fighting both the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany from the very be-

106 Л. Кравчук, Указ Президента України № 77/94/1994 про затвердження положення про пам'ятний знак "50 років визволення України" та Опису пам'ятного знака "50 років визволення України," 1994, accessed September 2, 2016, <http://zakon2.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/77/94/para02#o2>.

107 Wanner, *Burden of Dreams*, 160–161.

108 Кравченко, "Бой с тенью," 339–340; Subtelny, *Ukraine*, 597.

109 Marples, *Heroes and Villains*, 258–259. Western and Eastern regional administrations have also interpreted the 1993 Law on Veteran's status differently: local administrations in the East did not extend veterans' benefits to UPA fighters, Western local administrations generally have done. See: Jilge, "The Politics of History," 58, note 34.

110 Турченко, *Новітня історія України*.

ginning. It presented the UPA in similar terms: it supposedly fought (both Nazi and Soviet) totalitarianism without compromises.¹¹¹ Textbooks depended on the same negationist and evasionist devices that Ukrainian nationalists used; they required severe simplifications and falsifications. By utilizing them, the textbooks now promoted an image of Ukrainian victimhood and heroic struggle for independence.

It also put Red Army veterans in Ukraine up against former OUN members and UPA insurgents. There were many Red Army veterans in Ukraine. The reevaluation of their role in Ukrainian history understandably shocked them: for years, they were told that they unified Ukraine twice and played the most important part in Ukrainian history. Now they were relegated insignificance. Logically veterans and left-wing political parties (and even some parents) protested against the new textbooks and accused them of falsifying history.¹¹² The new textbooks also were incompatible with European standards. In short: they were problematic.

To a More Ambivalent Government Approach: Kuchma and the Legacy of Ukrainian Nationalism

After his election to the presidency, Kuchma had to appease the electorate that voted him in. Therefore, he emphasized Soviet accounts of the *Great Patriotic War*. In 1994 and 1999, Ukraine celebrated the 50th and 55th anniversaries of the country's liberation by the Red Army. In both years, Kuchma reinstated parts of the *Great Patriotic War* cult. Unlike in Soviet times, the regime now used it to bolster Ukrainian claims for independence. The regime now claimed the war as the genesis of the contemporary Ukrainian state. Many Ukrainians fought for Ukraine in Soviet service, either as regular soldiers or as partisans. They displayed their patriotism, notwithstanding the harsh realities of Soviet rule (forced collectivization, mass terror, and repression).¹¹³ Essentially, Ukraine liberated itself during the *Great Patriotic War*! As a logical consequence, the issue of OUN and UPA rehabilitation became less important.¹¹⁴ Kuchma's policy was no sincere attempt at forging a new nation but only meant to consolidate the Ukrainian state. Kuchma and the clans of oligarchs needed that state to further their personal, economic, and political interests. Kuchma's narrative Ukrainian *Great Patriotic War* was simply a political expedient stance.

Kuchma's policy also raised some interesting questions, because it was as much based on simplifications and falsifications of history as the nationalist interpretation of the Second World War. The truthfulness of Kuchma's statements was questionable. Did the Ukrainian Red Army soldiers perceive themselves as Ukrainians liberating Ukraine? Alternatively, did they see themselves as Soviet citizens liberating the Soviet Union in a united effort with all Soviet people? Given the way the Soviet propaganda presented the war, the latter seemed highly likely. Furthermore, the Red Army was led in a top-down fashion by the central (i.e. Moscow-based) leadership. That alone made it hard to stake the claim that Ukraine liberated itself.

Policy changes remained limited and were mainly rhetorical. The tensions between Red

111 Wilfried Jilge, "Nationalukrainischer Befreiungskampf," *Osteuropa. Zeitschrift für Gegenwartsfragen des Ostens* 58, no. 6 (2008): 169.

112 Ekaterina Krylač and Stanislav Kul'čickij, "Die Diskussionen in der Ukraine über die Schulbücher zur vaterländischen Geschichte," in *Auf den Kehrthaußen der Geschichte? Der Umgang mit der sozialistischen Vergangenheit*, ed. Isabelle de Keghel and Robert Maier (Hannover: Verlag Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1999), 165–166; Jilge, "The Politics of History," 63; Jan Germen Janmaat, *Nation-Building in Post-Soviet Ukraine: Educational Policy and the Response of the Russian-Speaking Population*, Nederlandse geografische studies 268 (Utrecht and Amsterdam: Royal Dutch Geographical Society and Faculty of Social and Behavioral Sciences Universiteit van Amsterdam, 2000), 99.

113 Jilge, "The Politics of History," 66.

114 *Ibid.*

Army veterans and nationalists (especially those on textbooks) remained. Protests against eventually forced political action: In 1997, two communist Rada deputies lodged complaints. To deal with them, the Rada created a commission to study the issue. It was placed under the auspices of the Institute for Ukrainian History of the National Academy of Sciences. Its members were the historians Stanislav Kulchitskyi (president), Vladyslav Verstyuk, Viktor Danylenko and Mikhailo Koval. They all supported ukrainization. Unsurprisingly, the commission declared the accusations against textbooks without substance. For now, the textbooks remained in place.¹¹⁵

These events were a run-up to the 1998 parliamentary and 1999 presidential elections (characterized by a strong resurgence of the radical left). Since Kuchma was re-elected by a Western Ukrainian – and thus more nationalist – electorate, he had little choice but to keep the textbooks as they were. The establishment of the government commission meant to appeal to this electorate.

Resuming the Rehabilitation Debate under Kuchma

Kuchma's re-election necessitated further policy shifts on the Second World War, the OUN and UPA. Increasingly, the Kuchma regime displayed eclectic and ambivalent approaches. On the one hand, Kuchma increasingly relied on a more Soviet version of the *Great Patriotic War* (appealing to the East). At the same time, he kept the issue of OUN and UPA rehabilitation on the political agenda.¹¹⁶ Prime Minister Valeryi Pustovoytenko's government created (yet) another commission to advise which policies were appropriate.¹¹⁷ Several ministries and executive agencies participated in it.¹¹⁸ Since the commission was to draw both historical and legal conclusions, it also set up a working group of historians to assist it. Like the previous commission of historians, it functioned under the aegis of the Institute of Ukrainian History. The working group only published its findings in 2004.¹¹⁹ The timing of the commission's creation, only a short time before the elections signified Kuchma's intentions. It was a purely symbolic political move: it failed to settle the issue but allowed Kuchma to appeal to a Western Ukrainian electorate.

The Civil War on Textbooks: Partially Rewinding Ukrainization

The Kuchma administration neither managed, nor intended to settle the dust. Therefore, political confrontation continued. Another controversy over textbooks erupted in 2002. That year, the opposition movement '*Ukraine without Kuchma*' challenged the regime. As discussed, the opposition accused Kuchma of authoritarianism and disregard of the Ukrainian national interest. Because Kuchma lost the support of the West, he had to appeal to the East. Therefore, he increasingly emphasized Russian and Soviet models of history in his policies: he established a binational Russian-Ukrainian commission on history textbooks. Its purpose was to bring Ukrainian and Russian textbooks more in line with one another. Unsurprisingly, this provoked a strong nationwide debate, the so-called '*Civil War on Textbooks*'.¹²⁰

115 Krylač and Kul'čickij, "Die Diskussionen," 168.

116 Кравченко, "Бой с тенью," 343; Портнов, "Упражнения с историей," 114–115.

117 For instance, the State Security Services, the General Procurator and two departments of the National Academy of Sciences, including the Institute of the History of the National Academy of Sciences participated. See: Jilge, "The Politics of History," 73–74.

118 В. Пустовойтенко, *Постанова Кабінету Міністрів України № 1004/1997 про урядову комісію з вивчення діяльності ОУН-УПА*, 1997, accessed September 15, 2016, <http://zakon5.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1004-97-%D0%BF/ed19970912>.

119 Робоча група істориків при Урядовій комісії з вивчення діяльності ОУН і УПА, *Проблема ОУН-УПА. Звіт робочої групи істориків при Урядовій комісії з вивчення діяльності ОУН і УПА. Основні тези з проблеми ОУН-УПА (історичний висновок)* (Київ: Національна академія наук. Інститут історії України, 2004).

120 Кравченко, "Бой с тенью," 357; see also: Портнов, "Упражнения с историей," 120.

Previously, the government had little incentive to change textbooks. Now the regime's demands changed and therefore the Ministry of Education changed the curriculum for Ukrainian history. It now referred to both the Second World War and the *Great Patriotic War* in the same context. Textbooks now reflected the regime's eclectic and ambivalent narratives that combined Soviet history and Ukrainian national history.¹²¹ For example, they now depicted the liberation of Ukraine by the Red Army in 1944 as a pivotal moment in Ukrainian history. This was a clear reinstatement of the *Great Patriotic War*. Nevertheless, textbooks also retained many aspects of the nationalist narrative: they depicted the UPA as an organization fighting a war on two fronts, against both the Soviets and the Nazis.¹²² Textbooks still kept silent about collaboration between Ukrainian nationalists and the Germans or even justified it by claiming that Ukrainian nationalist formations in German service would become the future core of a Ukrainian national army.¹²³ Textbooks also still denied the fascist nature of the OUN's ideology.¹²⁴

Such eclectic depictions of Ukrainian history were inherently simplistic and difficult to substantiate with historical evidence. Both the Soviet and Ukrainian narratives are based on modes of denial, falsification, or simplification. In short, the changes to the narratives in history textbooks under Kuchma showed that there was still little critical introspection in history education. They also failed to bring Western and Eastern Ukrainians closer to each other; on the contrary, they were only further alienated from one another.

Hybrid Remembrance of the Second World War

Kuchma's eclectic and ambivalent attitude also displayed itself in the continued drive to create new national symbols. Every state needs a system of decorations to honour those who made exemplary efforts for the country. Because old Soviet orders were inspired by communist ideology, they were ill-suited for an independent Ukraine. Kuchma, therefore, created new decorations.

The decoration *Hero of the Soviet Union* (*Geroy Sovetskogo Soyuzu*) was the highest Soviet decoration. In 1998, Kuchma replaced it with the decoration '*Hero of Ukraine*' (*Heroy Ukrainy*).¹²⁵ He created two versions: The *Order of State*, awarded for '*feats of labour*' (*Trudovyi podvyyh*) and the *Order of the Gold Star*, awarded for '*exceptional heroic deeds*' (*vyznachnyi heroyskyi vchynok*). Every recipient received a medal. Its ribbon contained the colours of the Ukrainian flag, as did the corresponding ribbon bar. The medal also displayed a wreath of oak leaves, resembling the Soviet predecessor. The main element of the medal differed depending on the order: the Order of State



Figure 7: The Decorations 'Hero of the Soviet Union and Hero of Ukraine'

Drawings: Zscout370 (Hero of the Soviet Union) & Andrew J. Kurbiko (Hero of Ukraine). Drawings in the public domain.

121 Кравченко, "Бой с тенью," 358.

122 Jilge, "The Politics of History," 63; Marples, *Heroes and Villains*, 243-244.

123 Jilge, "Nationalukrainischer Befreiungskampf," 171; Jilge, "The Politics of History," 62.

124 Janmaat, *Nation-Building*, 99.

125 Л. Кучма, Указ Президента України № 944/98/1998 про встановлення відзнаки Президента України "Герой України," 1998, accessed September 16, 2016, <http://zakon3.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/944/98/ed19980823>.

featured St. Volodymyr's trident (a nationalist symbol) and the Order of the Gold Star featured a golden star (like the old Soviet decoration.)

The decoration synthesized both Soviet and Ukrainian worlds: the structure (nomenclature) was Soviet, while its aesthetical representation featured both the Soviet and Ukrainian symbols.¹²⁶ The decoration's Soviet predecessor was also closely associated with the *Great Patriotic War*: 11.739 out of the 12.862 recipients received it during the War.¹²⁷ This automatically associated the new Ukrainian decoration with the *Great Patriotic War* as well. The use of nationalist symbols associated it with the Ukrainian nationalist version of the Second World War. The medal catered different audiences.

As Ukraine celebrated the 55th anniversary of the Soviet victory in the *Great Patriotic War* (and the country's liberation) in 1999 and 2000, Kuchma issued a decree that arranged the commemoration.¹²⁸ The decree is a further example of catering to different audiences: It was mainly concerned with the *Great Patriotic War* and those who died in Soviet service: it mandated a publication of books with all their names. Afterwards it was discovered that there had been two separate print runs. In one of these, the editorial introduction to the final tome claimed that: *'OUN and its armed formations helped and waged war as allies of fascist Germany against the countries of the anti-Hitlerite coalition and branded themselves as collaborators of fascism'*. In the other print-run, this phrase was omitted.¹²⁹ This was yet another illustration of the Kuchma regime's ambivalence: The goal of such a scheme is clear: different audiences received the version they – most likely – wanted to read.

Kuchma also ensured that he could politically exploit issues surrounding the OUN and UPA when it fitted his purposes. The supposed 60th anniversary of UPA's founding in 2002 was one of these moments. Kuchma used the occasion to stir up the issue of rehabilitation. The government, then led by Prime Minister Anatolyi Kinakh, proposed a bill *'on the restoration of historical justice toward the fighters for Ukraine's freedom and independence'*. If the government wanted to, the bill could have been brought to a vote in the Rada. However, parliament never voted on it. This showed that Kuchma was not genuinely interested in the issue of rehabilitation.¹³⁰ The government only introduced the bill after the regime suffered a loss in the March 2002 parliamentary elections to Viktor Yushchenko and Yulyia Tymoshenko. The regime used the proposal to demonstrate that, unlike the opposition claimed, it did guard national interests.¹³¹

The whole affair serves as a clear demonstration of Kuchma's opportunistic history policies: The claim that UPA was founded in 1942 was a nationalist falsification of history that masked that the UPA was only founded when it became clear that the Germans were going to lose the war.¹³² Because Kuchma had discredited himself with his autocratic tendencies

126 Jilge, "Exklusion oder Inklusion?," 993; Jilge, "The Politics of History," 70; Портнов, "Упражнения с историей," 110–111.

127 А.А. Симонов, "Статистика по Героям Советского Союза," *Герои страны*, accessed September 15, 2016, <http://www.warheroes.ru/stats.asp>.

128 Л. Кучма, *Указ Президента України № 494/99/1999 про додаткові заходи щодо забезпечення випуску історико-меморіального серіалу "Книга Пам'яті України"*, 1999, accessed September 16, 2016, <http://zakon3.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/494/99>.

129 The text of the introduction – with the sentence in question – has also been published online: Роман Сербин, "Боротьба за історичну пам'ять українського народу," accessed September 15, 2016, <http://exlibris.org.ua/vvv/article-end.html>. See also: Портнов, "Упражнения с историей," 113–114.

130 A claim made by Andriy Portnov. He erroneously situated this bill in 2004. To my knowledge there has not been such a draft law in 2004; besides, Portnov claimed Prime Minister Anatolyi Kinakh introduced the bill. He only was in office from May 2001 to November 2002. See: Портнов, "Упражнения с историей," 115.

131 Jilge, "The Politics of History," 74.

132 Nationalists claimed that the UPA was founded in 1942, before the Soviet victory at Stalingrad, which proved that the UPA had been a truly 'anti-totalitarian fighting force' against both Nazi and Soviet occupation. In reality, the UPA was founded in 1943 after it became clear that the Soviet Union was going to defeat Germany on the Eastern front. After the war, the Ukrainian diaspora antedated documents to present UPA as a democratic

and the 2000 Kuchmagate scandal, the opposition had taken the lead on him. Tabling rehabilitation was a simple method to take back some initiative from the opposition. Overall, important questions surrounding rehabilitation remained unanswered: what was the status of OUN members and UPA fighters compared to Red Army veterans? How should their ideology be judged? How does one account for war crimes committed by the UPA and the Red Army?

Neither Fish nor Fowl: The Report of the Working Group of Historians (2004)

As discussed, in 1997 the government created a commission to study the issue of the OUN's and UPA's rehabilitation. In 2004, the working group of historians created by the commission finally presented a report. This revived the issue of rehabilitation.¹³³ The working group's president, Stanislav Kulchytskyi and some of its members, such as Yuryi Shapoval, supported the nationalist narrative. Other members, most notably Heorhyi Kasianov, were more critical of nationalist views. The working group presented its findings in the form of 14 theses that only dealt with history. Drawing political conclusions was left to the politicians.

(Neo)-Soviet, anti-nationalist propaganda mainly focussed on the issue of the OUN's and UPA's collaboration with the Germans. That subject was, therefore, one of the main issues that the working group addressed. It concluded that the OUN failed to provoke a national uprising in Soviet-ruled Western Ukraine between 1939 and 1941 and that therefore the OUN chose to join the war against the Soviet Union on the German side. The relations between the Germans and the nationalists were virtually problem-free between September 1939 and June 1941. After the German invasion of the Soviet-Union, the OUN did not coordinate its actions with Germany, and while lower German units were happy to work with them, the German higher command was distrustful. The report described the *Nachtigall* and *Roland* battalions as the result of long-standing cooperation between the OUN and the German *Abwehr* and stressed that the Germans used them as an instrument. The units were supposed to secure the movement of German forces in Ukraine, to disarm Red Army units and to guard convoys of Soviet POWs and ammunition. Importantly the working group concluded that the *Nachtigall* battalion was not involved in the pogroms that took place in Lviv after the Germans captured the city. The report found that both the OUN-M and OUN-B collaborated with the Germans to establish a Ukrainian state. The OUN-B sought to create a Ukrainian state as an independent ally of the Third Reich, but they were not taken seriously by the Germans, because the German leadership considered the Ukrainian nationalists politically insignificant and were unsure of their real commitment to Hitler's new world order.¹³⁴ Strangely enough, the report did not mention the Ukrainian nationalists' naivety: Given the Nazi racial ideology that perceived all Slavs as *Untermenschen*, it was highly unlikely that the Nazis would support a Ukrainian state.

Unlike nationalist propaganda claims, the report did not hide that the OUN-B declared its allegiance to Hitler's new world order in the *Akt* of 1941. The report did not condone a simple narrative of the OUN and UPA as anti-totalitarian movements, which fought both the Germans and the Soviets with the same fierceness. It claimed that after the Germans arrested the OUN-B leadership in the aftermath of the *Akt*, the Banderite wing of the OUN adopted a wait-and-see-approach to the Germans. This meant that the OUN-B did not immediately take up arms against the Germans, although they viewed the latter as occupiers.

fighting force and to hide UPA's real objectives: a fascist-style, mono-ethnic Ukrainian state. See also: Rudling, *The OUN, UPA and the Holocaust*, 14–15.

133 For the report, see: Робоча група істориків при Урядовій комісії з вивчення діяльності ОУН і УПА, *Проблема ОУН-УПА*.

134 *Ibid*.

Only after 1942, after critical German defeats, did they start to do so.¹³⁵

The working group did not condemn collaboration with Germany. There was one exception: the Waffen-SS Division *Galizien*. The working group concluded that it had no direct link to the OUN and UPA and claimed that the division had damaged the Ukrainian cause. On the other hand, the working group concluded that the unit was not guilty of any war crimes either.¹³⁶ The latter sounded as an evasionist or even denialist statement; however, in the 1980s the presence of veterans from the division in the Canadian Ukrainian diaspora prompted an official Canadian government investigation. The Canadian commission drew the same conclusions regarding war crimes.¹³⁷ Nevertheless, the working group evaded some of the toxic material: it failed to mention that the Waffen-SS was judged a criminal organization in its entirety at the Nuremberg trials.¹³⁸

Regarding the UPA, the report did not support the nationalist thesis that the UPA was founded in 1942, before the battle of Stalingrad. The report even claimed that the UPA's actions against the Germans were of little strategic importance. Furthermore, the report stated that the nationalists were convinced that the Red Army was the real enemy and that any substantial anti-German actions in 1942 would only have benefited the Soviets. The report concluded that the UPA had even negotiated with the Germans in the last phase of the war against the Soviet Union. It also recognized that the UPA continued to fight a guerrilla struggle for independence after the Red Army defeated German forces in Ukraine.¹³⁹

One of the arguments used against the rehabilitation of UPA fighters and OUN members was their fascist ideology. The working group claimed that the OUN (whose ideology the UPA followed) had not been a fascist organization. Its ideology had similarities with fascism, but that did not mean that the OUN was a fascist organization. Instead, the working group designated the OUN as an '*integral nationalist*' organization. They did so by relying on studies by the American historian John Armstrong.¹⁴⁰ The employment of the term '*integral nationalism*' could be seen as a form of evasionism. Nevertheless, the working group described the OUN's ideology as 'totalitarian' and 'undemocratic'.¹⁴¹

The report also failed to raise a number of important issues: there is no mention of the OUN's antisemitic ideology. Its discussion of the UPA's mass murder of Poles in Volhynia in 1943 was rather apologetic: the report claimed that the German occupation had worsened existing ethnic tensions. This caused mutual ethnic violence between Ukrainians and Poles. The report added that memories of the interwar Polish rule (with anti-Ukrainian policies) had also contributed to the carnage. Nevertheless, the authors maintained that the massacres were a black stain on the history of the OUN-B and UPA.¹⁴²

From a historiographical point of view, many of the statements were unfounded, simplistic, or otherwise problematical. Politically, those who wanted to rehabilitate OUN members and UPA veterans could not use the report. Supporters of the Soviet view of history could also not use the report to enforce their political demands.¹⁴³ Because the report fitted nei-

135 Ibid.

136 Ibid.

137 Grant Purves, *War Criminals: The Deschênes Commission*, Current Issue Review (Ottawa: Library of Parliament, November 16, 1998), 5, accessed March 15, 2018, <https://lop.parl.ca/content/lop/researchpublications/873-e.pdf>.

138 Робоча група істориків при Урядовій комісії з вивчення діяльності ОУН і УПА, *Проблема ОУН-УПА*.

139 Ibid.

140 Ibid. John Armstrong's thinking on the OUN's ideology is discussed in the introduction of this study. See "footnote 21" on page 7.

141 Ibid.

142 Ibid.

143 For instance, the historian Viktor Yakunin, from Dnipropetrovsk has called the report an '*unscientific and political document, geared not only towards the rehabilitation of the OUN and UPA, but also towards the review of the main outcomes of the Great Patriotic War*'. Yakunin was clearly upset by the statements in the report that could

ther side of the rehabilitation debate, it was a present for the Kuchma regime. The regime could cite from the report to its discretion to please a certain audience. As a result, the issue of rehabilitation was not laid to rest (it would fuel even greater political controversies during Kuchma's successor's presidency).

The 2004 Presidential Elections: The Great Patriotic War Centre Stage

Political evaluations of the report's findings were postponed: the governmental commission still had to issue its advice. If Kuchma had wanted, the commission could have done so. Besides political expediency of not solving the issue, we must also point to another explanation: Because the report did not offer any clear arguments for or against rehabilitation, it also did not allow for simple policies. Any policy based on the report's findings would extend some benefits to OUN members and UPA fighters. That would satisfy neither the nationalists (who wanted more than the report allowed for) nor the Red Army veterans (who did not accept any further rehabilitation).

The context of the 2004 presidential elections ruled out any solution to the rehabilitation problem. As discussed, the opposition played both the European and nationalists 'cards' and as a consequence, Kuchma's designated successor, Viktor Yanukovich, had to play the Russian 'card'. The regime focussed on the *Great Patriotic War* narrative to gain the support of the Eastern electorate. It simply required other history policies than the rehabilitation of OUN members and UPA fighters.

On October 28, 2004, only a few days before the elections, the regime organized a military parade in honour of the 60th anniversary of Ukraine's liberation during the *Great Patriotic War* in Kyiv. This parade was a clear example of the shift in the regime's history policies. It had the grandeur of the Brezhnev-era Soviet military parades. One of the main symbols of the *Great Patriotic War*, the so-called *Victory Banner*, was flown in from Moscow and Vladimir Putin attended the ceremony in an attempt to bolster Viktor Yanukovich' chances in the upcoming elections.¹⁴⁴ The parade was a clear return to the Soviet narratives on Ukrainian history: the presence of leaders of other former Soviet republics closely resembled the idea of the 'fraternal Soviet peoples' under the leadership of Russia. The celebrations gave clear precedence to Soviet symbols and delegated Ukrainian symbols to the second place. Furthermore, all references to the OUN and UPA disappeared.¹⁴⁵

The similarity with Russia is significant: the growing importance of the *Great Patriotic War* coincided with an increase in authoritarianism and less democracy. The 2004 presidential elections saw large-scale machinations and fraud. If not for the sudden return of the *Great Patriotic War* in 2004, the reluctance of the years before ensured that the issue of the re-evaluation of the Second World War in Ukraine was not settled in the Kuchma years. Kuchma thus left the unsolved issue for his eventual successor, Viktor Yushchenko.

introduce the concept of the Second World War in Ukrainian history and because it did not follow previous Soviet propaganda statements about the OUN and UPA. (See: Yakunin, as cited by: Портнов, "Упражнения с историей," 115.) For the conclusion that the report gave neither side in the rehabilitation debate what it wanted, see also: Marples, *Heroes and Villains*, 229; Jilge, "The Politics of History," 74.

144 For Putin's presence, see: "В Киеве состоялся военный парад, посвященный 60-летию освобождения Украины от фашистских захватчиков," *Президент России*, last modified October 28, 2004, accessed September 16, 2016, <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/32032>. Putin also used his visit to Ukraine to campaign for Viktor Yanukovich in an hour-long interview on three different television channels in Ukraine. See: "Интервью украинским телеканалам «УТ-1», «Интер» и «1+1»," *Президент России*, last modified October 29, 2004, accessed September 16, 2016, <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/22661>.

145 Jilge, "The Politics of History," 78.

4.4. Coping with Black Pages: The Difficulty of Accounting for the Ukrainian Role in the Holocaust and Other Ethnic Violence

The Kravchuk Administration and the Holocaust: Remembering without Engagement

Post-Soviet nation-building asserted that Ukraine was an independent European nation. Given Tony Judt's statement that the Holocaust serves as an entry ticket to Europe and because of the role the Holocaust plays in the EU's *acquis historique*, the commemoration of the Holocaust is essential for any country that seeks to be a part of Europe.¹⁴⁶ The hagiographic character of the nationalist narrative in Ukraine and the (neo)-Soviet narrative's general disregard for the Holocaust stand in strong contrast to this.

Since independence, Ukraine made some progress in commemorating Holocaust victims. For example, several monuments have been erected in different cities. Nevertheless, these efforts remained marginal.¹⁴⁷ Monuments also suffered frequent vandalism or fell prey to commercial interests (for instance real-estate development).¹⁴⁸ Ukrainian nationalists also claimed some specific Holocaust sites for their own use: For instance, in the town of Drohobych (Lviv Oblast), a monument to Stepan Bandera was erected at the site of the town's Jewish ghetto. Such developments were an affront to the Holocaust's Jewish victims. The Israeli historian Omer Bartov (who composed an inventory of forgotten Jewish sites¹⁴⁹) called this '*double obliteration of the memory of the murdered Jews*'. He underlined that the Soviets did much to suppress their memory and that the nationalists now did the same by rehabilitating (and establishing monuments to) nationalist wartime criminals.¹⁵⁰

The government showed limited engagement with Holocaust commemoration. This already started before Ukraine became an independent state: The 50th anniversary of the infamous Babyn Yar (Rus. Babi Yar) massacre in September 1991 was its starting point. At this occasion, the Jewish community could finally unveil a monument (financed by themselves).¹⁵¹ It complemented the existing (and unsatisfactory) Soviet memorial dedicated to the memory of the Red Army soldiers executed at the site. At the unveiling, Kravchuk gave a speech, and acknowledged the Ukrainian people's share of responsibility for the destruction of the Jews and asked for forgiveness.¹⁵²

Similarly, some members of the Ukrainian nationalist intelligentsia wanted to end the hatred between Jews and Ukrainians. They strongly opposed any expression of antisemitism. As they had been imprisoned in Soviet prisons together with Jews, they argued that Jews and Ukrainians shared more than they previously realized.¹⁵³ After the 50th anniversary of Babyn Yar, Kravchuk also issued similar statements. This was a particular change of heart because before he became chairman of the Verkhovna Rada, he was in charge of the Communist Party's ideology. In that position he had been responsible for several campaigns

146 See "2.2. History, European Integration and the Holocaust" on page 40.

147 Himka, "The Reception of the Holocaust," 647.

148 Ibid.

149 Omer Bartov, *Erased: Vanishing Traces of Jewish Galicia in Present-Day Ukraine* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

150 Bartov as cited in: Sarah Fainberg, "Memory at the Margins: The Shoah in Ukraine," in *History, Memory and Politics in Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. Georges Mink and Laure Neumayer (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 97.

151 The ravine of Babyn Yar, located in Kyiv, is the most infamous of all Holocaust sites in Ukraine. On September 29 and 30, 1941, the SS *Sonderkommando 4* shot at least 33,771 Jewish inhabitants of Kyiv. Later other Jews, Soviet prisoners of war, Roma and Ukrainian nationalists were also shot near the same location.

152 Fainberg, "Memory at the Margins," 92.

153 Vladimir Khanin, "The Postcommunist Order, Public Opinion and the Jewish Community in Independent Ukraine," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 23, no. 1/2 (1999): 89.

based around antisemitic tropes.¹⁵⁴

After Kravchuk's speech, the government's limited engagement with Holocaust remembrance never stopped. Often, the Ukrainian government only took an interest in it under international pressure; at other instances, the Ukrainian nationalist narrative reigned supreme.¹⁵⁵ This was one of the main problems with Kravchuk's Holocaust commemorations: because the government re-evaluated Ukrainian nationalist heroes, it became difficult to criticize the nationalist movement because of either antisemitism or participation in the Holocaust.¹⁵⁶ Kravchuk did not understand what repentance for the Holocaust entailed. He only saw it as a one-time event, an entrance exam into the Western world.¹⁵⁷ If we stick to Tony Judt's above-cited dictum, the recognition of responsibility should be a long-term moral commitment.

Ukrainian society has missed its version of the Polish *Jedwabne* debate (i.e. a debate on what collaboration in the Holocaust should mean for the Ukrainian nation).¹⁵⁸ Of course, the government is not entirely responsible for the lack of such a debate. Nevertheless, it did little to foster a genuine discussion on the Holocaust in Ukrainian society.

Babyn Yar was also one of the sites that Ukrainian nationalists encroached upon because the Germans also executed OUN members there. In 1991, several groups started building their competing monuments. Amongst these groups were Ukrainian nationalists, victims of the nearby Syrets concentration camp, the patients of a nearby mental institution, Ukrainian orthodox priests, children, and soccer players of Dynamo and Lokomotyv Kyiv.¹⁵⁹ A caveat should be made: not all monuments were constructed during the presidency of Kravchuk (some were built under Kuchma's terms in office), nor was Kravchuk involved in these monuments. Yet, it showed a general tendency for groups in Ukrainian society to encroach on



Figure 8: The Soviet and Jewish Monuments at Babyn Yar.

Photo: Nicolaas A. Kraft van Ermel, August 4, 2013

154 *Ibid.*, 92.

155 Елена Иванова, "Конструирование коллективной памяти о холокосте в Украине," *Ab Imperio*, no. 2 (2004): 376.

156 Karel C. Berkhoff, "Babi Yar. Site of Mass Murder, Ravine of Oblivion," *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*, last modified February 9, 2011, accessed June 8, 2016, https://www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/Publication_OP_2011-02.pdf; Berkhoff is currently conducting an extensive research project on the Babyn Yar Massacre. For more information, see: "Babi Yar in History and Memory," *NIOD Instituut voor oorlogs-, holocaust- en genocidestudies*, last modified August 31, 2012, accessed March 13, 2018, <https://www.niod.nl/nl/projecten/babi-yar-history-and-memory>.

157 An argument put forward by the Jewish-Ukrainian historian Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern. As cited in: Khanin, "The Postcommunist Order," 93.

158 An argument made by Fainberg and Rohdewald: Fainberg, "Memory at the Margins," 93; S. Rohdewald, "Post-Soviet Remembrance of the Holocaust and National Memories of the Second World War in Russia, Ukraine and Lithuania," *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 44, no. 2 (April 1, 2008): 176.

159 Aleksandr Burakovskiy, "Holocaust Remembrance in Ukraine: Memorialization of the Jewish Tragedy at Babi Yar," *Nationalities Papers* 39, no. 3 (May 2011): 379.



Figure 9: A Monument Dedicated to OUN Members Executed at Babyn Yar
 Photo: Nicolaas A. Kraft van Ermel August 4, 2013

Holocaust sites for its own victims.

The debates over Babyn Yar in Ukraine resembled similar discussions on the significance of Auschwitz in Poland. The main point of contention in these discussions was whether Jewish victims had a monopoly on the site and whether Poles could also commemorate their victims at Auschwitz.¹⁶⁰ I would certainly not like to argue that taking responsibility for one's own role in the Holocaust does entail that one cannot memorialize one's own victims of Nazi terror if they were killed at the same site as Holocaust victims. However, given the OUN's antisemitic ideology and its collaboration with the Germans in the Holocaust, it is very problematic to commemorate both as victims of Nazi terror at the same site.

That Kravchuk did not grasp the importance of the Holocaust in European history is even further underlined by Ukrainian history textbooks: In 1993-1994, the government introduced the Holocaust as part of the school curriculum, but not as part of the subject of *Ukrainian history*.¹⁶¹ The government included the Holocaust in the educational programme for *world history* (in the Ukrainian education system Ukrainian and world history are different subjects with different textbooks). This automatically implied that it had little importance for Ukraine.¹⁶²

New textbooks for world history contextualized the Holocaust as a phenomenon external to Ukrainian history. The most widely used textbook for Ukrainian history acknowledged that Jews had been mass murdered in Ukraine, but also contextualized it outside of Ukrainian history. In essence, the Holocaust was a pan-European problem and part of the Second World War and a consequence of racial terror. Ukrainian participation in it was not discussed, as the Nazis were considered the sole perpetrator for the destruction of the

¹⁶⁰ Himka, "The Reception of the Holocaust," 646.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 640.

¹⁶² Fainberg, "Memory at the Margins," 93; Himka, "The Reception of the Holocaust," 640; Анатолій Подольський, "Українське суспільство і пам'ять про голокост: спроба аналізу деяких аспектів," *Голокост і Сучасність* 5, no. 1 (2009): 54; Иванова, "Конструирование коллективной памяти," 377.

Ukrainian Jewry.¹⁶³

Most textbooks of Ukrainian history also left the OUN's antisemitic ideology unmentioned. If they discussed antisemitic motives, they displayed Judeobolshevik apologetic arguments: Since the OUN was fighting communism and since the Jews supposedly controlled the Soviet Union, the OUN could legitimately perceive Jews as a target.¹⁶⁴ It again shows that the need for critical introspection had not (yet) been learned.

Such presentations were untrue and did not conform to European standards of Holocaust remembrance. That textbook authors were Soviet trained historians was a partial explanation for it (Soviet textbooks neither mentioned a separate Jewish tragedy). Furthermore, textbooks focussed on supporting Ukrainian sovereignty. The notion of a separate Jewish tragedy could only complicate the Ukrainian narrative that focused on victimhood and heroism. Therefore, it was simply put aside.¹⁶⁵

In general, the Holocaust played no role in the heated political debates caused by Kravchuk's ukrainization policies, since all opposition members focussed on salvaging the legacy of Red Army veterans. None of its participants raised any ethical concerns about the Holocaust or showed any self-criticism/introspection. Ukraine was not Europeanizing its historical narratives.

Ukrainian Politicians and the Holocaust during Kuchma's Presidency

Kuchma's policy on the Holocaust followed the general pattern of his predecessor: the regime valued good relations with the Jewish community.¹⁶⁶ Kuchma and other Ukrainian politicians kept visiting the Jewish memorial at Babyn Yar. These visits further (re)legitimized the memory of Holocaust victims and their surviving relatives.¹⁶⁷

The political and social commitment to the remembrance of the Holocaust remained limited. There were some minor changes: the government actually included the Holocaust in a narrative of Ukrainian history. But, it still did not conform to European practices. For example, on the 60th anniversary of the Babyn Yar tragedy in 2001, Kuchma expressed his concern for the plight of the Jews. In his speech, he evaded the subject of Ukrainian participation or complicity in the Holocaust.¹⁶⁸ This was probably due to the political context: the 2002 parliamentary elections were quickly approaching. If Kuchma unequivocally pressed for repentance for the Holocaust, he would have further delegitimized his position in the more nationalist West (where he had already lost much of his support due to the Kuchmagate scandal).

Kuchma subsumed the Holocaust in contemporary political contexts: in the 2001 speech, he called the massacre at Babyn Yar an act of terrorism. Kuchma claimed that ever since the Nazi era terrorism has remained an international political phenomenon.¹⁶⁹ Comparing the horrors of the Holocaust to international terrorism of the early 2000s was unfounded. Both the terrorism of Islamic terror groups such as Al-Qaida and the Nazi genocide of Jews were abhorrent, but the statement was a serious misjudgement of what was acceptable concerning the Holocaust. This presented the Holocaust as part of Ukrainian history, but not in a

163 Jilge, "The Politics of History," 61; Иванова, "Конструирование коллективной памяти," 378–379; Dietsch, *Making Sense of Suffering*, 165.

164 Jilge, "Nationalukrainischer Befreiungskampf," 172.

165 Dietsch, *Making Sense of Suffering*, 167–169, 176.

166 Khanin, "The Postcommunist Order," 91.

167 Jeff Mankoff, "Babi Yar and the Struggle for Memory, 1944-2004," *Ab Imperio*, no. 2 (2004): 411.

168 Портнов, "Упражнения с историей," 118.

169 Himka, "The Reception of the Holocaust," 646–647.

way that conformed to the European norms. This argument clearly displayed treats of anti-totalitarian discourse that has taken hold of Central Europe after the fall of communism.

A speech by (at that time Prime Minister) Viktor Yushchenko a year before, was another example. At the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust, Yushchenko called the massacre at Babyn Yar a ‘scar on the entire Ukrainian nation’ and not merely a Jewish tragedy. Yushchenko used this statement to promote the concept of Ukrainian victimhood: He admitted that Jews were an independent target for Nazi-persecution, but he intermingled their fate with that of the Ukrainians. In his speech, Yushchenko also mentioned the *Holodomor* and claimed that some seven million Ukrainians perished in a man-made famine. He claimed that, therefore, the Ukrainians were no stranger to the meaning of genocide.¹⁷⁰ Such a presentation stretched Holocaust remembrance beyond its limits: from a European perspective, it was unacceptable to include other victim groups, especially if this downplayed the nation’s role in the Holocaust.

It is here that we need to discuss another aspect: the European creed of Holocaust commemoration dictated that antisemitism was a social *faux pas*. The stereotype of inherently antisemitic Ukrainians is longstanding. While it is hardly true that all Ukrainians were staunch antisemites, public discourse still allowed for the use of antisemitic clichés (as is the case in all European societies). What differentiated the Ukraine case was that politicians, both from the government and opposition, were unwilling to fight antisemitism. They have even sought to capitalize on it. One example of this is the *Interregional Academy of Personnel Management (Mizhrehionalna Akademiya Upravlinnya Personalom, MAUP)*. This was Ukraine’s largest private higher education establishment and was also accredited by the government. It effectively functioned as the leading antisemitic think tank of the country. MAUP published a journal that was distributed among its staff, students, and alumni. This publication voiced arcane antisemitic conspiracy theories (for example, that Osama Bin Laden was a Jew named Benya Landau). MAUP also organized ‘scientific’ conferences in which prominent Ukrainian historians participated. These conferences aimed at ‘*exposing the practice of Zionism in the Modern World*’. MAUP also claimed that the Jews sought to suppress the truth about the ‘*Ukrainian Holocaust of 1933*’ (i.e. the Holodomor).¹⁷¹ The activities of this organisation were troubling because of the broad impact, but even more so because Ukrainian politicians were involved in it. Prominent Ukrainian politicians served on MAUP’s board or have some other connection to it. Among them are former President Kravchuk and former foreign minister Boris Tarasyuk (1998-2000).¹⁷²

The *Silski Visti* controversy in 2003 was another example of political capitalization on antisemitism. It occurred during the persistent clashes between government and opposition. The most widely circulated newspaper in the country, *Silski Visti* (Village News), published an antisemitic article. In response, the so-called ‘*International Antifascist Committee*’, led by people close to Kuchma’s presidential administration, filed a complaint and demanded the newspaper’s closure for inciting hatred.¹⁷³ This was not a sincere way of combatting antisemitism: *Silski Visti* was critical of the government and supported the opposition. Subsequently, opposition leaders, including both Yushchenko and Tymoshenko decried the action as one of Kuchma’s authoritarian measures.¹⁷⁴

The opposition that claimed to represent Ukraine’s true European values defended an antisemitic newspaper. The court case may have been an opportunistic attempt by the regime

170 Dietsch, *Making Sense of Suffering*, 161, 228–229.

171 Per Anders Rudling, “Organized Anti-Semitism in Contemporary Ukraine: Structure, Influence and Ideology,” *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 48, no. 1–2 (March 2006): 88–89.

172 *Ibid.*, 89–90.

173 Портнов, “Упражнения с историей,” 118–119.

174 *Ibid.*

to silence the opposition. Nevertheless, the opposition forgot that being European also entailed an effort to stop antisemitism. Yushchenko only changed his position after European Commission President Romano Prodi claimed the court decision showed that 'Ukraine was taking another step towards Europe'.¹⁷⁵

In one respect, Ukraine made limited progress under Kuchma: In the early 2000s, history textbooks started to touch the subject of Ukrainian collaboration in the Holocaust.¹⁷⁶ Nevertheless, the judeobolshevist arguments used in previous textbooks remained.¹⁷⁷ Also, projects by NGOs complemented regular textbooks. For instance, Ukrainian organisations collaborated with international partners, such as the (Dutch) Anne Frank House or the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.¹⁷⁸ Some Ukrainian educators used such educational tools, others believed that information on the Ukrainian participation in the Holocaust could shock young Ukrainians, and therefore refused to include the Holocaust into their lessons.¹⁷⁹ They might indeed have been concerned about the mental welfare of students, but they might also have realized that Ukrainian participation in the Holocaust problematized the nationalizing narrative.

The Volhynian Massacres: the Politicization of Ethnic Mass Murder in the Ukrainian-Polish Borderland

Not only collaboration in the Holocaust tarnished the record of Ukrainian nationalism. The massacres and ethnic cleansing of the Polish population by the UPA in Volhynia in 1943 constituted another black page. This issue came first to the fore within the increased political struggle between the opposition and the Kuchma-regime. The 60th anniversary of these events put the question on the political agenda.¹⁸⁰

For domestic reasons Polish historians and politicians also capitalized on the Volhynian massacres and demanded an apology. Their demands fuelled the debates in Ukraine.¹⁸¹ Kuchma tried to exploit these international tensions in the run-up to the 2004 presidential elections: his administration had already lost the support of the West and could lose little by supporting a drive for Ukrainian-Polish reconciliation. The opposition, on the contrary, could only lose credibility in the West by not supporting the Ukrainian nationalist cause (nationalists claimed they were the victims of Polish aggression and no perpetrators). Kuchma tried to use the Volhynian affair to drive a wedge between different opposition parties. By pressing for an apology, Kuchma forced the opposition to choose between the European values

175 *Ibid.*, 119.

176 Anatoliy Podolskyi argued that this was a consequence of the Stockholm Declaration. According to him, educational engagement with the Holocaust was an expression. See: Подольский, "Українське суспільство," 52.

177 Иванова, "Конструирование коллективной памяти," 379.

178 Подольский, "Українське суспільство," 52.; See for instance, the following collaboration project between the Institute of Jewish Studies in Kyiv and several Dutch, Belgian and Ukrainian educators (this project was sponsored by the Dutch Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports). It resulted in a bilingual publication: Марко Оттен and Юлія Стілянська, eds., *Дослідження та викладання історії Голокосту Україна, Нідерланди, Бельгія. Збірник матеріалів міжнародного проекту "Історія Голокосту в Україні та Нижніх Землях"* (Київ та Arnhem: Дух і Літера та Moadad, 2010); Marko Otten and Julia Smilyanska, eds., *Lessons from the Holocaust in Ukraine and the Low Countries. A Multinational Compendium to the Education of Remembrance*. (Kyiv and Arnhem: Duh i Literatura and Moadad, 2010).

179 Viktoriia Sukovata, "Collaboration in Ukraine during the Holocaust: Aspects of Historiography and Research," in *Teaching Holocaust and Genocide Studies in Modern Ukraine: Problems and Perspectives* (Washington, DC: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2013), 205.

180 Александр Осипян, "Этнические чистки и чистка памяти: Украинско-польское пограничье 1939-1947 гг. в современной политике и историографии," *Ab Imperio*, no. 2 (2004): 332.

181 For instance, a group of liberal intellectuals called for an apology, citing moral reasons to do so. They regretted the forceful removal of Poles from Volhynia as a tragic mistake: Юрій Андрухович et al., "Відкритий лист з приводу 60-річчя збройного українсько-польського конфлікту на Волині," *ї*, last modified 2003, accessed July 28, 2016, <http://www.ji-magazine.lviv.ua/dyskusija/volyn/vidozva.htm>.

it claimed to represent and its nationalist convictions.¹⁸² The attack on the regime was executed by Viktor Medvedchuk (the head of the presidential administration) and Volodymyr Lytvyn (the chairman of the *Verkhovna Rada*). Both were Kuchma allies. Especially Medvedchuk used the affair to smear the OUN as a totalitarian and authoritarian movement.¹⁸³

Both the Polish and Ukrainian executives and legislatures drew drafts of joint declarations, but could not reach an agreement. The primary cause of contention was the Polish demand that the resolution would describe the UPA's actions as an 'act of ethnic cleansing'. The Ukrainian delegation feared that such a formula would give given the victims' families grounds for (civil) litigation and rejected it.¹⁸⁴ Kuchma sought the political initiative and put his political weight behind reconciliation. The opposition could not let him do that. Therefore, the opposition-controlled Rada had to agree to a joint statement with the Sejm.¹⁸⁵ This statement declared that *The tragedy of the Poles, which were killed and expelled from their places of residence by Ukrainian militias, was accompanied by equal suffering of Ukrainian civilians, who were victims of Polish armed actions. These events were a tragedy for both our peoples*". The declaration also underlined a moral duty to remember and appealed for forgiveness by both sides in order to create a better future, good neighbourly relations, and Ukrainian-Polish friendship.¹⁸⁶

Parts of the statement were rather strange: there was indeed mutual ethnic violence between Ukrainians and Poles in 1943, but only the Ukrainian nationalists had initiated ethnic cleansings. Therefore, it was impossible to equate Polish and Ukrainian victims. The demonstrated that Ukrainian politicians, government and opposition alike, had not yet fully understood the European moral imperative, as well as the importance of reconciliation and recognizing one's historical guilt. Because the opposition explicitly claimed to represent European values it is highly troubling that only 16% of Yushchenko's *Our Ukraine* deputies voted in favour of the declaration.¹⁸⁷

Initially, it seemed as if the opposition had stepped in Kuchma's trap. In the end, his scheme backfired and the opposition used these debates to tarnish Kuchma's reputation. They asserted that the president could not rightfully represent the Ukrainian nation.¹⁸⁸ To do that, the opposition resorted to another contentious episode in Polish-Ukrainian history: the struggle for control over Galicia between Ukrainians and Poles in the wake of the First World War.

In 1918, the city of Lviv was one of the many places contested by Poles and Ukrainians. Soldiers from both nations found their grave at Lviv's famous Lychakiv cemetery (Ukr.: *Lychakivskiy tsyntyar*, Pol.: *Cmentarz Łyczakowski*). The Polish soldiers included both those of the Polish-Ukrainian war (1918-1919) and the Polish-Soviet War (1919-1929; during which Poles and Ukrainians were allied). The Polish military section of the cemetery was called the *Lviv Eaglets Cemetery (Cmentarz Orłąt Lwowskich)*. In the 1970s, the Soviet authorities destroyed it. After 1991, the Polish government paid for a reconstruction.

182 Осипян, "Этнические чистки," 324.

183 Виктор Медведчук, "Волынь — наша общая боль," *Газета "День"*, last modified April 2, 2003, accessed July 28, 2016, <http://day.kyiv.ua/ru/article/panorama-dnya/volyn-nasha-obshchaya-bol>.

184 Georgiy Kasianov, "The Burden of the Past: The Ukrainian-Polish Conflict of 1943/44 in Contemporary Public, Academic and Political Debates in Ukraine and Poland," *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research* 19, no. 3-4 (September 2006): 250-251.

185 В. Литвин, *Постанова Верховної Ради України № 1085-IV/2003 про схвалення українсько-польської парламентської заяви у зв'язку з 60-ю річницею волинської трагедії*, 2013, accessed September 16, 2016, <http://zakon0.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1085-15>.

186 *Ibid.*

187 Kasianov, "The Burden of the Past," 251.

188 Tatiana Zhurzhenko, "Memory Wars and Reconciliation in the Ukrainian-Polish Borderlands: Geopolitics of Memory from a Local Perspective," in *History, Memory and Politics in Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. Georges Mink and Laure Neumayer (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 184.



Figure 10: Impressions from the Polish Military Cemetery in Lviv

Left: The Polish military cemetery (Cmentarz Orłąt Lwowski) in Lviv; Right: The monument unveiled by presidents Yushchenko and Kwaśniewski. It is located between the Cmentarz Orłąt Lwowski and a plot dedicated to Ukrainian soldiers of the Ukrainian-Polish and Ukrainian-Bolshevik wars. The plaques on the right and left read: 'Here lie Ukrainian and Polish Soldiers who fell in the years 1918-1919'. The plaque in the middle is in Ukrainian and reads: 'We, Presidents of Poland and the Republic of Poland, by opening this monument to soldiers of the Ukrainian Galician Army and Polish soldiers buried at the Lychakiv cemetery, strive to strengthen the Ukrainian-Polish harmony for the benefit of a unified European home, and solemnly declare historical reconciliation and understanding between our peoples. The President of Ukraine, Viktor Yushchenko and the President of the Polish Republic, Alexander Kwaśniewski, June, 24, 2005'.

Photos: Nicolaas A. Kraft van Ermel. October 28, 2017

Because Kuchma pushed for Polish-Ukrainian reconciliation, he supported the reconstruction and planned to attend the official (re)inauguration. He wanted to unveil a joint Polish-Ukrainian monument on that occasion. The latter decision was contentious: In 2002, a meeting between Kuchma and Polish President Aleksander Kwaśniewski even had to be postponed. Disagreements were not between Ukraine and Poland but between Lviv and Kyiv. The Lviv City Council objected to the planned memorial as a symbol of Polish presence in Lviv. The council wanted to present itself as truly patriotic and wanted to tarnish Kuchma's already unpopular policies. They argued that the monument was of the utmost importance for the city. Kyiv should not interfere, because the national government failed to take local sensibilities into account. The text on the memorial was the apple of discord: the Lviv politicians could not accept the claim that the Polish soldiers buried on the cemetery had fallen for Polish independence.¹⁸⁹

Kuchma was unable to resolve the issue. Instead, his successor Yushchenko (and Kwaśniewski) opened the cemetery in 2005. By then the monument only read 'Here lies a Polish soldier who fell for the fatherland' (*Tu leży żołnierz polski poległy za Ojczyznę*). The change of wording is significant: the final text omitted the political reasons for the Ukrainian-Polish conflict and no longer called the Polish soldiers heroes. This text was acceptable to Ukrainian nationalists. Again, Ukrainian politicians failed to take the lead in seeking historical reconciliation.

4.5. Chapter Summary

This study investigates where Ukraine stands with its perceptions of history in relation to three models: the Western-European, the post-communist and the (neo)-Soviet model. Under Ukraine's first two presidents, Leonid Kravchuk (1991-1994) and Leonid Kuchma (1994-2005), the government did not introduce consistent history policies. Especially president Kuchma was highly ambivalent to history. Both presidents saw history and national identity as tools to support their political platforms. They both needed to support the state on which their power, position, and prestige depended with nation-building strategies that gave the newly independent country more social substance.

189 Ibid., 183.

President Kravchuk initiated a strong shift away from established Soviet perceptions of Ukrainian history. His policy of ukrainization used many aspects of post-communist narratives of history and was based on Ukrainian national history (e.g. the 'Hrushevskiy scheme'). They centred on two ideas: First, that Ukraine was an independent nation, which was continuously suppressed by its stronger neighbours. The artificial famine of 1932-1933 or *Holodomor* became the seminal moment of Ukraine's victimhood. The government-sponsored extensive commemoration campaigns to introduce the notion of an anti-Ukrainian genocide and to distance the administration (which was essentially composed of Soviet *nomenklatura*) from the legacy of Soviet rule in Ukraine. Kravchuk also used the legacy of Ukrainian nationalism in the 1930s and 1940s to underline the heroism of the suppressed nation. He tried to rehabilitate veterans of the radical nationalist *Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists* (OUN) and *Ukrainian Insurgent Army* (UPA) and wanted to give them an official status as 'veterans' (equal to that of Soviet Red Army veterans). Furthermore, he sought to accommodate their memory in other symbolic representations such as the state's symbols and national holidays. Ukrainian history textbooks also started to reflect the government's accounts of the *Holodomor*, Ukrainian nationalism and the Second World War, although there was no uniform representation between different textbooks.

Kravchuk had to thread a thin line: since he was a former Soviet bureaucrat and because Ukraine was essentially a Soviet creation, too much nationalization would damage his position. Furthermore, many Ukrainians, especially in the less nationally conscious East and South, saw the Soviet narrative of Ukrainian history as a self-evident truth. The Red Army veterans in the country were also unsatisfied: the positive appraisal of the OUN and UPA and the replacement of the *Great Patriotic War* with the *Second World War* relegated them to a place of secondary importance in (Ukrainian) history.

Opposition to ukrainization policies meant that Kravchuk lost the 1994 presidential elections to the former prime minister and Soviet bureaucrat Leonid Kuchma, who campaigned to end ukrainization. Although Kuchma never ended such policies, he scaled them down and his approach to history changed depending on what was expedient for him and his oligarchs. When he wanted to appeal to a Western electorate, he enacted more nationalist (often symbolic) policies. If he required electoral support in the East, he focussed on Soviet narratives. He was also highly ambivalent and was happy to serve whatever message an audience wanted to hear. Such approaches to history coincided with the creeping autocratization of the country.

Kuchma's history policies ensured that history became a primary political battleground and volatile political debates ensued. When Kuchma left office in 2005, Ukraine had polarized around two (political) mutually exclusive narratives of Ukrainian history. Like Kravchuk, Kuchma failed to reconcile the Ukrainian nationalists and the users of (neo)-Soviet narratives.

In 2005, the state no longer monopolized and controlled Ukrainian history as it did during the Soviet era. Overall, the fluctuating government policies emancipated the Ukrainian nationalist viewpoint of history. Nevertheless, the opposition against it, and the political use of the Soviet narrative showed that the legacy of Soviet Ukraine was still large. This also demonstrated itself in other ways: Although the nationalist narrative became dominant, a Soviet elite of politicians and historians adopted it. They applied the overall structure and methods of the Soviet model to the nationalist content. Because there was no real regime change after 1991, the Ukrainian nationalist narrative was essentially sovietised. Despite all opposition to the Ukrainian national(ist) narrative of history, there has essentially been a creeping institutionalization: many views that would have been outrageous before 1991 were common good in 2005: these included recognition of the *Holodomor as a fact*, the evaluation of the *Holodomor as a genocide* (opposition was limited to the left) and open com-

memoration of the OUN and UPA as fighters for Ukrainian independence.

Both Kravchuk and Kuchma have always stressed that Ukraine was a European nation and have claimed European integration as an important policy goal. Since perceptions of history (the *acquis historique*) were also important for European integration, the question how Ukrainian history policies stood in relation to them seemed important. The narratives Kravchuk and Kuchma employed hardly seemed compatible with the *acquis historique*. Both the Ukrainian nationalist and (neo)-Soviet narratives had exclusionary characters and were based on simplifications, obfuscations and had apologetic tendencies. As promoted by Ukraine's squabbling politicians, they lacked the self-critical attitude that one needs to show. For instance, there has been little or no discussion about the OUN's and UPA's fascist ideology nor of their crimes (and participation in the Holocaust) and collaboration with the Germans.

It is not that Ukrainian politicians have not interacted with European modes of dealing with history. For instance, Ukrainian politicians participated and enabled commemoration of the Holocaust's Jewish victims. Nevertheless, progress was limited. Both the Kravchuk and Kuchma administrations showed too little genuine and persistent concern with Holocaust remembrance. They did not fully appreciate the lessons and moral implications of the Holocaust. The regimes have also not integrated the Holocaust as part of Ukrainian history. Furthermore, they allowed encroachment of Holocaust sites by nationalists and commercial interests. Ukrainian politicians, government and opposition alike, also did little to counter or prevent expressions of antisemitism. Western Holocaust remembrance was influential in one way: it served as a template for Holodomor remembrance. Many of the commemorative practices that Kravchuk and Kuchma introduced copied practices of Holocaust remembrance. In creating symbols or seeking recognition for Ukrainian victimhood, politicians often stretched the Holodomor's narrative beyond the limits allowed by Holocaust remembrance.

Overall, Ukrainian history policies between 1991 and 2005 displayed highly problematic aspects. These policies did not help to foster a Ukrainian identity that the majority of the country's inhabitants could share. The politicians also left many important questions about the Holodomor, the OUN and UPA as well as the status of the Soviet past and the Red Army unanswered. The struggle between regime and opposition polarized Ukraine and its history. Both the formation of an overarching Ukrainian identity and these difficult questions were left for Kuchma's eventual successor. It was still uncertain where the country was heading for, both geopolitically and domestically. History would remain contested in the coming years. Because Ukrainian politics became extremely volatile after the *Orange Revolution* (2004), the political struggle for history only intensified with great consequences for history policies.

Chapter 5. Confrontation in a Divided Country: History Policies in Ukraine after the Orange Revolution (2004–2010)

5.1. Political Context: Ukraine after the Orange Revolution

In November and December 2004, the world watched how protesters occupied Kyiv's main square, the *Maidan Nezalezhnosti* (Independence Square). These demonstrations followed on the announcement of the presidential elections' results: Viktor Yanukovich supposedly won a marginal 49.46 % majority. The favourite opposition candidate, Viktor Yushchenko, only received 46.61% of the votes. Evidence of fraud quickly came to light: in some constituencies of Yanukovich's home Donetsk region, there were more votes than registered voters. Eventually, a re-run of the second round of the elections on December 26, ensured a 51.99% victory for Yushchenko. The so-called 'Orange Revolution' (after Yushchenko's campaign colour) resulted in a change of power.

Subsequent years were politically volatile: several political crises and changes of government ensued. History policies and questions of identity became major and characteristic political arguments. This was partially the result of two different political developments. First, a paradox: the Orange Revolution was not a real revolution. Second, the revolution's outcome satisfied none of the political players.

The Revolution that wasn't: The Orange Revolution in Ukraine (2004)

The Orange Revolution was a political event with revolutionary and non-revolutionary aspects. On the one hand it involved mass demonstrations by disenchanted citizens and the opposition candidate became president. On the other hand, the form of government remained unchanged.¹ Power simply shifted within the existing post-Soviet oligarchic-bureaucratic elite: already before the Orange revolution some parts of the elite stopped supporting the Kuchma administration. For instance, in September 2004 the presidential majority in the Rada disintegrated. Parliamentary Speaker Volodymyr Lytvyn indicated that he would support neither side in the upcoming elections (keeping his hands clean to act in any way after the elections).²

During the Orange Revolution, even more oligarchs defected to the opposition. The prosecutor's office in Kyiv and city governments in Western and Central Ukraine shifted their loyalty to Yushchenko. The television station 1+1, owned by oligarch Ihor Kolomoyskyi, and the main public broadcasting television station UT1 did likewise.³ When it became clear that the protesters would prevail, some of Kuchma's Rada members even rejected the elections' results.⁴ After Yushchenko's inauguration, these parliamentarians also helped to appoint

1 Adam Eberhardt, *Rewolucja, której nie było: bilans pięciolecia "pomarańczowej" Ukrainy/The Revolution That Never Was: Five Years of "Orange" Ukraine*, Wyd. 1., Punkt Widzenia/Policy briefs (Warszawa: Ośrodek Studiów Wschodnich, 2009), 44, accessed December 13, 2016, https://www.osw.waw.pl/sites/default/files/punkt_widzenia_20.pdf; Eleonora Narvselius, "Cultural Identifications, Political Representations and National Project(s) on the Symbolic Arena of the Orange Revolution," *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 7, no. 2 (September 1, 2007): 30.

2 Gerhard Simon, "An Orange-Tinged Revolution: The Ukrainian Path to Democracy," *Russian Politics and Law* 44, no. 2 (April 1, 2006): 12.

3 *Ibid.*, 16.

4 *Ibid.*

the new president's ally, Yuliya Tymoshenko, as prime minister.⁵

The main opposition parties – Yushchenko's *Our Ukraine (Nasha Ukrayina)* and the Bloc Yuliya Tymoshenko – also represented a group of certain oligarchs. Many members of this group held government positions under Kuchma. They only joined the opposition because they were forced out of office or became disillusioned with the regime.⁶

The overall process resembled the 1991 scenario: A desire to retain power, influence and parliamentary immunity was a keen motive. Elite representatives became convinced that Western Ukraine would not accept a victory of Yanukovich. Therefore, they had to throw their weight with the new political forces.⁷

The Constitutional Compromise

As no party could force a solution, either violence or a compromise would solve the political crisis. Since no politician could accept a violent outcome, only an agreement was feasible. The eventual settlement allowed pro-Yanukovich oligarchic elites to resign themselves to a Yushchenko presidency.⁸

The EU mediated a dual compromise based on a reform of electoral laws (to ensure a fair re-run) and significant constitutional amendments. These amendments drastically curtailed presidential powers and enlarged those of the Verkhovna Rada and the government. Because the old elite could more easily control parliament, it provided them with a safe shelter.⁹ This compromise profoundly influenced Ukrainian politics, because it gave the Orange Revolution's opponents legitimate instruments to oppose the revolution's outcomes.¹⁰

The Ukrainian Nation as a Political Entity

The Orange Revolution had one revolutionary aspect: it broke the regional divisions that characterised Ukrainian politics thus far. The protesters did not go to the streets to support their regional political franchise. Instead, they protested in the name of the Ukrainian nation. Their slogan, '*Razom nas bahato!*' ('*Together we are many!*'), was more than just empty rhetoric.¹¹ For the first time, Ukrainians from the Western and Central parts of the country considered themselves part of the same political construct. In essence, the Ukrainian nation unified as a political entity.¹²

5 Ibid., 22.

6 Dominique Arel, "Why and How It Happened. Orange Ukraine Chooses the West, but Without the East," in *Aspects of the Orange Revolution. The Context and Dynamics of the 2004 Orange Revolution*, ed. Ingmar Bredies, Andreas Umland, and Valentin Yakushik, vol. III, Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society (Stuttgart: Ibidem-Verlag, 2014), 39.

7 Taras Kuzio, "Soviet Conspiracy Theories and Political Culture in Ukraine: Understanding Viktor Yanukovich and the Party of Regions," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 44, no. 3 (September 2011): 230.

8 Vsevolod Samokhvalov, "Ukraine and the Orange Revolution: Democracy or a 'Velvet Restoration'?", *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 6, no. 2 (June 2006): 258–259.

9 In the old system, the president nominated the prime minister; this prerogative now fell to the Rada. The president could also no longer dissolve the Rada at will. Nevertheless, the president retained important powers: he appointed the Ministers of Defense and Foreign Affairs, as well as the prosecutor general and the head of the Security Service. For the complete constitutional compromise, see: Л. Кучма, *Закон України № 2222-IV/2004 про внесення змін до Конституції України*, 2004, accessed February 6, 2017, <http://zakon5.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2222-15/ed20041208>. For a concise summary, see: Nicole Gallina, "Ukraine," in *Constitutional Politics in Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. Anna Fruhstorfer and Michael Hein (Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden, 2016), 504–505, accessed November 9, 2016, http://link.springer.com/10.1007/978-3-658-13762-5_20.

10 Samokhvalov, "Ukraine and the Orange Revolution," 206.

11 Andrew Wilson, *Ukraine's Orange Revolution* (New Haven, Conn. and London: Yale University Press, 2005), 202.

12 Arel, "Why and How It Happened," 35.

The Maidan was fuelled by contradictory ideas: protesters were inspired by both nationalism and a desire for an open civil society and European-style democracy. The Kuchmagate scandal and subsequent protests demonstrated that nationalism was the only political franchise that could resist the regime's authoritarian tendencies.¹³ This might seem far off; however, there was a point to it. After the Kuchmagate scandal, the moderate nationalists no longer kept to the '*Grand Bargain*' and stopped empowering an inherently undemocratic regime. Neither the socialists nor the communists stood up for democracy in the same way.

Most protesters envisaged Ukraine as a civic republic for all citizens, regardless of their nationality. Some of the protesters had a more exclusionary ethnically based nation in mind. This greatly influenced political stability: A large group of citizens, mainly in the East and South, now felt excluded from the national polity. President Yushchenko had significant difficulties promoting his idea of a more modern democratic nation in these regions.¹⁴

The integration of the East and South in the political entity that formed on the Maidan was the primary political challenge for the new president.¹⁵ Simultaneously with Yushchenko's attempts at doing so, opponents of the Orange Revolution used their remaining legitimacy to present themselves as the sole defenders of the East and South.¹⁶

The Tri-Partite Power Struggle: The Story of the Two Viktors and one Yulyia

2005-2006 The First Orange Coalition: Former Allies Turning against Each Other

After the Orange Revolution, a volatile tri-partite power struggle increasingly characterized Ukrainian politics. Its protagonists, Viktor Yushchenko, Viktor Yanukovych, and the former's Orange ally, Yulyia Tymoshenko sought to deny the others a place in the political landscape. This struggle for power influenced identity politics and history policies.

In 2004, Yanukovych had become party leader of the small Party of the Regions, (one of the various political parties that supported the Kuchma regime). This party would in the ensuing years become the main vehicle of the representatives of the oligarchic regime who were driven out of power in the Orange revolution. The Orange Parties and the Party of the Regions now were the main antagonists in Ukraine's political landscape. As Orange Revolution was mediated, it seemed logical for Yushchenko to opt for a reconciliatory approach.¹⁷ For instance, Yushchenko could have entered a coalition with Yanukovych and have co-opted his party as partner in the consolidation of the Ukrainian nation as a political entity. This would have resembled the '*Grand Bargain*' of 1991: a trade-off between supporting reforms and the elite retaining power. The appointment of Tymoshenko as prime minister indicated that Yushchenko intended otherwise.¹⁸ In any case, reconciliation was a bridge too far for many Maidan protesters. The decision could also have indicated Yushchenko's intention to keep the pre-election arrangements with Tymoshenko.

Because Yushchenko opted for a hard-line, it was of the utmost importance that the Orange forces kept their unity, at least until the planned 2006 parliamentary elections (when they could attain a solid majority of their own). Together they could more easily fence off the Donetsk clan's attempts at regaining power. They could also introduce domestic re-

13 Ibid., 43.

14 Anton Shekhovtsov, "The 'Orange Revolution' and the 'Sacred' Birth of a Civic-Republican Ukrainian Nation," *Nationalities Papers* 41, no. 5 (September 2013): 740.

15 Arel, "Why and How It Happened," 52.

16 Samokhvalov, "Ukraine and the Orange Revolution," 263.

17 Simon, "An Orange-Tinged Revolution," 17.

18 Ibid.

forms and conduct pro-Western foreign policy. The Orange camp's protagonists failed to keep their unity and quickly started squabbling and delegitimizing each other. Two factors caused their disunity:

First, Yushchenko's *Our Ukraine* and Tymoshenko's party needed the same electorate: the voters who supported Yushchenko in the presidential elections: nationalists in the West, and the Central Ukrainians that joined them in 2004.¹⁹

Second, Yushchenko and Tymoshenko felt mutual personal animosity. Also, the division of power between their offices was unclear. Although the constitutional compromise increased the government's power, Yushchenko could also use the National Security and Defence Council to influence the government (its decisions were binding for all executive organs).²⁰ Yushchenko appointed an ambitious oligarch, Petro Poroshenko, as its head.²¹ Besides being close to the president, he was also one of Tymoshenko's rivals.

A broad Rada majority supported the coalition: *Our Ukraine* (111 seats), the Tymoshenko Bloc (22 seats), the Socialist Party (22 seats), 18 members of the Social Democratic Party (of the influential oligarch Viktor Medvedchuk, who was close to Kuchma), 46 members of Yanukovich's Party of the Regions and even three members of the Communist Party. That so many parties supported the new government indicated that the government's parliamentary support was far from secure.²²

For all the above reasons, it was unsurprising that the coalition failed quickly. The constitutional compromise dictated the moment of the breakup.²³ The amendments would become effective in 2006. Yushchenko would have lost the power to dismiss the government. With the old constitution still in effect, he sacked Tymoshenko and her government in September 2005. Subsequently, the president replaced her with Yuri Yekhanurov (*Our Ukraine*), after reaching an agreement with none other than Viktor Yanukovich and his Party of the Regions.²⁴

The political struggle between the Orange parties influenced the political struggle over history and memory. Yushchenko and his supporters claimed that Tymoshenko was 'not Ukrainian enough' in national and cultural issues.²⁵ These accusations had some substance: Tymoshenko never articulated a consistent conception of the past. Her stance often resembled Kuchma's: national identity, history, and memory only mattered to her, if they could influence election results.²⁶

19 Eberhardt, *Rewolucja, której nie było*, 56–57.

20 Its decisions were binding for all executive organs of state.

21 Simon, "An Orange-Tinged Revolution," 20.

22 "Ukrainian Assembly Backs New PM," *BBC News*, last modified September 22, 2005, accessed February 10, 2017, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4270694.stm>.

23 The constitutional compromise divided Yushchenko and Tymoshenko from the onset: while the majority of *Our Ukraine* deputies voted for the compromise, the Bloc Yuliya Tymoshenko's members abstained or voted against (for the vote tally, see: "Поіменне голосування про прийняття в пакеті проектів законів №4180, №3207-1, №6372-д," 08.12.2004, *Офіційний портал Верховної Ради України*, accessed February 8, 2017, http://w1.c1.rada.gov.ua/pls/radan_gs09/ns_arh_golos?g_id=1458604&n_skl=4). Since Tymoshenko did not participate in negotiations, she felt excluded and neglected by Yushchenko. On his part, Yushchenko feared that the constitutional compromise would strengthen Tymoshenko.

24 "Ukrainian Assembly Backs New PM."

25 Oxana Shevel, "Memories of the Past and Visions of the Future. Remembering the Soviet Era and Its End in Ukraine," in *Twenty Years After Communism*, ed. Michael Bernhard and Jan Kubik (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 157–158.

26 *Ibid.*

2007-2008: Uneasy Cohabitation

Early parliamentary elections were held in March 2006. Yushchenko lost 30 seats. His *Our Ukraine* now held 81 out of 450 Rada seats. The Tymoshenko Bloc gained 107 seats (129 in total). Yanukovych's Party of the Regions became the largest party with 178 seats (an increase of 85). The Socialist Party gained 11 seats (33 in total), while the Communist Party lost 45 seats (21 seats in total). According to the 2004 compromise, the new parliament was elected based only on a system of proportional representation (previously half of the parliament was comprised of individual mandates in a district-based system).²⁷

Given all political problems between the two Orange parties, it is unsurprising that talks between them and the Socialist party ended without an agreement. Cohabitation between Yushchenko as president and Yanukovych as prime minister was the only viable way to form a new government. The Party of the Regions used this situation to its advantage and formed the so-called '*anti-crisis coalition*' with the Socialist and Communist Parties. Initially, even Yushchenko's *Our Ukraine* joined this coalition, but Yanukovych soon forced their representatives to leave.²⁸

The Party of the Regions became the refuge for all former government officials threatened by the Orange Revolution. It also started representing the Russophone – not necessarily ethnic Russian – voters in Ukraine. The party pursued a policy defending their identity. It promised a legal status for the Russian language, closer ties with Russia, a neutral stance in international security (e.g. no NATO membership), as well as the devolution of power to Ukraine's regions.²⁹ This call for federalization pleased the Russophone electorate. It also aided the Donetsk clan's business interests, since the oligarchs could use their influence in local politics. The Party of the Region's 'Russian strategy' dictated its identity politics: it opposed all nationalizing policies.

2008-2010: The Uneasy Second and Third Orange Coalitions

Cohabitation was uneasy and short-lived: The '*anti-crisis coalition*' was in office for little over a year (August 2006-December 2007). A political and constitutional crisis meant the coalition's end.³⁰ The squabbling political parties only managed to reach an agreement to solve the crisis against the threat of a violent outcome. They set a date for new parliamentary elections in September 2007.³¹

27 *Вибори Президента України. Повторне голосування 7 лютого 2010 року. Протокол Центральної виборчої комісії про результати повторного голосування з виборів Президента України.* (Київ: Центральна Виборча Комісія, February 14, 2010), accessed May 19, 2017, http://www.cvk.gov.ua/info/pro-tokol_cvk_07022010.pdf.

28 "Коаліція утвердила: Тимошенко - прем'єр, Порошенко - спікер (оновлено)," Корреспондент.net, last modified June 27, 2006, accessed February 9, 2017, <http://korrespondent.net/ukraine/politics/157341-koalicya-utverdila-timoshenko-premier-poroshenko-spiker-obnovleno>; "New Ukrainian Coalition Announced Amid Scuffles," *RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty*, last modified November 6, 2006, accessed February 9, 2017, <http://www.rferl.org/a/1069755.html>.

29 Serhiy Kudelia, "The House That Yanukovych Built," *Journal of Democracy* 25, no. 3 (July 14, 2014): 20.

30 Yushchenko dissolved the Rada and ordered pre-term parliamentary elections. A parliamentary majority and the Yanukovych government disputed the constitutionality of this decision and declined to allocate government funds for the organization of the elections. A series of court cases followed. Eventually it looked like a violent clash between security forces loyal to the president and those loyal to the government was imminent. See: Mark Tran, "Ukraine Crisis Deepens as Parliament Dissolved," *The Guardian*, April 3, 2007, sec. World news, accessed February 9, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2007/apr/03/ukraine.marktran>; Taras Kuzio, "Our Ukraine and Viktor Yushchenko Revive Their Fortunes," *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 4, no. 77 (April 19, 2007), accessed February 8, 2017, <https://jamestown.org/program/our-ukraine-and-viktor-yushchenko-revive-their-fortunes/>.

31 "Итог встречи у Ющенко: внеочередные выборы состоятся 30 сентября," Корреспондент.net, last modified May 27, 2007, accessed February 8, 2017, Итог встречи у Ющенко: внеочередные выборы состоятся 30 сентября.

These pre-term elections enabled the formation of another fragile Orange coalition, based solely on *Our Ukraine* and the Tymoshenko bloc. Because of all the political problems between the two parties, this coalition was also short-lived. In September 2008, another political crisis erupted after Tymoshenko proposed constitutional changes that further limited presidential powers. Yushchenko and Tymoshenko also disagreed on foreign policy in the wake of the Russian-Georgian war earlier that year. Yushchenko supported quick accession to NATO, while Tymoshenko attempted to appeal to the Russophone citizens, by dismissing that option.³²

At the same time, the worldwide economic crisis hit Ukraine particularly hard. Only a revived Orange coalition could help Ukraine out of the adverse economic situation. Therefore, the political parties revived it. This time, the political chameleon Volodymyr Lytvyn (his party gained representation in parliament in the 2007 elections) joined the coalition as a moderator.³³ Unsurprisingly, relations in this coalition remained strained.

A New nationalist Force: Svoboda

After the Orange Revolution, a new political force also became prominent: the Svoboda (Freedom) Party. This party grew from the fringe Social-National Party of Ukraine, which used a Neo-Nazi Wolfsangel as its main logo.³⁴ In 2007, Svoboda monopolized the far-right nationalist vote share.³⁵ In 2009, it first made a breakthrough in regional elections: in the Western Ukrainian Ternopil Oblast Council, it even gained 50/120 seats and secured the appointment of its party secretary as council chairman.³⁶ The party also partly gained prominence in mainstream media.³⁷

The increasing loss of confidence in Ukraine's squabbling politicians fuelled the party's growth. Furthermore, Yushchenko's ideological policies relied on extreme nationalist historical narratives and legitimized part of Svoboda's ideological platform.³⁸ Yushchenko's *Our Ukraine* even held ties to the party: Svoboda's charismatic leader, Oleh Tyahnybok, who served as Rada Deputy for *Our Ukraine* between 2002 and 2006.

There were also speculations that the Party of the Regions secretly financed Svoboda. At that time, these were just unsubstantiated rumours. In 2016, the journalist Serhey Leshchenko and the anti-corruption analyst Anton Marchuk uncovered the Party of the Regions's so-called black (or secret) ledgers. These showed that the Party of the Regions paid one Svoboda deputy a sum of \$200,000 in 2014.³⁹ Although this is far from conclusive proof, it makes

32 Yuri Zarakhovich, "Why Ukraine's Pro-Western Coalition Split," *Time*, September 4, 2008, accessed February 8, 2017, <http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1838848,00.html>.

33 "Возвращение блудного Литвина," *Корреспондент.net*, last modified December 9, 2008, accessed February 10, 2017, <http://korrespondent.net/ukraine/3197145-vozvrashchenie-bludnogo-litvina>.

34 The party claimed that it was not a Nazi-symbol but stood for the political programme '*Idea of the Nation*' (*Idea Natiyi*). Strangely enough this digraph used the Ukrainian Cyrillic letter I combined with the Latin letter N, instead of the Cyrillic letter N (Н). See: Петро Андрусечко, "Шлях Тягнибока до Свободи," *Український журнал*, no. 5 (2009): 38.

35 Shekhovtsov, "The 'Orange Revolution,'" 218.

36 *Ibid.*, 219.

37 Per Anders Rudling, "The Return of the Ukrainian Far Right. The Case of VO Svoboda," in *Analysing Fascist Discourse. European Fascism in Talk and Text.*, ed. Ruth Wodak and John E. Richardson (New York and London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2013), 244.

38 *Ibid.*

39 The investigation implicated Paul Manafort, an American political consultant who worked for Yanukovich and received 22 individual payments. At the time of the revelations, Manafort worked as the campaign leader for Donald Trump, who contested in the 2016 American presidential elections. Manafort subsequently resigned from that position. See: Сергей Лещенко and Антон Марчук, "Рукописи не горят. Пол Manafort в теневой бухгалтерии партии Януковича," *Українська правда*, last modified August 19, 2016, accessed February 8, 2017, <http://www.pravda.com.ua/cdn/graphics/2016/08/manafort/index.html>.

it more likely that the Party of the Regions indeed financed Svoboda.

It might seem counterintuitive: Why would a party that opposed the nationalist political platform subsidize Svoboda? It fitted the general strategy: The upcoming 2010 presidential and 2012 parliamentary elections would become run-offs between Tymoshenko and Yanukovich. Any increase in the Svoboda Party's vote share would decrease Tymoshenko's. For many moderate voters, Svoboda was 'unfashionable' and they would not vote for the party.⁴⁰

5.2. The Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance: Yushchenko's Key Player

Before we can discuss Yushchenko's history policies, it is necessary to introduce the *Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance (Ukrayinskyi institut natsionalnoyi pamyati)*. Yushchenko created it to assist in the introduction of his history policies.

As discussed in chapter 1, such institutes are key political instruments for the politics of history. They combine several functions and political powers control them.⁴¹ The institutes of national remembrance are an understudied aspect of post-communist politics of history. Scientific literature on politics of history, as well as news coverage often refer to the institutes. Nevertheless, there are almost no specific studies about the institutes. For instance, there exists only one overview article by Heorhyi Kasianov about the Ukrainian institute.⁴² There is a reason to be concerned about the institute's activities. In a democratic and free society, it is essential to safeguard pluralism in a society's functional memory (*Funktionsgedächtnis*). To do that, it is necessary to manage the storage memory (*Speichergedächtnis*) carefully.⁴³ The institutes combine different functions the storage (archive & publishing) and functional (juridical functions & research) memories. This easily allows politicians to influence the delicate interplay between both stages of social memory.

High expectations: Aims and Means

Yushchenko undertook the first steps to found the Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance in 2005. That year the Yekhanurov government appointed a preparatory working group. Thirty-one representatives of several ministries, governmental agencies, and social and scientific institutes were appointed as members. Several nationalizing historians such as Stanislav Kulchytskyi, Volodymyr Viatrovych and Yuriy Shapoval as well as the nationalist politician Levko Lukyanenko also participated.⁴⁴ Finally, on July 5, 2006, the government founded the institute.⁴⁵

40 Yanukovich aimed at minimizing the moderate (nationalist) opposition; for instance by creating bureaucratic hurdles for participation in elections and imprisoning Yuliya Tymoshenko. His history policies were meant to enlarge his own support in the east and simultaneously enlarging support for radical nationalist opposition. These policies are extensively explained in "Chapter 6. Rewinding Yushchenko's History Policies: Yanukovich and the Politics of Ukrainian Identity (2010–2014)".

41 See "1.5. Politics of History as a Problem of Post-Communism", page 19 and further.

42 Георгий Касьянов, "К десятилетию Украинского института национальной памяти (2006 – 2016)," *Historians.in.ua*, last modified January 14, 2016, accessed November 4, 2016, <http://www.historians.in.ua/index.php/en/dyskusiya/1755-georgij-kas-yanov-k-desyatiliyuu-ukrainskogo-instituta-natsional-noj-pamyati-2006-2016>.

43 See "1.2. Canonization: Institutionalizing Memories", page 22 and "1.5. Politics of History as a Problem of Post-Communism", page 30.

44 Ю. Схануров, *Розпорядження Кабінету Міністрів України № 460-р/2005 про створення Міжвідомчої робочої групи з питання утворення Українського інституту національної пам'яті*, 2005, accessed February 14, 2017, <http://zakon3.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/460-2005-%D1%80>.

45 Ю. Схануров, *Постанова Кабінету Міністрів України № 927/2006 про затвердження положення про Український інститут національної пам'яті*, 2006, accessed February 14, 2017, <http://zakon3.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/927-2006-%D0%BF/ed20060705>.

According to the founding governmental decision, the institute had to:

1. Strengthen public attention to Ukrainian history and had to spread objective information about history in both Ukraine and other countries.
2. Realise governmental politics and coordinate activities for the recovery and the protection of the Ukrainian people's national memory.
3. Study stages in the struggle for the creation of a Ukrainian state in the 20th century and the Ukrainian people's past (including all forms of repression) from different viewpoints.
4. Implement a range of measures to immortalize the memory to the victims of the Holodomors (plural is in the original decree) and political repressions, and participants in the struggle for national independence.⁴⁶

The first and third goal could do little harm, but the second and fourth goals were more problematic. Combined, these goals indicated that the institute had to give scientific credence to the government's history policies.⁴⁷

The government translated these goals to the following specific tasks:

1. To form an archive of national memory.
2. To conduct oral history projects.
3. To make proposals to promote the concept of a famine-genocide internationally (e.g. with the UN, the EU and Council of Europe, etc.).
4. To design normative acts of law (including international law).
5. To create and administer places and complexes of memory (e.g. monuments and museums).
6. To create museum expositions.
7. To prepare proposals that extend security and social protection to '*participants in the struggle for national liberation*' (e.g. veterans from the OUN and UPA) and to award them decorations and titles.⁴⁸

To fulfil these tasks, the government entrusted wide-ranging powers to the institute:

1. The right to receive information and documents from all executive authorities, local governments, enterprises, institutions, and organizations and to work with all archives that fall within its competence.
2. The right to involve experts in the executive branch of government, science, education, and NGOs to consider matters within its competence, and to provide consulting services on the issues of restoration and preservation of national memory and to draft appropriate programmes and to implement them.
3. The right to promote and to provide services to individuals and legal entities that conduct research and to conduct special investigations to restore and preserve national memory.
4. The right to convene meetings of interagency committees, expert, and consultative councils, and working groups.
5. The right to represent the Cabinet of Ministers internationally.
6. The right to help with the restoration of the rights of persons persecuted for resisting a totalitarian regime, and to seek retrials for such persons.
7. The right to form enterprises, institutions, and organisation and to publish.
8. To perform other functions that lay within its competences.⁴⁹

The Cabinet of Ministers appointed the institute's head. He received the right to submit bills, presidential decrees, and governmental decisions to the Cabinet of Ministers for ap-

46 Касьянов, "К десятилетию."

47 See also: Mink, "Between Reconciliation and the Reactivation," 478.

48 Касьянов, "К десятилетию."

49 As stipulated in article 5 of the institute's regulations: Схануров, *Постанова Кабінету Міністрів України № 927/2006*.

proval. He also had an implicit right to advise the cabinet on legislation.⁵⁰ These rights displayed the troubling mix of archival and judicial functions mentioned above. They could have undermined Ukraine's democratic development. During Yushchenko's presidency, this remained only a theoretical possibility, because the institute faced several difficulties (as will be explained below)

The institute's goals and tasks were essentially a compromise that meant to satisfy adherents of nationalist, anti-communist and ethnically based history policies. The decree embedded such policies in highly bureaucratic language. The government also wanted to please the bureaucracy, which did not favour the president's policies. In essence, it allowed the opponents of the president's nationalizing agenda to subsume it and hinder its introduction.⁵¹

The president also involved other government agencies in his history policies: For instance, the institute's regulations stipulated close cooperation with the archives of the *Security Service of Ukraine* (SBU).⁵² Under the new constitution, the SBU was one of the few government agencies under the president's exclusive control. The appointment of heads for both the Institute and the SBU archives also indicated the political nature of these agencies. The government appointed Ihor Yuhnovskyyi as the institute's first head. This *Our Ukraine* Rada deputy, who already was in his eighties, was quite a curious pick: Not only was he a staunch nationalist, but also as a doctor of physics, he lacked the professional qualifications of a historian or archivist. Yushchenko appointed no other than the extremely nationalist historian Volodymyr Viatrovych to head the SBU archives. Viatrovych combined his new function with the leadership of the equally nationalist, but private, *Research Centre for the Liberation Movement*' based in Lviv.⁵³

Constraints: Bureaucracy and Finances

At the end of 2006, the institute occupied two rooms within the building of the Cabinet of Ministers. Its director and his two deputies were its only staff members.⁵⁴ This signified the great bureaucratic problems the institute faced. There were four of them: First, institutional and financial hurdles. For instance, the institute never had a high status or far-reaching prerogatives and its budget was rather small (even at its peak in 2010, the budget was mere 19 million hryvnia; some €1.67 million). Second, the institute was political. This meant that all political conflicts made it difficult to realise the institute's goals. The institute was administered by the government and not by the president. This created the bizarre situation that Prime Ministers Tymoshenko and Yanukovych had to manage the institute. Since both opposed president Yushchenko's policies, the institute suffered.⁵⁵

During his tenure as prime minister, Yanukovych withdrew money from the institute's budget. The Yanukovych government allotted a mere 921.4 thousand Hryvna (approximately €152.8 thousand). This demonstrated his eagerness to sabotage Yushchenko's policies. When the Second Tymoshenko government came to power, the government steadily increased the budget, reaching its maximum in the year 2008 (76th anniversary of the Holodomor).⁵⁶ Nevertheless, the budget was still minimal. This could indicate that Tymoshen-

50 As stipulated in article 9 of the regulations: Ibid.

51 Касьянов, "К десятилетию."

52 Rudling, "The Return of the Ukrainian Far Right," 230.

53 For the appointment of Yuhnovskyyi see: "Юхновський став директором Інституту національної пам'яті," Вголос, last modified May 22, 2006, accessed February 14, 2017, http://vgolos.com.ua/news/yuhnovskyyi_stav_dyrektorem_instyutynu_natsionalnoi_pamyati_12343.html.

54 Georgiy Kasianov, "Revisiting the Great Famine of 1932-1933. Politics of Memory and Public Consciousness (Ukraine after 1991)," in *Past in the Making. Historical Revisionism in Central Europe after 1989*, ed. Michal Kopeček (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2008), 215.

55 Касьянов, "К десятилетию."

56 Ibid.

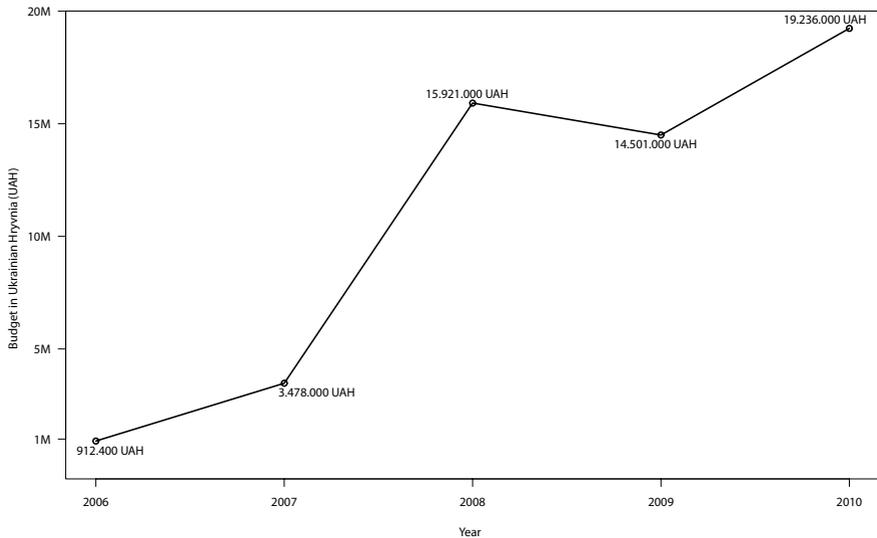


Figure 11: Budget of the Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance (2006-2010).

Source for the figures: Касьянов, “К десятилетію.”

ko’s government did not fully support Yushchenko’s policies, or that it gave higher priority to other policies (the domestic and international economic situation severely limited the government’s means).

The institute was most active in the years 2008-2009. Besides extensive Holodomor commemorations, the institute also enabled a new conception for history education. A round table of historians prepared this proposal at the request of the institute. Their proposal would have ended the use of a teleological nationalist narrative of history and replaced that with an antropocentric approach. The focus of history would shift to people of all nationalities that lived in Ukraine throughout the ages. It would explain how they coped with their changing political, economic and social surroundings. History would be presented as the development of humanity in Ukraine.⁵⁷ Such an approach is much closer related to the way how history is taught in (Western) Europe.

The proposed conception was rather paradoxical: the main instrument Yushchenko created for his history policies actually made use of a proposition that went against his nationalist policies. Full implementation of the round table’s proposal would have damaged Yushchenko’s political platform. His political opponents also had little incentive to support the round table’s proposition, because they either had an ambivalent approach to the president’s policies or required anti-nationalist history policies. In any case, the proposal was never implemented.

5.3. Unifying the Nation with the Holodomor: A Process of Commemoration and Judicialization

It was only logical that Yushchenko’s history policies would involve the Holodomor. On

⁵⁷ *Пропозиції до концепції історичної освіти в Україні: Матеріали III Робочої наради з моніторингу шкільних підручників історії України (Київ, 18 жовтня 2008 року)* (Український Інститут Національної Пам’яті, April 1, 2009), accessed November 15, 2016, <http://www.memory.gov.ua:8080/data/upload/publication/main/ua/1457/4.pdf>.

January 23, 2005, Yushchenko made this clear in his inaugural address. Besides praising the Maidan protesters for their bravery, the president emphasized that Ukrainians fought for their freedom since time immemorial. In this struggle, many Ukrainians fell victim to (foreign) suppressors:

*On this day let us remember the heroes who sacrificed their lives for this victory: the martyrs of the Auschwitzes and the Gulags, the victims of the Holodomor Famine-Genocide, the deportations, and the Holocaust. They are looking at us today, from the heavens, and I'm sure they are proud of us!*⁵⁸

Yushchenko strongly emphasized that the Holodomor was a genocide, but was very cautious not to blame it on anyone else but the Soviet leaders. He did not blame the famine on Russia nor on the Russian people.⁵⁹

According to Yushchenko, Ukraine was a post-colonial nation that had to emancipate its history from Russian political and cultural influence.⁶⁰ The Holodomor was a constituent part of this narrative. The famine supposedly demonstrated that the Ukrainian nation was a (European) victim of totalitarianism.⁶¹ Yushchenko used that notion to forge a shared Ukrainian identity. In essence, he made the Holodomor the glue to heal the rift between Western 'Orange' and Eastern Ukraine.⁶² This resembled his predecessor's approach. Nevertheless, there was a difference: While Kravchuk and Kuchma used the genocide thesis mainly as a political argument, Yushchenko much more felt the urge to enact concrete policies to support the genocide thesis.⁶³

Victim Inflation: A Portrait of a Victimized Nation

As part of his Holodomor narrative, Yushchenko continuously inflated the number of victims, to an eventual high of 10 million. The increment meant to assert the claim that the Holodomor was the biggest tragedy in history. Such a policy was highly disrespectful of the victims. The Holodomor was clearly a criminal, a murderous policy and a violation of the moral order. Would it not be wiser to draw moral lessons from such tragedies instead? One could do that by carefully and respectfully study the Holodomor. Yushchenko's policies did neither.⁶⁴ His number play also indicated that he relied on Soviet methods of deal-

58 Viktor Yushchenko, "Inaugural Address by President Viktor Yushchenko," trans. George Sajewych, *Ukrainian Weekly* LXXIII, no. 5 (January 30, 2005), accessed February 21, 2017, <http://www.ukrweekly.com/old/archive/2005/050523.shtml>.

59 Riabchuk, as paraphrased in: Matthew Kupfer and Thomas de Waal, "Crying Genocide: Use and Abuse of Political Rhetoric in Russia and Ukraine," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, last modified June 28, 2014, accessed November 29, 2016, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2014/07/28/crying-genocide-use-and-abuse-of-political-rhetoric-in-russia-and-ukraine-pub-56265>.

60 It is highly questionable whether Ukraine was a post-colonial country and nation. While Ukraine was a part of a multi-national empire, there were major differences with colonies: For instance, Ukrainians or other ethnicities from Ukraine had a high degree of upwards mobility to the centre (Moscow). This was unheard of in colonial systems. Both Nikita Khrushchev and Leonid Brezhnev were born or raised in Ukraine and made their early party careers in Ukraine. Other prominent functionaries from Ukraine in the federal party were Nikolay Podgorny (Mykola Pidhornyi), Konstantin Chernenko, Lazar Kaganovych, Grigory Zinovyev and Marshal Semyon Tymoshenko. The Ukrainian Communist Party was also influential in the all-union Communist Party.

61 T. Zhurzhenko, "Capital of Despair: Holodomor Memory and Political Conflicts in Kharkiv after the Orange Revolution," *East European Politics and Societies* 25, no. 3 (August 1, 2011): 559.

62 Barbara Martin, "The Holodomor Issue in Russo-Ukrainian Relations from 1991 to 2010" (Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, 2011), 16, accessed November 4, 2016, <http://repository.graduateinstitute.ch/record/13748>.

63 Kupfer and de Waal, "Crying Genocide."

64 Himka, "How Many Perished in the Famine and Why Does It Matter?"

ing with history and banalized the past.⁶⁵ Yushchenko claimed that he wanted to bring Ukraine closer to Europe. However, from a European perspective, it is highly problematic to view the Holodomor as the biggest tragedy in history since this qualification is usually reserved for the Holocaust.

Standing on the Shoulders of Predecessors: Yushchenko's Commemorative Practises of the Holodomor

Yushchenko could not approach the Holodomor as a tabula rasa because his predecessors left a legacy of commemorative practices. Yushchenko used these as a basis and paid unprecedented attention to the Holodomor, especially during the 72nd anniversary (2006-2007).⁶⁶ The commemorative efforts intensified between 2008 and 2010. Meanwhile, Ukraine's frequent political crises increasingly subsumed them.

In 2005, Yushchenko started his Holodomor-related policies by signing several presidential decrees. They introduced a new element: the request for a government bill that evaluated the Holodomors (with the plural in the decree) politically and judicially.⁶⁷ Later such legislation would become Yushchenko's main effort. For now, he mainly changed existing commemorations, such as the *Day of Commemorations of the Victims of the Holodomor and Political Repression*. Yushchenko expanded its rituals with the laying of wreaths at monuments and graves of victims. Laying a wreath is a common feature of commemorations worldwide. However, Yushchenko ensured that it was done rather symbolically: the wreaths were made of ears of wheat instead of flowers.⁶⁸

In October 2006, the presidential secretariat and the *Institute of National Remembrance* jointly organized a roundtable on the Holodomor. The roundtable issued a statement that reflected Yushchenko's characterization of the Holodomor as the apogee of Soviet attempts at curbing the Ukrainian people's struggle for independence.⁶⁹

A decree from 2007 again copied all previous commemorative practices but added another element: the construction of a national memorial in Kyiv. It ordered the Cabinet of Ministers and the Kyiv City administration to collaborate for its creation. It also gave the *Institute of National Remembrance* the task to organize a commemoration campaign. Furthermore, it instructed the government to provide the institute with sufficient funds to complete this task.⁷⁰

Another decree introduced a further new element: the publication of the so-called *Books of Memory*.⁷¹ These were one of the focal points of Yushchenko's commemorative policies. The *Institute of National Remembrance* prepared one national volume and the administrations of Holodomor-affected oblasts and the city of Kyiv prepared 19 regional volumes.⁷²

65 Kasianov, "The Great Famine of 1932-1933," 625, note 17; Kasianov as cited in: Леонид Швець, "Історик Георгій Касьянов о Голодоморі: Учений повинен бути автономним од політичного заказу," *Фокус*, last modified January 14, 2010, accessed November 9, 2016, <https://focus.ua/country/92637/>.

66 Касьянов, *Danse macabre*, 56.

67 В. Ющенко, *Указ Президента України № 1644/2005 про відзначення Дня пам'яті жертв голодоморів та політичних репресій*, 2005, accessed November 15, 2016, <http://zakon3.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1644/2005>; В. Ющенко, *Указ Президента України № 1544/2005 про шанування жертв та постраждалих від голодоморів в Україні*, 2005, accessed November 15, 2016, <http://zakon3.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1544/2005>.

68 В. Ющенко, *Указ Президента України № 1087/2005 про додаткові заходи щодо увічнення пам'яті жертв політичних репресій та голодоморів в Україні*, 2005, accessed November 15, 2016, <http://zakon3.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1087/2005>; Касьянов, *Danse macabre*, 57.

69 Касьянов, *Danse macabre*, 59.

70 В. Ющенко, *Указ Президента України № 1056/2007 про відзначення у 2007 році Дня пам'яті жертв голодоморів*, 2007, accessed November 15, 2016, <http://zakon3.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1056/2007>.

71 В. Ющенко, *Указ Президента України № 250/2007 про заходи у зв'язку з 75-ми роковинами Голодомору 1932-1933 років в Україні*, 2007, accessed November 15, 2016, <http://zakon3.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/250/2007>.

72 The national volume is: І. Юхновський et al., *Національна книга пам'яті жертв голодомору 1932-1933 років*

These books combine articles by historians, eye whiteness accounts, documents, photographs, and a timeline together with lists of (preferably all) victims. As noticed in chapter 4, international commemorative practices of the Holocaust provided examples for those of the Holodomor.⁷³ The *books of memory* were a prime example: the collection of names of victims and the collection of eyewitness accounts reflected similar practices of Holocaust remembrance.⁷⁴

The constitutional compromise severely limited Yushchenko's ability to conduct his Holodomor policies. Most of the activities of the presidential decrees fell under the purview of the national government and local administrations. A presidential decree, issued after the 2007 pre-term Rada elections reflected this: it reprimanded the governors of the Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia, Kherson, and Odesa oblasts because they neglected his directives.⁷⁵ Yushchenko again issued a similar reprimand in 2008.⁷⁶

в Україні (Київ: Видавництво імені Олени Теліги, 2008). The regional volumes are: Л.М. Спріденова et al., *Національна книга пам'яті жертв голодомору 1932-1933 років в Україні - Вінницька область* (Вінниця: Державна картографічна фабрика, 2008); Є.І. Бородин et al., *Національна книга пам'яті жертв Голодомору 1932-1933 років в Україні. Дніпропетровська область* (Дніпропетровськ: АРТ-ПРЕСС, 2008); О.І. Третяк et al., *Національна книга пам'яті жертв Голодомору 1932-1933 років в Україні. Донецька область*, vol. 1 (Донецьк: Видавництво КП «Регион», Видавництво СПД Бледнов та АТЗТ «Видавництво «Донеччина», 2008); О.І. Третяк et al., *Національна книга пам'яті жертв Голодомору 1932-1933 років в Україні. Донецька область*, vol. 2 (Донецьк: Видавництво КП «Регион», та Видавництво «ФОП Колесніченко», 2009); М.А. Черненко et al., *Національна книга пам'яті жертв Голодомору 1932-1933 років в Україні. Житомирська область* (Житомир: Полісся, 2008); О.В. Старух et al., *Національна книга пам'яті жертв Голодомору 1932-1933 років в Україні. Запорізька область* (Запоріжжя: Діке Поле, 2008); В.І. Ульяновченко et al., *Національна книга пам'яті жертв Голодомору 1932-1933 років в Україні. Київська область* (Бла Церква: МП Видавництво «Буква», 2008); Т.Т. Дмитренко et al., *Національна книга пам'яті жертв Голодомору 1932-1933 років в Україні. Кіровоградська область* (Кіровоград: ТОВ Імекс ЛТД, 2008); В.В. Михайличенко, М.О. Борзенко, and В.Л. Жигальцева, *Національна книга пам'яті жертв Голодомору 1932-1933 років в Україні. Луганська область* (Луганськ: Янтар, 2008); О.М. Гаркуша et al., *Національна книга пам'яті жертв Голодомору 1932-1933 років в Україні. Миколаївська область* (Миколаїв: Видавництво «Шамрай», 2008); М.Д. Сердюк et al., *Національна книга пам'яті жертв Голодомору 1932-1933 років в Україні. Одеська область* (Одеса: Астропринт, n.d.); Олександр Андрійович Білоусько et al., *Національна книга пам'яті жертв Голодомору 1932-1933 років в Україні. Полтавська область* (Полтава: Оріяна, 2008); О.Ф. Лаврик et al., *Національна книга пам'яті жертв Голодомору 1932-1933 років в Україні. Сумська область* (Суми: Видавництво Собор, 2008); В.Я. Білоцерківський et al., *Національна книга пам'яті жертв голодомору 1932-1933 років в Україні. Харківська область* (Харків: Фолио, 2008); С.Г. Водотика et al., *Національна книга пам'яті жертв Голодомору 1932-1933 років в Україні. Херсонська область* (Херсон: Видавництво «Наддніпрянська правда», 2008); І.К. Гавчук et al., *Національна книга пам'яті жертв Голодомору 1932-1933 років в Україні. Хмельницька область*, vol. 1 (Хмельницький, 2008); І.К. Гавчук et al., *Національна книга пам'яті жертв Голодомору 1932-1933 років в Україні. Хмельницька область*, vol. 2 (Хмельницький, 2008); Е.А. Левицька and П.І. Гаман, *Національна книга пам'яті жертв голодомору 1932-1933 років в Україні. Черкаська область*, vol. 1 (Черкаси: Видавець Чабаненко Ю., 2008); Е.А. Левицька and П.І. Гаман, *Національна книга пам'яті жертв голодомору 1932-1933 років в Україні. Черкаська область*, vol. 2 (Черкаси: Видавець Чабаненко Ю., 2008); В.М. Хоменко et al., *Національна книга пам'яті жертв Голодомору 1932-1933 років в Україні. Чернігівська область* (Чернігів: Деснянська правда, 2008); В. І. Марочко, В. К. Борисенко, and О. М. Веселова, *Національна книга пам'яті жертв Голодомору 1932-1933 років в Україні. Місто Київ* (Київ: Фенікс, 2008). Excerpt for the volume for the Cherson oblast, all regional volumes and the national volume have been published as a pdf-files on the website of the Institute of National Remembrance: "Томи Книги пам'яті жертв Голодомору 1932-1933 років в Україні," Офіційний веб-сайт Українського інституту національної пам'яті, accessed March 28, 2017, <http://www.memory.gov.ua:8080/ua/publication/content/1522.htm>.

73 See "4.2. A Tragedy for Ukraine: The Man-Made Famine of 1932-1933", page 98.

74 For example, the project initiated by the USC Shoah Foundation Institute for Visual History and Education, established by movie director Steven Spielberg after he made his famous Holocaust film *Schindler's List*. The foundation collects, keeps, and publishes testimonies of Holocaust survivors. These are most prominently of Jewish victims, but also of rescuers, aid-providers, Sinti and Roma, liberators, political prisoners, Jehovah's witnesses, war crimes trial participants, eugenic policies survivors, non-Jewish forced labourers and homosexuals. For more information see: "About Us," *USC Shoah Foundation. The Institute for Visual History and Education*, accessed February 23, 2017, <http://sfi.usc.edu/about>.

75 Kasianov, "The Great Famine of 1932-1933," 632-633; В. Ющенко, *Указ Президента України № 1021/2007 про персональну відповідальність посадових осіб за незадовільний стан підготовки заходів у зв'язку з 75-ми роковинами Голодомору 1932-1933 років в Україні*, 2007, accessed November 15, 2016, <http://zakon3.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1021/2007>.

76 Kasianov, "The Great Famine of 1932-1933," 633-634.

The Party of the Regions obstructed Yushchenko's policies. The conflict that arose between Arsen Avakov (the head of the Kharkiv oblast appointed by Yushchenko) and Mikhail Dobkin (the Party of the Regions mayor of Kharkiv) was a prime example. Yushchenko's decrees instructed regional administrations to construct a Holodomor monument. The oblast administration insisted on a prime location in Kharkiv's city centre. The city administration objected to this and favoured the construction of a monument on the countryside, because the famine was a rural tragedy. In the Oblast council, the dominant Party of the Regions argued that the characterization of the Holodomor as genocide and the educational activities could cause political tensions and interethnic hostility. Therefore, it objected to Holodomor-related policies. Dobkin used the Party of the Regions' majority in the city council to block all initiatives proposed by the *Institute of National Remembrance* to rename public spaces and to remove Soviet monuments to Holodomor perpetrators.⁷⁷ He also issued public statements in defiance of Yushchenko's policies and even openly played with the idea to offer asylum to the infamous Soviet Bronze Soldier War Memorial from Tallinn.⁷⁸ He even compared marches of UPA veterans with gay parades and used that comparison to call the former morally unacceptable.⁷⁹

Another, even insulting case of obstruction by local politicians and administrations occurred in the North-Eastern Sumy oblast. The regional administration simply provided the current list of registered voters instead of actual names of Holodomor victims for the book of memory. This caused a minor scandal in 2009 and made it easier to discredit Yushchenko's ongoing campaign to establish the genocide thesis. Its opponents could now point to its supposed falsified foundations.⁸⁰

The National Monument and Museum Complex

In 2009, Yushchenko initiated another major Holodomor remembrance campaign. This was out of the ordinary because it was not an anniversary year. It is likely that Yushchenko wanted to use it to increase his declining popularity. He needed to bolster his image because the 2010 presidential elections approached quickly. Yushchenko wanted to appeal to the Ukrainian nationalist electorate to dissuade these voters from voting for Tymoshenko (the second round of these elections would be either Yushchenko or Tymoshenko vs. Yanukovych).

The 2009 campaign centred around the same kind of commemorations as previous years.⁸¹ Its main achievement was the completion of a national memorial and state museum.⁸² The

77 Presidential decrees stipulated that streets named after Holodomor perpetrators should be renamed and monuments to them should be removed.

78 In 2007, the latter monument was moved by the Estonian government from the city centre to a cemetery. This caused major riots between Estonians and Russians with at least one fatality, see: Steven Lee Myers, "Estonia Removes Soviet-Era War Memorial after a Night of Violence," *The New York Times*, April 27, 2007, accessed February 23, 2017, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/27/world/europe/27iht-estonia.4.5477141.html>.

79 Zhurzhenko, "Capital of Despair," 611, 616–617.

80 Martin, "The Holodomor Issue," 36.

81 See for instance: Ю. Тимошенко, *Розпорядження Кабінету Міністрів України № 1328-р/2009 про вшанування пам'яті жертв голодоморів у листопаді 2009 року*, 2009, accessed November 15, 2016, <http://zakon3.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1328-2009-%D1%80>; Ю. Тимошенко, *Розпорядження Кабінету Міністрів України № 1429-р/2009 про прозатвердження плану заходів на 2009-2010 роки із вшанування пам'яті жертв Голодомору 1932-1933 років в Україні, дальшого дослідження теми голодоморів в Україні*, 2009, accessed November 15, 2016, <http://zakon3.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1429-2009-%D1%80>.

82 The Cabinet of Ministers had approved plans for the monument on July 23, 2008. The monument was to be built at Ivan Mazepa Street (formerly January Uprising Street) and was allotted a plot of 1009 m² and a budget of 133.775,429 Hryvna was projected. In 2010, the additional sum of 100.000 Hryvnya was budgeted for the completion of the project. See the following governmental decree and decision: Ю. Тимошенко, *Розпорядження Кабінету Міністрів України № 1094-р/2008 про питання будівництва у м. Києві Меморіального комплексу пам'яті жертв Голодоморів в Україні*, 2008, accessed November 15, 2016, <http://zakon3.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1094-2008-%D1%80>; Ю. Тимошенко, *Постанова Кабінету Міністрів України № 71/2010 питання*



Figure 12: The National Monument for the Victims of the Holodomors in Kyiv
Photo: Nicolaas A. Kraft van Ermel

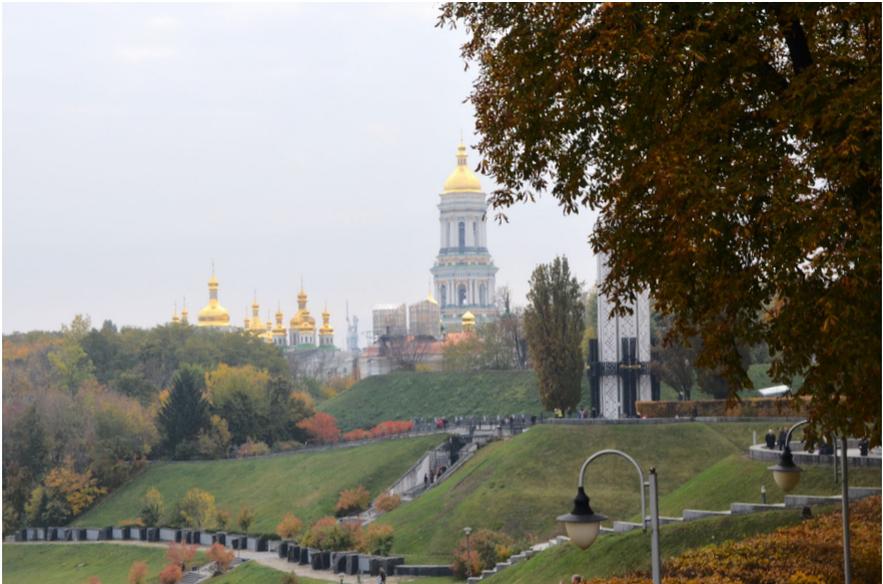


Figure 13: Kyiv's 'Memorial Stretch'.
Just behind the tree on the right stands the Soviet Memorial to the Unknown Soldier, behind it the Holodomor Memorial, directly followed by the Kyiv Pecherska Lavra and the Mother Motherland Statue of the (Soviet) Museum of the Great Patriotic War. (Photo: Nicolaas Kraft van Ermel)

government entrusted the management of this monument to the *Institute of National Remembrance*, which received a sum of 60 million Hryvna to complete the project's first stage.⁸³

The monument and museum were important parts of Yushchenko's Holodomor politics. This was signified by its location: It was built in Kyiv's 'Memorial Stretch', a section of Kyiv's Lower city along Mazepa and Lavra streets. Several important historical buildings and monuments are located here: the Kiev Arsenal (the site of a pro-Bolshevik uprising in 1918), the Monument to the Unknown Soldier (a *Great Patriotic War* monument), the Holodomor monument/museum under discussion here, the religiously significant Lavra monastery complex, and Mother-Motherland statue and the museum of the *Great Patriotic War*.

The monument was constructed next to the monument to the Unknown Soldier and was shaped like a candle. This referred to the '*light a candle*' ceremony, which Yushchenko emphasised as part of his Holodomor commemorations. In front of the monument, 24 millstones indicate that food was the source of life and that during the Holodomor people starved 24 hours a day. In the middle of this circle, a figure represented the most vulnerable Holodomor victims: children. Underground, underneath the candle, a museum was located. This museum told the standard nationalist narrative of the Holodomor: namely, that it was indeed genocide and was part of a series of famines intended to suppress the Ukrainian nation and that Ukraine still suffered because of this tragedy. The museum also gave visitors the opportunity to view the *Books of Memory*. In front of the monument, a section was reserved for planting trees during official visits of foreign (state) functionaries.⁸⁴ Behind the monument, a small garden displayed quotes about the Holodomor or displayed names of places affected by the famine.⁸⁵

The Judicialization of the Holodomor: Enforcing the Genocide Thesis Legally

As aforementioned, Yushchenko already suggested the introduction of a law on the Holodomor in 2005. He continued this policy of 'judicialization' throughout his presidency. This policy meant to establish the genocide thesis as a legal truth. As this notion was far from universally accepted, judicialization became the most controversial of Yushchenko's Holodomor policies.

Yushchenko first proposed a law of his own making during the 75th anniversary in 2006. His proposal contained several controversial stipulations: Not only did it define the Holodomor as a genocide, but it also forbade denial of the Holodomor *as a fact* (i.e. that the famine had taken place). It also enabled the introduction of fines for such denial.⁸⁶

використання у 2010 році коштів Стабілізаційного фонду для завершення робіт із спорудження Меморіального комплексу пам'яті жертв голодоморів в Україні, 2010, accessed November 15, 2016, <http://zakon3.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/71-2010-%D0%BE>. Furthermore, the plans for the monument were expanded to include a museum, managed by the Institute of National Remembrance. It is important to note that the museum was awarded the status of a state museum as well. See: В. Ющенко, Указ Президента України № 188/2010 про надання Державному музею "Меморіал пам'яті жертв голодоморів в Україні" статусу національного, 2010, accessed November 15, 2016, <http://zakon3.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/188/2010>.

83 Ю. Тимошенко, Розпорядження Кабінету Міністрів України № 435-р/2009 про утворення Державного музею "Меморіал пам'яті жертв голодоморів в Україні," 2009, accessed November 15, 2016, <http://zakon3.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/435-2009-%D1%80>.

84 In many countries in Europe, it is customary for foreign heads of state to lay a wreath at the national First or Second World War Monument during an official visit. During Yushchenko's presidency, it was standard practice to plant a tree at the Holodomor monument at such occasions

85 Roman A Cybriwsky, *Kyiv, Ukraine: The City of Domes and Demons from the Collapse of Socialism to the Mass Uprising of 2013-2014* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016), 141-144. This description of the monument is also based on my own personal observations during a visit to the monument and museum in August 2013.

86 Віктор Андрійович Ющенко, Проект Закону № 2470/2006 про Голодомор 1932-1933 років в Україні, 2006, accessed November 25, 2016, http://w1.c1.rada.gov.ua/pls/zweb2/webproc4_1?pf3511=28535.

Yushchenko wanted to discredit his political opponents with the proposal: He reasoned that opposition to the bill exposed the amorality of his opponents to the electorate.⁸⁷ This meant to provoke an angered response from the ‘*anti-crisis coalition*’.⁸⁸

Yushchenko’s political set-up worked: his proposal caused a heated Rada debate. The opposition, *Our Ukraine* and the Tymoshenko Bloc, favoured the president’s bill. They argued that the famine was one of the main causes of the country’s present difficult situation. The *anti-crisis coalition* parties claimed that the proposal was irrelevant and that it only intended to exert pressure on political opponents. Rada speaker Oleksandr Moroz (Socialist Party) even remarked that the president’s proposal used the Holodomor to establish a dictatorship. The communists underlined that there was no support for the president’s bill in society. They also stressed that it would complicate relations with Russia. The communists even called for Yushchenko’s impeachment.⁸⁹

At that time, no political force denied the existence of the Holodomor *as a fact*, but the Party of the Regions and the Communist Party opposed its classification *as genocide*.⁹⁰ As a response, three Party of the Region’s deputies proposed an alternative bill. It only defined the Holodomor as a ‘*crime against humanity*’ and a ‘*tragedy of the Ukrainian nation*’. The bill also lacked provisions on responsibility for denial.⁹¹

Halfway during the debate, the Party of the Regions decided that it was better to join the opposition’s claim that the Holodomor was a genocide. This act of political manoeuvring is still clouded in fog, but most likely the party decided to take away some wind from the sails of the opposition. However, the ostensible agreement was only superficial: the Party of the Regions’ definition of ‘genocide’ was so narrow that it only applied to the famine. On the other hand, the president relied on a general definition of genocide (the 1948 UN Genocide convention).⁹² A compromise was also unlikely because neither Yushchenko nor Yanukovich had anything to gain from it. Furthermore, the Communist Party tried to prevent a vote: its deputies left the floor, depriving the Rada of a voting quorum.⁹³

It seemed as if a compromise was unattainable and no Holodomor law would be enacted. Nevertheless, the smallest member of the *anti-crisis coalition* had an incentive to act as peacemaker. Its leader, Oleksandr Moroz, a historian, presented himself as an expert who was able to reach a compromise. He proposed another alternative bill that integrated aspects of both the president’s original and the Party of the Regions’ alternative proposals.⁹⁴ It defined the Holodomor as ‘*a genocide of the Ukrainian people*’. The use of the word *people* (*narod*) enabled the compromise: Legally and linguistically, it referred to all Ukrainian citizens regardless of their nationality. This was a strong contrast to the president, who used the word ‘nation’ (*natsiya*).⁹⁵

The compromise bill did not stop here: It also claimed that denial of the Holodomor insulted the memory of millions of victims and disrespected the dignity of the Ukrainian people. Finally, it declared denial ‘*unlawful*’ but did not proscribe any consequences.⁹⁶ The latter was rather peculiar. The bill was also inconsistent: it established a certain interpretation

87 Kasianov, “Holodomor and the Politics of Memory,” 178.

88 Kas’ianov, “The Holodomor and the Building of a Nation,” 36–38; Касьянов, *Danse macabre*, 59–60.

89 Касьянов, *Danse macabre*, 60–61.

90 Kas’ianov, “The Holodomor and the Building of a Nation,” 36–38; Касьянов, *Danse macabre*, 59–60.

91 Kasianov, “The Great Famine of 1932–1933,” 628.

92 *Ibid.*

93 Портнов, “Упражнения с историей,” 131.

94 *Ibid.*

95 Долганов, “Формування та імплементація меморального законодавства,” 21–23.

96 В. Ющенко, *Закон України № 376-V/2006 про Голодомор 1932-1933 років в Україні*, 2006, Articles 1 & 2, accessed November 15, 2016, <http://zakon3.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/376-16>. The bill also made some minor stipulations, that codified already existing commemorative practices (articles 3, 4 & 5).

of the famine, but only banned denial of the famine *as a fact*. This made the compromise toothless: it was a mere symbolic declaration that neither Yushchenko nor the Party of the Regions could use as a political instrument.

The Rada adopted Moroz's compromise on November 28, 2006, and Yushchenko signed it into law the following day.⁹⁷ The two Orange parties and the Socialist Party voted for the law. Two members of the Party of the Regions also joined them. The latter often played the role of '*nationally conscious Ukrainians*' and regularly voted for nationalist propositions in the Rada.⁹⁸ This ensured that the Party of the Regions could not be simply be put away as an '*anti-Ukrainian political force*'.⁹⁹

It is difficult to say whether the 2006 law was a loss or a win for Yushchenko: He might have won the battle for the legal recognition of the Holodomor *as an act of genocide*, but the war was still on because he lacked any instruments to enforce that interpretation.

Yushchenko's Struggle for the Criminalization of Holodomor Denial

Later that year, Yushchenko continued the judicialization of the Holodomor. In December, two of his Rada deputies proposed an amendment to the criminal code to criminalize denial of the Holodomor.¹⁰⁰ There was no chance that the Rada would adopt the proposal: it was withdrawn after the Party of the Regions demanded a vote. At that time, the proposers stated that the president would soon make a similar proposal.¹⁰¹ Although this bill was fruitless, it was noteworthy, because it was the first of many other ones.¹⁰²

In 2007, Yushchenko indeed proposed a similar bill. It also criminalised denial of the Holodomor as a genocide. It stipulated a maximum fine of 100-300 times the untaxed minimum wage (117-5100 Hryvna) or a prison term of up to two years. Civil servants could receive higher punishments. Yushchenko could use the latter provision to deal with local governments that opposed his interpretation of the Holodomor. Simultaneously, it also criminalized denial of the Holocaust as a genocide of the Jewish people.¹⁰³ This provision was an excuse for the Holodomor-related provisions. They only served the purpose of making the law more acceptable to an international (i.e. Western European audience).¹⁰⁴

Only two days after the president proposed his criminalization bill, the 2007 political crisis between the president and the anti-crisis coalition erupted. It subsumed Yushchenko's criminalization bill. Yushchenko marked the bill as 'urgent', but because of the crisis, the Rada postponed discussions on the bill until May 2007.¹⁰⁵

The crisis did not force Yushchenko to halt his initiative. It also did not stop him from en-

97 Олександр Олександрович Мороз, *Проект Закону № 2470-д про Голодомор 1932-1933 років в Україні*, 2006, accessed November 25, 2016, http://w1.c1.rada.gov.ua/pls/zweb2/webproc4_1?pf3511=28790.

98 This were Hanna Herman and Taras Chornovyl. The latter was also the son of former Rukh leader Viacheslav Chornovyl. See also: Касьянов, *Danse macabre*, 62.

99 Портнов, "Упражнения с историей," 131.

100 Ярослав Михайлович Кендзьор and Рефат Абдурахманович Чубаров, *Проект Закону № 2816/2006 про внесення змін до Кримінального кодексу України (щодо відповідальності за публічне заперечення факту Голодомору 1932-1933 років, як геноциду українського народу)*, 2006, accessed November 25, 2016, http://w1.c1.rada.gov.ua/pls/zweb2/webproc4_1?pf3511=29140.

101 Касьянов, *Danse macabre*, 62.

102 Kasianov, "The Great Famine of 1932-1933," 629-630.

103 Віктор Андрійович Ющенко, *Проект Закону № 3407/2007 про внесення змін до Кримінального та Кримінально-процесуального кодексов України (щодо відповідальності за заперечення Голодомору)*, 2007, accessed November 25, 2016, http://w1.c1.rada.gov.ua/pls/zweb2/webproc4_1?pf3511=29881.

104 Kas'ianov, "The Holodomor and the Building of a Nation," 38.

105 Whether such a bill was urgent or not is questionable, but it is a matter of decency to quickly discuss a bill marked as 'urgent'.

acting other Holodomor-related directives: For instance, he separated the ‘*Day of Remembrance of the Victims of the Holodomor and Political Repressions*’ in two days. The last Saturday of November would be devoted to ‘*Victims of the Holodomor*’ while the third Saturday of May would honour ‘*Victims of Political Repressions*’.¹⁰⁶ The president reasoned that some of the Holodomor’s perpetrators were themselves victims of political repressions.¹⁰⁷ He wanted to create a distance between the Holodomor from the Party of the Regions and the Communist Party because they and their electorate felt attached to exactly those victims of political repressions.

When it became clear that there would be pre-term elections later in 2007, Yushchenko had the prospect of a pro-presidential majority in the Rada. Therefore, he withdrew his criminalization bill and included it on a list with thirteen urgent matters. The president indicated that the new Rada should discuss the items on this list immediately after the formation of a new government.¹⁰⁸ On December 7, the Orange parties formed a new pro-presidential majority in the Rada and Yushchenko again sent the Holodomor criminalization bill to the Rada.¹⁰⁹

In an explanatory note, the president expressed his intentions: he wanted to enhance provisions of the 2006 law and cited a resolution of Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) to support the bill.¹¹⁰ This resolution declared that awareness about communist crimes was essential and that it was necessary to morally assess and condemn such crimes to prevent them from being committed again.¹¹¹ That Yushchenko cited this resolution showed interaction with ongoing European revision of history since the end of the Cold War.¹¹²

The Main Legal Experts Department, advises the Rada on legal aspects of bills. In the case of the criminalization bill, their advice was negative. They concluded that it disproportionately and unconstitutionally restricted the freedom of expression. They also stressed that a ban on the denial of the Holodomor did not conform to European legal precedents.¹¹³ This exposed a paradox in Yushchenko’s history policies: the president sincerely believed that his policies would bring the country closer to Europe, but they only widened the gap: Criminalizing certain opinions because it is politically expedient was certainly not European! *Our Ukraine* disregarded all such criticism and opposition. The party even increased its efforts, and introduced another bill that introduced harsher punishments.¹¹⁴

None of these bills was ever enacted. It is likely that the oncoming 2010 presidential elections ensured this outcome: Yanukovich had little to gain from supporting criminalization since his electorate opposed it. Tymoshenko risked losing less-nationalist voters in the cen-

106 В. Ющенко, *Указ Президента України № 431/2007 про заходи у зв'язку з 70-ми роковинами Великого терору - масових політичних репресій 1937-1938 років*, 2007, accessed February 23, 2017, <http://zakon2.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/431/2007>.

107 Kasianov, “Holodomor and the Politics of Memory,” 180.

108 *Ibid.*, 180–181.

109 Касьянов, *Danse macabre*, 67–68.

110 This resolution is also discussed in “2.5. New Totalitarianism after the 2004 EU Enlargement”, page 48.

111 *Need for International Condemnation of Crimes of Totalitarian Communist Regimes*, 2006, accessed February 23, 2017, <http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-en.asp?fileid=17403&lang=en>.

112 Віктор Андрійович Ющенко, *Проект Закону № 1143/2007 про внесення змін до Кримінального та Кримінально-процесуального кодексів України (щодо відповідальності за публічне заперечення Голодомору 1932 - 1933 років в Україні)*, 2007, accessed November 25, 2016, http://w1.c1.rada.gov.ua/pls/zweb2/webproc4_1?pf3511=30993.

113 Касьянов, *Danse macabre*, 65; The comments of the experts are affixed to Yushchenko’s proposal in the database of the Verkhovna Rada: Ющенко, *Проект Закону № 1143/2007*.

114 Борис Іванович Тарасюк and Ярослав Михайлович Кендзьор, *Проект Закону № 1427/2008 про внесення змін до Кримінального кодексу України (щодо відповідальності за публічне заперечення факту Голодомору 1932-1933 років, як геноциду українського народу)*, 2008, accessed November 25, 2016, http://w1.c1.rada.gov.ua/pls/zweb2/webproc4_1?pf3511=31473.

tre of the country to Yanukovich. Tymoshenko also had no incentives to support Yushchenko's bill. Only Yushchenko aimed at the Ukrainian nationalist vote.¹¹⁵

Criminalization again became an important political subject during the 2008 political crisis within the Orange coalition. As discussed above, an agreement between the Orange parties eventually solved the crisis.¹¹⁶ During the crisis, Yushchenko unsuccessfully demanded the criminalization of Holodomor denial as part of a political deal.¹¹⁷ Yushchenko had to settle for a revitalized Orange coalition without any real gains (an indication of his increasingly weakening political position).

Prosecuting the Holodomor: The 2009 SBU list and the 2010 Trial of Stalin c.s.

Yushchenko desperately needed to achieve something Holodomor-related to increase his chances in the upcoming presidential elections. As mentioned above, Yushchenko had exclusive control over the *Security Service of Ukraine* (SBU).¹¹⁸ Starting in July 2008, he used this government agency as an alternative to legislative initiatives.

That month, the SBU published a list of Holodomor perpetrators. This list implicated the higher echelons of the Soviet leadership and emphasized their non-Ukrainian nationality by explicitly using their ethnic birth names.¹¹⁹ This not only neglected that Ukrainians in the communist establishment played a role in the Holodomor's execution but also played on antisemitic and anti-Russian sentiments.¹²⁰

The SBU list was not the first time that Yushchenko's policies enabled antisemitic elements: For instance, at a conference in 2005, the prominent nationalist politician Levko Lukyanenko (Tymoshenko Bloc) staked the claim that the Holodomor was carried out by a satanic government controlled by Jews. Supposedly, 95% of the people's commissars in the Soviet Union were Jews. He also claimed that 80% of all the Soviet functionaries, including Lenin and Stalin were Jewish.¹²¹ The fact that a prominent politician could utter such bogus and obviously racist views was a troubling aspect of Ukrainian politics of that time.

In the summer of 2009, the SBU's head, Valentyn Nalivaychenko, announced the initiation of a criminal investigation against the Holodomor's perpetrators. He also declared that there was enough reason for criminal prosecution.¹²² The timing of the whole affair indicated political motives: on January 13, 2010, the Kyiv Appellate Court issued a ruling.¹²³ This was only a few days before the first round of the 2010 presidential elections.¹²⁴

The court explicitly confirmed the SBU's conclusions: the defendants (Joseph Stalin, Viacheslav Molotov, Lazar Kaganovich, Pavlo Postyshev, Stanislav Kosior, Vlas Chubar and Mendel Khatayevych) committed genocide. They purposefully created conditions calculat-

115 Katchanovski, "Terrorists or National Heroes?," 984.

116 See "5.1. Political Context: Ukraine after the Orange Revolution", page 125

117 Kasianov, "The Great Famine of 1932-1933," 637-638.

118 See "5.2. The Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance: Yushchenko's Key Player", page 129 and further.

119 For instance, Joseph Stalin was listed as Iosif Vissarionovich Dzugashvili, while Genrikh Yagoda was also listed under the Jewish ethnic name of Genrich Grigorovich Yenokh (Yehuda). For the list, see "Список осіб, причетних до організації та проведення голодомору 1932-1933 років в Україні," *Служба безпеки України*, last modified 2008, accessed November 23, 2016, http://www.sbu.gov.ua/sbu/chtpt://www.sbu.gov.ua/sbu/control/uk/pub-list/article?art_id=121814&cat_id=121743&mustWords=Список партійних і радянських керівників&search-Publishing=1.

120 John Paul Himka calculated that 40% of the people on the list were openly indicated as being Jewish. See: Himka, "Encumbered Memory," 432.

121 Rudling, "Organized Anti-Semitism," 91.

122 Касьянов, *Danse macabre*, 73.

123 В.М. Скавронік, *Постанова № 1-33/2010* (Апеляційний суд міста Києва 2010).

124 Касьянов, *Danse macabre*, 72.

ed toward the Ukrainian nation's physical destruction by grain procurements, blacklists of settlements, farms and villages, and other suppressive measures. The court stopped short of declaring the defendants guilty: it was impossible to render a final verdict because the defendants had all died. The court, therefore, halted all proceedings.¹²⁵

Yushchenko immediately welcomed the ruling and claimed that it was historic, while the Communist Party claimed the trial was an unfair election tactic against them and other left-wing political forces.¹²⁶

This court case was troublesome, mainly because of legal aspects: For instance, the court retroactively applied the law. Genocide was only made a crime in Ukraine in the 1990s. International law also only recognized genocide as a crime, after the *UN Genocide Convention* entered into force in 1951. In democracies, retroactive application is generally not allowed.¹²⁷ Defendants are also innocent until proven otherwise and are entitled to a fair trial and have the right to defend themselves. These are all essential human rights. Dead people cannot defend themselves in a court of law. Therefore, as soon as it becomes clear that the defendants have passed away, all criminal proceedings against them should stop. The Ukrainian court transgressed this boundary by agreeing to the SBU's findings. The legal subtlety that the defendants were not found guilty did not permeate Ukrainian public discourse.¹²⁸

Many observers criticized the trial. Some even likened it to a Soviet-style troika. A single day trial conducted in closed chambers by a Security Service Officer, a prosecutor and a judge resembled this Soviet practice. The SBU acted as a censor, researcher, *amicus curiae* and spokesperson in one. It decided which archival records were (de)classified, which of the 320 volumes of documents were part of the court case, it proposed the way in which the court might evaluate them and issued a triumphant press release after the court confirmed its findings.¹²⁹ The SBU's role was curious since the service is a successor to the Soviet NKVD (one of the Holodomor's organizers). Was this a reason that the trial only implicated some high political leaders, but no security service officers?¹³⁰

Stalin and his aides were guilty of many crimes, the Holodomor being only one of them. When a historian makes such a judgement, he does so based on available historiography

125 Скавронік, *Постанова № 1-33/2010.*; because of 'privacy concerns' the names of defendants and witnesses were anonymized in the published verdict. Nevertheless, the description leaves little doubt about their identity. For instance, the first defendant is identified as 'Person 3, born in the city of Gori, Georgia. From 1903, a member of the Bolshevik party and from April 1922, Secretary of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks)'. This can be none other than Joseph Stalin.

126 "Україна осудила Сталіна за голодомор," *Українська правда*, last modified January 13, 2010, accessed November 9, 2016, <http://www.prawda.com.ua/rus/news/2010/01/13/4613506/>.

127 The Ukrainian constitution forbids retroactive application of the law, as does the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms to which Ukraine is a party. The court claimed that retroactive application was possible in this case, because the European Convention makes an exception for 'acts or omissions which, at the time when they were committed, were criminal according to the general principles of law recognized by civilized nations'. (See: Скавронік, *Постанова № 1-33/2010.*). This exception enabled trials against Holocaust perpetrators (the Holocaust also predated the 1948 UN Genocide Convention). From a legal standpoint, retroactive application might be permissible: The legal specialist William A. Schabas argued that it is possible for genocide, at least when the Second World War is concerned. The retroactive use is not unlimited. At minimum, it is possible to prosecute the 1915 Armenian Genocide; any application to crimes committed before the Second World War remains untested in a court of law. See: William A. Schabas, "Retroactive Application of the Genocide Convention," *University of St. Thomas Journal of Law and Public Policy* IV, no. 1 (2009): 46–47.

128 Both foreign and domestic news coverage, only mention that a judgement was issued, but not that the proceedings were halted before an official declaration of guilt was issued. See, for example, Віктор Міняйло, "Суд визнав Голодомор 1932-33 років геноцидом," *Радіо Свобода*, last modified January 14, 2010, accessed February 23, 2017, <http://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/1929813.html>; "Україна осудила Сталіна за голодомор."

129 Timothy Snyder, "Ukraine's Past on Trial," *The New York Review of Books*, last modified February 3, 2010, accessed December 14, 2016, <http://www.nybooks.com/daily/2010/02/03/ukraines-past-on-trial/>.

130 Ibid.

and primary sources. He approaches these with a theoretical and methodological toolbox. His findings are historiographical and in no way a legal judgement. The same is true if a historian concludes that the Holodomor was a genocide. On the other hand, a judge issues his verdict based on legal standards for the evaluation of evidence and interpretation of facts. Historians and jurists abide by different rules. For one, history as a discipline never ceases to (re)-evaluate views on the past: a historiographical debate can always be reopened. If a judge evaluates evidence and draws a certain conclusion and all means for appealing his verdict are exhausted, this settles the (legal) interpretation. Legal standards are also much stricter: for example, a historian may rely on hearsay to conclude that something is credible; a judge in a criminal case can generally not do this. Given the large amount of time since 1932-1933, it is hard, if not impossible to comply with strict legal standards. It is therefore unwise to undertake such proceedings.

Because the prosecutor (e.g. the SBU) was under political control and because the issue of the Holodomor was a political item at the time, the trial of Stalin c.s. looked like a political affair and not a fair legal trial. Even if it was possible to apply the law against genocide retroactively, many questions were left unanswered: For instance, why were there no concurrent trials against Ukrainian nationalists who aided in the German genocide of Ukraine's Jewry? If the reason for bringing Stalin c.s. to trial was that the severe crime of genocide never should go unpunished, then it would be reasonable to also prosecute Ukrainian nationalists for their role in other genocides and mass murders. Although consistent, that would also contradict Yushchenko's history policies related to the OUN and UPA (discussed below).

A more divided country: the results of Yushchenko's Holodomor policies

Yushchenko did not succeed in consolidating Ukraine as a nation with the notion of the Holodomor *as a genocide*. Yushchenko only achieved the opposite: His policies made those who already felt excluded from the nation feel even more excluded. This came in part because the president claimed that they were immoral because they did not support the genocide thesis.¹³¹

Tangible data on the acceptance of the Holodomor *as genocide* are rare. The reputable Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (KIIS) gathered some public opinion poll data. We have to be wary of them. For starters, the data could just be a showpiece of history policies propaganda: Yushchenko's presidential administration published them on its website to boast the 'success' of Holodomor-related policies. Second, the data were published without the regular statistic parameters that enable an accurate assessment.¹³² Finally, the data were gathered during the 2006-2007 anniversary and do not reflect any changes in public opinion during the 2008 commemoration campaign and the run-up to the 2010 presidential elections. Nevertheless, if Yushchenko's campaigns resulted in an increase in support for the genocide thesis, it seems logical that it would only have increased since the data's publication.

The KIIS-study indicated that the number of people who thought that the Holodomor was a genocide increased nationwide. In 2006, 52% of the respondents supported such a statement; in 2007, this had increased to 63%. At the same time, the number of people who did not support the designation of the Holodomor as a genocide rose marginally (from 21% to 22%). The number of people who had no opinion about the matter decreased strongly from 19% to 3%, while the number of people who claimed that they found it difficult to say whether the Holodomor was a genocide increased from 8% to 12%. If the data are credible,

¹³¹ As argued by Касьянов, *Danse macabre*, 77.

¹³² For the data, see: "Думки населення України щодо визнання Голодомору 1932-33 рр. геноцидом," Офіційне представництво Президента України, accessed May 29, 2009, https://web.archive.org/web/20090529072346/http://president.gov.ua/content/golodomor_sociology.html

they indicate an increase in support for the genocide thesis and a decrease in the number of people without an opinion.

A nationwide look is deceptive: the data on Ukraine's regions are rather revealing. In all regions, the number of people who supported the genocide thesis increased. This seemed to fall within the same range in all Ukrainian regions (+9% to +15%). Only in the West, the increase was smaller (+6%), but support was high to start with. At the same time, the number of people who did not support the genocide thesis also increased in all regions, except for Central Ukraine (a -2% decrease). In the regions where opposition against the genocide thesis rose, within a similar range (+3% to +5%). The simultaneous growth of support and opposition came from respondents without an opinion, whose number shrank in all regions. At the same time, the number of respondents who found it 'difficult to say' also increased in all regions.

The data seemed to indicate that Yushchenko's policies failed to unite the East and South with the West and Centre: as both support and disapproval of the genocide thesis increased, his policies only further polarized the country. The simultaneous decrease of people without an opinion adds weight to that conclusion. Furthermore, support for the genocide-thesis was still only the dominant opinion in the West and Centre (85% and 76% respectively in 2007); Opposition to it remained the dominant position in the East and South (44% and 30% respectively in 2007).

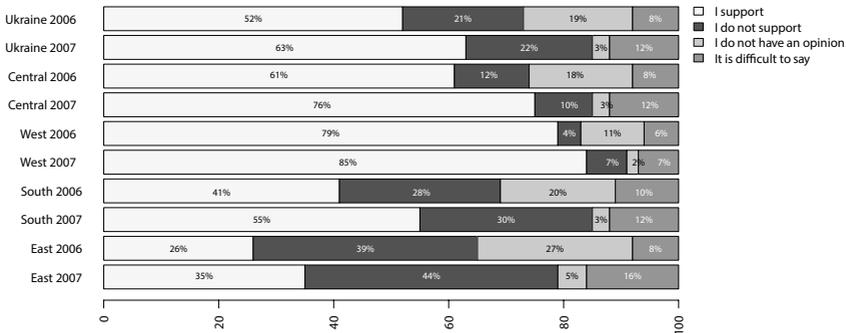


Figure 14: Regional Support for the Holodomor as Genocide in 2006 and 2007 (by Macroregion)

Based on: "Думки населення України щодо визнання Голодомору 1932-33 рр. геноцидом," Офіційне представництво Президента України, accessed May 29, 2009, https://web.archive.org/web/20090529072346/http://president.gov.ua/content/golodomor_sociology.html

In a similar fashion, Yushchenko's policies failed to bring voters of different Ukrainian parties closer together. The KIIS study also asked respondents about their political party affiliation. There was a similar increase of support for the genocide thesis among voters of the Tymoshenko bloc, the Communist Party and the Party of the Regions (+7% to +9%). The number of voters for Tymoshenko and the Party of the Regions who opposed recognition increased slightly (+1% and +3% respectively). A strong increase of disapproval for the genocide thesis was found amongst voters of the Communist Party (+9%). *Our Ukraine* was the exception, the growth of support amongst its voters was much stronger (+18%) and the number of opposing voters decreased (-5%). Overall, the bulk of support for the Holodomor as genocide was still located with voters of *Our Ukraine* and the Tymoshenko bloc

(93% and 84% respectively in 2007). Interestingly, the number of Party of the Regions voters who supported and opposed the genocide thesis was roughly equal in 2006 (35% and 34% respectively), but in 2007, the number of supporters outnumbered opponents (43% vs 37%). Nevertheless, Yushchenko's policies failed to foster consensus amongst voters of different parties as both support and opposition increased and the number of people without an opinion decreased.

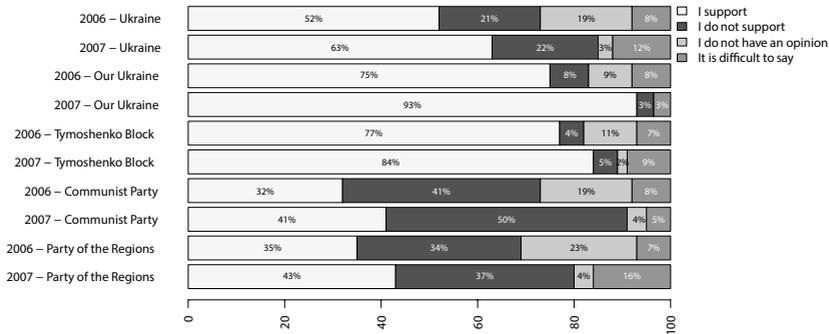


Figure 15: Support for the Holodomor as Genocide by Party Affiliation

Based on: “Думки населення України щодо визнання Голодомору 1932-33 рр. геноцидом,” Офіційне представництво Президента України, accessed May 29, 2009, https://web.archive.org/web/20090529072346/http://president.gov.ua/content/golodomor_sociology.html

5.4. Consolidating the Nation: Rehabilitation and Glorification of the OUN and UPA under Yushchenko

Yushchenko not only relied on the tragedy of the Holodomor's to consolidate the Ukrainian nation. He also actively focused on a moment of heroism: the supposed ‘*Ukrainian movement for liberation*’, in which OUN and UPA were the main participants. Yushchenko nevertheless also included various other movements, both of earlier and later date. Yushchenko wanted to re-evaluate the history and the status of OUN and UPA veterans and returned to the policies Kuchma had sought to implement during his first term in office: reconciliation of the OUN, UPA and Red Army veterans.

Kuchma had established a governmental commission on the issue of OUN and UPA in 1997. In 2005, the commission's working group of historians issued a new report.¹³³ Officially, the report presented the conclusions of the entire working group. The historian Heorhiy Kasianov, one of its members, complained that the working group's president, Stanislav Kulchytskyi, wrote the report and ignored his (and others') critical remarks on the OUN and UPA.¹³⁴ The report was nearly identical to the report the working group presented in 2004.¹³⁵ This meant that both supporters and opponents of the OUN and UPA's rehabilitation could

133 It issued an initial report in 2004, but the political context ensured that nothing was done with this particular report. For the 2004 report, see: Робоча група істориків при Урядовій комісії з вивчення діяльності ОУН і УПА, *Проблема ОУН-УПА*. For the new 2005 report see: С. Кульчицький, *Організація Українських Націоналістів і Українська Повстанська Армія. Фаховий висновок робочої групи істориків при Урядовій комісії з вивчення діяльності ОУН і УПА*. (Київ: Робоча група істориків при Урядовій комісії з вивчення діяльності ОУН і УПА, 2005), accessed March 21, 2017, <http://www.memory.gov.ua:8080/ua/454.htm>.

134 Kasianov, as cited by: Karel Berkhoff, “Historici en hun leest in Oekraïne en Rusland,” *NIOD Blog*, March 23, 2016, accessed January 25, 2017, <http://niodbibliotheek.blogspot.com/2016/03/historici-en-hun-leest-in-oekraïne-en.html>.

135 Кульчицький, *Організація Українських Націоналістів і Українська Повстанська Армія*, 43.

not use it to support their views. Nevertheless, like the 2004 report, many statements in it were apologetic, naïvely nationalistic or outright attempts to shed a positive light on the OUN and UPA in order to legitimate certain policies.¹³⁶ The report also foresaw what would happen during Yushchenko's presidency:

*The confrontations between supporters and opponents of the nationalists, between veterans of the OUN and Communist party of the Soviet Union, UPA and the Soviet Army, will, over time, only become exacerbated. In defining its position to OUN-UPA, the Ukrainian government will induce protests from segments of society, no matter what decision it takes. The only exit is the demythologization of the activities of, on the one hand, OUN-UPA, and, on the other hand, the Kremlin, in spreading historical truth, which has not happened thus far.*¹³⁷

Yushchenko's Failed Attempt for Reconciliation

Yushchenko's first year in office coincided with the 60th anniversary of the war's end. During these commemorations, Yushchenko kept parts of the Soviet narrative in place. For instance, he claimed 'Victory over Fascism'. He also stated his intention to reconcile veterans of the Red Army with UPA insurgents.¹³⁸ Such a policy goal stemmed from Yushchenko's ambition to consolidate the Ukrainian nation. It was unlikely to succeed because of the political struggles between the Orange parties, the Party of the Regions, and the Socialist and Communist parties.

The desire for reconciliation coloured Yushchenko's statements on the War, the Red Army and the OUN and UPA. For instance, on Victory Day (May 9) 2005, Yushchenko presented a pantheon of heroes starting with Volodymyr the Great and including figures such as Yaroslav the Wise, Bohdan Khmelnytskyi and Ivan Mazepa. He placed them in line with the OUN, UPA, and Red Army and mentioned both the Ukrainian Soviet General Nikolay Vatutin and UPA's commander-in-chief, Roman Shukhevych. Yushchenko called the latter two heroes who fought for Ukraine. A rather peculiar statement because UPA insurgents killed Vatutin in 1944.¹³⁹

Notwithstanding reconciliatory efforts, tensions between all sides continuously increased. In October 2005, UPA veterans and their supporters marched along Kyiv's main avenue, the Khreshchatyk, to celebrate the '63rd anniversary of UPA's founding'. They demanded government recognition of UPA fighters as an official belligerent, and the same government pensions and social benefits, which Red Army veterans received. The demonstration did not end peacefully: members of the Communist Party and the Progressive Socialist Party (a small pro-Russian party) confronted and attacked the UPA veterans.¹⁴⁰

Yushchenko did not give UPA veterans what they wanted: His policy of reconciliation necessitated a more inclusive view of history. According to Yushchenko, UPA and Red Army veterans fought on different fronts and in different services, but for the same country: Ukraine.¹⁴¹ Unlike the UPA veterans, Yushchenko did not exclude Red Army veterans from

136 Since both reports are so similar, see "4.3. A Story of Heroism: Ukrainian Radical Nationalism during the 1930s and 1940s", page 107 and further for an evaluation of their contents.

137 Кульчицький, *Організація Українських Націоналістів і Українська Повстанська Армія*, 3–4.

138 Dietsch, "Textbooks and the Holocaust in Independent Ukraine," 85.

139 Портнов, "Упражнения с историей," 130.

140 Dietsch, "Textbooks and the Holocaust in Independent Ukraine," 85.

141 Andriy Portnov and Tetjana Portnova, "Der Preis des Sieges. Der Krieg und die Konkurrenz der Veteranen in der Ukraine," trans. Claudia Dathe, *Osteuropa. Zeitschrift für Gegenwartsfragen des Ostens* 60 (May 2010): 34.

the Ukrainian nation. Instead, he claimed that nationalists and Red Army veterans achieved victory over fascism and that this achievement was an important step for the creation of an independent Ukrainian state. Formally, Yushchenko defined the nation broadly and included non-ethnic Ukrainians. Nevertheless, he mainly emphasized the heroism of ethnic Ukrainians in service of the OUN, UPA and the Red army. He explicitly referred to a number of ethnic Ukrainian WW II heroes. They included Oles Honchar (a Soviet soldier and writer), Olena Teliha (a Ukrainian poet and OUN member executed by the Nazis), and Oleksiy Berest (one of the Soviet Soldiers who placed the Victory Banner on the Reichstag in May 1945).¹⁴² Yushchenko even awarded Berest with the title '*Hero of Ukraine*'.¹⁴³

The main problem with this policy was that Yushchenko wanted to unite two groups of veterans who perceived each other as enemies. The unity that Yushchenko promoted never existed, neither during the war nor in the present. The OUN and UPA considered the Red Army as an 'occupier', Red Army veterans perceived the OUN and UPA as part of the fascist threat they defeated. Yushchenko sought to reconcile two mutually exclusive ideologically charged concepts: a nationalist version of the Second World War and a Soviet version of the *Great Patriotic War*.¹⁴⁴

Yushchenko kept considerable moderation compared to his Holodomor policies: There was no outright heroization of OUN members and UPA fighters. Besides the need for a reconciliatory approach, there was also a more practical motive: it was simply impossible to replace the memory of Red Army veterans with that of OUN members and UPA insurgents because the former outnumbered the latter by enormous proportions. Millions of Ukrainians served in the Red Army, while only 20.000-23.000 Ukrainians took up arms in the UPA. Maybe because of this, Yushchenko also inflated the number of UPA-insurgents to half a million.¹⁴⁵

The Soviet roots of the Ukrainian state also were an obstacle to a full shift to the nationalist narrative: Ukraine's borders were formed at the Yalta conference in 1945. At this conference, the Western allies recognized previous Soviet territorial acquisitions of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact. Since then, only minor adjustments were made: The addition of the Crimean Peninsula in 1954 was the proverbial exception to this rule.¹⁴⁶ If Yushchenko had claimed that the Red Army's memory was illegitimate and that only the nationalists contributed to the formation of the Ukrainian state, he would have delegitimized the Ukrainian state's current composition.

Yushchenko also sought – and failed – to give further legal rehabilitation to OUN and UPA fighters. For instance, in 2006 Yushchenko ordered the Yanukovych government to propose a law that would give OUN and UPA veterans a legal status. The government ignored Yushchenko's order because the anti-crisis coalition directly opposed the president.¹⁴⁷

Yushchenko continued his reconciliation attempts after the second Tymoshenko govern-

142 Портнов, "Упражнения с историей," 129.

143 В. Ющенко, *Указ Президента України № 753/2005 про присвоєння О. Бересту звання Герой України*, 2005, accessed March 28, 2017, <http://zakon3.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/753/2005>; see also: Wilfried Jilge, "Competing Victimhoods - Post Soviet Ukrainian Narratives on World War II," in *Shared History - Divided Memory. Jews and Others in Soviet-Occupied Poland, 1939-1941*, ed. Elazar Barkan, Elizabeth A. Cole, and Kai Struve, Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2007), 127, note 99.

144 Портнов, "Упражнения с историей," 129.

145 For the number of UPA insurgents and Yushchenko's inflation of their number, see Katchanovski, "Terrorists or National Heroes?," 220.

146 Serhii Plokhyy, *Ukraine and Russia: Representations of the Past* (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 236.

147 В. Ющенко, *Указ Президента України № 879/2006 про всебічне вивчення та об'єктивне висвітлення діяльності українського визвольного руху та сприяння процесу національного примирення*, 2006, accessed March 29, 2017, <http://zakon5.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/879/2006>.

ment came to power in 2007.¹⁴⁸ The president stated that the proposal would ‘*promote the principles of historical justice and the consolidation of Ukrainian society*’.¹⁴⁹ The political situation also ensured that the law was not adopted: Yushchenko not only faced the strong opposition by the Party of the Regions and the Communist and Socialist parties; Tymoshenko also had little reason to support the proposal. Like in the case of his Holodomor-denial criminalization bills, Tymoshenko had little incentive to promote a nationalist agenda. In the end, the Rada never voted on the bill.¹⁵⁰ For the same reason seven similar bills, proposed by individual Rada members also had no result.¹⁵¹ The ongoing tri-partite power struggle, combined with his weak constitutional powers limited Yushchenko’s ability to initiate new (legal) policy related to OUN and UPA.

A Heroic History: Obfuscating and Denying Nationalist Crimes and Complicity

Although Yushchenko’s policies were initially moderate, they indicated a strong shift from Kuchma’s (Neo)-Soviet policies. Equating OUN and UPA fighters with Red Army veterans also raised the question of how Yushchenko dealt with (war) crimes and atrocities committed by the OUN and UPA members with their fascist ideology and crimes.

The Lontskyi Street Prison Museum displayed how Yushchenko’s institutions handled this important issue. Its opening in 2009 was a joint effort by the nationalist *Research Centre for the Study of the Liberation Movement* and the SBU. The museum was placed under the auspices of the *Institute for National Remembrance*. Its exposition claimed that Ukrainians were the victim of both Soviet and Nazi totalitarianism. It did not discuss their role as (co)-perpetrator in any crime.¹⁵²



Figure 16: The Lontskyi Prison Museum

The photo to the right shows a memorial plaque installed on the building. It reads: ‘In memory of the victims of the NKVD, the Gestapo and the Ministry of State Security (MGB) 1939-1953. (Photos: Nicolaas A. Kraft van Ernel).

148 Віктор Андрійович Ющенко, *Проект Закону № 1319/2008 про правовий статус учасників боротьби за незалежність України 20 - 90-х років XX століття*, 2008, accessed March 29, 2017, http://w1.c1.rada.gov.ua/pls/zweb2/webproc4_1?pf3511=31295.

149 Ibid.

150 According to parliamentary records, the bill was never ‘included on the agenda’. See: Ibid.

151 For an overview of these law-making initiatives, see: Shevel, “The Politics of Memory,” 153.

152 For the Lontskyi prison exposition, see: Delphine Bechtel, “The 1941 Pogroms As Represented in Western Ukrainian Historiography and Memorial Culture,” in *The Holocaust in Ukraine. New Sources and Perspectives. Conference Presentations* (Washington, DC: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2013), 8.

Yushchenko's policy limited the room to discuss crimes committed by the OUN and UPA. They made it more difficult to discuss Ukrainian participation in the Holocaust because they described co-perpetrators as heroes. The history of the '*Ukrainian struggle for independence*' subsumed the history of the Holocaust. Yushchenko's policies made the Holocaust a part of Ukrainian history, but they also denied, obfuscated or avoided the Ukrainian participation in the Holocaust.

Developments surrounding the site of Babyn Yar illustrated this. Besides murdering Jews, the Nazis also executed some 400 OUN members at the site. Since Yushchenko's policies presented Ukrainian nationalists as heroes and victims, his policies emphasized Babyn Yar as a site of Ukrainian victimhood and minimized the significance of the Jewish victims. In 2007, the Cabinet of Ministers declared Babyn Yar a '*national historical preserve*' and placed it under the authority of the *Institute of National Remembrance*.¹⁵³ This decision hindered the construction of Jewish monuments or (a) commemorative centre(s) and it prevented Jews from remembering their tragedy. It also meant that the Ukrainian far-right could appropriate the site for its own use.¹⁵⁴ The decision caused angry responses, both internationally and from the Ukrainian Jewish community. In 2008, Chief Rabi Yaakov Dov Bleich harshly condemned the Ukrainian government's policies:

*With each year, at these gatherings, there are fewer and fewer Ukrainian officials and leaders present. On this day, there is not one. ... We cannot, we do not have the right to allow what happened at Babi Yar to be forgotten. We cannot be silent when history is being rewritten according to someone's pleasure. Now is the time to be screaming aloud about this, so that later, it will not be too late.*¹⁵⁵

The condemnation was undoubtedly meant for foreign guests at the commemoration. It had to draw international attention to Yushchenko's policies.

Yushchenko was no Holocaust denier, but his narrative of Ukrainian suffering overshadowed the Holocaust and gave room in the public debate for Ukrainian nationalists with apologetic views regarding Ukrainian participation in the Holocaust.¹⁵⁶ Yushchenko limited his policies to the domestic context. On the international stage, he acknowledged the importance of the Holocaust and even instrumentalized it to gain support for Ukraine's Europeanization. His visit to Dachau demonstrated this: Yushchenko made it because his father was one of its prisoners.¹⁵⁷ By making this visit, the president emphasized that Ukraine went through the European ordeal of the Holocaust and that he supported '*European values*'.¹⁵⁸ Internationally, Yushchenko sought to give some weight to Judt's dictum that recognition of the Holocaust was the entry ticket to Europe.¹⁵⁹

The strong contrast of such international statements and actions with domestic policy shows that they were symbolic. This was not limited to the regime's treatment of the Holocaust-issue: the glorification of movements with a fascist ideology was incompatible with European integration as well. It seemed as if Yushchenko's domestic agenda mainly dictated his policy and that he disregarded such international arguments against them. Nevertheless,

153 В. Янукович, *Постанова Кабінету Міністрів України № 308/2007 про Державний історико-меморіальний заповідник "Бабин Яр"*, 2007, accessed March 28, 2017, <http://zakon2.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/308-2007-%D0%BF>.

154 Burakovskiy, "Holocaust Remembrance," 372; Barbara Martin, "Babi Yar: La commémoration impossible," *Émulations. Revue des jeunes chercheurs en sciences sociales*, no. 12 (2013): 77.

155 Chief-Rabbi Bleich, as quoted in: Burakovskiy, "Holocaust Remembrance," 385.

156 Ingmar Oldberg, "Ukraine's Problematic Relationship to the Holocaust," *Balticworlds.Com*, August 1, 2011, accessed June 7, 2016, <http://balticworlds.com/ukraine%E2%80%99s-problematic-relationship-to-the-holocaust/>.

157 His father, Andriy Andriyovych Yushchenko, was imprisoned in several camps, including Auschwitz-Birkenau.

158 Oldberg, "Ukraine's Problematic Relationship to the Holocaust."

159 See also: "2.2. History, European Integration and the Holocaust", page 40.

Yushchenko's approach to the OUN and UPA was rather complicated: although he considered them heroes, he supported neither their fascist ideology, totalitarianism, terrorism nor *Fuhrerprinzip*.¹⁶⁰ This incoherency might also have reflected the composition of Yushchenko's political movement: it included oligarchs, national democrats, and nationalist movements (such as the *Congress of Ukrainian Nationalists*).¹⁶¹

The war on monuments (2006-2007)

The debates on the OUN and UPA during Yushchenko's early presidency were far less intensive and emotional than those on Holodomor policies. This might be because Yushchenko did not delegitimize Red Army veterans or replaced them with OUN members and UPA insurgents. This approach made these policies less controversial.

Nevertheless, Ukrainian politics slowly polarized around the issue of OUN and UPA. The so-called 'war on monuments' (2006-2007) was an illustration of early political clashes. In October 2006, the Kharkiv Oblast Council decided to remove all monuments to the OUN and UPA. In December, the Kharkiv City Administration removed a memorial plaque from the city's Youth Park. Similarly, in September 2007, the Communist Party, and the Russian *Rodina* (motherland) organization unveiled a monument to the victims of the OUN and UPA. Later that year, the Party of the Regions also sponsored a monument to the Russian empress



Figure 17: The Monument for Those 'Shot in the Back' by OUN-UPA in Simferopol.

Photo: DrDeemon (Dmitriy Sklyarenko), licenced as Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported. The text on the monument reads: 'In memory of the victims of the Soviet people, who fell at the hands collaborators with the fascists – fighters of OUN-UPA and other collaborationists', see: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Shot_in_the_Back#/media/File:Памятник_жертвам_коллаборационистов.jpg

160 Rudling, *The OUN, UPA and the Holocaust*, 26.

161 Ibid.

Catherine II.¹⁶² A similar monument was also unveiled in the Black Sea port of Odesa.¹⁶³

Yushchenko's political opponents sought to undermine the consolidation of the Ukrainian nation as a political entity and to polarize the Ukrainian electorate. During these debates, *Our Ukraine* increased its reliance on nationalist symbols and personalities, while the Party of the Regions and the Communist parties referred to Soviet or Imperial Russian counterparts. It is an indication that Yushchenko's policies lacked broad support and that his policies sometimes even backfired: his political opponents only increasingly emphasized opposing memories.¹⁶⁴ Instead of unifying Ukraine by reconciling Red Army veterans with OUN members and UPA fighters, Yushchenko's policies helped to fuel antagonism on the subject.

Politics of Confrontation: Yushchenko's Heroization and Glorification of the OUN and UPA

Between 2008 and 2010, political confrontations on the OUN and UPA intensified. The upcoming 2010 presidential elections served as a catalyst. Hearings organized by the SBU in 2008 were one of the first signs for this development.

These hearings focussed on the participation of Ukrainians in the Holocaust and meant to establish a narrative of Ukrainians and Jews fighting together against the Bolshevik-Muscovite enemy they held in common. SBU director Valentyn Nalyvaichenko claimed that the hearings dispelled all existing myths on the OUN and UPA.¹⁶⁵ The SBU denied Ukrainian participation in the Holocaust. It acknowledged anti-Jewish pogroms after the German invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941 but asserted that there was no connection with the (OUN) Nachtigall battalion.¹⁶⁶ The SBU also claimed that many of the accusations against Ukrainian nationalists were KGB falsifications meant to discredit the Ukrainian diaspora during the Cold War. The SBU also stated that both Roman Shukhevych and the OUN were entirely innocent of pogroms and antisemitic violence.¹⁶⁷ The *Institute of National Remembrance* also participated in the SBU's hearings. The institute presented a history of the OUN and UPA as democratically oriented movements and supporters of a pluralistic society.¹⁶⁸

The *Research Centre for the Liberation movement* supported the SBU in these efforts. In 2006, the head of the Centre and the SBU archives, Volodymyr Viatrovych, published the book *The Position of the OUN vis-à-vis the Jews*.¹⁶⁹ Like the SBU hearings, it minimized the OUN's accountability for participation in the Holocaust and claimed that there had been little Ukrainian nationalist antisemitism. The book also went further: any antisemitism that did occur was justified. To make this argument, Viatrovych relied on the image of Judeobolshevism. He claimed that the OUN's antisemitism should be seen from the context of three (sic!) Holodomor famines and other Soviet repressions. According to the historian, Judeobolshevism was not propaganda, but a reality the Ukrainian nationalists faced: Many of Ukraine's Soviet overlords were Jews.¹⁷⁰ Nevertheless, Viatrovych asserted that the OUN quickly overcame ethnic intolerance and developed positive attitudes towards the Jews. In 1944, the OUN supposedly even formulated a policy that considered Jews a legitimate na-

162 Портнов, "Упражнения с историей," 133–135.

163 Volodymyr Kulyk, "The Media, History and Identity: Competing Narratives of the Past in the Ukrainian Popular Press," *National Identities* 13, no. 3 (September 2011): 293.

164 Ibid.

165 See also: Rudling, *The OUN, UPA and the Holocaust*, 30.

166 This statement was, actually correct. See also: "Introduction", page 8.

167 John-Paul Himka, "Debates in Ukraine over Nationalist Involvement in the Holocaust, 2004–2008," *Nationalities Papers* 39, no. 3 (May 2011): 365.

168 Rudling, *The OUN, UPA and the Holocaust*, 28–30.

169 Володимир В'ятрович, *Ставлення ОУН до Євреїв: формування позиції на тлі катастрофи* (Львів: Центр Досліджень Визвольного Руху та Видавництво "МС," 2006).

170 Ibid., 100–101.

tional minority with equal rights in a future Ukrainian state. This supposedly proved that all stereotypes of Ukrainians as judeophobes and antisemites were false.¹⁷¹

The book of Viatrovych was more fiction than reality and was based on dubious methods: its author rejected sources that compromised the OUN for its antisemitism and complicity in the Holocaust. He also uncritically depended on diaspora sources, which were known forgeries, and he failed to consult English and German language source publications and scientific literature.¹⁷²

Viatrovych's book was a private initiative of the Research Centre and not funded by the government. Nevertheless, we cannot separate it from the aforementioned SBU activities. Firstly, because Viatrovych's double function and secondly, because the book and the SBU hearings proposed similar ideas. Viatrovych's activities demonstrated the active collaboration of some Ukrainian historians with Yushchenko's history policies. Such efforts gave the president's policies an 'aura of scientific credence' with their work.

Aided by such efforts, Yushchenko could initiate radical history policies that increasingly glorified and heroized the OUN and UPA. For example, in 2007, he decorated UPA leader Roman Shukhevych as 'Hero of Ukraine'.¹⁷³ Shukhevych was a domestically dividing figure: nationalists viewed him as a hero, in the East he was seen as a traitor and war criminal because of his involvement in anti-partisan warfare. Jews also saw him in a negative light for his involvement in the Holocaust. His controversial nature made it highly troubling that Yushchenko gave Shukhevych the country's highest honour.

International responses to the Shukhevych decoration were much stronger than domestic responses. A month after the decision, the president made an official trip to Israel. During his stay, he also visited Yad Vashem. At this occasion, Yad Vashem's Advisory Board Chairman and former Deputy Prime Minister, Joseph (Tommy) Lapid strongly criticized Yushchenko for the decoration. Lapid denounced Shukhevych as a war criminal who was responsible for the slaughter of 4.000 Jews during the 1941 Lviv pogrom.¹⁷⁴ He also claimed that Yad Vashem had proof for this. Yushchenko angrily responded that there was no proof to these accusations.¹⁷⁵

The following year, Lapid even asserted that Yad Vashem had a file that proved Shukhevych's participation in mass murder. Yad Vashem would happily supply it to the Ukrainian government. None other than Volodymyr Viatrovych organized a delegation to Yad Vashem and requested to see the folder. Yad Vashem's archival services had to admit that such a file did not exist. Viatrovych exploited this situation and proclaimed Shukhevych's innocence, not only in the case of the 1941 Lviv pogrom but also of all accusations. Supporters of Shukhevych's decoration expanded this 'exoneration' as a blanket acquittal of the entire OUN(-B) and the UPA.¹⁷⁶

171 Ibid., 86.

172 Himka and Kurylo, as cited by: Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe, "Debating, Obfuscating and Disciplining the Holocaust: Post-Soviet Historical Discourses on the OUN–UPA and Other Nationalist Movements," *East European Jewish Affairs* 42, no. 3 (December 2012): 207. Viatrovych even pointed to an autobiography by a Jewish woman named Stella (or Settela) Krentsbach to prove that the OUN and UPA actually saved Jews. Such an autobiography did exist, but it is a known forgery, and it is highly likely that no Stella Krentsbach ever existed (For the Krentsbach case, see: Rossoliński-Liebe, *Stepan Bandera*, 447.)

173 В. Ющенко, *Указ Президента України № 965/2007 про присвоєння Р. Шухевичу звання Герой України*, 2007, accessed November 18, 2016, <http://zakon3.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/965/2007>.

174 Anshel Pfeffer, Yair Ettinger, and Shahar Ilan, "Ukraine President Vows Before Knesset to Combat Anti-Semitism," *Haaretz*, November 15, 2007, accessed April 26, 2017, <http://www.haaretz.com/news/ukraine-president-vows-before-knesset-to-combat-anti-semitism-1.233273>.

175 Rudling, "The Cult of Roman Shukhevych in Ukraine," 54.

176 Ibid., 55.

Yushchenko's Greatest Controversy: Stepan Bandera as 'Hero of Ukraine'

Yushchenko polled a meagre 5.45% in the first round of the presidential elections on January 17, 2010. It meant that either Tymoshenko or Yanukovich would become Ukraine's next president. To prevent Yanukovich from winning the presidency, Tymoshenko could have used every support she could get. Yushchenko could have supported Tymoshenko to prevent a Yanukovich presidency. Yushchenko's history policies indicated otherwise: he used them to polarize the election campaign for the second round. His intentions remain unclear to this day: He might have felt an urge to put his limited time in office to good use and pushed his history policies through as quickly as possible. It is also possible that Yushchenko wanted to meddle in the election campaign. However, this all remains speculation.

In the short time between the two rounds, Yushchenko caused heated public debates as he decorated Stepan Bandera as '*Hero of Ukraine*' on January 22. According to the president, Bandera was worthy of this honour, because of his '*formidable spirit in defending the national ideas of heroism and self-sacrifice in the struggle for an independent Ukraine*'.¹⁷⁷ Yushchenko presented him as an intricate link for Ukraine's independence and claimed that Soviet propaganda about him was false: Bandera was no Nazi collaborator, but deeply cared about Ukraine. He was even a victim of Nazi oppression: the Nazis imprisoned him in concentration camps and supposedly sentenced him to death after the Akt of 1941.¹⁷⁸ (The latter was an untrue statement: the Germans neither sentenced Bandera to death nor executed him, but merely incarcerated him).¹⁷⁹

The Bandera award was Yushchenko's most controversial move. It caused major international criticism.¹⁸⁰ For instance, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev responded with a propagandistic video blog and recalled the Russian ambassador.¹⁸¹ The European Union responded equally negative to the move. For the European Parliament, the Bandera Award was the final limit:

*[The European Parliament] deeply deplores the decision by the outgoing president of Ukraine, Viktor Yushchenko, posthumously to award Stepan Bandera, a leader of the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) which collaborated with Nazi-Germany, the title of 'National Hero of Ukraine'.*¹⁸²

The European Parliament furthermore expressed its hope that Yushchenko's successor

177 В. Ющенко, Указ Президента України № 46/2010 про присвоєння С. Бандері звання Герой України, 2010, accessed November 18, 2016, <http://zakon2.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/46/2010>.

178 "Ющенко пояснив, чому Бандера – Герой України," ZAXID.NET, last modified January 22, 2010, accessed March 24, 2017, http://zaxid.net/news/showNews.do?yushhenko_poyasniv_chomu_bandera_ndazh_geroy_ukrayini&objectId=1094314.

179 Bandera was sentenced to death in pre-war Poland, but this sentence was commuted to life imprisonment. See also: "Introduction", Introduction, page 6.

180 Shevel, "The Politics of Memory," 157.

181 Д. Медведев, "В отношениях России и Украины должны наступить новые времена," *Видеоблог Дмитрия Медведева*, last modified August 11, 2009, accessed March 29, 2017, <http://blog.da-medvedev.ru/post/30/transcript>; The Russian foreign ministry also objected to the Bandera award, and the Russian delegation at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe requested this body to adopt a resolution condemning it. See: "Москва отреагировала на присвоение Бандере звания Герой Украины," Корреспондент.net, last modified January 26, 2010, accessed March 29, 2017, <http://korrespondent.net/ukraine/politics/1039929-moskva-otreaгиrovala-na-prisvoenie-bandere-zvaniya-geroj-ukrainy>; "Россия просит ПАСЕ осудить Ющенко за героизацию Бандеры," Корреспондент.net, accessed March 29, 2017, <http://korrespondent.net/ukraine/politics/1040960-rossiya-prosit-pase-osudit-yushchenko-za-geroizaciyu-bandery>.

182 *European Parliament Resolution of 25 February 2010 on the Situation in Ukraine*, 2010, accessed March 29, 2017, [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/seance_pleniere/textes_adoptes/provisoire/0035/P7_TA-PROV\(2010\)0035_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/seance_pleniere/textes_adoptes/provisoire/0035/P7_TA-PROV(2010)0035_EN.pdf).

would reconsider and maintain a commitment to European values.¹⁸³ The resolution indicated that Yushchenko's glorification of the OUN and UPA directly opposed one of his other policy goals: European integration.

In addition, individual European countries objected to the award. Poland was the most notable example. President Lech Kaczyński condemned Yushchenko's action because of the Volhynian massacres and claimed that the award hindered dialogue and reconciliation between Ukraine and Poland.¹⁸⁴ A similar negative response came from both Ukrainian and international Jewish organisations.¹⁸⁵

These criticisms did not stop Yushchenko from undertaking further controversial moves. On January 29, he issued another decree. It recognized OUN members and UPA fighters as participants in the struggle for Ukrainian independence and again called for a law that would give them legal status.¹⁸⁶

Yushchenko's persistence indicated that he had domestic goals. He wanted to influence the outcome of the second round of the presidential elections. Yanukovich could not but condemn the Bandera award. He argued that the title of '*Hero of Ukraine*' was a contemporary decoration reserved for living people. Given the Party of the Regions stance on the OUN and UPA, and especially the person of Bandera, it is not surprising that Yanukovich's main problem was that Bandera received the award:¹⁸⁷

*In addition, when politicians entangle themselves in the process and especially in such matters that divide society, and we are at the same time speaking about the unification of the country, it is incorrect. Moreover, when, I would say, very controversial heroes of Ukraine are heroized, it only causes indignation.*¹⁸⁸

Tymoshenko had much to lose from supporting the award. If she did, a part of the electorate could switch allegiance to Yanukovich. Opposing the award would also harm her position because she needed the support of nationalist voters in the second round.¹⁸⁹ Her response was a mixed message, to avoid antagonizing a potential voter group: On the one hand, Andriy Shkil, a Tymoshenko bloc Rada member, gave a positive opinion about the award. On

183 Ibid.

184 "Качинський засудив Ющенка за героїзацію Бандери," ZAXID.NET, last modified February 5, 2010, accessed March 29, 2017, http://zaxid.net/news/showNews.do?kachinskiy_zasudiv_yushhenka_za_geroyizatsiyu_banderi&objectId=1095255.

185 For instance, responses by Mark Weitzman (Simon Wiesenthal Centre) and Kyiv Chief Rabi Bleich in: "Євреї обурені присвоєнням звання Героя Бандері," ZAXID.NET, last modified February 1, 2010, accessed March 29, 2017, http://zaxid.net/news/showNews.do?yevreyi_obureni_prisvoyenniam_zvannya_geroya_banderi&objectId=1094878.

186 В. Ющенко, *Указ Президента України № 75/2010 про вшанування учасників боротьби за незалежність України у ХХ столітті*, 2010, accessed December 13, 2016, <http://zakon3.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/75/2010>; "Ющенко признал воинов ОУН-УПА участниками борьбы за независимость Украины," Корреспондент.net, last modified January 29, 2010, accessed March 29, 2017, <http://korrespondent.net/ukraine/politics/1041243-yushchenko-priznal-voinov-oun-upa-uchastnikami-borby-za-nezavisimost-ukrainy>.

187 Party of the Regions officials, especially Dmytro Tabachnyk, a close confidant of Yanukovich, frequently made negative statements about Stepan Bandera and his cult. See for instance: Дмитрий Табачник, "От Риббентропа до майдана," *Известия*, last modified September 23, 2009, accessed March 16, 2017, <http://izvestia.ru/news/353329>.

188 "Янукович считає, що присвоєння Бандері звання Героя України не об'єднує українців," Корреспондент.net, last modified February 2, 2010, accessed March 29, 2017, <http://korrespondent.net/ukraine/politics/1042208-yanukovich-schitaet-cto-prisvoenie-bandere-zvaniya-geroya-ukrainy-ne-obedinyaet-ukraincev>.

189 Katchanovski argued that the Bloc Yulia Tymoshenko did not emphasize memory issues such as WW II, UPA, and the OUN. See: Ivan Katchanovski, "The Politics of Soviet and Nazi Genocides in Orange Ukraine," *Europe-Asia Studies* 62, no. 6 (August 2010): 214.

the other hand, Tymoshenko tried to avoid the issue.¹⁹⁰ She declared that ‘*Historians have to clearly establish which heroes protected independence, and which heroes fought against it*’.¹⁹¹

The Bandera award potentially damaged Tymoshenko more than any other politician in Ukraine. This leads to speculation: Could this have been one of Yushchenko’s reasons? Could he not accept that his former ally, now turned political opponent, would succeed him? Did he want to prevent her presidency this way?

Yushchenko’s OUN and UPA Policies: An Evaluation

Yushchenko’s focus on Ukrainian nationalism did not achieve the desired effect: instead of uniting Ukraine around a narrative of a glorious struggle for independence, it polarized Ukrainian society.¹⁹² Although he put a lot of effort in his OUN and UPA-related history policies, Yushchenko achieved even less than with his Holodomor-related history policies. Partly this was the case because the president had limited means at his disposal: presidential decrees and government agencies under his direct control (such as the SBU). Another reason was that Yushchenko was the only genuine proponent of nationalist policies. His political opponents either disavowed such policies (Party of the Regions, the Communist and Socialist parties) or had a rather ambivalent attitude to them (Tymoshenko). Only the nationalist niche supported the president’s policies. Far more Ukrainians did not want the complete re-evaluation of the ‘*Great Patriotic War*’ that Yushchenko proposed. His policies thus deeply split and fragmented historical memory in Ukraine.¹⁹³ Overall, Yushchenko was rather naïve in believing that by forcing his OUN-UPA policies, he could consolidate Ukraine as a nation. Such policies could never succeed because of their internal incoherencies, the tri-partite political power struggle, and the international confrontations they caused.

5.5. Chapter Summary

The Orange Revolution reshaped the Ukrainian political landscape. Three general developments have been especially important: First, the old elites retained legitimacy, because of the negotiated outcome. Second, the constitutional compromise severely limited Yushchenko’s ability to enact new policy. Third, the volatile tri-partite political struggle between President Viktor Yushchenko, his supposed ‘ally’ Yulyia Tymoshenko, and his main opponent Viktor Yanukovych destabilized Ukrainian politics. Debates on history policies and identity were increasingly subsumed by these complicated political struggles.

Yushchenko’s desire to consolidate Ukraine as a nation was the main driving force for his history policies: During the Orange Revolution, Western and Central Ukraine united. The integration of the Russophone East of the country in this community was the main challenge that lay ahead. Yushchenko sought to achieve this with his history policies.

Yushchenko founded the *Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance* to aid his history policies. It never became what Yushchenko intended, because opponents used budgetary constraints and other bureaucratic means to obstruct the institute. As the constitutional

190 “У Тимошенко задоволені, що Бандера – Герой України,” ZAXID.NET, last modified January 22, 2010, accessed March 29, 2017, http://zaxid.net/news/showNews.do?u_tymoshenko_zadovoleni_shho_bandera_ndazh_geroy_ukrayini&objectId=1094241.

191 “Євреї указали Ющенко на Бандеру,” *Сьогодні*, last modified February 1, 2010, accessed March 29, 2017, <http://www.segodnya.ua/ukraine/evrei-ukazali-jushchenko-na-banderu.html>.

192 Eleonora Narvselius, “The ‘Bandera Debate’: The Contentious Legacy of World War II and Liberalization of Collective Memory in Western Ukraine,” *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 54, no. 3–4 (September 2012): 475.

193 Yaroslav Hrytsak, “Geschichte und Erinnerung: Amnesie, Ambivalenz, Aktivierung,” in *Die Ukraine. Prozesse der Nationsbildung*, ed. Andreas Kappeler (Köln, Weimar und Wien: Böhlau Verlag, 2011), 417.

compromise took away many of the president's powers, he could not directly control the institute. Therefore, Yushchenko relied on one of the few government organs directly under his purview: the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) and its archives. Together, the SBU and the *Institute of National Remembrance* managed the flow of information on the Holodomor, the OUN, and UPA.

The Holodomor served as one of the focal points of Yushchenko's history policies. The president wanted to unite Ukrainians around a notion of victimhood for which the Holodomor was one of the building blocks. In his Holodomor-related policies, Yushchenko had to take into account precedents set by his predecessors. He copied previous commemorations and expanded them. Novelties included the publishing of the so-called '*Books of Memory*' and the completion of a national memorial in Kyiv.

Yushchenko's main Holodomor-related effort was his attempt at judicialization. This entailed two different measures: 1) official legal recognition that the Holodomor was a genocide and 2) criminalizing denial of this specific interpretation. Yushchenko succeeded in the former but failed in the latter. This showed that there was severe opposition to his policies by the Party of the Regions and the Communist Party. Yulyia Tymoshenko also had little incentive to support the president's efforts. Only because of the fact that the Socialist Party acted as a peace broker could the Rada support a law that described the Holodomor as a genocide. The compromise essentially was politically useless to the president. Therefore, Yushchenko continued to press for criminalization of denial of the Holodomor as *genocide*. Opposition by the Party of the Regions, the Communist and Socialist parties and political inaction by the Tymoshenko Bloc ensured that all these efforts remained fruitless.

Yushchenko's legislative efforts exposed the contradictory nature of his history policies: On the one hand, the intention was to make Ukraine a European country. On the other hand, all acts that he or his party proposed to introduce criminal responsibility for the denial were incompatible with the rule of law and normal judicial procedures in democratic states. They also limited the freedom of speech in a way that did not conform to European standards.

On a narrative level, Yushchenko's Holodomor policies were also incompatible with European standards. They relied on a narrative of Ukrainian victimhood: he considered the famine a genocide and continuously inflated the number of victims up to 10 million (significantly higher than demographic estimates). The inflated numbers meant to support the idea that the Holodomor was a larger tragedy than the Holocaust. This did clearly not comply with the European idea that the Holocaust was the greatest tragedy in (European) history.

Most of Yushchenko's policy initiatives failed. Therefore, he resorted to more symbolic gestures. In the run-up to the 2010 presidential elections, the SBU conducted a trial against the 'Holodomor's main organizers'. This trial also placed Yushchenko at odds with European standards, because it did not comply with most essential safeguards for the rule of law.

Yushchenko's history policies also focussed on the notion of Ukrainian heroism. The president wanted to consolidate Ukraine as a nation around that notion. These policies revolved around the OUN and UPA. He depicted participants in both organisations as heroes who fought for Ukraine's independence. He claimed that both the Ukrainian nationalists and the Red Army fought for Ukraine against the Nazis. This policy was a strong shift from the emphasis Kuchma placed on the *Great Patriotic War* and the Red Army in his second term. Initially, Yushchenko's policy shift was not so extreme that he replaced the memory of the Red Army with that of the OUN and UPA. This was probably because many Ukrainians still held Red Army veterans in great esteem and because much more Ukrainians fought in the ranks of the Red Army than in the UPA. Nevertheless, Yushchenko's policy of reconciliation between Red Army, and OUN and UPA veterans strongly divided the nation. It did not

succeed and even caused violent clashes between supporters of the OUN and UPA and the Red Army. Yushchenko sought to reconcile mutually exclusive ideologies, concepts and historical actors with each other and his policy seemed almost impossible to be realized.

These policies caused severe political clashes between his own political supporters and the Party of the Regions and the Communist Party. In the run-up to the 2010 elections, these clashes intensified from 2008 onwards. This followed the basic pattern of his Holodomor policies: Yushchenko had to rely on the same instruments. For instance, he used the SBU to whitewash the history of the OUN and UPA.

After Yushchenko lost the first round of the presidential elections in 2010, he enacted radical and highly symbolic policies that caused confrontation. For instance, he decorated Stepan Bandera as '*Hero of Ukraine*' (he had already earlier awarded to Roman Shukhevych). A political controversy followed and it more difficult for Tymoshenko to win the second round of the presidential elections.

Any historical narrative that depicts OUN and UPA veterans as heroes fighting for Ukraine needs to deal with the black pages in the movement's history. These included accusations of mass murder and collaboration with the Germans. Yushchenko's narrative left little room to discuss them. If it allowed for discussion of the Holocaust, Ukrainian history and the struggle for independence subsumed it. Yushchenko's policy denied obfuscated or simply avoided Ukrainian participation in the Holocaust. This again showed that Yushchenko's domestic and international agendas not always aligned.

Yushchenko's history policies opposed his international agenda of Europeanization in other ways as well. His policies on the OUN and UPA lacked the self-critical attitude that is a pre-requisite for European integration. In a sense, the methods Yushchenko used for his history policies resembled Soviet methods of dealing with the past. This underlined the long-lasting influence of Soviet rule over Ukraine.

Yushchenko's policies on the OUN, the UPA, the Holodomor, and the Second World War failed to achieve their main goal: the integration of the East and South of the country in one nation with the West and Centre. The responses they provoked only helped to polarize Ukraine around two equally problematic narratives of history: the Ukrainian nationalist version and the (Neo)-Soviet one.

Yushchenko's presidency failed to fulfil the high expectations of 2004. Yushchenko might have stopped the authoritarian tendencies that Kuchma introduced, but he did not succeed in either economic, political or cultural reforms. When Yushchenko left office, the country was in no better shape than it was in 2004. His presidency was one of missed opportunities: while politicians kept squabbling over matters of identity and history, they neglected important political and economic issues.

Chapter 6. Rewinding Yushchenko's History Policies: Yanukovych and the Politics of Ukrainian Identity (2010–2014)

6.1. Political context: Yanukovych's Return to Autocracy

Victor Yanukovych won the 2010 presidential elections in a close call (49% vs 46% for Tymoshenko). How was it possible that, of all Ukrainian politicians, the very candidate won, against whom many Ukrainians successfully went to the streets in 2004?

His victory was a technicality: Compared to the second (i.e. third) round of the 2004 presidential elections he even received about half a million votes less.¹ For many voters, Orange rule had discredited itself and seemed as corrupt as the Donetsk clan. Some even perceived Yanukovych as a more effective executive than Tymoshenko; they expected that he might actually get things done.² Yanukovych capitalized on this: he sought to dissuade nationalist or Orange voters from voting. The Party of the Regions limited its efforts to its home region and used anti-Western and Sovietophile ideology to appeal to an Eastern Ukrainian electorate.³ This strategy worked: more than one-third of the voters stayed at home. In addition, a little less than 5% of the voters crossed the 'against all candidates' option.⁴ The decline of electoral participation was highest in Western and Central Ukraine (were Tymoshenko could win votes). Yanukovych also managed to increase his relative vote share in Central Ukraine (where Ukrainian elections are traditionally decided).⁵

The 2008-2009 financial crisis also worked to Tymoshenko's disadvantage. Since she was prime minister at the time, many Ukrainians blamed her for their dire economic situation. Furthermore, Yushchenko acted as a 'technical spoiler candidate' and did much to harm Tymoshenko's position: He captured a significant part of the nationalist vote share in the first round. In the second round, Yushchenko called upon his voters not to vote for any candidate. This might even have cost Tymoshenko the elections.⁶

After his inauguration on February 25, 2010, Yanukovych quickly built an autocratic system. He started by removing Tymoshenko as prime minister: Yanukovych blatantly violated established constitutional and parliamentary procedures to form a ruling coalition of his own liking (Party of the Regions, the Communist Party, the Lytvyn Bloc and 16 Our

- 1 Mykola Rjabčuk, "Prekäre Autokratie. Stillstand und Wandel in der Ukraine," *Osteuropa. Zeitschrift für Gegenwartsfragen des Ostens* 62, no. 9 (2009): 37. In the third run, the re-run of the second round of the 2004 elections, Yanukovych received 12.848.528 votes; during the second round of the 2010 elections, he received 12.481.266 votes. Cf. *Результати голосування по Україні. Повторне голосування виборів Президента України 26.12.2004* (Київ: Центральна Виборча Комісія, 2004), accessed May 19, 2017, http://www.cvk.gov.ua/pls/vp2004/vp0011;_Вибори_Президента_України._Повторне_голосування_7_лютого_2010_року._Протокол_Центральної_виборчої_комісії_про_результати_повторного_голосування_з_виборів_Президента_України.
- 2 Anders Åslund, *Ukraine: What Went Wrong and How to Fix It* (Washington, DC: Peterson Institute for International Economics, 2015), 80; See also: Olexiy Haran, "From Viktor to Viktor: Democracy and Authoritarianism in Ukraine," *Demokratizatsiya* 19, no. 2 (Spring 2011): 95.
- 3 Rjabčuk, "Prekäre Autokratie," 42.
- 4 *Ibid.*, 37–38; *Вибори Президента України. Повторне голосування 7 лютого 2010 року. Протокол Центральної виборчої комісії про результати повторного голосування з виборів Президента України*.
- 5 Nathaniel Copsey and Natalia Sharovalova, "The Ukrainian Presidential Election of 2010," *Representation* 46, no. 2 (July 2010): 221; Alexander J. Motyl, "Ukrainian Blues: Yanukovych's Rise, Democracy's Fall," *Foreign Affairs* 89, no. 4 (2010): 126.
- 6 Yushchenko called for voting the 'against all' option on the ballot. See: Haran, "From Viktor to Viktor," 95–96; Taras Kuzio, "Yushchenko versus Tymoshenko: Why Ukraine's National Democrats Are Divided," *Demokratizatsiya* 21, no. 2 (2013): 231; Motyl, "Ukrainian Blues," 126.

Ukraine members).⁷

The new prime minister, Mykola Azarov, was a long-time associate of Yanukovich and a bureaucrat synonymous with government corruption. His new cabinet was top-heavy (39 ministers) and all the important ministries (such as economy and finance) were given to non-entities.⁸ Yanukovich's power grab strengthened oligarchic rule: oligarchs such as Azarov, Yuriy Boyko and Serhiy Lyovochkin dominated the new government.⁹

Yanukovich's Judiciary: Control and Selective Use

The next step in introducing autocracy was control over the judiciary. In July 2010, Yanukovich introduced several judicial reforms.¹⁰ In September, Yanukovich used the judiciary to strengthen his grip on the country: The Constitutional Court declared the 2004 constitutional compromise null and void. The court reasoned that they were introduced in violation of constitutional procedures.¹¹ This ruling restored the 1996 constitution and its semi-presidential system that enabled Kuchma's authoritarian tendencies. Subsequently, a new law also strengthened Yanukovich's power over the Cabinet of Ministers.¹²

Yanukovich possessed more power than any previous president did, but that did not satisfy him. He used his control over the judiciary to eliminate or silence political opponents and to legitimate corporate raiding by ruling oligarchs, as judicial reforms effectively enabled the state to put anyone it wanted in prison.¹³ Yuliya Tymoshenko was the prime victim of these practices, as she became subject to selective prosecution. The regime also started a case against her former Minister of Internal Affairs, Yuriy Lutsenko. After his arrest in December 2010, a court convicted him to prison terms of two and four years.¹⁴ Likewise, a court convicted Tymoshenko on charges of corruption and abuse of power on October 11, 2010. She received a prison term of seven years, and a ban on participating in elections and holding public office, effectively until 2020.¹⁵ Given the nature of Ukrainian politics, it was highly unlikely that Tymoshenko had not committed any corrupt practices during her

7 Kuzio, "Yushchenko versus Tymoshenko," 231; Rjabčuk, "Prekäre Autokratie," 42; Haran, "From Viktor to Viktor," 97; Motyl, "Ukrainian Blues," 127. The Party of the Regions bought the defectors from Our Ukraine. The price for their defection was rumoured to have been between \$500,000 and \$1,000,000. (See: Rjabčuk, "Prekäre Autokratie," 43.)

8 Alexander J. Motyl, "Ukraine's Democracy in Danger," *Wall Street Journal*, March 29, 2010, sec. Opinion, accessed January 10, 2017, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052748704094104575143380743824408>.

9 Andrew Wilson, *Dealing with Yanukovich's Ukraine*, ECFR Policy Memo (London: European Council on Foreign Relations, March 2010), 2, accessed May 3, 2017, http://www.ecfr.eu/page/-/ECFR20_UKRAINE_POLICY_BRIEF.pdf.

10 The main instrument to achieve this was the 'Supreme Council of Justice', which had the right to appoint and dismiss judges. The president, who appointed loyalists to its membership, dominated this council. See: Wilson, *The Ukrainians*, 344–345; Haran, "From Viktor to Viktor," 94; Rjabčuk, "Prekäre Autokratie," 38.

11 Анатолій Сергійович Головін et al., *Рішення Конституційного Суду України у справі за конституційним поданням 252 народних депутатів України щодо відповідності Конституції України (конституційності) Закону України „Про внесення змін до Конституції України“ від 8 грудня 2004 року № 2222-IV (справа про додержання процедури внесення змін до Конституції України)* (Конституційний Суд України 2010); See also: Rjabčuk, "Prekäre Autokratie," 38; Haran, "From Viktor to Viktor," 98; Gerhard Simon, "Staatskrise in der Ukraine. Vom Bürgerprotest für Europa zur Revolution," *Osteuropa. Zeitschrift für Gegenwartsfragen des Ostens* 64, no. 1 (2014): 26.

12 В. Янукович, *Закон України № 2591-VI/2010 про Кабінет Міністрів України*, 2010, accessed May 19, 2017, <http://zakon3.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2591-17/ed20101007>; See also: Taras Kuzio, "Russianization of Ukrainian National Security Policy under Viktor Yanukovich," *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 25, no. 4 (October 2012): 561.

13 Andrew Wilson, *The EU and Ukraine after the 2012 Elections*, ECFR Policy Memo (London: European Council on Foreign Relations, November 2012), 2, accessed May 3, 2017, http://www.ecfr.eu/page/-/ECFR45_Ukraine_65_MEMO_AW.pdf.

14 He was accused of paying his driver, who continued to work beyond his compulsory retirement age (a widespread practice in Ukraine) and of abusing police funds.

15 Simon, "Staatskrise in der Ukraine," 26.

career. Nevertheless, this trial was unfair and a political ploy.¹⁶

Control by Elections

The Yanukovych regime rigged the October 2010 local elections (which did not meet international democratic standards). These elections effectively ensured the domination of all but a few local administrations by the Party of the Regions. Only in the three Galician oblasts did the ultra-nationalist Svoboda Party receive the most votes.¹⁷

In November 2011, the regime enacted a new electoral law. This reinstated the pre-2004 mixed electoral system of both territorial individual mandates and proportional representation.¹⁸ Previously, individual mandates proved to be prone to corrupt practices and abuse. The law also banned multi-party electoral coalitions to participate in elections. This severely hindered the opposition, since the Tymoshenko bloc was an electoral coalition.¹⁹

The opposition had to reorganize itself: In May 2012, several opposition parties reluctantly decided to merge in Tymoshenko's *Batkivshchyna* (Fatherland) party. Two largest constituent members of the Tymoshenko Bloc: *Batkivshchyna* and the *Front Zmin* (Front for Changes) of Arseniy Yatsenyuk controlled the new *Batkivshchyna*. As Tymoshenko was in prison, the young technocrat Yatsenyuk became the party leader (Tymoshenko was appointed 'honorary president'). Tymoshenko's right-hand man, Oleksandr Turchynov, became the party's electoral campaign leader.²⁰

Yatsenyuk's claim to opposition leadership was not uncontested: Vitaliy Klychko, a Russian speaker and retired professional heavyweight boxer, formed a new alternative opposition party. His *Ukrainian Democratic Alliance for Reform* (*Ukrayynskiy Demokratichnyi Alyans za Reformi*) was better known by its acronym, UDAR (a tongue-in-cheek; it means 'punch' in both Ukrainian and Russian). UDAR attracted many opposition voters, since they did not fully trust the 'flexible' Yatsenyuk.²¹

In Western Ukraine, the ultra-nationalist Svoboda was the dominant opposition party. This damaged both *Batkivshchyna*'s and UDAR's chances in the 2012 Rada elections. As discussed in chapter 5, the Party of the Regions probably and secretly supported Svoboda, to prevent as many voters from voting for moderate opposition parties.²² The party's popularity further grew because of general disappointment with mainstream political parties and Yanukovych's Russian/(neo)-Soviet identity politics (which will be discussed extensively in this chapter).²³

Relying on the territorial individual mandates, the regime doctored the 2012 Rada elections: The Party of the Regions only gained 30% of the proportionally awarded seats. Nevertheless, it gained a sizable 52% of the individual mandates.

Yanukovych now tightly controlled the legislature. While the ruling coalition of the Communist Party and Party of the Regions parties fell short of a majority, it only needed the

16 Kuzio, "Russianization of Ukrainian National Security Policy," 570–571.

17 Serhiy Kudelia, "The Sources of Continuity and Change of Ukraine's Incomplete State," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 45, no. 3–4 (September 2012): 426.

18 В. Янукович, *Закон України № 4061-VI про вибори народних депутатів України*, 2011, accessed May 19, 2017, <http://zakon5.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/4061-17/ed20111117>.

19 Rjabčuk, "Prekäre Autokratie," 45–46.

20 *Ibid.*, 46–47.

21 Kuzio, "Yushchenko versus Tymoshenko," 232.

22 See "5.1. Political Context: Ukraine after the Orange Revolution", page 126.

23 Rjabčuk, "Prekäre Autokratie," 49. See also See "5.1. Political Context: Ukraine after the Orange Revolution", page 126 for more information on this support.

support of a few – easily bribable – independents. Furthermore, the 1996 constitution did not require a parliamentary majority. As long as the government was not defeated in a vote-of-no-confidence, it could remain. Nevertheless, Yanukovich lacked the two-thirds supermajority needed for constitutional amendments.²⁴

Party	% of proportional vote	No. of proportional seats	% of individual mandates	No. of Individual mandates	Total seats
Batkivshchyna	25.54 %	62	-	-	62
Communist Party of Ukraine	13.18 %	32	-	-	32
Independent	-	-	15.11 %	34	34
Invalid Election (for individual mandates)	-	-	2.22 %	5	5
Party of the New Generation of Ukraine	-	-	0.44 %	1	1
Party of the Regions	30.00 %	72	52.00 %	117	189
Radical Party	-	-	0.44 %	1	1
Rodina	-	-	0.44 %	1	1
Soyuz	-	-	0.44 %	1	1
Svoboda	14.44 %	25	23.56 %	53	78
UDAR	13.96 %	34	2.67 %	6	40
Ukrainian People's Party	-	-	1.33 %	3	3
United Centre	-	-	1.33 %	3	3

Table 2: The Results of the 2012 Rada Elections.

The results for the proportional representation voting is based on the official results as published by the Central Election Commission of Ukraine: *Вибори народних депутатів України 28 жовтня 2012 року. Протокол центральної виборчої комісії про результати виборів народних депутатів України у загальнодержавному багатомандатному виборчому окрузі* (Київ: Центральна Виборча Комісія, November 10, 2012), accessed May 19, 2017, http://www.cvk.gov.ua/info/zbyvo_2012.pdf. I have calculated the number of seats for each party on the basis of the official results. For the sake of clarity, I have counted both party members running as independents and non-members nominated by a party as belonging to the party indicated. For the territorial individual mandates see: *Список народних депутатів України, обраних на виборах народних депутатів України 28 жовтня 2012 року* (Київ: Центральна Виборча Комісія, n.d.), accessed May 19, 2017, http://www.cvk.gov.ua/info/dep_2012.doc.

Closer control over the security service was the final element of Yanukovich's autocratic system. Yanukovich appointed close associates to head the SBU, the Prosecutor-General and the National Defence and Security Council and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Other

²⁴ Rilka Dragneva-Lewers and Kataryna Wolczuk, *Ukraine between the EU and Russia: The Integration Challenge* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 53–54; Åslund, *Ukraine*, 89–90.

legislation also enhanced security services' powers.²⁵ Yanukovych also expanded his powers regarding the armed forces in domestic contexts in time of peace against 'terrorists' and 'to restore constitutional order'.²⁶

Having established his autocracy, reshuffled his cabinet and narrowed it down to his power base in December 2012: Most important economic portfolios now went to his 'family' of loyalists. Young friends of his son Oleksandr became especially influential. For instance, the 34-year old Oleksandr Arbuzov became the chairman of the National Bank of Ukraine.²⁷

Yanukovych used the state to enhance his (family's) personal wealth.²⁸ Because of this, it was difficult to enact policies that would help the country overcome its many problems. This alienated many outside of Yanukovych's narrow electoral base.²⁹ The regime felt it owed responsibility to no one and ruled according to the proverbial principle of '*apres moi, le déluge*'.

6.2. The Great Rewind of Yushchenko's History Policies

Yanukovych undid many of Yushchenko's history policies at the same pace as he re-introduced autocracy. This fitted Yanukovych's main strategy of antagonizing the West and East. It enabled Yanukovych to brand the West as 'nationalist' and to please his Eastern power base. It also ensured that political moderates were left without a voice in Ukrainian politics.

The Institute of National Remembrance and its Diminished Importance

Any discussion of Yanukovych's history policies must start with the infrastructure that Yushchenko put in place: the tandem of the *Institute of National Remembrance* and the SBU.

In July 2010, Prime Minister Azarov appointed the communist historian Valeryi Soldatenko as the institute's new head.³⁰ Soldatenko did not support the ideas of his nationalist predecessor Ihor Yukhnovskiy: he wanted to replace the word '*Holodomor*' (i.e. the famine as a deliberate act) with the word '*Holod*' (merely hunger, or famine). This suggestion denied the central tenet of previous Holodomor policies. Not surprisingly, Volodymyr Viatrovych, – one of the enablers of Yushchenko's history policies – decried Soldatenko's appointment.³¹ Yanukovych also fired Viatrovych from his position as SBU archives director. He nominated the communist Olha Hinzburh, who previously argued against restoring historical memory because it '*might harm descendants*', as Viatrovych's replacement.³² Once in office, she

25 Dragneva-Lewers and Wolczuk, *Ukraine between the EU and Russia*, 54.

26 В. Янукович, *Закон України № 1934-ХІІ/2011 про Збройні Сили України*, 2011, accessed May 19, 2017, <http://zakon3.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1934-12/ed20111208>.

27 Kudelia, "The Sources of Continuity and Change," 426; Åslund, *Ukraine*, 90.

28 Dragneva-Lewers and Wolczuk, *Ukraine between the EU and Russia*, 54–55.

29 Åslund, *Ukraine*, 101.

30 Antoon De Baets, *Annual Report 2013* (Network of Concerned Historians, 2013), 99–100, accessed November 15, 2016, http://www.concernedhistorians.org/content_files/file/ar/13.pdf; Martin, "The Holodomor Issue," 26; Rudling, *The OUN, UPA and the Holocaust*, 36; For the decision to fire Yukhnovskiy, see: М. Азаров, *Розпорядження Кабінету Міністрів України № 1310-р/2010 про звільнення Юхновського І.Р. з посади виконуючого обов'язки Голови Українського інституту національної пам'яті*, 2010, accessed May 26, 2017, <http://zakon3.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1310-2010-%D1%80>; For the appointment of Soldatenko, see: М. Азаров, *Розпорядження Кабінету Міністрів України № 1438-р/2010 про призначення Солдатенка В.Ф. Головою Українського інституту національної пам'яті*, 2010, accessed May 26, 2017, <http://zakon3.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1438-2010-%D1%80>.

31 Володимир В'ятрович, "На що перетвориться національна пам'ять під керівництвом комуністів?," *Уніан Інформаційне Агентство*, last modified July 21, 2010, accessed May 26, 2017, <http://www.unian.ua/politics/382058-na-scho-peretvoritsya-natsionalna-pamyat-pid-kerivnitvkom-komunistiv.html>; See also: Касьянов, "К десятилетню."

32 Rudling, *The OUN, UPA and the Holocaust*, 36; De Baets, *Annual Report 2013*, 99–100; Andrii Portnov, "Bandera

reversed the policy of relative openness and declassification of documents about the Holodomor, Stalinist repressions and the OUN and UPA.³³

Yushchenko also reorganized the *Institute of National Remembrance* as part of his so-called ‘*optimization of the state apparatus*’ (i.e. budget cuts). It was reinstated as a research institute under the purview of the Cabinet of Ministers. This diminished the institute’s status and it was no longer an important policy instrument.³⁴

With a new status came new tasks. The institute now had to focus on scientific tasks, such as informing the government’s memory policies. Besides, it had to conduct scientific studies in Ukrainian history and commit itself to outreach and education.³⁵ There was no room for commemorative or political initiatives. Correspondingly, the institute received less budget: in 2010, it amounted to 19.2 million hryvnia; between 2011 and 2013, the yearly budget was a mere 4.4-5.6 million hryvnia. At the same time, all memorials, historical complexes, and preserves under the institute’s administration were transferred to the Ministry of Culture.³⁶

Why did Yanukovich not simply disband the institute? First, liquidating it would damage Yanukovich’s political image. Second, Yanukovich could also use the institute for short-term political tasks. It could help to discredit political opponents and to propagandize the (neo)-Soviet narrative of Ukrainian history.³⁷ The institute kept working from the standard national narrative but no longer used Yushchenko’s exclusionary variant. Simultaneously, the institute started (scientific) work on theoretical and conceptual problems of collective and historical memory.³⁸

What happened with the Lontskyi Prison Memorial Museum is also illustrative of Yanukovich’s approach.³⁹ The SBU arrested director Ruslan Zabilyi in September 2010 because he supposedly intended to provide state secrets to third parties. Zabilyi claimed that the

Mythologies and Their Traps for Ukraine,” *OpenDemocracy*, last modified June 21, 2016, accessed June 28, 2016, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/od-russia/andrii-portnov/bandera-mythologies-and-their-traps-for-ukraine>; For the the decision to relieve Viatrovych from his position, see: В. Янукович, *Указ Президента України № 312/2010 про звільнення В. В'ятровича з посади директора Департаменту архівного забезпечення Служби безпеки України*, 2010, accessed May 26, 2017, <http://zakon3.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/312/2010>.

33 In 2012, the Rada also altered the law on national archives. The archival services could now destroy ‘duplicate’ or ‘damaged’ documents or items that had ‘lost cultural value’. It also allowed to restrict confidential information for 75 years. В. Янукович, *Закон України № 3814-ХІІ/2012 про Національний архівний фонд та архівні установи*, 2012, accessed May 26, 2017, <http://zakon5.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/3814-12/ed20120817/page>; See also: De Baets, *Annual Report 2013*, 99–100.

34 For the liquidation of the institute, see: В. Янукович, *Указ Президента України № 1085/2010 про оптимізацію системи центральних органів виконавчої влади*, 2010, accessed May 26, 2017, <http://zakon1.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1085/2010/ed20101209>; For the new incarnation of the institute, see: М. Азаров, *Постанова Кабінету Міністрів України № 8/2011 про утворення Українського інституту національної пам’яті*, 2011, accessed May 26, 2017, <http://zakon4.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/8-2011-%D0%BF/ed20110112>; See also: Georgiy Kasianov, “History, Politics and Memory (Ukraine 1990s - 2000s),” in *Memory and Change in Europe. Eastern Perspectives*, ed. Małgorzata Pakier and Joanna Wawrzyniak (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2015), 203; Касьянов, “К десятилетію.”

35 The tasks are listed in article 4 of the following decision of the Cabinet of Ministers: М. Азаров, *Постанова Кабінету Міністрів України № 74/2011 про затвердження Положення про Український інститут національної пам’яті*, 2011, accessed May 26, 2017, <http://zakon4.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/74-2011-%D0%BF/ed20110131>; See also: Касьянов, “К десятилетію.”

36 For the transfer of these sites, see the following governmental decision: М. Азаров, *Розпорядження Кабінету Міністрів України № 843-р/2010 про віднесення нерухомого майна Меморіального комплексу пам’яті жертв голодоморів в Україні до сфери управління Міністерства культури*, 2010, accessed November 15, 2016, <http://zakon3.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/843-2011-%D1%80>.

37 Касьянов, “К десятилетію.”

38 For instance, it prepared a dictionary of terms and concepts in memory studies and a bibliography: А.М. Киридон, ed., *Національна та історична пам’ять: словник ключових термінів* (Київ: Пріоритети, 2013); А.М. Киридон, О.Я. Волнянок, and В.І. Огієнко, eds., *Студії пам’яті в Україні. (Історіографічний дискурс. Бібліографічний покажчик)* (Київ: Пріоритети, 2013); See also: Касьянов, “К десятилетію.”

39 The establishment of this museum is discussed in “5.4. Consolidating the Nation: Rehabilitation and Glorification of the OUN and UPA under Yushchenko”, page 147.

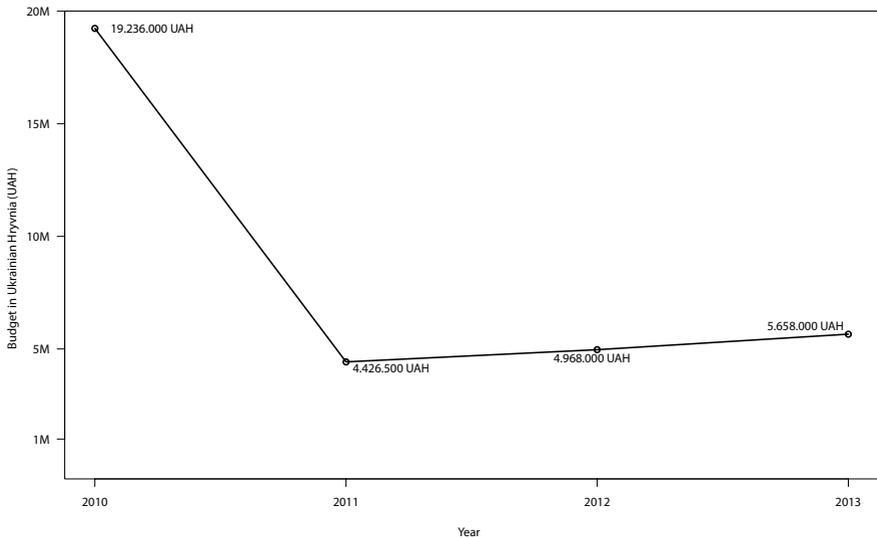


Figure 18: Budget of the Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance (2010-2013).

These figures, with the exception of 2011, can be found in Kasianov's study on the Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance, see: Касьянов, "К десятилетню." The figures for 2011 are taken from the budget law: В. Янукович, Закон України № 2857-VI/2010 про Державний бюджет України на 2011 рік, 2010, accessed May 26, 2017, <http://zakon2.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2857-17>.

documents in question were KGB documents about the Holodomor, the OUN, and UPA, which were declassified during Yushchenko's presidency. The security service subsequently opened a criminal investigation. This was a case of harassment, since no subsequent actions followed. Other motives might also have played a role: cleaning the internal SBU cadres, or dividing SBU real estate in Lviv (the museum was located in an SBU-owned building). Anyhow, the case against Zabilyi was the motive to place the museum under the supervision of the *Institute of National Remembrance* (and under government control).⁴⁰

The Zabilyi affair was highly problematic: Even if the director was a known nationalist with dubious historiographical qualifications and a known distorter of the Holocaust, he was still entitled to the same (constitutional) protections and human rights like any other person. Arbitrary use of law enforcement agencies and the justice system violated those protections and rights.

It was furthermore problematic because his arrest gave Zabilyi a platform: Afterwards, Zabilyi toured universities in the United States and Canada. In his lectures, he played the 'victim card' and campaigned for nationalist viewpoints, denied ethnic and political violence; in short: he deplatformatized Ukrainian nationalism's history.⁴¹ (Diaspora) Ukrainian nationalists even laid a claim to Zabilyi's victimhood, when the historian Per Anders Rudling published an open letter in protest to the lecture tour.⁴² In a letter to Lund University, with which the historian was affiliated, representatives from several nationalist

40 Kasianov, "History, Politics and Memory (Ukraine 1990s - 2000s)," 203-204.

41 Ab Imperio Quarterly et al., "Open Letter in Support of Per Anders Rudling," *Defending History*, October 21, 2012, accessed December 14, 2016, <http://defendinghistory.com/open-letter-in-support-of-per-anders-rudling/44285>.

42 Per Anders Rudling, "Ukrainian Ultranationalists Sponsor Lecture Tour Across North American Universities," *Searchlight Magazine*, last modified November 1, 2012, accessed October 15, 2017, <https://web.archive.org/web/20121101091333/http://www.searchlightmagazine.com/news/international-news/ukrainian-ultranationalists-sponsor-lecture-tour-across-north-american-universities>.

organisations accused Rudling of expressing opinions that ‘bordered on “hate-speech”’.⁴³ In response, several (international) scholars of Ukraine wrote an open letter in support of Rudling. They explicitly protested against Zabylyi’s use of a victim’s aura to obfuscate his historiographical flaws.⁴⁴

Yanukovych’s Gambit: Dmytro Tabachnyk as Education Minister

Yanukovych made one other important appointment: the (neo-)Soviet historian Dmytro Tabachnyk became Minister of Education. Tabachnyk was as a fervent opponent of Yushchenko’s history policies and frequently made severe accusations against the OUN and UPA.⁴⁵ Under his tutelage, the education ministry started to rewind many aspects of Yushchenko’s educational history policies.

As discussed in chapter 5, the *Institute of National Remembrance* organised a round table of historians, which presented an innovative (anthropocentric) approach for history education in Ukraine. Its introduction would have been an improvement.⁴⁶ Theoretically, Tabachnyk underwrote the round table’s conclusions: history textbooks needed to be ‘historically correct’ and their presentation should not change from one president or minister to the next. He claimed that an anthropocentric approach would make it easier to educate pupils and to improve Ukraine’s social climate.⁴⁷ Tabachnyk was hardly sincere: his subsequent policies did little to introduce a new approach. His statements only aimed at discrediting the previous administration’s nationalist history policies.

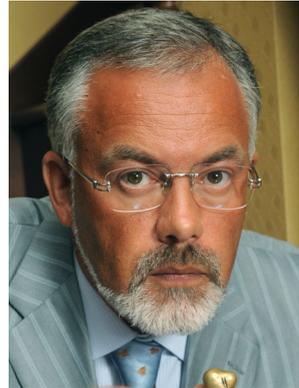


Figure 19: Dmytro Tabachnyk. Photo by Orae. Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:DmytroTabachnyk.jpg>

Tabachnyk caused great controversy in May 2010. He announced that a new teacher-training handbook should be written jointly by the Russian and Ukrainian Academies of Sciences. He claimed that the new manual should describe the Holodomor as a ‘a common tragedy of the Ukrainian, Russian, Belarusian, and Kazakh peoples’.⁴⁸ In March 2011, he also argued for the reintroduction of the ‘Great Patriotic War’ in textbooks.⁴⁹ That year, Viktor Mysan, one of the established textbook historians in Ukraine, published a new version of his textbook. Instead of following the round table’s advice, it merely replaced some Ukrainian nationalist themes with their (neo-)Soviet equivalents: a photo of the Orange Revolution disappeared from the cover, the notion of an artificial famine was no longer part of the text, the

43 “Canadian Missile Lands in Sweden,” *Defending History*, October 11, 2012, accessed October 15, 2017, <http://defendinghistory.com/ukrainian-nationalist-groups-in-canada-complain-to-the-vice-chancellor-of-lund-university-in-sweden/43748>.

44 Ab Imperio Quarterly et al., “Open Letter in Support of Per Anders Rudling.”

45 For controversial statements by Tabachnyk, see “5.4. Consolidating the Nation: Rehabilitation and Glorification of the OUN and UPA under Yushchenko”, page 153, “Footnote 187”.

46 See “5.2. The Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance: Yushchenko’s Key Player”, page 130.

47 Дмитрий Табачник, “Каким должен быть учебник истории,” *Освіта.UA*, last modified April 6, 2010, accessed May 12, 2017, <http://ru.osvita.ua/school/method/7768/>; See also: Андрей Портнов, “История для домашнего употребления,” *Ab Imperio*, no. 3 (2012): 309–338; Kasianov, “History, Politics and Memory (Ukraine 1990s – 2000s),” 204.

48 Martin, “The Holodomor Issue,” 71.

49 Michael Moser, *Language Policy and the Discourse on Languages in Ukraine under President Viktor Yanukovych (25 February 2010–28 October 2012)*, *Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society* 122 (Stuttgart: Ibidem-Verlag, 2014), 223–224.

section on the UPA was shorter, and a photo of Shukhevych no was no longer included.⁵⁰ Later, the textbook's authors claimed that they received directions by telephone to make these changes.⁵¹ The textbooks even allotted space for Viktor Yanukovych's biography and renamed the chapter '*Ukraine in the Second World War*' to '*The Great Patriotic War*'.⁵² Nevertheless, textbooks did not entirely restore the Soviet narrative or a Russian view on history. They remained a compromise with many non-Soviet accents.⁵³

Tabachnyk was also quite apologetic about Joseph Stalin: He claimed that the nationalists Bandera and Shukhevych would always count as '*organizers of mass murder*' and that their legacy would always '*be stained by the brush of collaborationism*'. On the other hand, Stalin was worthy of praise for his victory in the *Great Patriotic War*, although his role in the Soviet purges was not positive.⁵⁴

Tabachnyk's policies further polarized Ukraine into two camps: in the West an increasingly radicalized nationalist camp and the (neo)-Soviet East. With the national democratic opposition outplayed, those who were not attracted to extreme nationalism, or to the Party of the Regions had little alternatives.⁵⁵ Alternatively, as phrased by Andriy Portnov: '*... Ukraine seems to stand before the unpromising choice between both T's: Tabachnyk or Tyahnybok* (Svoboda's leader; NAKvE).⁵⁶

This strategy was inherently risky: in the short term, it helped the Yanukovych administration to stay in power, but in the longer term, it might also lead to inter-ethnic violence: one can only antagonize the Ukrainian nationalists up to a certain level.⁵⁷

6.3. From Ukrainian Genocide to All-Union Tragedy: Yanukovych and the Holodomor

The rewind of Yushchenko's Holodomor-policies became immediately evident after Yanukovych's inauguration: information on the Holodomor disappeared from the presidential website, ostensibly due to '*technical difficulties*'.⁵⁸ This caused a minor controversy and, after a short while, the information re-appeared, albeit in an abridged form.⁵⁹ The republication indicated that Yanukovych did not intend to end all government-sponsored remembrance. Yanukovych still claimed the Holodomor as an important moment in Ukrainian history. His discourse resembled Kuchma's: Yanukovych avoided nationalist ideological arguments and called for pluralism of ideas.⁶⁰

50 Antoon De Baets, *Annual Report 2011* (Network of Concerned Historians, 2011), 106, accessed November 15, 2016, http://www.concernedhistorians.org/content_files/file/ar/11.pdf; Kasianov, "History, Politics and Memory (Ukraine 1990s - 2000s)," 204–205; Moser, *Language Policy*, 223.

51 Kasianov, "History, Politics and Memory (Ukraine 1990s - 2000s)," 204–205.

52 Moser, *Language Policy*, 223–224.

53 Портнов, "История для домашнего употребления," 318.

54 Табачник, "Каким должен быть учебник истории"; See also: Taras Kuzio, "Ukrainian Nationalism Again Under Attack in Ukraine," *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 7, no. 138 (July 19, 2010), accessed May 12, 2017, <https://james-town.org/program/ukrainian-nationalism-again-under-attack-in-ukraine/>.

55 As claimed by David Marples. See Marples as quoted in: Taras Kuzio, "Viktor Yanukovych's First 100 Days: Back to the Past, but What's the Rush?," *Demokratyzatsiya* 18, no. 3 (2010): 214.

56 Портнов, "История для домашнего употребления," 324.

57 Motyl, "Ukrainian Blues," 274.

58 David R. Marples, "Yanukovych Fails to Negotiate on Ukraine's Behalf," *Kyiv Post*, last modified April 26, 2010, accessed January 10, 2017, <https://www.kyivpost.com/article/opinion/op-ed/yanukovych-fails-to-negotiate-on-ukraines-behalf-64998.html>.

59 Kasianov, "History, Politics and Memory (Ukraine 1990s - 2000s)," 200–201.

60 Ibid., 201.

The Council of Europe Controversy: Provoking Polarization

Yanukovych's real designs were different: His pluralism was phoney and only meant to cause friction in the Ukrainian society to benefit his political position. This became clear on April 27, 2010, when Yanukovych addressed the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE). The assembly discussed the Holodomor because Yushchenko requested the assembly's recognition of the Holodomor as *genocide*. Yanukovych' speech could hardly infuriate political opponents: it was a laudation of the Council of Europe and underlined Yanukovych's self-stated adherence to European values and democracy. It also contained some smears against his predecessor. After the president finished, the floor was opened for questions. The left-wing Finnish parliamentarian Jaako Laakso used this opportunity to inform about the president's opinion on the famine. He specifically asked for *'the correct interpretation of history'*.⁶¹ Yanukovych replied:

*The Great famine of the 1930s had affected the Volga region, Belarus, Kazakhstan as well as Ukraine. It had been a consequence of the policies of the Stalinist regime, and all countries had been affected. To recognise [the] Holodomor as a genocide in respect of one or another people would be incorrect and unfair. It had been a shared tragedy between all members of the Soviet Union.*⁶²

Subsequently, PACE failed to adopt a resolution recognizing the Holodomor as a genocide. Instead, it declared that *'These tragic events are referred to as Holodomor (politically-motivated famine) and are recognized by Ukrainian law as an act of genocide against Ukrainians'*.⁶³ Ukrainian nationalists (and the West of the country) responded with anger. The national-democratic opposition also received Yanukovych's remarks with discontent.⁶⁴ Only the East of the country interpreted the president's remarks positively.⁶⁵

Opponents claimed that Yanukovych had broken the 2006 Holodomor law because he denied the Holodomor. Volodymyr Volosyuk, a private citizen, subsequently sued the president. He also asserted that – as a descendant of Holodomor victims – he was personally hurt in his honour. The president similarly offended millions other victims. Volosyuk demanded an apology. The court did not agree with him and decided that Yanukovych had done nothing wrong.⁶⁶

As we know, the regime had tightened its grip over the judiciary. Nevertheless, the court's

61 Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, *Commemorating the Victims of the Great Famine (Holodomor) in the Former USSR* (Strasbourg: Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, March 1, 2010), accessed June 1, 2017, <http://semantics-pace.net/tools/pdf.aspx?doc=aHR0cDovL2Fzc2VtYm95LmNvZS5pbmQvbn9veG1sL1hSZWYvWDJlLURXLWV4dHl0YXN-wP2ZpbGVpZD0xMjM4NiZsYW5nPUVO&xsl=aHR0cDovL3NlbWFudGljcGFJZS5uZXQvWHNsdC9QZGYvWFJlZi1X-RC1BVC1YUWwyUERGLnhzbA==&xsltparams=ZmlsZWlkPTEyMzg2>.

62 2010 Ordinary Session (Second Part) Report Twelfth Sitting (Strasbourg: Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, April 27, 2010), accessed June 1, 2017, <http://assembly.coe.int/Documents/Records/2010/E/1004271000E.htm>.

63 Çavuşoğlu, *Commemorating the Victims of the Great Famine (Holodomor) in the Former USSR*.

64 Kasianov, "History, Politics and Memory (Ukraine 1990s - 2000s)," 201–202.

65 Martin, "The Holodomor Issue," 25–26.

66 Ibid.; De Baets, *Annual Report 2011*, 106; "Суд открыл дело на Януковича за отрицание Голодомора," *Сегодня*, last modified June 14, 2010, accessed June 1, 2017, <http://www.segodnya.ua/politics/power/cud-otkryl-delo-na-yanukovicha-za-otritsanie-holodomora.html>; "Гражданин Волосюк подал в суд на Януковича из-за Голодомора," *Корреспондент.net*, last modified June 14, 2010, accessed June 1, 2017, <http://korrespondent.net/ukraine/politics/1085915-grazhdanin-volosyuk-podal-v-sud-na-yanukovicha-iz-zagolodomora>; "Апелляционный суд отказался заставить Януковича извиниться за отрицание Голодомора-геноцида," *Корреспондент.net*, last modified December 8, 2010, accessed June 1, 2017, <http://korrespondent.net/ukraine/politics/1146918-appeylyacionnyi-sud-otkazalsya-zastavit-yanukovicha-izvinitysya-za-otricanie-golodomora-genocida>; For the court's verdict, see Г.Б. Супрун and А.И. Костюк, *Рішення Печерського районного суду №2-3967/10* (Печерський районний суд 2010).

verdict was correct: the 2006 Holodomor law only outlawed denial of the Holodomor *as a fact*. Had post-2006 attempts of criminalizing denial of the Holodomor as a genocide succeeded, the legal situation would have been different.⁶⁷

Politicization by Legislation

Simultaneous with Yanukovych's public denial of the Holodomor *as genocide*, the Party of the Regions re-opened the political debate about the Holodomor's legal definition. Vitaly Kyselyov, a lawmaker for the Party of the Regions, proposed an amendment to the 2006 Holodomor law that would redefine the Holodomor as a 'tragedy' instead of a 'genocide'. In order to justify his proposal, Kyselyov explicitly mentioned that the PACE resolution did not consider the Holodomor genocide.⁶⁸

Yushchenko's Our Ukraine had to respond with an amendment of its own. Rada member Yuriy Karmazin proposed to redefine the Holodomor as 'a genocide of the Ukrainian people - a crime of the All-Union Communist Party (B) and its branch - the Communist Party (B) of Ukraine against the Ukrainian people'. Karmazin's proposal further codified a specific historical interpretation in Ukrainian law. The lawmaker claimed that, despite the 2006 law, international recognition of the Holodomor, and the 2010 Kyiv Appellate Court's ruling against Stalin c.s.:⁶⁹

*there are still people who not only do not comply with the law with impunity, but also act, like the current President of Ukraine, who represents the Party of the Regions and members of her coalition - the Communist Party of Ukraine and the Lytvyn Bloc - with public statements at a session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, that are a desecration of the memory of the millions of victims of the Holodomor, and a humiliation of their dignity.*⁷⁰

Interestingly, Karmazin did not seek to criminalize denial of the Holodomor *as genocide*, as his party sought to before.⁷¹ If adopted, the law would still not help in resolving any future denial of the Holodomor *as genocide* by president Yanukovych, or other members of his regime.

In an angered response, Kyselyov proposed another amendment that also removed all references to totalitarianism from the 2006 law.⁷² If adopted, the bill would codify in law, the lowest common denominator about the Holodomor; save for some hard-line communists, nobody denied that the famine was a tragedy.

67 For these attempts, see "5.3. Unifying the Nation with the Holodomor: A Process of Commemoration and Judicialization", page 130 and further.

68 See the explanatory note attached to the proposed bill: Василь Олексійович Кисельов, *Проект Закону № 6427/2010 про внесення змін до статті 1 Закону України "Про Голодомор 1932-1933 років в Україні"*, 2010, accessed June 1, 2017, http://w1.c1.rada.gov.ua/pls/zweb2/webproc4_1?pf3511=37774.

69 This court case is discussed in "5.3. Unifying the Nation with the Holodomor: A Process of Commemoration and Judicialization", page 140 and further..

70 See the explanatory note in: Юрій Анатолійович Кармазін, *Проект Закону № 6427-1/2010 про внесення змін до статті 1 Закону України "Про Голодомор 1932-1933 років в Україні" (щодо визнання Голодомору 1932-1933 років в Україні геноцидом Українського народу - злочинном Всесоюзної комуністичної партії (б) та її філіалу - Комуністичної партії (б) України проти Українського народу)*, 2010, accessed June 1, 2017, http://w1.c1.rada.gov.ua/pls/zweb2/webproc4_1?pf3511=37888.

71 Ibid.

72 Василь Олексійович Кисельов, *Проект Закону № 6427-2/2010 про внесення змін до статті 1 Закону України "Про Голодомор 1932-1933 років в Україні"*, 2010, accessed June 1, 2017, http://w1.c1.rada.gov.ua/pls/zweb2/webproc4_1?pf3511=38001.

Both authors presented their bills to the Rada that was elected in 2007, but already after Yanukovich had bribed enough parliamentarians to form a government of his own liking. Given this, it was highly improbable that the Rada would adopt Karmazin's bill. The adoption of Kyselyov's bills was equally unlikely: raising the issue and provoking the opposition was enough for the regime. Unlike Yushchenko, who wanted to codify his viewpoints on the Holodomor, Yanukovich only wanted to polarize Ukraine's political landscape. The opposition stepped into Yanukovich's trap by responding to his provocations. In the end, none of the proposals was brought to a vote.⁷³

The opposition could not let Yanukovich's provocations rest. At the end of 2010, Rada deputy Stepan Kurpil (Tymoshenko bloc), proposed yet another bill to answer the president. It criminalized denial of the Holodomor as *genocide*.⁷⁴ A second bill would again change the 2006 Holodomor law, so that denial was not only unlawful, but would make it possible that offenders were also be liable 'in accordance with the legislation of Ukraine'.⁷⁵ Since these bills were conceptually not different from those of the Yushchenko presidency, they shared the same legal flaws.⁷⁶

Again, there was little chance the bill would pass the Rada. The opposition had again stepped in Yanukovich's trap as Our Ukraine and Tymoshenko Bloc lawmakers could only alienate moderate national democratic voters.

Yanukovich's Commemorations of the Holodomor

Yanukovich lacked any real ideology; his discourse was flexible and he quickly watered down his statements on the Holodomor.⁷⁷ For instance, during the commemoration day in November 2010, he no longer used the strong language of his PACE address. Instead, he called the Holodomor a '*real Armageddon*' that should not be forgotten. The president used the commemoration to criticize his predecessor's policies: Yushchenko's commemorations were inauthentic ('*organized on a conveyor belt*'), the inflation of the victim count was a '*sacrilege*' and he supposedly minimized the Holodomor's tragedy.⁷⁸ Although Yanukovich did not outright deny that the Holodomor was a genocide, he not once explicitly claimed that it was.⁷⁹

We can only speculate why Yanukovich moderated his policy on the Holodomor. Maybe, the president reached his *short-term* political goals or he feared that in the *long-term* further polarization would cause more damage. Another consideration might also have played

73 Kiselyov withdrew his first bill, while the Karmazin and second Kiselyov bills were 'not included in the agenda'. See the information sheet for all three bills on: Ibid.; Кармазін, *Проект Закону № 6427-1/2010*; Кисельов, *Проект Закону № 6427/2010*.

74 The bill imposed a fine of 30-100 times the untaxed minimum income or 20-62 hours of community service. It also introduced '*administrative liability*' for denial. See: Степан Володимирович Курпіль, *Проект Закону № 7443/2010 про внесення змін до Кодексу України про адміністративні правопорушення (щодо відповідальності за публічне заперечення факту Голодомору 1932-1933 років, як геноциду Українського народу)*, 2010, accessed June 1, 2017, http://w1.c1.rada.gov.ua/pls/zweb2/webproc4_1?pf3511=39189.

75 Степан Володимирович Курпіль, *Проект Закону № 7442/2010 про внесення змін до статті 2 Закону України "Про Голодомор 1932-1933 років в Україні" (щодо відповідальності за публічне заперечення факту Голодомору 1932-1933 років, як геноциду Українського народу)*, 2010, accessed June 1, 2017, http://w1.c1.rada.gov.ua/pls/zweb2/webproc4_1?pf3511=39188.

76 See the advice of the Rada's legal experts attached to the bill: Курпіль, *Проект Закону № 7443/2010*.

77 Many noted this: Kupfer and de Waal, "Crying Genocide"; Alexander J. Motyl, "Yanukovich and Stalin's Genocide," *World Affairs Journal*, last modified November 29, 2012, accessed November 29, 2016, <http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/blog/alexander-j-motyl/yanukovich-and-stalin%E2%80%99s-genocide>; Barbara Martin, "Le Holodomor dans les relations russo-ukrainiennes (2005-2010). Guerre des mémoires, guerre des identités," *Relations Internationales* 150, no. 2 (2012): 103-116; Martin, "The Holodomor Issue," 27.

78 Martin, "The Holodomor Issue," 27.

79 Motyl, "Yanukovich and Stalin's Genocide."

a role: Governing, as a rule, is often similar to getting on a train: it has a set destination and one can influence its course, but changing its heading is often more difficult than one would expect. Yanukovych's predecessors left institutional structures, such as the national commemoration day, the national monument, and several programmes. Ignoring such precedents might also have been impossible for Yanukovych.⁸⁰ Other possible reasons were a shortage of funding, a lack of political will, concerns about public opinion, or a combination of one or more of these factors.⁸¹

In subsequent years, Yanukovych's rhetoric on the Holodomor changed even more: in 2011, Yanukovych linked the Holodomor to totalitarianism, no longer criticizing his predecessor. In 2012, he called the Holodomor a crime that affected all territories of the former Soviet Union and did not explicitly name any perpetrators.⁸²

In August 2013, Yanukovych issued a presidential decree for the 80th anniversary of the famine in November. Keeping with his general line, the decree did not mention the Holodomor as *genocide*. The decree was rather brief and contained little more than arrangements for a 'dignified commemoration'. It was less extensive than Yushchenko's decrees, but again used many of the latter's practices established.⁸³ In any case, the political turn of events that month overshadowed the November 2013 commemorations: After Yanukovych refused to sign the association agreement with the European Union and protests against his regime began⁸⁴, members of the opposition explicitly linked the commemoration with current political events. For instance, they carried Ukrainian and European flags and even the OUN's Red Black flag donned with a mourning band.⁸⁵

During commemorations, the president's entourage strictly emphasized that the Holodomor was no genocide. For instance, Oleksandr Yefremov – the leader of the Party of the Regions' parliamentary faction – argued that the famine claimed victims in all nationalities in Ukraine, and it, therefore, could not be a genocide.⁸⁶ Yanukovych did little more than to 'express sympathy with the peoples of Belarus, Kazakhstan, Russia and all other peoples of the former Soviet Union that suffered in those years'. The president also referred to the ongoing political context: 'Today, we have to reject all political discussions and have to be together. On this sorrowful day, the memory of our lost compatriots unite us, today should be without politics'. Yanukovych also called politicization of history in the current climate inadmissible because it 'causes tensions, divides people, and contradicts the consolidation of society, which Ukraine so much needs'. He even asserted that his policies of 'guarding Ukraine's past and identity' helped to Europeanize the country. Yanukovych meant to accuse the opposition with his last two statements.⁸⁷ Of course, Yanukovych was as guilty of politicizing the past as his opponents and it was hard to see how he helped Ukraine to Europeanize.

80 Martin, "The Holodomor Issue," 24.

81 Ibid., 27.

82 Motyl, "Yanukovych and Stalin's Genocide."

83 Such as, a memorial ceremony at (Yushchenko's) national monument, the lowering of the flag do half mast, and laying wreaths of rye and ears of wheat. It even proscribed the continuation of work on the *Books of memory*. See: В. Янукович, Указ Президента України № 430/2013 про заходи у зв'язку з 80-ми роковинами Голодомору 1932 - 1933 років в Україні, 2013, accessed November 15, 2016, <http://zakon3.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/430/2013>.

84 I will discuss those events extensively in "7.1. A Story of Drastic Changes: Political Developments in Ukraine after 2014" on page 181 and further.

85 "В Києве началось траурное шествие в память о жертвах Голодомора," Корреспондент.net, last modified November 23, 2013, accessed June 1, 2017, <http://korrespondent.net/kyiv/3270770-v-kyeve-nachalos-traurnoe-shestvye-v-pamiat-o-zhertvakh-holodomora>.

86 Александр Савицкий, "Игры с исторической памятью: голодомор не геноцид?," *Deutsche Welle*, last modified November 23, 2013, accessed June 1, 2017, <https://www.dw.com/ru/игры-с-исторической-памятью-голодомор-не-геноцид/a-17246810>.

87 "Янукович почтил память жертв Голодомора и призвал украинцев к единению," Корреспондент.net, last modified November 23, 2013, accessed June 1, 2017, <http://korrespondent.net/ukraine/politics/3270726-yanukovych-pochtyl-pamiat-zhertv-holodomora-y-pryzval-ukrayntsev-k-edyenyui>.

This did little to heal the wounds Yanukovich caused by denying the Holodomor as *genocide*, building an autocracy and withdrawing from the EU association agreement. Had Yanukovich gone beyond the limit to which he could antagonize Western Ukraine? It is hard to tell: during the 2013-2014 Euromaidan revolution, the Holodomor was not the most important issue. The opposition mainly focussed on European identity and corruption.⁸⁸ The issue of the Holodomor only mattered to the West and the East cared little for it. Nevertheless, there were more divisive issues, such as the legacy of the Second World War, the *Great Patriotic War*, and radical Ukrainian nationalism. These issues mattered to both the West and East.

6.4. The Return of (neo)-Soviet Discourse: Yanukovich, the Great Patriotic War and OUN-UPA

We already discussed the appointment of Dmytro Tabachnyk as education minister. Tabachnyk represented the idea of the *Russkiy Mir* (Russian World) that gained prominence in Putin's Russia in recent years.⁸⁹ Based on this ideology, Tabachnyk presented Stalin as a 'heroic victor'. He consistently linked everything Ukrainian with nationalists and denounced them as 'murderers, traitors, and accomplices of Hitler's henchmen'. Tabachnyk favoured the narrative of the *Great Patriotic War* over the *Second World War*.⁹⁰ His appointment indicated a return of a (Neo)-Soviet discourse regarding the OUN, the UPA, the Second World War, and the *Great Patriotic War*.

Yanukovich depicted the war as the common heritage of Ukraine and other former Soviet republics. He claimed that the war legitimated a close(r) relationship with Russia. Nevertheless, Yanukovich also stressed that the war was a unique Ukrainian experience: It was a holy tradition that linked different generations of Ukrainians. The Ukrainian heroism in the Red Army had to be remembered, because the modern Ukrainian nation was supposedly born in this struggle. This resembled Kuchma's initial approach to the war: Yanukovich used the *Great Patriotic War* both as a *binding narrative within a greater pan-Soviet experience* and as a *specific moment in Ukrainian history* of great national importance.⁹¹ See, for instance, Yanukovich's 2010 Victory Day Speech:

The 65th anniversary of the Victory in the Great Patriotic War is one of the most important dates that unites peoples in Ukraine, Russia and Belarus. This is our common sorrow and pride. This is our responsibility to our compatriotic veterans and in memory of those who did not come back from the battlefields. Together with my colleagues, Presidents Dmytro (Dmitriy) Medvedev and Oleksandr (Aleksandr) Lukashenko, I agreed to a common celebration of the Victory Day and to

88 These issues will be extensively discussed in "7.1. A Story of Drastic Changes: Political Developments in Ukraine after 2014" on page 181 and further.

89 Lilia Shevtsova has characterised the concept of the *Russkiy Mir*: '... the idea of the *Russkiy Mir* (Russian World), which is supposed to consolidate ethnic Russians globally on the basis of loyalty to the Kremlin. The annexation of Crimea was the first step in implementing this initiative. Putin has also expressed his commitment to helping Novorossiia (New Russia) — that is, Russian speakers — in southeastern Ukraine and has provoked an undeclared war in the region. The *Russkiy Mir* project is an ethnocentric initiative.' See: Lilia Shevtsova, "Forward to the Past in Russia," *Journal of Democracy* 26, no. 2 (April 13, 2015): 26.

90 Moser, *Language Policy*, 214; Taras Kuzio, "Yanukovich Relies On Soviet Nationalism To Stay In Power," *RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty*, accessed May 16, 2017, https://www.rferl.org/a/yanukovich_looks_to_soviet_nationalism_to_stay_in_power/24227494.html; Kuzio, "Ukrainian Nationalism Again Under Attack in Ukraine"; Olesya Khromeychuk, "The Shaping of 'Historical Truth': Construction and Reconstruction of the Memory and Narrative of the Waffen SS 'Galicia' Division," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 54, no. 3-4 (September 2012): 465; Katchanovski, "Terrorists or National Heroes?," 218; Shevel, "The Politics of Memory," 160-161.

91 Lina Klymenko, "World War II or Great Patriotic War Remembrance? Crafting the Nation in Commemorative Speeches of Ukrainian Presidents," *National Identities* 17, no. 4 (October 2, 2015): 396-397.

*common commemorative ceremonies.*⁹²

Yanukovych also reinstated parts of the Brezhnevite cult of the *Great Patriotic War*. For instance, a military parade was organized on Victory Day. In it, only Soviet war veterans participated and subjects such as the Holocaust, the deportations of Crimean Tatars, the fate of Soviet prisoners of war in German captivity or post-war Soviet repressions in Ukraine were no longer touched.⁹³

The return of Soviet discourse meant that the space for state-led commemoration and heroization of OUN and UPA veterans decreased. As will be shown below, this caused frictions between the Yanukovych regime and nationalists. Nevertheless, Yanukovych's position was flexible: like his stance on the Holodomor. (Neo)-Soviet discourse nevertheless was the baseline from which Yanukovych plotted his course. Between 2010 and 2012, Yanukovych provoked the opposition but made calls for '*national peace, dialogue and reconciliation*' in 2013. The latter proposition resembled Yushchenko's previous attempts at reconciliation.⁹⁴

Yanukovych's policy also entailed downplaying elements related to Ukraine and its national history. For instance, he cancelled the military parade on Ukraine's 20th Independence Day, August 24, 2011. This was a clear message: only Soviet historical periods and figures – especially pro-Russian ones – were relevant for contemporary Ukraine.⁹⁵ Subsequently, the opposition and the Azarov government confronted each other: the latter arranged different street festivities and concerts to mark Ukraine's independence, but effectively banned the opposition from holding alternative public marches. This led to violent clashes between police and protesters in Kyiv. These events allowed the opposition to brand Yanukovych's government as 'unukrainian'.⁹⁶

The Rescinding of the Bandera Award and Clashes of Memory

Yanukovych also used the legacy of the OUN and UPA to criticize his predecessor.⁹⁷ He already did so during the Bandera award controversy.⁹⁸ It was therefore logical that Yanukovych took action against the award. Yanukovych used his control over the judiciary to do so. On April 20, 2010, the Donetsk district administrative court declared the Bandera award null and void. A court later issued a similar verdict for Shukevych's title. According to the court, only Ukrainian citizens could be awarded the title of *Hero of Ukraine*. Because Ukrainian citizenship did not exist prior to 1991, people who passed away before that date were illegible. Since Bandera died in 1959, the president illegally made him a *Hero of Ukraine*.⁹⁹

This seemed logical reasoning: At birth, Bandera was an Austrian subject and became a Polish citizen after the First World War. Since Bandera died before Ukraine became an independent state, he never became a Ukrainian citizen. Nevertheless, the verdict showed a clear political bias: Many other non-citizens were made *Heroes of Ukraine* as well. For instance, the Red Army Lieutenant Olexiy Berest, who was born in 1921 in the Sumy oblast and died in 1970 in the Russian city of Rostov on the Don. In chapter 5, we discussed that Yushchenko awarded him posthumously in 2005 because Berest was one of the soldiers

92 Yanukovych as cited in: *Ibid.*

93 Портнов, "История для домашнего употребления," 317.

94 Szevolod Samokhvalov, "Ukraine between Russia and the European Union: Triangle Revisited," *Europe-Asia Studies* 67, no. 9 (October 21, 2015): 1388.

95 Moser, *Language Policy*, 102–103.

96 Shevel, "Memories of the Past," 105.

97 *Ibid.*, 158.

98 See "5.4. Consolidating the Nation: Rehabilitation and Glorification of the OUN and UPA under Yushchenko", page 152, and further.

99 Портнов, "История для домашнего употребления," 316.

who raised the Banner of Victory in Berlin in 1945.¹⁰⁰ Like Bandera, he was also illegible to become a *Hero of Ukraine*. Because Berest was an important figure in Yanukovich's *Great Patriotic War* narrative, rescinding his award would have been political inexpedient. That no court issued a verdict about Berest's award showed that the nullification of Bandera's award was a form of political instrumentalization of the judiciary.

The court's verdict caused a massive response, especially in Western Ukraine. Regional administrations controlled by nationalists answered it with symbolic gestures. The cities of Ivano-Frankivsk, Lviv, Ternopil, and Lutsk made Bandera and Shukhevych 'honorary citizens'.¹⁰¹ The Lviv Oblast Council gathered in an extraordinary session and declared that 'Bandera remained a Ukrainian hero for millions of Ukrainians, notwithstanding the decision of the courts'. It also recommended the Lviv City Administration to rename *Stepan Bandera Street* to *Hero of Ukraine Stepan Bandera Street*.¹⁰²

Subsequently, in 2011 and 2012 the nationalists initiated a building boom of Bandera monuments in Western Ukraine. Such monuments protested against the regimes' perceived 'Anti-Ukrainianness'. They meant to oppose the regime's (neo)-Soviet history policies, but ironically often closely resembled Soviet statues of Lenin in style and composition. This was an example of how the Ukrainian nationalists often followed Soviet models.¹⁰³ The historian Heorhiy Kasianov pointed at this similarity when he proposed a humourist solution for resolving the conflicting memories:

*When people really want to fight with monuments, then I would propose the following variant of reconciliation. Bandera monuments are similar to Lenin monuments. It is a monument to a revolutionary and the people who bow to them are similar in psyche. On Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, Lenin's head will be placed on the statue, on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays Bandera's and on Sundays the heads will get rest.*¹⁰⁴

We can speak of a 'war on monuments': simultaneously with the construction of nationalist monuments, the Party of the Regions sponsored monuments to the victims of the OUN and UPA in the East. They also sponsored monuments to *Great Patriotic War* resistance groups. In the industrial city of Zaporizhzhia, a new monument to Stalin was even unveiled in May 2010. In December, nationalists vandalized this memorial with a bomb – decapitating it.¹⁰⁵

The rescinding of the Bandera award helped to polarize Ukraine further between the nationalist and (neo)-Soviet narratives of history.¹⁰⁶

100 Ющенко, *Указ Президента України № 753/2005*. See also See "5.4. Consolidating the Nation: Rehabilitation and Glorification of the OUN and UPA under Yushchenko", page 146 for the political context of this award.

101 Касьянов, "К десятилетию."

102 Andre Liebich and Oksana Myshlovska, "Bandera: Memorialization and Commemoration," *Nationalities Papers* 42, no. 5 (September 3, 2014): 757; "Львівська обласна рада ухвалила заяву про Героя Степана Бандеру," *Львівська обласна рада*, last modified January 13, 2010, accessed October 13, 2017, <http://old.lvivrada.gov.ua/home/zmi/1472-2011-01-18-07-28-10>.

103 Liebich and Myshlovska, "Bandera," 757.

104 Виталий Криворочко, "Историк Георгий Касьянов: Ленину и Бандере можно сделать один памятник. Менять только головы на резьбе," *Цензор.НЕТ*, last modified March 12, 2013, accessed August 29, 2017, https://censor.net.ua/resonance/235563/istorik_georgiyi_kasyanov_leninu_i_bandere_mojno_sdelat_odin_pamyatnik_menyat_tolko_golovy_na_rezbe.

105 Rossoliński-Liebe, *Stepan Bandera*, 515–516.

106 Liebich and Myshlovska, "Bandera," 760.

The Victory Banner Law: Renewed Confrontation

Yanukovych fostered even more confrontation: In the spring of 2010, Petro Tsybenko, a Rada deputy for the Communist Party proposed a bill that prescribed the use of the Victory Banner. As the Communist Party was part of the Azarov government, the coalition mandated this move. Yanukovych indicated that he would sign the law if the Rada adopted it. Nevertheless, he hesitated for a while before finally signing the law in April 2011 (just in time for Victory Day!).¹⁰⁷ The law declared the banner a 'symbol for the victory of the Soviet people and its army and fleet over Fascist Germany in the years of the Great Patriotic War' and stipulated that copies of the banner were flown over certain symbolic monuments throughout the country. It also allowed for the use of the banner as the national flag.¹⁰⁸ In practice, the law did not apply to the entire country: local governments could decide whether they wanted to use the banner.¹⁰⁹ In response, the Lviv Oblast council banned all Communist symbols on its territory (although the ban was not effective on Victory Day).¹¹⁰

The law further fuelled violent clashes between nationalists and proponents of the (neo)-Soviet narrative on Victory Day: In Lviv, the extremist pro-Russian organisations *Rodina* (Fatherland) and *Russkoye Yedinstvo* (Russian Unity) and the nationalist *Svoboda* confronted each other. A pro-Russian protester even fired a shot at one of the Ukrainian nationalists. *Svoboda* also poured more oil on the fire: one nationalist stole a wreath from the hands of the Russian Consul General during a commemoration at the *Kholm Slavy* (*Hill of Glory*), a Soviet *Great Patriotic War* memorial and military cemetery. At the Lviv *Ratush* (Town Hall),



Figure 20: The Kholm Slavy (Hill of Glory) in Lviv, Location of the 2011 Victory Day Clashes
Photo: Nicolaas A. Kraft van Ermel

107 В. Янукович, Закон України № 3298-VI/2011 про увічнення Перемоги у Великій Вітчизняній війні 1941-1945 років щодо порядку офіційного використання копій Прапора Перемоги, 2011, accessed October 13, 2017, <http://zakon3.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/3298-17/ed20110421>; Moser, *Language Policy*, 96–97.

108 Янукович, Закон України № 3298-VI/2011.

109 Moser, *Language Policy*, 96–97; Портнов, "История для домашнего употребления," 317.

110 Портнов, "История для домашнего употребления," 317.

nationalists also burned red banners.¹¹¹

A scandal quickly ensued: Tabachyk provocatively claimed that Yanukovich was the greatest Ukrainian state figure because he appreciated his electorate and fulfilled his electoral promises. Furthermore, he concluded that the events in Lviv proved that Ukrainian society was divided between anti-fascists and Nazi-sympathizers. In Tabachnyk eyes opposition to the Victory Banner automatically made one a fascist.¹¹² As an opponent of the banner is not necessarily a fascist, the argument displayed the government's intention to create social discord and to scare away moderate voters from the only functioning opposition movement.¹¹³

Yuriy Kostenko, a member of Our Ukraine, appealed the law before the Constitutional Court. On June 17, 2011, the court declared the designation of the Banner as an official symbol unconstitutional. The banner itself could be used unofficially.¹¹⁴ After the judgement, president Yanukovich quickly stated that the Constitutional Court was correct¹¹⁵, probably to take off the heat from the situation.

Polarization continued anyhow: Later that year, Ukrainian nationalists celebrated the 70th anniversary of the *Akt* of June 30, 1941. At this occasion, a popular festival was organized in Lviv and the events were re-enacted. During these celebrations, children waved flags to re-enactors wearing SS-uniforms. Some soccer supporters – the *'ultras'* – even started to promote Lviv as *'Banderstadt'*.¹¹⁶

Enraged by Yanukovich's policies, local administrations initiated further policy initiatives, lionizing OUN members and UPA veterans. For instance, the Lviv (Oblast) Historical museum opened a new branch in 2012. This *'Museum of the Ukrainian Liberation Struggle'* presented a typical nationalist narrative: there was a single continuous movement *'liberation struggle for independence'*. It started after the First World War, continued via the OUN and UPA, to Ukrainian dissidents of the 1960s and Rukh. Only with independence in 1991 was the struggle completed. Of course, there was little or no mention of antisemitism, antipol-



Figure 21: The Museum of the Liberation Struggle of Ukraine in Lviv.

Photos: Nicolaas A. Kraft van Ermel

111 Moser, *Language Policy*, 97–98; Портнов, “История для домашнего употребления,” 317; “У генконсула Росии на Холме Славы во Львове отобрали и растоптали венки - СМН,” *Интерфакс Украина*, last modified May 9, 2011, accessed November 3, 2017, <http://interfax.com.ua/news/general/68006.html>.

112 Moser, *Language Policy*, 97–98.

113 A policy exposed by Neorhiy Kasianov: Г.В. Касьянов, “Историческая политика и ‘мемориальные законы’ в Украине: начало XXI в.,” *Историческая экспертиза*, no. 2 (2016): 31–32, 38.

114 А.С. Головин et al., *Рішення Конституційного Суду України у справі за конституційним зверненням громадянина Костенка Юрія Івановича щодо офіційного тлумачення окремих положень підпунктів 1, 2 пункту 1 Закону України „Про внесення змін до Закону України „Про увічнення Перемоги у Великій Вітчизняній війні 1941–1945 років“ щодо порядку офіційного використання копій Прапора Перемоги“* (Конституційний Суд України 2011); Касьянов, “Историческая политика и ‘мемориальные законы,’” 31–32; Moser, *Language Policy*, 100.

115 Moser, *Language Policy*, 97–98.

116 Rudling, “The Return of the Ukrainian Far Right.,” 232–233.

onism, fascist ideology and participation crimes and grave human rights violations or collaboration with Nazi-forces.¹¹⁷

UPA veterans dressed in their full uniform attended the opening ceremony. During it, Shukhevych's son, Yuriy remarked that *'Our children and grandchildren must know who we are, where we struggled, and what we achieved. I want to bow my head to those who gave their lives for Ukraine, for those who passed through Vorkuta and Kalyma (e.g. the Gulag; NAKvE)'*. Members of the city and oblast executives and councils were also present at the ceremony.¹¹⁸

The Kolesnichenko Law: Protecting the Image of the Soviet War Effort

In May 2013, Vadym Kolesnichenko, a lawmaker for the Party of the Regions proposed to criminalize *'rehabilitation and heroization of persons and organisations, which fought against the anti-Hitlerite coalition'*. His bill was another attempt to polarize Ukrainian society.¹¹⁹

Kolesnichenko was one of the most important ideologues of the Party of the Regions, especially in the field of language policy.¹²⁰ Like the *Great Patriotic War*, the Russian language was also an important aspect of the *Russkyi Mir* ideology. Kolesnichenko felt that any view other than his own should be silenced. Such rhetoric was similar to attempts by the Kremlin to silence *'falsifications of history'* in Russia.¹²¹ He also actively promoted the use of the *'St. George's Ribbon'* in Ukraine. This symbol recently gained prominence in the Russian-speaking world as a symbol of the Victory in the *Great Patriotic War*. Not only did the lawmaker wear such ribbons, he even handed them out to more than 300 Rada members and journalists.¹²²



Figure 22: Vadym Kolesnichenko
Photo: Glavkom NN, license CC BY 3.0, source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vadim_Kolesnichenko_February_8,_2010.JPG

Kolesnichenko's bill outlawed action or negligence aimed at the rehabilitation and heroization of persons and organizations who fought against the Allies or had a fascist or Nazi ideology. The bill introduced a fine of 200-500 times the minimum untaxed income or a prison term of up to five years. Those convicted could also be forbidden to fulfil 'certain positions' (i.e. in government) for up to three years. It set a similar punishment for 'public rehabilitation' and producing materials that did so. If a government official committed the offence, the fine would be significantly higher. If an organised group committed the offence or if it had grave consequences, the prison term was set for five to eight years.¹²³ Kolesnichenko's bill would apply to a whole range of Ukrainian nationalist organizations, including the OUN, the UPA, the Roland and Nachtigall battalions, and the Galizien Waffen-SS division.¹²⁴ The bill reversed many of Yushchenko's OUN and UPA policies. Significantly, the law also

117 Description based on my own visit to the museum in October 2017. I have in my possession photos of the explicative texts of its exposition.

118 For the opening of the museum (with revealing photos) see: "У Львові Відкрили Музей Визвольної Боротьби України," *Вголос*, last modified October 13, 2012, accessed November 3, 2017, http://vgolos.com.ua/news/u_lvo- vi_vidkryly_muzei_vyzvolnoi_borotby_ukrainy_foto_81750.html.

119 Вадим Васильович Колесніченко, *Проект Закону № 2960/2013 про заборону реабілітації та героїзації осіб й організацій, що боролися проти антигітлерівської коаліції*, 2013, accessed October 13, 2017, http://w1.c1.rada.gov.ua/pls/zweb2/webproc4_1?pf3511=46867.

120 Moser, *Language Policy*, 181.

121 *Ibid.*, 208–209. In 2009, the Russian president Medvedev created the *'Presidential commission to counteract falsification of history against the interests of Russia'*, for that commission, see also"3.6. The Great Patriotic War again Centre Stage: A Recycled National Myth under Putin and Medvedev", page 77.

122 *Ibid.*, 209.

123 Колесніченко, *Проект Закону № 2960/2013*.

124 See the explanatory note attached to: *Ibid.*

rescinded rights awarded to UPA veterans in the 1993 law. This damaged the existing status quo in Ukrainian society.¹²⁵

As expected, Kolesnichenko's proposition infuriated many nationalists. Again, they stepped in the trap: Svoboda responded with a diatribe accusing Kolesnichenko of falsifying history and made accusations against the Soviet regime: the OUN and UPA were not Nazi collaborators, but the Soviet Union was:

While UPA was fighting the Germans, Stalin was shooting them in the back. Guerrilla leader Kovpack's¹²⁶ (sic) raid on Western Ukraine was aimed at destroying the nationalist liberation movement. While UPA was engaged in battles against the Germans, Soviet guerrillas terrorized, plundered and raped the local population. The Soviets did not liberate any village or town from Germans but they actively fought against the nationalists.¹²⁷

The veracity of this statement was doubtful at best and it read history as selective as the Yanukovich regime: There is no proof of extensive anti-German operations by UPA, nor does the statement mention that the OUN – initially – envisioned itself as an ally of Hitler's Germany. The opposition again stepped in Yanukovich's trap, as the statement indicated further polarization.

As with many policy initiatives, the law was never brought to a vote and was finally withdrawn in April 2014 (after Yanukovich was ousted as president). It was yet another example of a bill, which only meant to cause frictions and not to initiate any policies.

Yanukovich and the Holocaust: True Engagement or a Return to Soviet Standards?

Yanukovich claimed that he aimed for European integration. His refusal to sign the EU Association Agreement and his (neo)-Soviet history policies brought this aim in to question. As discussed in chapter 2, Europeanization also entails a sustained engagement with Holocaust remembrance.¹²⁸ That Yanukovich reversed many of Yushchenko's policies did not automatically result in conformance to European standards.

Like all Ukrainian presidents before him, Yanukovich emphasized his commitment to Holocaust commemoration. Nevertheless, this lacked in several aspects: Yanukovich externalized the Holocaust and detached it from Ukrainian history, in a similar manner as the



Figure 23: The First Stone for the Memorial Complex Laid on October 3, 2011.

The Ukrainian text on the stone reads: 'On the sad 70th anniversary of the shootings at Babyn Yar, the first stone for the construction of the memorial-museum complex "Babyn Yar" was laid at this place'. Photo: Nicolaas A. Kraft van Ermel

125 The 1993 law is discussed in "4.3. A Story of Heroism: Ukrainian Radical Nationalism during the 1930s and 1940s", page 101 and further, the law itself is: Кравчук, *Закон України № 3551-XII/1993*.

126 Sydir Kovpak (1887-1967) was one of the key commanders of the Soviet Partisans in Ukraine.

127 Ihor Shlyahetniuk, "Kolesnichenko Should Catch up on His Reading: Facts against Regions' Spin," *Svoboda - Ukrainian Nationalist Political Party Official Website*, last modified May 14, 2013, accessed October 13, 2017, <http://en.svoboda.org.ua/publications/articles/00000096/>.

128 See also, "2.2. History, European Integration and the Holocaust" on page 40 and further.

nationalist viewpoint. According to Yanukovych, the Holocaust was an event of world history without any domestic importance. Sometimes, he referred to the Holocaust, but only to stress that Ukraine came closer to European standards because the country had reckoned with xenophobia.¹²⁹ Seen from a European viewpoint, such a view is problematic: Yanukovych failed to grasp the importance of Holocaust remembrance. He did not consider the Holocaust as the lowest point of history, nor understood the moral implications of Holocaust remembrance.

Yanukovych's lack of engagement also showed itself at the site of Babyn Yar. Ever since 1991, the Jewish community unsuccessfully attempted to construct there a memorial complex/museum.¹³⁰ At the 70th anniversary of the massacre, Yanukovych supported the construction of a new memorial complex.¹³¹ Nevertheless, during the three years, that Yanukovych was in power, his regime did nothing to realize the project.¹³²

Instead, the regime utilized the site to suit its own needs. In 2011, the Rada issued a decree that mandated commemorations of the massacre at Babyn Yar. The measures also included the organisation of expositions the use of mass media and the introduction of *International Holocaust Remembrance Day* (January 27) in Ukraine.¹³³ Such measures seemed a step forward, but closer inspection of the decree reveals a striking feature: references to the Jewish character of the tragedy were almost completely absent; the word 'Jew' was mentioned only once!

The decree's preamble read:

*Between 1941 and 1943, Babyn Yar became a site of mass execution and burial. It became a site of a huge fraternal grave, where only - according to the official numbers - over 100.000 persons of different nationalities – they were peaceful inhabitants, prisoners of war, communists, underground fighters, partisans and nationalists – have died.*¹³⁴

This was a clear return of Soviet representations of the Babyn Yar massacre.¹³⁵ The decree simply lumped up all victims as '*compatriots of different nationalities*' and denied the main victims a right to their own memory. This was hardly compatible with Yanukovych's goal of European integration. Other victims of Nazi violence need to be remembered, including Soviet prisoners of war, but not at the expense of Jewish victims.

Such a depiction of Babyn Yar also aided Russian nationalists to exploit the 1941 massacre. For instance, in 2013, the Russian Historical Memory Foundation published a documentary entitled '*Babyn Yar. Last witnesses*'. The film aimed to discredit Ukrainian nationalists and regimes in the Baltic states by exposing them as '*neo-Nazis*'. The filmmakers claimed that there were no problems with commemorating Babyn Yar in Soviet times (a claim that simply is untrue) and accused Ukrainians of covering the site with earth (another lie: Soviet authorities did this). It also blamed Ukraine for lacking a law that banned denial of the Holocaust and claimed that Ukraine has never had any deep discussions about their

129 Fainberg, "Memory at the Margins," 93.

130 This was partly because of intra-Jewish strife, and partly because of Yushchenko's policies. The latter is discussed in "5.4. Consolidating the Nation: Rehabilitation and Glorification of the OUN and UPA under Yushchenko", page 148.

131 Martin, "Babi Yar," 77.

132 In August 2013, when I visited Babyn Yar, the only sign of this project was the symbolic first stone that was laid in 2011.

133 В. Литвин, *Постанова Верховної Ради України № 3560-VI/2011 про 70-річчя трагедії Бабиного Яру*, vol. № 3560-VI, 2011, accessed October 14, 2017, <http://zakon2.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/3560-vi>.

134 Ibid.

135 Долганов, "Формування та імплементація меморального законодавства," 26.

participation in the Holocaust.¹³⁶ While awareness of the Holocaust is (too) low in Ukraine, it is simply false to claim that there have never been any discussions about them at all. In addition, Holocaust denial is not a criminal offence in every European country.¹³⁷ The documentary was a clever way of framing (Western) Ukrainians as ‘fascists’ and ‘neo-Nazis’, just as the Yanukovych regime did.¹³⁸

Forging the Appearance of a Fascist Ukraine: Antagonizing East and West

At first sight, it might seem that Yanukovych’s policies on Ukrainian nationalism during the inter-war period and the Second World War were more in line with the basic tenets of European integration. For instance, the rescinding of the Bandera and Shukhevych awards made Ukraine more compliant with the EU’s views on history (The European Parliament protested against the Bandera award in 2010).¹³⁹

Of course, the Yanukovych’s motive did not comply with European standards, as Yanukovych implicitly desired and allowed manifestations of extreme Ukrainian nationalism by the opposition. A policy that meant to increase the appeal of right-wing extremism was not European. It ran against the very core idea behind European integration. It also failed to initiate any comprehensive ‘*working through*’ (*Vergangenheitsbewältigung*) of the past: neither for Soviet totalitarian history (which was now again placed on a pedestal) nor for Ukrainian nationalist history.

Radical nationalism only became more influential during Yanukovych’s presidency.¹⁴⁰ As noted, this polarization policy was inherently risky. Yanukovych might have tickled the dragon’s tail too hard. He had unleashed the very monster that would cause his political undoing during the Euromaidan in 2013-2014.¹⁴¹ He also created much of the ideological material that pro-Russian separatists and Russia would use during the Russian annexation of the Crimean Peninsula and the separatist uprisings in Donetsk and Luhansk in 2014.¹⁴²

6.5. Chapter summary

The situation in Ukraine did not become any better after Yanukovych came to office: First, Yanukovych blatantly disregarded the constitution (which he reversed to its 1996 version) and quickly turned Ukraine into an unprecedented autocracy. He also ‘privatized’ the state, which almost became Yanukovych’s and his family’s personal possession as corruption was rampant. Yushchenko severely – and unfairly – weakened the opposition: he decapitated

136 Jurij Radchenko, “Babyn Yar: A Site of Massacres, (Dis)Remembrance and Instrumentalisation,” *New Eastern Europe* 20, no. 1 (2016): 168–169.

137 In some European countries, such as Germany and France, it is forbidden to deny the Holocaust outright. In other European countries, for instance, in the Netherlands, Holocaust denial is only a crime if it offends or discriminates against a group (which Holocaust deniers do more often than not). In chapter 2 of this study, we discussed an EU framework decision that mandated criminalization of Holocaust denial if it incited hatred. See “2.5. New Totalitarianism after the 2004 EU Enlargement”, page 47

138 Yuriy Radchenko even suggested that it was no accident that the film was produced during Yanukovych’s tenure. See: Radchenko, “Babyn Yar,” 169.

139 See “5.4. Consolidating the Nation: Rehabilitation and Glorification of the OUN and UPA under Yushchenko”, page 152.

140 Volodymyr Kravchenko, “Fighting Soviet Myths: The Ukrainian Experience,” in *The Future of the Past. New Perspectives on Ukrainian History*, ed. Serhii Plokhyy (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2016), 453.

141 Jessica Desvarieux and Per Anders Rudling, “The History of Right-Wing Nationalism in Ukraine,” *A Socialist in Canada*, March 13, 2014, accessed December 14, 2016, <http://rogerannis.com/the-history-of-right-wing-nationalism-in-ukraine/>.

142 See also: “7.1. A Story of Drastic Changes: Political Developments in Ukraine after 2014” on page 181, page 184..

the moderate opposition by arbitrarily prosecuting its leaders such as Yulia Tymoshenko. At the same time, he did little to stop the growth of the radical nationalist opposition.

Yanukovych's history policies served these developments and government policies. They were a story of continuity and change: Yanukovych continued the polarization that started in the Yushchenko era but shifted his policy to the (Neo-)Soviet narrative. Yanukovych had little true ideological attachment: the (Neo-)Soviet narrative became the baseline for his policies because it was politically expedient to him. This also meant that Yanukovych was somewhat flexible: for instance, his Holodomor-related policies were more provocative at first, but later watered down.

Yanukovych quickly rewound much of Yushchenko's history policies. He replaced Yushchenko's main appointees for history policies: the nationalists Ihor Yukhnovskyy (as director of the *Institute of National Remembrance*) and Volodymyr Viatrovych (as director of the SBU archives). He replaced them with (neo-)Soviet ideologues. The *Institute of National Remembrance* was reorganized and became less important; it lost much of its budget and many of its goals and prerogatives. The regime essentially reduced it to a small research institution. The new president also appointed the (neo-)Soviet historian and provocateur Dmytro Tabachnyk as Minister of Education. The new education minister was, above all a propagandist for the ideology of the *Russkiy Mir*.

Soon after his inauguration as president, he publicly denied the Holodomor as *genocide* and his coalition followed up on this denial with legislative initiatives that would have legally redefined the Holodomor as a mere '*tragedy*' instead of a genocide. Yanukovych also reversed the award of the title of *Hero of Ukraine* to both Stepan Bandera and Roman Shukhevych. His team also made proposals to mandate the use of the Soviet Victory Banner on Victory Day and to ban '*rehabilitation and heroization*' of the OUN and UPA.

All such actions and propositions inflamed the nationalist opposition and polarized Ukrainians along an East-West axis. Just as the regime intended: The nationalists took the bait and eagerly: local administrations in the West, controlled by the nationalist *Svoboda* party, made radical symbolic counter-propositions. For instance, they declared Bandera a 'hero' and took initiatives to erect monuments to the OUN-B's leader. The Party of the Regions, the Communist Party and pro-Russian organizations responded with (Neo-)Soviet monuments of their own. Sometimes nationalist and pro-Russian/pro-regime protesters even confronted each other violently.

In general, Yanukovych's assault on the nationalist narrative of the Holodomor was less severe than on the OUN and the UPA's remembrance. It might have been that Yanukovych achieved his short-term political goals. Of course, Yanukovych also had to take established institutional structures of Holodomor commemorations into account (his predecessors, from Kravchuk to Yushchenko created a strong commemorative cult with their policies). The Holodomor was not the most divisive issue at hand: it mattered little to the East and was only important to the nationalist West. The Second World War, the *Great Patriotic War*, the OUN, and the UPA mattered to both opposites of the political spectrum. Their commemoration was a much more toxic combination. It is therefore that Yanukovych's main provocations sought to exploit these histories.

Although Yanukovych claimed otherwise, Ukraine moved away from Europe under his tenure. Not only because the president refused to sign the long-negotiated Association Agreement with the European Union in 2013. His history policies also made it hard to argue that Ukraine belonged in Europe. At first, the neo-Soviet narrative the regime employed was incompatible with European integration on a narrative level. The policies also lacked critical introspective elements (towards both the Soviet and the nationalist pasts) that the European

Acquis Historique presupposes. The regime's history policies also lacked engagement with the Holocaust, as its government-sponsored commemorations returned to Soviet models that essentially denied that the Nazis killed Jews in Ukraine because they were Jewish. These policies also limited the possibility for Jews to commemorate their own victims. In addition, a regime that encourages the growth of radical ethno-nationalist movements because that is politically expedient is hardly compatible with European integration.

In short, Ukraine regressed under Yanukovych: the country became less democratic and there was less room for historical pluralism or critical reception of Ukrainian and Soviet history. These policies were also inherently dangerous: polarization served the regime in the short term as it pleased Yanukovych's home region and weakened the moderate opposition (because radical nationalist ideas were unattractive to many moderate voters in Central Ukraine). In the long term, polarization also created a toxic atmosphere; one can only antagonize Ukrainian nationalists to a certain extent. The policy helped to awaken the movement that became Yanukovych's political undoing in 2014. It also created much of the ideological material used at all sides: by Ukrainian nationalists, the moderate opposition, pro-Russian separatists, and the Russian government after Yanukovych's ouster. Nationalist symbols were prominent during the 2013-2014 *Euromaidan Revolution*. Similarly, (Neo)-Soviet symbols played a large role in the separatist movements in the Donetsk basin and on the Crimean peninsula.

In any case, Yanukovych did little to heal the already fractured fabric of Ukrainian society as he was not interested in entertaining policies that would enable Ukrainian society to debate its complicated and toxic history of experiences with different forms of totalitarianism, as well as genocides, ethnic cleansing and other grave human rights abuses committed by non-Ukrainians and Ukrainians alike. Instead Yanukovych only meant to cause as much provocation as was politically expedient to his regime.

Chapter 7. The Nationalist Narrative Reigning Supreme: History Policies after the Euromaidan (2014–2019)

7.1. A Story of Drastic Changes: Political Developments in Ukraine after 2014

Another Revolution: the Euromaidan (2013–2014)

The political upheavals in 2013–2014 greatly influenced subsequent history policies. Mass protests started on November 21, 2013, after Yanukovich refused to sign an Association Agreement with the European Union. These protests quickly grew in size and widened in scope: the protesters not only dreaded Yanukovich's decision but also turned against the regime's general corruption.¹

Ukraine and the EU had been negotiating for years, even before Yanukovich's presidency. In the preceding months, Russia imposed restrictions on Ukrainian exports and hinted on long-term consequences if Ukraine signed.² The pressure had an effect: Ukraine suddenly demanded EU compensation for supposedly unforeseen costs.³ Meanwhile, Russia offered Yanukovich to participate in the Eurasian Economic Union (EAU) – Russia's own post-Soviet integration project – as an alternative. This deal was too good to refuse: Ukraine would pay less for Russian gas imports (a major stain on the economy) and Russia would buy \$15 billion in Ukrainian bonds (a sizable capital injection).⁴ The offer also came without strings attached: Russia did not demand political reforms, the enforcement of the rule of law or a democratic system. Moreover, participation in the EAU's economic structures was beneficial, as Russia was Ukraine's largest trade partner. The regime had to choose, as Ukraine could join either the EU or the EAU single market. In the short term, the Russian alternative was the best deal available.

At first sight, the events resembled the Orange Revolution: dissatisfaction with a political event sparked protests. Unlike 2004, the regime used violence early on: Police and hired hooligans, the so-called *titushki*, attacked on multiple occasions. Faced with violence, protesters organized 'self-defence forces' in 'sotnya's ('hundreds', ancient – Cossack – military subdivisions). Nationalists also acquired weapons from government stocks. Contrary to the general cliché of a 'peaceful Maidan', both the government and protesters (mainly from the extreme right) resorted to violence.⁵

The protests lasted for weeks. Neither the regime nor the protesters gave in. On January 16, 2014, the regime forced several laws through the Rada. These retroactively curtailed the

1 Wilson, *Ukraine Crisis*, 65; Wilson, *The Ukrainians*, 348; Andriy Portnov, "Krieg und Frieden. Die 'Euro-Revolution in der Ukraine,'" *Osteuropa. Zeitschrift für Gegenwartsfragen des Ostens* 64, no. 1 (2014): 12; Dragneva-Lewers and Wolczuk, *Ukraine between the EU and Russia*, 96.

2 Wilson, *Ukraine Crisis*, 64.

3 *Ibid.*, 63–64.

4 "Russia Offers Ukraine Major Economic Assistance," *BBC News*, December 17, 2013, sec. Europe, accessed December 6, 2017, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-25411118>; "Ukraine to Issue Eurobonds; Russia Will Purchase \$15 Bln, Says Russian Finance Minister," *Interfax-Ukraine Ukraine News Agency*, last modified December 17, 2013, accessed December 6, 2017, <http://en.interfax.com.ua/news/economic/182491.html>.

5 Volodymyr Ishchenko, "Far Right Participation in the Ukrainian Maidan Protests: An Attempt of Systematic Estimation," *European Politics and Society* 17, no. 4 (October 2016): 459–461, 464.

rights of protesters.⁶ They outlawed many normal activities and restricted the work of NGOs. Foreign-funded NGO's were required to register as '*foreign agents*'. It also became illegal to wear a hat or uniform (protesters wore construction caps to protect themselves) or to carry an open flame. The laws also outlawed putting up tents, a stage, or sound system without police permission, driving in an organized group of more than five cars or blocking access to someone's residence. The government also could restrict internet access (protesters mobilized on social media) and stripped members of the Rada of their immunity. Furthermore, the laws made it illegal to collect information about judges, making it difficult to expose their corruption. Finally, they criminalized the denial of fascist crimes, effectively banning the Svoboda party.⁷ The so-called 'dictatorship laws' only further fuelled the protests.

Opposition leaders Vitaliy Klychko, Arseniy Yatsenyuk, and Oleh Tyahnybok formed one front. Some of the oligarchs joined the opposition: Petro Poroshenko's television station Chanel 5 openly sided with the protesters.⁸ The Maidan distrusted this 'official opposition' and only tolerated them because they were part of the system.⁹ As the Maidan organized itself, new leaders rose to prominence, such as the nationalists Andriy Parubiy and Dmytro Yarosh. The former coordinated the Maidan '*Self-Defence Forces*', while the latter led a fringe nationalist group called the *Right sector*. After the bloody events in 2014, Yarosh laid claim to the defence of the Maidan.¹⁰

Nationalism was a potent force for mobilisation. The nationalist slogan '*Glory to Ukraine – Glory to the Heroes*' – once used by the OUN and UPA – sounded regularly. Nevertheless, the Maidan was diverse: LGBT-rights activists, anarchists, feminists, liberals, national democrats, young professionals, Afghan War veterans, and unemployed all participated. Christians, Muslims, and Jews also prayed together. Ninety-two percent of the protesters were unaffiliated with any party. Russian propaganda might claim otherwise, but it was not a '*fascist coup*'.¹¹

As international negotiations were ongoing for months, the EU, the US and Russia all had interests in the protests' outcome. Despite their conflicting interests, they forced the regime and opposition to negotiate. On January 28, it seemed that a compromise was at hand: Prime Minister Azarov resigned and left the country. Yanukovych even offered Azarov's post to the opposition. The regime also repealed some – but not all – of the dictatorship laws and even offered a conditional amnesty: protesters had to leave the government offices, which they occupied (such as the Kyiv City Administration). The Maidan refused Yanukovych's terms.¹²

As protests and violent clashes continued, talks continued intermittently. On February 18, the police violently stopped protesters who marched to the Rada. The next day, the government launched the so-called '*Anti-Terrorist Operation*', an undeclared state of emergency. On February 20, protesters counter-attacked. Later that day snipers opened fire, resulting in the death of more than 100 protesters and at least 17 policemen.¹³

6 Wilson, *The Ukrainians*, 349.

7 Ibid., 81.

8 Åslund, *Ukraine*, 103.

9 Ibid.

10 Anton Shekhovtsov and Andreas Umland, "Ukraine's Radical Right," *Journal of Democracy* 25, no. 3 (2014): 59.

11 Timothy Snyder, "Ukraine: The Haze of Propaganda," *The New York Review of Books*, accessed May 15, 2017, <http://www.nybooks.com/daily/2014/03/01/ukraine-haze-propaganda/>; William Jay Risch, "What the Far Right Does Not Tell Us about the Maidan," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 16, no. 1 (2015): 142.

12 Wilson, *Ukraine Crisis*, 84.

13 What exactly happened is still unclear. The majority of scholars supports the claim that the regime opened fire on protesters (see for instance Ibid., 88–90.). Ivan Katchanovski highly controversially, claimed that oligarchs connected to the post-Euromaidan administration orchestrated the sniper fire in a 'false flag' operation. See: Ivan Katchanovski, "The Snipers' Massacre on the Maidan in Ukraine" (presented at the Annual Meeting of American Political Science Association, San Francisco, 2015), accessed March 16, 2017, https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2658245; see also a rebuttal by David Marples: David Marples, "The Snipers' Massacre in Kyiv," *Euromaidan Press*, last modified October 23, 2014, accessed December 6, 2017, <http://euromaidanpress>.

Again, foreign emissaries sought to broker a peace-saving deal: The regime and opposition agreed to restore the 2004 constitution and to form a coalition of national unity. Although Yanukovich would remain president, they scheduled early presidential elections for December. In the meanwhile, the authorities and opposition would refrain from violence and the government would not declare a state of emergency. Finally, the protesters would have to hand over illegal weapons.¹⁴

Many protesters felt unrepresented by the opposition politicians that negotiated the deal. They found this deal unacceptable. The so-called Maidan Civic Council represented the protesters. It ruled out any deal without a transition mechanism or with Yanukovich left in office. Andriy Parubiy demanded Yanukovich's immediate resignation and new elections in 2-3 months.¹⁵ Volodymyr Parashuk, a *Sotnya* commander, even threatened with an armed coup if Yanukovich did not resign by the next day.¹⁶ Another confrontation seemed at hand.

The next day, developments headed in another direction: Yanukovich fled the country. What exactly happened is uncertain: from video footage taken at his luxury estate, we know that he prepared to leave even before the final agreement with the opposition. Yanukovich claimed that he feared for his personal safety as people shot at his car with automatic rifles.¹⁷ His fear might have been genuine: protesters or factions outside of Yanukovich's control might have initiated the violence on the Maidan. Many other scenarios also seem reasonable: German, Polish, and French representatives signed the deal as witnesses. The Russian emissary, Vladimir Lukin, refused. Yanukovich could have interpreted this as the loss of his only foreign supporter. He could also have lost the confidence of his security services or might have feared that the opposition would lock him up, just as he did with Tymoshenko.¹⁸

The Reestablishment of Order: The Opposition's Empowered and Renewed Control by the Oligarchy

Like in 1991 and 2004, the real take-over did not take place on the streets, but in the Rada. After Yanukovich fled, the Party of the Regions quickly imploded. Many of its deputies, especially those not from Yanukovich's home region, were the first to break ranks. They supported a decision to oust Yanukovich. In the subsequent nine months, 101 of the party's delegates joined other political movements. They jumped ship out of self-preservation.¹⁹

Aided by defectors, the opposition quickly filled the political vacuum. The Rada appointed

[com/2014/10/23/the-snipers-massacre-in-kyiv-katchanovski-marples/](http://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2014/02/21/7015573/). Also, Richard Sakwa has doubts about the perpetrators of the sniper massacre on the Maidan: Sakwa, *Frontline Ukraine*, 121–122. In any case, there has not been a thorough and impartial investigation of the massacre to date. For a list of dead from both sides, see: "Список погибших в ходе акций протеста в Украине (январь-март 2014)," LB.ua, last modified March 15, 2014, accessed March 25, 2019, https://lb.ua/society/2014/03/15/256239_spisok_pogibshih_hode_aktivy_protesta.html.

14 Wilson, *Ukraine Crisis*, 86–92.

15 "Парубій: дострокові вибори президента мають відбутися якнайшвидше," *Українська правда*, last modified February 21, 2014, accessed March 25, 2019, <http://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2014/02/21/7015573/>.

16 "Люди поставили ультиматум: відставка Януковича до ранку," *Українська правда*, accessed March 25, 2019, <http://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2014/02/21/7015590/>.

17 "Ukrainian Ex-Leader Vows Fightback," February 28, 2014, sec. Europe, accessed March 25, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-26386946>.

18 Alexander Baunov, Jarábik Balázs, and Alexander Golubov, "A Year After Maidan: Why Did Viktor Yanukovich Flee After Signing the Agreement With the Opposition?," *Carnegie Moscow Center*, last modified February 25, 2015, accessed March 25, 2019, <https://carnegie.ru/commentary/59172>.

19 Taras Kuzio, "Rise and Fall of the Party of Regions Political Machine," *Problems of Post-Communism* 62, no. 3 (May 4, 2015): 180–183; Åslund, *Ukraine*, 109; For the parliamentary decision, see O. Турчинов, *Постанова Верховної Ради України № 757-VII про самоусунення Президента України від виконання конституційних повноважень та призначення позачергових виборів Президента України*, 2014, accessed December 6, 2017, <http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/go/757-18>.

Tymoshenko's right-hand man, Oleksandr Turchynov, as speaker (and *ex officio* acting president). It also scheduled early presidential elections for May 25 and freed Yuliya Tymoshenko.²⁰ Arseniy Yatsenyuk (Batkivshchyna) was appointed prime minister of a government of national unity.²¹ Parliament also restored the 2004 constitution.²²

Despite the prominence of nationalism on the Maidan, the transition government was not outspokenly nationalist. Only three out of twenty ministers were members of the ultra-nationalist Svoboda Party. They mainly held insignificant positions. The important 'power ministries' were in the hands of technocrats, who were mainly Russian-speaking professionals. For less than a month, Svoboda member Ihor Tenyukh was the acting minister of defence.²³ Besides him, several nominally independent nationalists joined the government. They included minister of education Serhiy Kvit, the former rector of the Kyiv Mohyla Academy who openly professed his admiration for the OUN and UPA.²⁴

The transition authorities were neither extreme right nor solely based in Western Ukraine: Turchynov was a Baptist preacher from South-Eastern Ukraine. The acting Minister of Internal Affairs, Arsen Avakov, was half-Armenian and half-Russian.²⁵

The political events also demonstrated that the new authorities were not nationalist. The day after Yanukovich fled, the Rada rescinded a controversial language law enacted in 2012. This law gave Russian an official status in a region if 10% of the population used it as their primary language.²⁶ Understandably, this move worried Russian speakers. It reinforced the image of a nationalist takeover in Kyiv. Acting President Turchynov quickly intervened, issuing a veto and referring the problem of language policy to a special commission.²⁷ The 2012 law remained in force for years, until February 2018.²⁸

Nevertheless, the Rada's move served as an alibi for the Russian meddling in Ukraine. Using subversive means, Russian intelligence services infiltrated the Crimea and the Donbas. They incited fear among ethnic Russians and Russian speakers, exploiting the notion of a 'fascist coup in Kyiv'.²⁹ On the Crimea, the Russian military took control of strategic

20 О. Турчинов, *Постанова Верховної Ради України № 751-VII/2014 про виконання міжнародних зобов'язань України щодо звільнення Тимошенко Ю.В.*, 2014, accessed December 6, 2017, <http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/go/751-18>.

21 Yuri Matsiyevsky, *Old Political Habits Die Hard in Ukraine*, PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo (Washington, DC: PONARS Eurasia, May 2017), 2, accessed May 10, 2017, http://www.ponarseurasia.org/sites/default/files/policy-memos-pdf/Peppm473_Matsiyevsky_April2017.pdf.

22 Although the 2004 constitution did a better job in preventing autocracy than the 1996 constitution, the unclear division of powers contained in it also caused political instability. Therefore, Andrew Wilson warned for the consequences of this restoration: Wilson, *Ukraine Crisis*, 154.

23 For the appointment of the government see: "Ukrainian Parliament Endorses New Cabinet," *Interfax-Ukraine Ukraine News Agency*, last modified February 27, 2014, accessed December 7, 2017, <http://en.interfax.com.ua/news/general/193222.html>.

24 John-Paul Himka, "The History behind the Regional Conflict in Ukraine," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 16, no. 1 (February 13, 2015): 135.

25 Snyder, "Ukraine: The Haze of Propaganda."

26 The law in question is: В. Янукович, *Закон України № 5029-VI/2012 про засади державної мовної політики*, 2012, accessed December 6, 2017, <http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/go/5029-17>.

27 "Ukraine's Parliament-Appointed Acting President Says Language Law to Stay Effective," *TASS*, accessed December 6, 2017, <http://tass.com/world/721537>; See also the decree creating the commission: О. Турчинов, *Постанова Верховної Ради України № 851-VII про утворення Тимчасової спеціальної комісії Верховної Ради України з підготовки проекту закону про розвиток і застосування мов в Україні*, 2014, accessed December 6, 2017, <http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/go/851-18>.

28 In 2018, the constitutional court declared the law unconstitutional on procedural grounds, see: С.В. Шевчук et al., *Рішення конституційного суду України у справі за конституційним поданням 57 народних депутатів України щодо відповідності Конституції України (конституційності) Закону України "Про засади державної мовної політики"* (Конституційний Суд України 2018).

29 See: Timothy Snyder, "Fascism, Russia, and Ukraine," *The New York Review of Books*, March 20, 2014, accessed December 6, 2017, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2014/03/20/fascism-russia-and-ukraine/>. For instance, in his statement about the annexation of the Crimea, Putin claimed: 'I would like to reiterate that I understand those

positions before a dubious referendum ‘legitimated’ a formal Russian annexation. In the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, Russian-backed separatists proclaimed their own republics. A war between them and Ukraine ensued. Russia holds a key position, as it keeps the separatist movement alive.³⁰

The 2014 Elections: Establishing ‘New’ Rulers

Presidential elections on May 25 initiated the restoration of regular order. By then, revelations of corruption and political violence fully discredited the Party of the Regions. The ongoing conflict in the East also finished much of the sympathy for its pro-Russian policies. It had become irrelevant. The same was true for partner-in-crime: The Communist Party.³¹

Only two candidates stood any chance in the elections: the oligarchs Petro Poroshenko and Yuliya Tymoshenko. Poroshenko had consistently supported the Maidan. He campaigned on an agenda of political, economic, and social reforms. Tymoshenko was unable to reinvent herself: she based her campaign on populist promises and openly sought to make deals with the oligarch elite.³² A new generation of Maidan activists had no chance to organize themselves before the elections.³³

The elections also dispelled the propaganda narrative of a nationalist take-over: The nationalist candidates, Oleh Tyahnibok and Dmytro Yarosh did not even poll 2% combined. The

Candidate	% of the votes
Dmytro Yarosh Right sector	0.7%
Oleh Tyahnybok Svoboda	1.16%
Petro Symonenko Communist party	1.51%
Mikhailo Dobkin Party of the Regions	3.03%
Oleh Lyashko Radical party	8.32%
Yuliya Tymoshenko Batkivshchyna	12.81%
Petro Poroshenko Independent	54.7%

Table 3: Selected Results of the 2014 Presidential Elections

Source: Позачергові вибори Президента України 25 травня 2014 року. Протокол Центральної виборчої комісії про результати виборів Президента України (Київ: Центральна Виборча Комісія, June 2, 2014), https://web.archive.org/web/20170711020458/http://www.cvk.gov.ua/info/protokol_cvk_25052014.pdf.

who came out on Maidan with peaceful slogans against corruption, inefficient state management, and poverty. The right to peaceful protest, democratic procedures, and elections exist for the sole purpose of replacing the authorities that do not satisfy the people. However, those who stood behind the latest events in Ukraine had a different agenda: they were preparing yet another government takeover; they wanted to seize power and would stop short of nothing. They resorted to terror, murder, and riots. Nationalists, neo-Nazis, Russophobes and anti-Semites executed this coup. They continue to set the tone in Ukraine to this day. // The so-called new authorities began by introducing a draft law to revise the language policy, which was a direct infringement on the rights of ethnic minorities. However, they were immediately ‘disciplined’ by the foreign sponsors of these so-called politicians. One has to admit that the mentors of these current authorities are smart and know well to what such attempts to build a purely Ukrainian state may lead. The draft law was set aside, but clearly reserved for the future. Hardly any mention is made of this attempt now, probably on the presumption that people have a short memory. Nevertheless, we can all clearly see the intentions of these ideological heirs of Bandera, Hitler’s accomplice during World War II.’ See: Путин, “Обращение Президента Российской Федерации.”

30 The Donetsk (DNR) and Luhansk (LNR) People’s Republics are proxy regimes sponsored by Russia. Russian volunteers and government representatives supported and supervised the separatist forces. Russia continues to deny its involvement in the Donbas. However, as Mark Galeotti described: ‘Western and Ukrainian government sources and journalists have accumulated a wealth of evidence demonstrating that there are not only teams of advisors, trainers, and command personnel present attached to DNR and LNR forces, but also formed regular Russian units, largely comprising battalion tactical groups, drawn from multiple parent brigades.’ See: Mark Galeotti, “Hybrid, Ambiguous, and Non-Linear? How New Is Russia’s ‘New Way of War’?,” *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 27, no. 2 (March 3, 2016): 282–301.

31 Wilson, *Ukraine Crisis*, 151–152.

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid., 152.

only new face in this election was Oleh Lyashko of the *Radical party*. He exploited the general dissatisfaction with the political system with an anti-system platform. Nevertheless, oligarchs who wanted to frustrate Tymoshenko's chance of election sponsored him.³⁴

None of the candidates campaigned on a pro-Russian or (neo)-Soviet platform. Since the Russian-annexed Crimea and most of the electoral districts in the Donbas could not participate in the election, this electoral niche was without a chance. The Party of the Regions' candidate, Mikhailo Dobkin, only polled 3%. Overall Poroshenko was unopposed and won with a fair margin (54.7%), becoming the only president ever to be elected in one round. He also won all but one electoral district. The overall turnout was not high (60.3%), but fair given the circumstances.³⁵

The political centre of gravity had shifted to parliament, which was controlled by several oligarch-backed factions. These disunited factions reconsolidated their power. In February and March, the Rada supported the government with large majorities. From March onwards, influential oligarchs, such as Ihor Kolomoiskyi and Ihor Yeremeyev, formed their own parliamentary factions and stalled the government's reform agenda. Yatsenyuk's interim government lacked a majority and depended on former Party of the Regions deputies. This was an inherently unstable situation. Unsurprisingly, the Yatsenyuk government eventually fell on July 24. In the subsequent parliamentary elections on October 26, all parties were tied to one or more oligarchs.³⁶

The parliamentary elections produced a more stable majority, but also helped to reconsolidate the oligarchy. Six parties entered parliament via the system of proportional representation. Although four of them never contested elections before, 'old faces' controlled them: The *Poroshenko Bloc's* lead candidate was former Minister of Internal Affairs (2007-2010) Yuri Lutsenko. Prime minister Yatsenyuk led his own party: *People's Front*. Oligarch Yuriy Boyko represented the *Opposition Bloc*, the successor to the Party of the Regions. Tymoshenko led *Batkivshchyna*. Oleh Lyashko was the lead candidate for the *Radical Party*. The Self-Reliance Party (*Samopomich*), led by Lviv Mayor Andriy Sadoviy, was the only genuinely new party. Its platform resembled that of a Christian Democratic Party. All parties ran both Russian and Ukrainian candidates and campaigned on an agenda of good governance, anti-corruption and economic growth.³⁷

Although Svoboda and the Right Sector put candidates forward, neither party reached the required 5% electoral threshold in the proportional voting system. They only managed to win a few individual electoral mandates: Six for Svoboda and one for the Right Sector.³⁸

A coalition of the Petro Poroshenko Bloc, the People's Front, and Samopomich seemed feasible after the elections. The Radical Party and Batkivshchyna also joined.³⁹ The coalition attracted several foreign professionals with proven records of accomplishment to introduce

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 152-153.

³⁵ See the official election results: *Позачергові вибори Президента України 25 травня 2014 року. Протокол Центральної виборчої комісії про результати виборів Президента України* (Київ: Центральна Виборча Комісія, June 2, 2014), https://web.archive.org/web/20170711020458/http://www.cvk.gov.ua/info/protokol_cvk_25052014.pdf.

³⁶ Wilson, *Ukraine Crisis*, 157.

³⁷ Samokhvalov, "Ukraine between Russia and the European Union," 1385.

³⁸ For the results of the proportional voting, see: *Позачергові вибори народних депутатів України 26 жовтня 2014 року. Протокол Центральної Виборчої Комісії про результати виборів народних депутатів України у загальнодержавному багатомандатному виборочному окрузі* (Київ: Центральна Виборча Комісія, November 10, 2014), accessed December 6, 2017, http://www.cvk.gov.ua/info/protokol_bmvo_ndu_26102014.pdf; For the results of the individual mandates, see: "Відомості про підрахунок голосів виборців в межах одномандатних виборчих округів," *Центральна виборча комісія України - WWW відображення ІАС "Вибори народних депутатів України 2014,"* accessed December 6, 2017, <http://www.cvk.gov.ua/pls/vnd2014/wp039?PT001F01=910>.

³⁹ Wilson, *The Ukrainians*, 357.

Party	% of the votes (proportional voting)	Seats (proportion- al voting)	Individ- ual man- dates	Total
Petro Poroshenko Bloc	21.82	63	69	159
Self-Nominated Candidates	N/A	N/A	96	96
People's front	22.14	64	18	82
Samopomich	10.97%	32	1	33
Opposition bloc	9.43%	27	2	29
Batkivshchyna	5.68%	22	2	24
Radical Party	7.44%	17	0	17
Svoboda	4.71%	0	6	6
Right Sector	1.80%	0	1	1
A Strong Ukraine	3.11%	0	1	1
Volya	N/A	N/A	1	1
Zastup	2.68%	0	1	1
Total		225	198	423
Seats unfulfilled due to inability to organize elections on the Crimea and several districts in the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts			27	

Table 4: Selected Results of the 2014 Verkhovna Rada Elections

Only parties that gained representation in the Rada have been included. Позачергові вибори народних депутатів України 26 жовтня 2014 року. Протокол Центральної Вибірчої Комісії про результати виборів народних депутатів України у загальнодержавному багатомандатному виборочному окрузі (Київ: Центральна Вибірча Комісія, November 10, 2014), accessed December 6, 2017, http://www.cvk.gov.ua/info/protokol_bmvo.ndu_26102014.pdf. For the results of the individual mandates, see: “Відомості про підрахунок голосів виборців в межах одномандатних виборчих округів,” Центральна Вибірча Комісія України - WWW Відображення ІАС “Вибори Народних Депутатів України 2014,” accessed December 6, 2017, <http://www.cvk.gov.ua/pls/vnd2014/wp039?PT001F01=910>.

reforms as ministers of Finance, Healthcare, and Economy and Trade.⁴⁰

Given the government's broad base and the volatile political situation, it was unstable. In September 2015, the Radical Party left the government in protest against proposed constitutional changes that decentralized government power (one of Ukraine's commitments in the Minsk peace process).⁴¹ In February 2016, the Minister of Economy and Trade, Aivaras Abromavičius resigned citing a lack of commitment to fight corruption.⁴² His resignation caused the government's fall: Yatsenyuk survived an initial vote-of-no-confidence in February but eventually resigned in April.⁴³

40 These ministers were the Ukrainian-American Natalie Jaresko (Finance), the Georgian Alexander Kvitashvili (Health), and the Lithuanian Aivaras Abromavičius (Economy and Trade). All of them entered government on behalf of the Poroshenko Bloc. Poroshenko granted them Ukrainian citizenship on February 12, 2014. See: “Poroshenko Orders to Grant Citizenship to Jaresko, Kvitashvili and Abromavičius,” *Interfax-Ukraine Ukraine News Agency*, last modified December 2, 2014, accessed December 6, 2017, <http://en.interfax.com.ua/news/general/237464.html>.

41 “Експерти: чому Ляшко об'явив о виході из коаліції,” *BBC Україна*, last modified September 1, 2015, accessed December 6, 2017, http://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/ukraine_in_russian/2015/09/150901_ru_s_coalition_lyashko.

42 “Абромавичус не отзывает заявление об отставке,” *Корреспондент.net*, last modified February 4, 2016, accessed December 6, 2017, <https://korrespondent.net/ukraine/politics/3625071-abromavychus-ne-otzyvaet-zaia-vlyenye-ob-otstavke>.

43 Oleh Bereznyuk, “Another Party Quits Ukraine Coalition,” *RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty*, last modified February 18, 2016, accessed December 6, 2017, <https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-another-party-quits-coalition/27560070.html>.

None of the established parties could gain from new elections. The Poroshenko Bloc and the People's Front quickly formed a new government. Rada Speaker Volodymyr Hroysman, a close Poroshenko confidant, became prime minister. The new coalition had no majority of its own but also had the support of oligarch-backed parliamentary groupings.⁴⁴

This was the final step for the reconsolidation of oligarchic rule. While the Yatsenyuk and Hroysman governments promised reforms, there was little progress.⁴⁵ Those in control had very different agendas than the Maidan protesters.⁴⁶ As the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace's *Ukrainian Reform Monitor* concluded in October 2017:

The hallmark of Ukrainian political life over the last six months has been President Petro Poroshenko's efforts to consolidate power, as he looks ahead to the presidential and parliamentary elections of 2019. However, he faces challenges to his authority, in the parliament and, most visibly, from former Georgian president Mikheil Saakashvili and his supporters.

The first signs of preelection political maneuvering have already affected the reform process. Reforms with the necessary political "clearance"—such as the judiciary, decentralization, and pension reform—have moved forward in the Ukrainian parliament, or Rada. However, the overall pace of reforms remained slow and delays in the Rada put a pause on the recently launched healthcare reforms.⁴⁷

The lack of progress frustrated many ordinary Ukrainians. In the fall of 2017, there were weeks-long demonstrations for the abolition of individual Rada mandates, the creation of anti-corruption courts and the abolition of parliamentary immunity. The Movement of New Forces (*Rukh Novykh Syl*) of former Georgian president Mikheil Saakashvili was one of their main organizers. In 2015, Poroshenko appointed Saakashvili – whom he knew from their time at Kyiv's Shevchenko University – as governor of the Odesa Oblast. In November 2016, Saakashvili resigned, citing sabotage of his anti-corruption policies by the government. Subsequently, he founded his own political movement and continued to be a nuisance for Poroshenko. When Saakashvili was abroad in 2018, Poroshenko stripped him of his Ukrainian citizenship, making him stateless.⁴⁸ Despite all discontent, no genuine al-

44 "Ukraine Parliament Approves Volodymyr Groysman as New PM," *The Guardian*, April 14, 2016, sec. World news, accessed December 6, 2017, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/apr/14/ukraine-volodymyr-groysman-new-prime-minister>.

45 The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace created the 'Ukraine Reform Monitor'. If one reads the reports of the monitors, one can find an increasing negative tone of voice. For instance, in December 2015, they claimed that 'Ukraine held local elections and made modest reform progress, while the economy improved slowly. But there are renewed concerns about the ceasefire in the east.' but in April 2017, its report claimed that 'In the past year, Ukraine's reform progress slowed as the president consolidated power and key decentralization reforms met opposition in the parliament.' Cf. Mikhail Minakov et al., "Ukraine Reform Monitor: December 2015," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, accessed December 6, 2017, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2015/12/07/ukraine-reform-monitor-december-2015-pub-62191>; Mikhail Minakov et al., "Ukraine Reform Monitor: April 2017," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, accessed December 6, 2017, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2017/04/19/ukraine-reform-monitor-april-2017-pub-68700>.

46 "Anti-Government Protests in Ukraine," *Euronews*, last modified October 18, 2017, accessed December 6, 2017, <http://www.euronews.com/2017/10/18/anti-government-protests-in-ukraine>.

47 Mikhail Minakov et al., "Ukraine Reform Monitor: October 2017," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, last modified October 10, 2017, accessed December 6, 2017, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2017/10/10/ukraine-reform-monitor-october-2017-pub-73330>.

48 A political drama ensued: In a theatrical move, Saakashvili re-entered Ukraine by breaking through a border blockade aided by supporters. He continued to lead his political movement. The Ukrainian authorities still wanted to get rid of him and forcibly deported him to Poland on February 12, 2018. Afterwards Saakashvili resettled to the Netherlands, where he received a residency permit as his wife, Sandra Roelofs, was a Dutch citizen. Af-

ternative for the oligarch-led political parties was formed.

The Return of Mainstream Nationalism

As discussed, nationalism was prominently visible on the Maidan. Nevertheless, protesters hardly favoured extreme nationalism. The Euromaidan made nationalist symbols fashionable: The OUN-UPA slogan of ‘*Glory to Ukraine – Glory to the Heroes*’ has become generally accepted. According to some, Euromaidan imbued it with new meaning: it supposedly referred to the protesters who died in 2013-2014, the so-called ‘*Nebesna Sotnya*’ (‘*Heavenly Hundred*’).⁴⁹ Others claim it has become a nonpartisan slogan similar to the Polish ‘*Niech żyje Polska!*’ (Long live Poland!).⁵⁰ Even if a semantic shift occurred, it remains problematic that this slogan – once used to promote the idea of a mono-ethnic and fascist Ukrainian state with an antisemitic and polonophobic ideology – has gained such currency.

Why have such nationalist symbols become prominent? First, Yushchenko’s history policies legitimized them. Yanukovich’s history policies and autocracy subsequently made them valuable for the opposition. Second, Russia invaded the Crimea and supported separatists in the Donbas. Russian aggression made nationalist ideology a logical rallying point.

Consequently, the consolidation of Ukraine as a nation again became a major political topic. While such attempts failed after 2004, Russian intervention unified the country in 2014: The areas that previously voiced the strongest opposition were now effectively no longer a part of Ukraine.⁵¹ The formation of a new national myth that included the Euromaidan, the *Nebesna Sotnya* and the ongoing struggle in the Donbas was only a logical development.

ter Volodymyr Zelenskiy was elected president in 2019, Saakashvili’s citizenship was restored. See also: Roman Olearchyk, “Ukraine’s Poroshenko Strips Mikheil Saakashvili of Citizenship,” *Financial Times*, last modified July 26, 2017, accessed December 6, 2017, <https://www.ft.com/content/8e0fe436-723c-11e7-aca6-c6bd07df1a3c>; “Mikheil Saakashvili Re-Enters Ukraine with Help of Supporters,” accessed December 6, 2017, <https://www.ft.com/content/f03a1234-9641-11e7-b83c-9588e51488a0>; Christopher Miller, “After Dramatic Expulsion From Ukraine, What’s Next For Saakashvili?,” *RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty*, last modified February 13, 2018, accessed February 16, 2018, <https://www.rferl.org/a/what-is-next-for-saakashvili-ukraine-georgia-options/29037879.html>; “Michail Saakasjvili vestigt zich in Nederland na uitzetting Oekraïne,” *NOS*, last modified February 14, 2018, accessed February 16, 2018, <https://nos.nl/artikel/2217162-michail-saakasjvili-vestigt-zich-in-nederland-na-uit-zetting-oekraïne.html>; “Citizenship Restored, Saakashvili Returns To Ukraine,” *RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty*, last modified May 29, 2019, accessed August 15, 2019, <https://www.rferl.org/a/citizenship-restored-saakashvili-due-to-return-to-ukraine/29970428.html>.

49 The name ‘Heavenly Hundred’ refers to the circa one hundred fatal casualties on the Maidan. The name is, however, also a reference to the Ukrainian past. A ‘hundred’, or *sotnya* is also the name for a military unit of Ukrainian Cossacks. Yuriy Shveda and Joung Ho Park, “Ukraine’s Revolution of Dignity: The Dynamics of Euromaidan,” *Journal of Eurasian Studies* 7, no. 1 (January 2016): 90.

50 Andriy Portnov pointed to these semantic shifts and to their legitimization by non-Ukrainian actors, such as the Polish politician Jarosław Kaczyński who used the slogan on the Maidan. The claim that the slogan is now akin to the Polish slogan mentioned is originally that of the Polish historian Andrzej Nowak. See: Andriy Portnov, “Ukraine’s ‘Eurorevolution’: Chronology and Interpretations,” *Russian Politics and Law* 53, no. 3 (May 4, 2015): 16–17. Andrzej Nowak remarked: ‘Yes, ten years ago, the quoted words would be part of a Banderite ritual, however, all the people who are repeating it on the Maidan in Kyiv, do not want to join Ukraine to Putin’s empire – nationalists, liberals, socialists, conservatives and those (the majority) to whom neither the ideology ideologies and nor, for example, Bandera’s name does not hit at all. These words are today the equivalent of our “niech żyje Polska”, not the National Radical Camp’s (a far right Polish political movement; NAKvE) party greeting’. See: Andrzej Nowak, “Pytanie do Rafała Ziemkiewicza,” *NIEZALEZNA.PL*, last modified December 17, 2013, accessed December 6, 2017, <http://niezalezna.pl/49626-pytanie-do-rafala-ziemkiewicza>.

51 Wilson and Kulyk argue that this is the case for the Crimea, but in extension, the same can be said for the separatist-controlled areas of the Donbas. See: Wilson, *Ukraine Crisis*, 70; Wilson, *The Ukrainians*, 353–354; See also: Volodymyr Kulyk, “Language and Identity in Ukraine after Euromaidan,” *Thesis Eleven* 136, no. 1 (October 2016): 93.

7.2. Leninopad: Wild Decommunization during the Euromaidan

The forming of such a narrative already started during the Euromaidan, which initiated a new round of reckoning with Soviet legacies. This started in the third week of the protests: On December 8, 2013, a crowd gathered in front of the Bessarabian Market in Kyiv, some 900 meters from the Maidan. They held several flags, besides the national flag, including the Svoboda party and the Red-Black nationalist flags. A 3.45-meter-high statue of Lenin, by the Soviet sculptor Sergey Merkurov, directly faced the market building. Masked men toppled it, while the crowd shouted ‘*Glory to Ukraine! Glory to the Heroes!*’. After the statue fell to the ground, the slogans ‘*Yanukovych, you will be next!*’, and ‘*Revolution!*’ followed and protesters sang the Ukrainian anthem.⁵² Svoboda later claimed responsibility.⁵³

This monument was symbolic: In 2009, nationalist activists already tried to dismantle it and broke off Lenin’s nose and left hand.⁵⁴ These activists claimed to execute a presidential decree that ordered the demolition of monuments to perpetrators of political repression.⁵⁵ Subsequently, the Communist Party paid for the monument’s restoration. Later that year, the reunveiling turned into a violent brawl.⁵⁶ The Communist Party subsequently guarded the monument.

Its 2013 destruction was the first act of spontaneous or ‘wild’ decommunization; the so-called *Leninopad* (*Lenin’s fall*).⁵⁷ Throughout the country, activists or local administrations

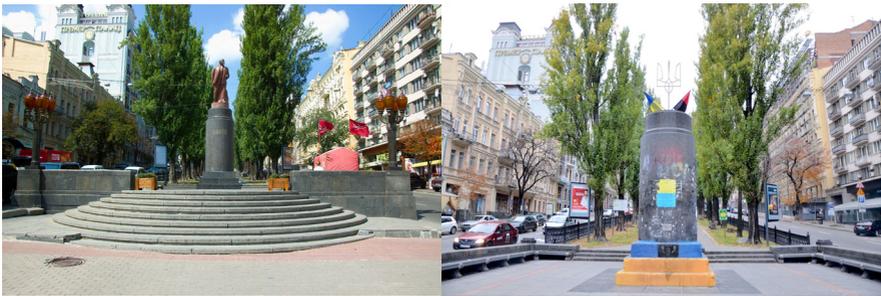


Figure 24: Before and After: The Lenin Monument on August, 12, 2013 and October 21, 2017.

Note the tent on the 2013 photo; the Communist Party placed it for its guards. After the Leninopad, the Ukrainian national crest, a Ukrainian national flag, and a nationalist red-black flag have been placed on Lenin’s former base. On the base a poem by Ukraine’s national writer, Taras Shevchenko has been added (the yellow-blue sticker on the centre of the base). Further down two dedicational plaques have been placed, one to the ‘combatants of Ukraine’ the other to the Heroes-revolutionaries, who have been killed for the truth’ The last plaque features the anthem of the OUN and UPA. (Photos: Nicolaas A. Kraft van Ermel)

52 Afterwards several videos of this event have been posted to the internet. See, for instance: Maks Halicki, *Повалення Леніна в Києві на Бессарабській площі - 08.12.2013*, 2013, accessed December 21, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PxU4noAezys>.

53 “Svoboda Assumes Responsibility for Pulling down Lenin Monument in Kyiv,” *Zik*, last modified December 8, 2013, accessed December 21, 2017, http://zik.ua/en/news/2013/12/08/svoboda_assumes_responsibility_for_pulling_down_lenin_monument_in_kyiv_445647.

54 The perpetrators published a video of their act online: Olena Bilozerska, *Rujnuvannya Lenina*, 2009, accessed December 21, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=anMRtvDy_kU.

55 The decree in question is: В. Ющенко, *Указ Президента України № 856/2008 про заходи у зв’язку з Днем пам’яті жертв голодоморів*, 2008, accessed November 15, 2016, <http://zakon3.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/856/2008>.

56 Тарас Бурнос, “В Києве открытие восстановленного памятника Ленину обернулось кровавой драмой,” *Новий День*, last modified November 27, 2009, accessed December 21, 2017, <https://newdaynews.ru/kyiv/259003.html>.

57 The meaning of this word is immediately clear for speakers of a Slavic language. It is a contraction of Lenin and the suffix *-pad*, which comes from the verb ‘to fall’. Such constructions are used in, for instance, the word *snihopad* (snowfall) and *listopad* (literally: leaf fall, figuratively: November). For the *Leninopad*, see also. Андрій Портнов, “Майдан и после Майдана,” *Ab Imperio* 2014, no. 3 (2014): 214; Kasianov, “History, Politics and Memory (Ukraine 1990s - 2000s),” 207.

quickly dismantled other communist monuments. Between December 2013 and October 2014, crowds and local authorities either destroyed or orderly removed more than 300 Lenin monuments.⁵⁸ Andriy Portnov argued that this movement completed a process that had started in Western Ukraine in the 1990s.⁵⁹ The movement also gripped the Ukrainian war efforts in the Donbas: Lenin monuments were often destroyed when places were re-taken from the separatist forces.⁶⁰

Protesters quickly replaced Kyiv's Lenin statue with Ukrainian nationalist symbols, as well as the European flag. In other places, nationalist symbols did not automatically replace Lenin statues. For instance, in Dnipropetrovsk, a memorial for the *Nebesna Sotnya* replaced a communist monument. Zaporizhzhya kept its Lenin statue, but dressed it in *vyshyvka* (traditional embroidery). In Odesa, Darth Vader replaced the former communist leader.⁶¹

Anticommunism, or anti-Sovietism, served as the basis for future identity politics. According to Tatiana Zhurzhenko, an '*anti-Soviet memory regime*' based on several collective memories formed. The Soviet invasions of 1939 and 1944, Stalinization, political repressions, shared values and identities (e.g. Ukrainian anti-communism and nationalism), the equation of Nazism and communism, and their occupation regimes in Ukraine constituted the backbone of the new memory regime.⁶²

7.3. Official Decommunization: Denying Communism a Place in Ukrainian history and Replacing it with Nationalism

After the Euromaidan, governments capitalized on decommunization and aimed at canonizing and institutionalizing the anti-Soviet memory regime. An overview of the persons and institutions involved shows that these policies continued where Yushchenko's policies stopped.

The Institute of National Remembrance has again become a key player. The government reformed it in 2014, making it a central government institution and giving it new tasks. The institute now had to '*realize governmental politics for the creation and protection of the Ukrainian people's national memory*'. Comprehensive research in the history of the Ukrainian state and the struggle for its creation was also on the agenda. The institute furthermore had to popularize its findings in Ukraine and worldwide. The immortalization of participants in the '*Ukrainian liberation movement*', the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917-1921, and the victims of the Holodomor of 1932-1933 (and of famines in 1921-1923 and 1946-1947) was another important task. Furthermore, the institute had to extend its efforts to those who protected Ukraine's independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity. The decree specifically mentioned participants in the *Anti-Terrorist Operation* (ATO; the Ukrainian war-effort in the Donbas).⁶³ Besides these already substantial goals, the institute had to study the historical heritage of national minorities and indigenous peoples and to promote their integration in Ukrainian society. Finally, the institute had to overcome existing his-

58 Georgiy Kasianov, "How a War for the Past Becomes a War in the Present," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 16, no. 1 (February 13, 2015): 154.

59 Portnov, "Krieg und Frieden," 22.

60 Kasianov, "History, Politics and Memory (Ukraine 1990s - 2000s)," 207.

61 Портнов, "Майдан и после Майдана," 214; Касьянов, "Историческая политика и мемориальные законы," 45.

62 Tatiana Zhurzhenko, "From the Reunification of the Ukrainian Lands to Soviet Occupation: The Molotov Ribbentrop Pact in the Ukrainian Political Memory," in *The Use and Abuse of Memory. Interpreting World War II in Contemporary European Politics*, ed. Christian Karner and Bram Mertens (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 2013), 231.

63 It is highly ironic that the new regime used this name for their war effort in the East because the Yanukovich regime also used it for their violent onslaught of the Euromaidan protests. In 2018, the administration renamed the war as '*Joint Forces Operation*'. Nevertheless, for many the ATO-denominator stuck.

torical myths about Ukraine.⁶⁴

As the institute became a cornerstone for history policies, its budget increased every year since. The Yanukovych administration had still prepared the 2014 budget, which allotted a mere 5.531.000 hryvnya. By 2018, this increased to 57.37 million hryvnya.⁶⁵ Even if we consider high yearly inflation rates, the institute received more funds than in its heydays during Yushchenko's presidency.

The government appointed the well-known nationalist historian Volodymyr Viatrovych to lead the institute. He was an 'old face' face in Ukrainian history policies and played an important role during Yushchenko's presidency as head of the SBU archives. His historical work distorts and denies history and is apologetic of Ukrainian crimes.⁶⁶ His appointment made clear what course the government set out.

According to the new director, the institute's main function was to initiate a social dialogue on Ukraine's totalitarian past. The idea of a dialogue was an illusion, because Viatrovych laid out a clearly partisan programme: 1) to overcome Soviet stereotypes and myths, 2) to uncover secret archives of repressive organs and the Communist Party, 3) to protect the memory of the 'struggle for freedom and human dignity, 4) to overcome 'conflicts of memory' and 5) 'to critically comprehend the past'.⁶⁷

7.4. The Holodomor: Less important, but not Forgotten

Most post-Euromaidan history policies focussed on the Second World War, the Ukrainian nationalist movement, or the Ukrainian Revolution (1917-1921). Previous administrations, especially Yushchenko's and Yanukovych's, gave much attention to the Holodomor. Why has the famine not returned to prominence? At first sight, the importance of the Holodomor declined, which seems illogical: The government wanted to 'decommunize' the country and, seen from a nationalist perspective, the Holodomor was the seminal communist crime against Ukraine.

The government certainly did not forget the Holodomor: The Institute of National Remembrance still devoted a section of its website to it.⁶⁸ Each year of his presidency, Poroshenko also signed decrees arranging commemorations. The government subsequently implemented them. These decrees were very similar to Yushchenko's and Kuchma's decrees. The new administration followed a clearly established commemorative tradition.⁶⁹ The 85th anniversary

64 Касьянов, "К десятилетию."

65 Ibid.; П. Порошенко, Закон України № 928-VIII/2015 про Державний бюджет України на 2016 рік, 2015, accessed December 21, 2017, <http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/go/928-19>; Віталій Червоненко, "Бюджет 2017: кому у владі підвищати фінансування?," ВВС Україна, last modified September 20, 2016, accessed December 21, 2017, http://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/business/2016/09/160920_budget_2017_yc.

66 See also "5.2. The Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance: Yushchenko's Key Player", page 129 and "5.4. Consolidating the Nation: Rehabilitation and Glorification of the OUN and UPA under Yushchenko", page 150.

67 Касьянов, "К десятилетию."

68 "Пам'ять про Голодомор 1932-1933," Український інститут національної пам'яті, accessed February 8, 2018, <http://www.memory.gov.ua/page/pamyat-pro-golodomor-1932-1933>; "Новини на тему 'Пам'ять про Голодомор,'" Український інститут національної пам'яті, accessed February 8, 2018, <http://www.memory.gov.ua/holodomor-commemoration-news>.

69 П. Порошенко, Указ Президента України № 830/2014 про заходи у зв'язку з Днем пам'яті жертв голодоморів, 2014, accessed February 8, 2018, <http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/go/830/2014>; А. Яценюк, Розпорядження Кабінету Міністрів України № 830/2014 про заходи у зв'язку з Днем пам'яті жертв голодоморів, 2014, accessed February 8, 2018, <http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/go/830/2014>; П. Порошенко, Указ Президента України № 635/2015 про заходи у зв'язку з Днем пам'яті жертв голодоморів, 2015, accessed February 8, 2018, <http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/go/635/2015>; А. Яценюк, Розпорядження Кабінету Міністрів України № 1212-р/2015 про проведення у 2015 році заходів у зв'язку з Днем пам'яті жертв голодоморів, 2015, accessed February 8, 2018, <http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/go/1212-2015-%D1%80>; П. Порошенко, Указ Президента України № 480/2016 про заходи у зв'язку з Днем пам'яті жертв голодоморів, 2016, accessed February 8, 2018, <http://zakon.rada.gov>.

sary of the Holodomor in 2017-2018 coincided with some conferences, ceremonies and an on- and offline commemoration campaign. Unlike before, such activities did not result in political controversies.⁷⁰

Even the most political action of the new regime was hardly controversial: In 2016, the Verkhovna Rada, referring to Yushchenko's Holodomor Law, called upon Ukraine's international partners to recognize the Holodomor as 'a crime of genocide'. As one might expect, the Rada declaration instrumentalized the current political situation to put extra force behind its request:

*Today, Ukraine has again become a victim of the Stalinist successor from the Kremlin. Ukraine does not only face aggression from the East, but also a large-scale information invasion, which relies on lies. The aggressor again builds a wall of propaganda, to hide its crimes. Moreover, today, as some eighty years ago, Ukraine needs the truth, so that the world may know.*⁷¹

President Poroshenko subsequently issued similar requests and directed the Ministry of Foreign affairs to encourage international recognition.⁷² Such attempts were nothing new: Kravchuk, Kuchma, and Yushchenko had similar designs.

Why have political controversies and confrontations on the Holodomor stopped? Several reasons might have played a role: For starters, Yushchenko's Holodomor policies already entrenched political interpretations of the famine. They established social recognition of the Holodomor as a crime.⁷³ In addition, the main opponents of the Holodomor-as-genocide thesis, the Party of the Regions and the Communist Party had become politically irrelevant. This made it less likely for a policy that sought politicization around the Holodomor to strike a chord. In other words, it takes two to tango, and one of the dance partners has left the stage. On the other hand, a new partner appeared in the form of Russia. The history policies described below, focussing on the Ukrainian nationalist movement, the notion of a Soviet Occupation and the Second World War, were likely to resonate in this situation. If the political context changes again, the Holodomor might become a political hot-topic. Such new politics could make unresolved items, such as the criminalization of Holodomor denial, contested again.

[ua/go/480/2016](http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/go/480/2016); В. Гройсман, Розпорядження Кабінету Міністрів України № 845-р/2016 про проведення у 2016 році заходів у зв'язку з Днем пам'яті жертв голодоморів, 2016, accessed February 8, 2018, <http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/go/845-2016-%D1%80>; П. Порошенко, Указ Президента України № 523/2016 про заходи у зв'язку з 85-ми роковинами Голодомору 1932-1933 років в Україні - геноциду Українського народу, 2016, accessed February 8, 2018, <http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/go/523/2016>; В. Гройсман, Розпорядження Кабінету Міністрів України № 254-р/2017 про утворення Організаційного комітету з підготовки і проведення заходів у зв'язку з 85-ми роковинами Голодомору 1932-1933 років в Україні, 2017, accessed February 8, 2018, <http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/go/254-2017-%D1%80>; В. Гройсман, Розпорядження Кабінету Міністрів України № 550-р/2017 про затвердження плану заходів на 2017-2018 роки у зв'язку з 85-ми роковинами Голодомору 1932-1933 років в Україні, 2017, accessed February 8, 2018, <http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/go/550-2017-%D1%80>.

70 The 2018 annual report of the Institute of National Remembrance lists a number of ceremonies, campaigns and commemorations, but nothing political. See: "Звіт Голови Українського інституту національної пам'яті за 2018 рік," Офіційний веб-сайт УІНП, accessed March 25, 2019, <http://www.memory.gov.ua/page/zvit-golovi-ukrainskogo-institutu-natsionalnoi-pamyati-za-2018-rik-0>.

71 А. Парубій, Постанова Верховної Ради України № 1777-VIII/2016 про Звернення Верховної Ради України до держав - партнерів України щодо визнання Голодомору 1932-1933 років в Україні злочинним геноцидом Українського народу, 2016, accessed February 8, 2018, <http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/go/1777-19>.

72 "Президент закликав визнати голодомор геноцидом українців," Український інститут національної пам'яті, last modified September 21, 2017, accessed February 8, 2018, <http://www.memory.gov.ua/news/prezident-zaklikav-viznati-golodomor-genotsidom-ukraintsiv>.

73 See "5.3. Unifying the Nation with the Holodomor: A Process of Commemoration and Judicialization", especialy page 142 and further.

7.5. The 2015 History Laws: Codifying the anti-Soviet Memory Regime

Under Viatrovych's leadership, the Institute of National Remembrance prepared four so-called '*decommunization laws*'. Scholars from in- and outside of Ukraine have called them '*memory laws*' or '*history laws*'. The Verkhovna Rada approved them on April 9, 2015. Together they entrenched the anti-Soviet memory regime in law and retroactively legalized the *Leninopad*.⁷⁴

Three of the laws introduced a post-communist narrative of totalitarianism in Ukrainian legislation. Most criticism focussed on these laws. The law '*on the legal status and honouring of the memory of fighters for Ukraine's independence in the twentieth century*' was the first of these. We will refer to it as '*law on the independence struggle*'. It listed several Ukrainian nationalist organisations as '*fighters for independence*'. Several organisations from the Revolutionary era, such as the Ukrainian Central Rada, the Ukrainian People's Republic and the Western Ukrainian People's Republic were on the list. The OUN and UPA also figured prominently, as did Ukrainian dissenters sent to the GULAG, and the Perestroika-era Rukh (article 1).⁷⁵ The law recognized their efforts (article 2) and gave them and their family members certain social guarantees (e.g. pensions and other financial privileges; article 3). The law also recognized any official decorations issued by the listed organisations (article 4) and laid out a '*state policy*' on the '*restoration, preservation and honouring*' of the national memory to both the '*struggle*' and '*fighters*'. To do this, the law mandated a comprehensive study of their history, as well as measures to raise public awareness (encouraging NGO-activities, locating and preserving the fighter's graves, and honouring them in media, street names, etc.).⁷⁶

According to the law, showing public contempt for the fighters '*impedes the realization of [their] rights*'. Those who do '*shall be liable in accordance with the law*'. The law also recognized public denial of the legitimacy of Ukraine's struggle for independence as '*a mockery of the memory to the fighters for independence*' and '*a humiliation of the Ukrainian people's dignity*' and declared it '*unlawful*' (article 6).⁷⁷ These were the most far-reaching provisions of the law. The last clause clearly echoed Yushchenko's Holodomor law and highlighted the continuity with his history policies. It also fitted a general pattern in similar laws proposed in post-communist Europe.⁷⁸ For instance, the Polish Holocaust law discussed below and

⁷⁴ Andrii Portnov, "How to Bid Goodbye to Lenin in Ukraine," *OpenDemocracy*, last modified May 26, 2015, accessed November 21, 2016, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/andriy-portnov/on-%E2%80%98decommunisation%E2%80%99-and-legislating-history-in-ukraine>.

⁷⁵ The law recognizes the following organizations: Organs of the government of the Ukrainian People's Republic, the Ukrainian State (Hetmanate), the Western Ukrainian People's Republic, the East-Lemko and Hutsul Republics, Carpatho Ukraine, their armies, security services and other (para)military forces and political parties and other civil society organizations. Furthermore, the law extends recognitions to the Ukrainian Military Organization (UVO), the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), the People's Liberation Revolutionary Organization (NVR), the Ukrainian Insurgent's Army (UPA), the Taras Borovets Ukrainian Insurgent's Army 'Poliska Sich' (UNRA), Ukrainian Main Liberation Council (UHVR) and the Foreign Representation of the Ukrainian Main Liberation Council (ZP UHVR), the Anti-Bolshevist Block of Nations (ABN), The Ukrainian Helsinki Union (or Group; UHS, UHH), The People's Movement of Ukraine for Perestroika (People's Movement of Ukraine; Rukh). The law also recognized '*organizations of the Ukrainian Liberation Movement of the second half of the twentieth century*' (in general, but also naming some specifically) and '*organizations created by persons, who have suffered from political repressions for their participation in the struggle for Ukraine in the twentieth century in Soviet prisons, camps or division camps for their struggle for civic or other rights*'. Finally, the law recognized '*other organizations, structures, or formations that existed during the twentieth century (until December 24, 1991) and had the purpose to obtain or to protect the independence of Ukraine*'. See article 1 in: П. Порошенко, *Закон України № 314-VIII про правовий статус та вшанування пам'яті борців за незалежність України у XX столітті*, 2015, accessed December 18, 2017, <http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/go/314-19>.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ All states have their memory laws, because they want and need to regulate the community. Such laws can arrange commemorations, decorations, or try to enforce an interpretation of history. Laws of the latter type also exist in Western Europe. France has its *Loi Gayssot* (1990) that bans Holocaust denial; Germany has its law

the 2014 Russian *Law Against Rehabilitation of Nazism*. The latter law criminalized denial and approval of Nazi crimes, intentionally spreading of false information on the Soviet Union's activities during World War II, and the public desecration of symbols of Russian military glory.⁷⁹

The *law on the independence* struggle codified part of the anti-Soviet memory consensus: the legitimacy of Ukraine's struggle for independence and the idea of Ukraine's occupation by a succession of totalitarian regimes. The law '*Regarding the Condemnation of the Communist and National-Socialist (Nazi) Totalitarian Regimes in Ukraine and the Prohibition of Propaganda of their Symbols*' complemented this by establishing the moral equivalency of Communist and Nazi totalitarianism. This '*law on totalitarianism*' promoted a narrative of totalitarianism common to Eastern Europe. The preamble dully cited several European declarations that sought to establish a notion of equivalency of Communism and Nazism in European institutions, for instance, the European Parliament Resolution '*on European Conscience and Totalitarianism*'.⁸⁰

Article 2 declared both the Communist and Nazi totalitarian regimes criminal. Article 3 recognized that propaganda for these regimes and their symbols should be considered a '*mockery of the memory of millions of victims*' and prohibited it. The government can refuse registration of legal entities, political parties, or associations that make such propaganda. They can also be required to discontinue their activities. A court may also suspend them.⁸¹

against *Volksverhetzung* (*incitement of the people*; a law originally from 1871, significantly extended in 1960 as a response to increasing antisemitism; since 1994 the law explicitly banned Holocaust denial) that also outlawed denial of the Holocaust. In recent years, several countries have started to mimic such laws to settle historical scores and used criminal law to impose a certain interpretation of history focusing on the legacy of Communism (and Nazism). See: Uladzislau Belavusau and Aleksandra Gliszczyńska-Grabias, "Memory Laws: Mapping a New Subject in Comparative Law and Transitional Justice," in *Law and Memory*, ed. Uladzislau Belavusau and Aleksandra Gliszczyńska-Grabias, 1st ed. (Cambridge University Press, 2017), 1,12-14, 18. See also: "Annex VII. An Overview of Holocaust Denial Laws in selected European Countries" on page 273 and further.

79 В. Путин, *Федеральный закон № 128-ФЗ "О внесении изменений в отдельные законодательные акты Российской Федерации,"* 2014, accessed April 12, 2019, http://www.consultant.ru/cons/cgi/online.cgi?req=doc&base=LAW&n=162575&fld=134&dst=1000000001_0&rnd=0.13828753569098706#06812523488748008; See also: Ivan Kurilla, *The Implications of Russia's Law against the "Rehabilitation of Nazism,"* PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo, August 2014.

80 See "2.2. History, European Integration and the Holocaust", page 48

81 The law explicitly referred to a range of Communist symbols: 1) Any depiction of state flags, coat of arms of: (a) the USSR and its constituent republics, (b) the Albanian People's Republic, (c) the Bulgarian People's Republic, (d) the German Democratic Republic, (e) the People's Republic of Rumania, (f) the Hungarian People's Republic, (g) the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, (h) the Federative People's Republic of Yugoslavia, and (i) their constituent socialist republics (except those currently in use by states); 2) The anthems of the USSR, and other symbols of the USSR and its constituent republics or their fragments; 3) Flags, symbols, images, or other attributes that reproduce a hammer, sickle, five-pointed star and/or a plough; 4) Symbols of the Communist Party or its elements; 5) Images, monuments, memorial signs, inscriptions dedicated to (a) activities of the communist party, (b) the institution of Soviet authority over the territory of Ukraine or other administrative territorial entities, (c) the persecution of participants in the struggle for Ukraine's independence in the 20th century (except monuments and memorial signs dedicated to defeat of the Nazis or the development of Ukrainian science and culture); 6) Representations of the Communist party's slogans, quotations of persons in party leadership positions (rayon party secretary or higher), in state leadership positions (in the USSR, Ukrainian SSR and other union or autonomous Soviet republics, in leadership position of government organs at the level of oblast or republican city (except quotations related to the development of Ukrainian science and culture, or members of Soviet state security services at all levels. 7) Geographic, commercial or institutional names containing: (a) the names or nicknames of persons in key leadership positions in the Party (rayon party secretary or higher) USSR, Ukrainian SSR or other union or autonomous Soviet republics, or employees of Soviet state security services, (b) the names of the USSR, Ukrainian SSR and other union or autonomous Soviet republics, (c) names related to activities of the communist party (including party congresses), anniversaries of the October revolution, the exercise of Soviet authority in Ukraine or other administrative-territorial entities, the persecution of fighters for independence (unless such names are related to defeat of the Nazis or the development of Ukrainian science and culture); 8) the name of the Communist Party. The law explicitly referred to the following Nazi symbols: 1) Symbols of the National Socialist German Workers Party (NSDAP); 2) The state flag and coat of arms of Nazi-Germany; 3) The name of the NSDAP; 4) Depictions and writings dedicated to events related to the NSDAP's activities; 5) Depictions of slogans of the NSDAP, quotations of persons in leadership positions in the NSDAP,

Article 4 outlawed the production, distribution, and the public use of Nazi and communist symbols. It exempted scientific and educational use, but only if it did not promote the criminal nature of totalitarian regimes. Article 5 stipulated that the state should investigate crimes committed by Nazi and communist regimes and support NGOs active in this field. It also prescribed the opening of the archival holdings related to both regimes.⁸²

Article 6 contained the crux of the law. It boldly stated that persons who violate its provisions '*shall be liable in accordance with the law*'. Article 7 subsequently amended several laws to enforce the responsibility created by the previous article. This criminalized the production and distribution of communist and Nazi symbols and set a maximum sentence of five years imprisonment for individual offenders. The provision also arranged an extended term of 5-10 years for governmental representatives, repeated and organized offenders or if mass media were involved.⁸³

The law outlawed naming streets, cities, towns, villages, enterprises, institutions, and organisations after the Communist Party and the German National Socialist Workers Party or their functionaries. It also made the renaming of existing geographical features with forbidden names mandatory. Likewise, monuments to communist and Nazi leaders should be destroyed.⁸⁴ The law essentially tried to erase all traces of totalitarian regimes from Ukraine's topographical map.

The law '*On Perpetuating the Victory over Nazism in the Second World War of 1939-1945*' was the last of the three narrative laws. We will call it the *law on the Victory over Nazism*. It complemented efforts to promote a post-communist narrative focussed on totalitarianism. According to the law, the state and all citizens share a sacred duty to show a respectful attitude towards the '*victory over Nazism in the Second World War*'. War veterans, participants in the '*Ukrainian liberation movement*' and victims of Nazism are entitled to a similar attitude. Since the law applied to the victory in the *Second World War*, the law used a European interpretation of the War. Although the law kept Victory Day (May 9), the main Soviet *Great Patriotic War* holiday, it changed the holiday's meaning: it now celebrated victory in the *Second World War*. In addition, it complimented Victory Day with a new *Day of Memory and Reconciliation* (May 8). Of these two, only Victory Day was a national holiday.⁸⁵

The law prescribed several measures to perpetuate the victory over Nazism, including commemorations on the *Day of Memory and Reconciliation* and *Victory Day*. It also mandated an honour guard at the Eternal Flame and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Kyiv. Because Ukraine laid claim to the Crimean Peninsula, the law unrealistically required a similar honour guard at the monument to the Unknown Seaman in Sevastopol. Other measures included the laying of wreaths and flowers at monuments and memorials and the promotion of '*objective*' and '*comprehensive*' research into Second World War history. The law also provided for state assistance for establishing the names of the dead, the missing, and the reburial of the remains of soldiers (articles 2 & 3).⁸⁶

The Cabinet of Ministers had to establish a national register of protected Second World War monuments. State and local budgets should pay for their maintenance. Finally, the law cancelled the law '*On the Perpetuation of the Victory in the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945*'

high government office and the administration of Nazi-Germany and territories occupied by it between 1935-1945. See: *Ibid*.

82 Порошенко, *Закон України № 317-VIII/2015*.

83 *Ibid*.

84 *Ibid*.

85 П. Порошенко, *Закон України № 315-VIII про увічнення перемоги над нацизмом у Другій світовій війні 1939-1945 років*, 2015, accessed December 18, 2017, <http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/go/315-19>.

86 *Ibid*.

(which it copied almost verbatim).⁸⁷

Essentially, the law did away with the concept of the *Great Patriotic War* but also copied some of its constituent components into the new memory cult of the Second World War (such as Victory Day, existing monuments, and commemorations such as the wreath layings). The law effectively decommunized and de-Sovietised Ukraine's experiences during the war.

The *Law on Access to the Archives of the Repressive Bodies of the Communist Totalitarian Regime of 1917-1991*, was the least controversial of the four laws. It established the right to access archival information of the Soviet Security apparatus (article 1) and determined that the archival artefacts of certain '*repressive organs*' should be handed to the Institute of National Remembrance (article 2 and 3).⁸⁸ This law mainly had some practical problems: Heorhiy Kasianov, who has worked with these archives extensively, indicated that their sheer volume would overwhelm the institute's 70-man strong archival staff.⁸⁹ In addition, the transfer would make documents unavailable for an extended period, since the institute would have to prepare an inventory and describe the documents.⁹⁰

From the historian's point of view, the opening of archives is positive and practical problems are understandable. Nevertheless, historians seem to have neglected a possible ideological issue. The Institute of National Remembrance is a political institution. It aims at codifying a canonical version of Ukrainian history and wants to discard unwanted elements. The law entrusts the institute with the management of certain archives. Given the precarious relationship between power and memory, it seems unwise to give the institute control over the very same archives that it needs to fulfil its political agenda.⁹¹ The law potentially empowers the institute to realize this.

The Decommunization Laws and Europe: The Legal Perspective

The decommunization laws had many legal flaws. For starters, they have been introduced with great haste and without genuine debate in parliament and society. As there was no Communist Party in the Rada, the opposition was not registered.⁹² Opponents have also remained silent.⁹³

Scholars of Ukrainian history, foreign and domestic, opposed the history laws. Seventy scholars published an open letter and requested president Poroshenko and Rada speaker Hroysman to reconsider the '*law on totalitarian regimes*' and the '*law on the independence struggle*'. They claimed that these laws contradicted fundamental political rights, such as the right to freedom of speech, casting a shadow over Ukraine's commitment to democratic principles. They also objected to the lack of debate on the laws. The scholars also feared that the laws would impede questioning the OUN's or UPA's legitimacy because of their

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ П. Порошенко, *Закон України № 316-VIII/2015 про доступ до архівів репресивних органів комуністичного тоталітарного режиму 1917-1991 років*, 2015, accessed December 18, 2017, <http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/go/316-19>.

⁸⁹ Касьянов, "Историческая политика и 'мемориальные законы,'" 45–46.

⁹⁰ Mykhailo Haukhan, "The Case of Decommunization," *Крытыка*, last modified May 2015, accessed September 28, 2017, <https://krytyka.com/en/solutions/opinions/case-decommunization>.

⁹¹ For this relationship, see also Aleida Assman's concepts Storage and Functional Memory as discussed in: "1.2. Canonization: Institutionalizing Memories", page 22..

⁹² Ilya Nuzov, "The Dynamics of Collective Memory in the Ukraine Crisis: A Transitional Justice Perspective," *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 11, no. 1 (March 2017): 148.

⁹³ Oxana Shevel, *Decommunization in Post-Euromaidan Ukraine. Law and Practice*, PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo (PONARS Eurasia, January 2016), 2–3, accessed September 26, 2017, http://www.ponarseurasia.org/sites/default/files/policy-memos-pdf/Peppm411_Shevel_Jan2016.pdf.

crimes, ideology, and collaborationism with the Germans.⁹⁴

In a thorough legal analysis, the Council of Europe's Venice Commission and the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR) joined the concerned scholars. Their report focussed solely on the *law on totalitarian regimes* and concluded that it breached national and international regulations, including the Ukrainian constitution and the European Convention for Human Rights.⁹⁵

According to the report, international and Ukrainian law permitted the state to ban and/or criminalize (propaganda with) certain symbols. Obviously, this restricted numerous freedoms, such as the freedom of expression, association and the right to free elections. The law, therefore, had to pass tests of legality, legitimacy, and necessity in a democratic society. Any restriction of the right to free elections also had to be proportional. The legal dictum of '*no penalty without law*' was inviable under any circumstance. The report concluded that the laws might serve legitimate aims, but that their provisions were imprecise and this jeopardized these legal principles. The law's vagueness created uncertainty about the acceptability of certain expressions and the government could also exploit it for arbitrary interference.⁹⁶ Combined with excessively high penalties, this could lead to a '*chilling effect*' that could stifle the freedom of expression.⁹⁷

Likewise, the report concluded that the list of symbols was too exhaustive and too extensive. For instance, it outlawed the state flags, coat of arms and *other* symbols of the USSR (and its constituent republics, such as Ukrainian SSR) and other communist states. Similarly, the law outlawed the anthems of these republics *or their fragments*. The ban on reproductions of communist symbols, such as the hammer and/or sickle and the five-pointed star, was equally vague. The list of Nazi-Symbols was similarly sketchy. The report mentioned that the European Court Human Rights previously judged such general bans impermissible.⁹⁸

The ban on propaganda of totalitarian symbols was equally vague. It defined propaganda as 1) publicly denying the criminal nature of communist or Nazi regimes, 2) disseminating information aimed at finding excuses for the criminal nature of communist or Nazi regimes, and 3) to produce, disseminate or publicly use products with communist or Nazi symbols. This definition did not allow a clear distinction between propaganda and expressions protected as free speech by the European Convention of Human Rights. The law also failed to provide a list of specific crimes that may not be denied. The wording '*excuses for*

94 The letter was signed by: David Albanese, Tarik Cyril Amar, Dominique Arel, Eric Aunoble, Martin Aust, Mark R. Baker, Omer Bartov, Harald Binder, Uilleam Blacker, Marko Bojcum, Jeffrey Burds, Marco Carynnyk, Heather J. Coleman, Markian Dobczansky, Sofia Dyak, Maria Ferretti, Evgeny Finkel, Rory Finnin, Christopher Ford, J. Arch Getty, Christopher Gilley, Frank Golczewski, Mark von Hagen, André Härtel, Guido Hausmann, John-Paul Himka, Adrian Ivakhiv, Kerstin S. Jobst, Tom Junes, Andreas Kappeler, Ivan Katchanovski, Padraic Kenney, Olesya Khromeychuk, Oleh Kotsyuba, Matthew Kott, Mark Kramer, Nadiya Kravets, Olga Kucherenko, John J. Kulczycki, Victor Hugo Lane, Yurii Latysh, David R. Marples, Jared McBride, Brendan McGeever, Javier Morales, Tanja Penter, Olena Petrenko, Simon Pirani, Yuri Radchenko, William Risch, Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe, Blair Ruble, Per Anders Rudling, Steven Seegel, Anton Shekhovtsov, James Sherr, Volodymyr Sklokin, Iryna Sklokina, Yegor Stadny, Andreas Umland, Ricarda Vulpius, Zenon Wasyliv, Lucan Way, Anna Veronika Wendland, Martin Schulze Wessel, Frank Wolff, Christine Worobec, Serhy Yekelchik, Tanya Zaharchenko and Sergei Zhuk. For the letter, see: David Albanese et al., "Open Letter from Scholars and Experts on Ukraine Re. the So-Called 'Anti-Communist Law,'" last modified April 29, 2015, accessed June 3, 2016, <http://krytyka.com/en/articles/open-letter-scholars-and-experts-ukraine-re-so-called-anti-communist-law>.

95 European Commission for Democracy Through Law (Venice Commission) and OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR), *Joint Interim Opinion on the Law of Ukraine on the Condemnation of the Communist and National Socialist (Nazi) Regimes and the Prohibition of Propaganda of Their Symbols*, Opinion (Strasbourg and Warsaw: Venice Commission for Democracy Through Law & OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, December 21, 2015), 27, accessed December 21, 2017, [http://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD\(2015\)041-e](http://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD(2015)041-e).

96 *Ibid.*

97 *Ibid.*, 22.

98 *Ibid.*, 19–20.

the criminal nature’ could also lead to the conclusion that *any statement* showing an aspect of these regimes in a positive light was criminal.⁹⁹

Even in democratic societies, there are legitimate grounds to ban associations or political parties, but only in exceptional circumstances. It should be a measure of last resort and proportional to the offences committed.¹⁰⁰ The Cabinet of Ministers subsequently instated a ban on three political parties, including the Communist Party, because they used the epithet ‘communist’. This ban did not pass the test of proportionality.¹⁰¹ The judicial experts of the Verkhovna Rada unsuccessfully raised similar concerns.¹⁰² In short, Svitlana Khilyuk, a Ukrainian jurist, characterized the law as ‘*getting rid of a headache with the help of a guillotine*’.¹⁰³

Legal concerns about the proportionality were not limited to the *law on totalitarian regimes*. The historian Andriy Portnov expressed his amazement about the *law on the independence struggle*, because it banned ‘*falsification of history*’, without specifying what a falsification constituted. The law also left unclear who was the competent authority to judge something a falsification.¹⁰⁴ Although the law did not exactly criminalize denial of the legitimacy of ‘*fighters for Ukrainian independence*’, they did so implicitly and in vague terms, declaring it ‘*unlawful*’.¹⁰⁵ At a minimum, the vagueness demonstrated the low quality of the law. It also allows the government to interpret the law in a way that suits it.

All such legal concerns placed the laws at odds with European integration, a key Ukrainian policy goal. Democratic standards, the rule of law and human rights are important for successful integration.

The Decommunization Laws and Europe: Non-Legal Problems

The authors of the open letter discussed above also pointed to several non-legal problems connected with the law. They objected to the wholesale condemnation of the Soviet era as an ‘*occupation of Ukraine*’ and the invalidation of the memory to Ukrainian soldiers in the Red Army. They also claimed that the laws could aid Russia and harm relations with key allies such as Poland and Germany.¹⁰⁶ Heorhiy Kasianov even claimed the history laws were similar to the Soviet history they meant to counteract. Anticommunist iconoclasm reminded him of the destruction of Ukrainian national(ist) monuments by the Bolsheviks. The law simply reversed the outcomes of communism on Ukrainian history but left its methods for enforcing historical interpretations in place.¹⁰⁷ We will discuss some examples of such objections below.

99 Ibid., 20.

100 Касьянов, “Историческая политика и ‘мемориальные законы,’” 43.

101 European Commission for Democracy Through Law (Venice Commission) and OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR), *Joint Interim Opinion*, 25–26.

102 Касьянов, “Историческая политика и ‘мемориальные законы,’” 39–40., See the “Висновок Головного науково-експертного управління 09.04.2015” at Ляшко, Олег Валерійович et al., *Проект Закону № 2558 про засудження комуністичного та націонал-соціалістичного (нацистського) тоталітарних режимів в Україні та заборону пропаганди їх символіки*, 2015, accessed December 21, 2017, http://w1.c1.rada.gov.ua/pls/zweb2/webproc4_1?pf3511=54670.

103 Khilyuk as cited in Antonina Kozyrska, “Decommunisation of the Public Space in Post-Euromaidan Ukraine,” *Polish Political Science Yearbook* 45 (December 12, 2016): 134.

104 Portnov, as cited in Volodymyr Kulyk, “On Shoddy Laws and Insensitive Critics,” *Крытыка*, last modified May 2015, accessed September 28, 2017, <https://krytyka.com/en/solutions/opinions/shoddy-laws-and-insensitive-critics>.

105 David R. Marples, “Volodymyr Viatrovych and Ukraine’s ‘Decommunization’ Laws,” *Крытыка*, last modified May 2015, accessed September 28, 2017, <https://krytyka.com/en/print/solutions/opinions/volodymyr-viatrovych-and-ukraines-decommunization-laws>.

106 Albanese et al., “Open Letter from Scholars and Experts on Ukraine Re. the So-Called ‘Anti-Communist Law.’”

107 Касьянов, “Историческая политика и ‘мемориальные законы,’” 43.

The Polish Imbroglia: Volhynia 1943

In previous chapters, we have discussed the controversial nature of the OUN and UPA in Poland. Heroization of the *'fighters for independence'* potentially troubles Polish-Ukrainian relations. Of all contentious chapters, the ethnic cleansing of Poles by the UPA in Volhynia in 1943 stands out. According to the history laws' author, Viatrovych, there was no ethnic cleansing. Instead, a Polish-Ukrainian civil war in which both sides committed violence in equal measure engulfed Volhynia.¹⁰⁸

Viatrovych claims any statement to the contrary is a *'falsification of history'* and the *law on the independence struggle* made it unlawful to deny the legitimacy of UPA's struggle because of its ideology and crimes. Seen from a Polish perspective, Viatrovych's interpretation of the events is unacceptable. That Polish politicians objected was logical. Shortly before the laws' introduction, Polish president Bronisław Komorowski addressed the Ukrainian parliament. He asserted that many Poles considered the proposed law as a sign of disrespect. He also claimed that it indicated Ukraine's low appreciation of its strategic partnership with Poland.¹⁰⁹

In response to the laws, the Polish parliament adopted a government-sponsored statement that called the Volhynian massacres a genocide.¹¹⁰ This was both a statement of discontent with the Ukrainian law and a domestic Polish history policy initiative. Responses in Ukraine and by the Polish opposition were negative.¹¹¹ In November 2017, the tensions increased: the Polish minister of Foreign Affairs, Witold Waszczykowski, initiated procedures to bar people with *'extreme anti-Polish attitudes'* from entering Poland. This move caused angry responses in Ukraine. Viatrovych – a Ukrainian civil servant(!) – responded with outrage. He reminded Waszczykowski that Russia banned him from entering the country back in 2008. Poland was now imitating this supposed anti-Ukrainian move. Instead, Poland should respect Ukrainian law.¹¹²

The Ukrainian law caused cracks in Polish-Ukrainian relations. This becomes even more apparent if we consider that shortly before the Polish recognition of the Volhynian massacres as a genocide, a group of moderate politicians from the Polish government party, the right-wing *Prawo i Sprawiedliwość*, visited Kyiv. They wanted to dissuade the Rada from glorifying those who murdered Poles, to prevent a downturn in Polish-Ukrainian relations. The Rada had no regard for their arguments. Subsequently, the Kyiv City Administration even rechristened *Moscow Avenue* to *Stepan Bandera Avenue*. This decision, stifled moderate voices in Poland, damaging bilateral relations, and making Russia a laughing third party.¹¹³

108 A claim Viatrovych further worked out in a recent monograph: Володимир В'ятрович, *За лаїтунками "Волині-43". Невідома Польсько-Українська Війна* (Харків: Клуб Сімейного Дозвілля, 2016).

109 Andrii Portnov, "Clash of Victimhoods: The Volhynia Massacre in Polish and Ukrainian Memory," *OpenDemocracy*, last modified November 16, 2016, accessed November 21, 2016, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/od-russia/andrii-portnov/clash-of-victimhood-1943-volhynian-massacre-in-polish-and-ukrainian-culture>.

110 Simon Lewis, "Wolyń: Towards Memory Dialogue between Poland and Ukraine," *OpenDemocracy*, last modified October 27, 2016, accessed November 21, 2016, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/od-russia/simon-lewis/wolyn-towards-memory-dialogue-poland-ukraine>. For the decision by the Polish Sejm, see: Marek Kuchciński, *Uchwała Sejmu Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej z dnia 22 lipca 2016 w sprawie oddania hołdu ofiarom ludobójstwa dokonanego przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich na obywatelach II Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej w latach 1943–1945*, 2016, accessed December 21, 2017, [http://orka.sejm.gov.pl/opinie8.nsf/nazwa/625_u/\\$file/625_u.pdf](http://orka.sejm.gov.pl/opinie8.nsf/nazwa/625_u/$file/625_u.pdf).

111 Lewis, "Wolyń."

112 Barbara Bodalska, "Poland Seeks to Deny Entry to Those with 'Extreme Anti-Polish Attitudes,'" trans. Viorica-Valeria Ciobanu Viobanu, EURACTIV.Com, last modified November 3, 2017, accessed December 21, 2017, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/news/poland-seeks-to-deny-entry-to-those-with-extreme-anti-polish-attitudes/>.

113 Shekhovstov in Andreas Umland, "Oekraïnes herdenkingspolitiek belemmert Europese integratie," *Raam op Rusland*, last modified September 29, 2016, accessed January 25, 2017, <http://www.raamoprusland.nl/dossiers/oekraïne/285-oekraïnes-herdenkingspolitiek-belemmert-europese-integratie>.

A mutual fear for Russia and resentment of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact seemed to prevent a severe decline in Polish-Ukrainian relations. Polish and Ukrainian politicians even joined forces in mutual history policy initiatives: in October 2016, the parliaments of both countries, issued a joint declaration, condemning the pact and negative experiences with Nazi and Soviet rule.¹¹⁴ They even managed to contextualize the Donbas in their narrative of totalitarian oppression:

*We bring attention to the fact that the implementation of an aggressive foreign policy by the Russian Federation, the annexation of the Crimea, the support and realization of an armed intervention in Eastern Ukraine, the transgression of fundamental international legal norms and treaties, the non-fulfilment of agreements concluded with Ukraine by the Kremlin, and the conduct of a hybrid information war are a danger for the peace and security of Europe in its entirety.*¹¹⁵

The two parliaments called for cooperation between Ukraine and NATO and future membership of Ukraine in the alliance. They also ‘*encouraged all European partners to show unity and international solidarity to protect a united Europe from external aggression*’ and called on all Europeans to remember the causes and the consequences of the Second World War.¹¹⁶

The 2016 declaration simply neglected the issue of the OUN-B and UPA.¹¹⁷ Ukraine and Poland could unite against a common enemy at the price of not resolving the conflict and contentious history between the two countries.¹¹⁸

In 2018, more cracks appeared in the relationship between both countries. The Polish Sejm adopted a controversial ‘Holocaust law’. It imposed hefty penalties for accusing Poles of (co)-responsibility for Nazi-crimes (a provision on which the Polish government later backtracked).¹¹⁹ The law also referred to crimes committed by Ukrainian nationalists against Poles and Jews and their collaboration with Nazi-Germany.¹²⁰ This indicated increasing Polish discontent. Ukraine’s glorification of OUN and UPA undermined foreign partners and damage attempts of building a modern and European state in Ukraine.¹²¹ Of course, the mutual distrust of Russia does much to bring Ukraine and Poland together, but the potential to drive the countries apart continues to exist.

Countering the *Acquis Historique*: On the Equivalency and Heroization of War Criminals and Fascists

The history laws suggested the equivalency of Nazism and communism and heroized the OUN and UPA. Even if we allow for changes to the EU’s *acquis historique* to integrate com-

114 Portnov, “Clash of Victimhoods”; Lewis, “Wołyń.”

115 А. Парубій, *Постанова Верховної Ради України № 1704-VIII/2016 про Декларацію пам’яті і солідарності Верховної Ради України та Сейму Республіки Польща*, 2016, accessed November 28, 2016, <http://zakon5.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1704-19>.

116 Ibid.

117 Portnov, “Clash of Victimhoods.”

118 Lewis, “Wołyń.”

119 “Full Text of Poland’s Controversial Holocaust Legislation,” *The Times of Israel*, last modified February 1, 2018, accessed February 16, 2018, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/full-text-of-polands-controversial-holocaust-legislation/>; “Poland U-Turn on Holocaust Law,” June 27, 2018, sec. Europe, accessed April 15, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-44627129>.

120 “Full Text of Poland’s Controversial Holocaust Legislation.”

121 Umland, “Oekraïnes herdenkingspolitiek.” The Polish historian Łukasz Adamski, who analyzed the recent interactions between Ukraine and Poland on the Volhynian matter, as well as the Polish domestic context issued a similar warning. See: Łukasz Adamski, “Kyiv’s ‘Volhynian Negationism:’ Reflections on the 2016 Polish-Ukrainian Memory Conflict,” *Journal of Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society* 3, no. 2 (2017): 285.

munist crimes (as argued in chapter 2¹²²), the history laws still contradict the *acquis*.

At first sight, the provisions in the *law on totalitarian regimes* that outlawed denial of the criminal nature of communist and Nazi regimes resemble Holocaust denial laws. Many Western European countries have such laws.¹²³ Nevertheless, the Ukrainian law is different: Christopher Gilley and Per Anders Rudling pointed out that anti-holocaust denial laws protect the memory of the victims. The Ukrainian laws mainly protect the memory of perpetrators from critical inquiry. Much like Kasianov, they claimed this resembled Soviet methods of establishing history. They considered this ironic: Ukraine is trying to reckon with the legacy of totalitarianism using a method common to all totalitarian systems: legislating historical truth.¹²⁴ Other scholars drew such analogies. Even some supporters of decommunization criticized this aspect of the law: Alexander Motyl believed that it would transform Ukraine in a freer, more tolerant, and just and open society. He also agreed with the idea that Nazism and communism were equally criminal. Nevertheless, he claimed that the history laws undermined their own purpose because they restricted Ukrainians from using their freedoms.¹²⁵

The laws also failed to establish the moral equivalency of Nazism and communism and created a new kind of inequality between the two totalitarian systems and their crimes. As discussed, the *law on totalitarian regimes* contained an extensive list of banned communist symbols. It banned a much shorter list of Nazi symbols, even though many of them are in use in Ukraine. The Azov battalion – a nationalist militia that fights in the Donbas – currently uses several Nazi symbols, such as the Black Sun and the Wolfsangel.¹²⁶ The law favours a negative appreciation of the Soviet past over a negative appreciation of Nazism. It essentially claims that communism was the greatest crime that befell Ukraine in the previous century. From a historiographical viewpoint, this is an interesting position. Nevertheless, it is incompatible with Ukraine's intention to integrate into Europe. Even if we allow for a new evaluation of communist crimes in the European *acquis historique*, its basic conceptions cannot completely be reversed. If Ukraine wants to integrate with Europe, it must go further than equating the two totalitarian systems; it will also have to introduce the category of Ukrainian complicity. The de-communization laws only transformed Ukrainians into mere victims.¹²⁷

The decommunization laws combined criminalizing communism and denying its contribution to Ukraine's development with lionizing Ukrainian nationalism and its heroes. The laws were part of a larger concerted effort. For instance, on October 14, 2014 president Poroshenko issued a decree that created a new national holiday: '*Defender of Ukraine Day*' (*Den zakhystnyka Ukrayiny*). The same decree abolished the originally Soviet '*Defender of the Fatherland Day*' (*Den zakhysnyka Vitchyzny*), observed yearly on February 23.¹²⁸

This was a further shift away from the Soviet narrative of history, as *Defender of the Fatherland Day* had deep roots in Soviet history: The Soviet leadership introduced it in 1922 as 'Red Army Day', celebrating the founding of the Red Army and its fighting against German forces in 1918. After a few alterations (*Day of the Soviet Army* in 1946, *Day of the Soviet Army and*

122 See, "2.5. New Totalitarianism after the 2004 EU Enlargement" on page 46 and further, and "2.6. New Historiographical Approaches: The Bloodlands Controversy" on page 51 and further..

123 See also "Footnote 137" on page 178 for a comparison of Holodomor and Holocaust denial laws.

124 Christopher Gilley and Per Anders Rudling, "The History Wars in Ukraine Are Heating Up," accessed December 14, 2016, <http://historynewsnetwork.org/article/159301>.

125 Alexander J. Motyl, "Kiev's Purge," *Foreign Affairs*, April 28, 2015, accessed September 27, 2017, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/ukraine/2015-04-28/kyivs-purge>.

126 Gilley and Rudling, "The History Wars."

127 Nuzov, "The Dynamics of Collective Memory," 149.

128 Петро Порошенко, *Указ Президента України № 806/2014 про День захисника України*, 2014, accessed December 21, 2017, <http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/go/806/2014>.

Navy in 1949), the Russian Federation rechristened it *'Defenders (pl.) of the Fatherland Day'* in 1993. Subsequently, it became a non-working day and received the name *'Defender (sg.) of the Fatherland Day'* in 2002. In 1999, Ukraine followed and instituted the holiday as well.¹²⁹

Poroshenko explicitly meant to transition Ukraine from Soviet and Russian conceptions of history. He announced the abolishment on Independence Day (August 24). In his speech, he remarked *'Ukraine will not celebrate this holiday according to the military-historical calendar of a neighbouring country. We will honour the defenders of our fatherland, not those of a foreign country'*.¹³⁰ These 'Ukrainian heroes' supposedly fought a long struggle for independence:

*Our Armed Forces, National Guard, Border Service and Volunteer Battalions deservedly inherited the military glory of the ancient Ukrainian chieftains' military outfits and of the Zaporizhian Army, the Ukrainian Sich Riflemen and the soldiers of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, the Army of the Ukrainian People's Republic, and those Ukrainians, who during the Second World War, defended Ukraine in the ranks of the Red Army.*¹³¹

The date for *'Defender of Ukraine Day'* (October 14) was of special significance, as a nationalist myth claims the UPA was founded on that day in 1942.¹³² As we know, this was a falsification, meant to promote an image of the UPA as a democratic nationalist movement.¹³³ Poroshenko made no mention of any crimes committed by Ukrainian nationalists, showing the same lack of introspection as the decommunization laws.

Poroshenko's speech also demonstrated an inherent contradiction in the historical narrative promoted by his administration: On the one hand, all Ukrainians – in both the Red Army and nationalist outfits – shared in the victory over Nazism in the Second World War. On the other hand, the Red Army occupied the country and communism was external to Ukrainian history. This ambiguity showed that it is impossible to exclude communism from Ukrainian history.

Heroization of the OUN and the UPA also contrasted with the need to commemorate the Holocaust. It seems as almost nothing changed in this respect: In September 2014, Poroshenko attended the commemoration of the 73rd anniversary of the Babyn Yar massacre. At that occasion, the president also laid a wreath in honour of OUN members executed there. He essentially claimed that the nationalists suffered the same fate as Jewish Holocaust victims and failed to acknowledge OUN-M's involvement at Babyn Yar and other sites.¹³⁴ Such policies were reminiscent of Yushchenko's position vis-à-vis the Holocaust. Of course, Poroshenko spoke out against antisemitism but did little act against it.¹³⁵ There still is a lack

129 For the institution of the Ukrainian "Defender of the Fatherland day", see: Л. Кучма, *Указ Президента України № 202/99 про День захисника Вітчизни*, № 202/99, 1999, accessed March 26, 2019, <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/go/202/99>.

130 П. Порошенко, "Треба бути постійно готовими захищати незалежність," *Офіційне інтернет-представництво Президента України*, last modified 2014 2014, accessed March 26, 2019, <https://www.president.gov.ua/ua/news/treba-butii-postijno-gotovimi-zahishhati-nezalezhnist-preziden-33535>.

131 "Порошенко зарікся святкувати день захисника вітчизни за календарем сусідів," *Українська правда*, last modified August 24, 2014, accessed December 21, 2017, <http://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2014/08/24/7035657/>.

132 Gilley and Rudling, "The History Wars"; Per Anders Rudling and Christopher Gilley, "Laws 2558 and 2538-1: On Critical Inquiry, the Holocaust, and Academic Freedom in Ukraine," *Політична Критика*, last modified April 29, 2015, accessed December 14, 2016, <http://ukraine.politicalcritique.org/2015/04/laws-2558-and-2538-1-on-critical-inquiry-the-holocaust-and-academic-freedom-in-ukraine/>; David R. Marples, "Russia's Perceptions of Ukraine: Euromaidan and Historical Conflicts," *European Politics and Society* 17, no. 4 (October 2016): 427.

133 See "4.3. A Story of Heroism: Ukrainian Radical Nationalism during the 1930s and 1940s", page 106.

134 Rudling and Gilley, "Laws 2558 and 2538-1"; Gilley and Rudling, "The History Wars."

135 Poroshenko made such statement at the 75th anniversary of the tragedy. See: Karel Berkhoff, "Hoe herdacht

of true bottom-up commemoration of the Holocaust and, since 1991, Ukraine made little progress in this matter.

During the 75th anniversary, Ukrainian historians gathered in the Ukrainian House, the former Lenin Museum in Kyiv. They blamed the Soviet Union for not allowing Jews to commemorate the Babyn Yar massacre. They did not initiate a debate on the massacre itself. Some voices even wanted to blame Babyn Yar on ‘*both totalitarian regimes*’. Some historians discussed the OUN’s radical ideology but did not mention the presence of the OUN-(M) members during the mass murder. According to Karel Berkhoff (who was a participant himself), no historian wanted to touch the collaboration by the OUN, because of the ban on ‘*insulting fighters for independence*’ in the law on the independence struggle.¹³⁶ At present, the project resulted in a website, explaining the tragedy’s history and a building competition.¹³⁷ In September 2019, project announced that the Austrian architectural bureau Querkraft Architekten won the competition. However, the announcement contains no concrete end date for the construction.¹³⁸ Even now, many roadblocks still lay ahead. Especially if we consider the context of the 2015 history laws, which make a Holocaust centred-historical narrative in combination with a self-critical approach difficult. Given previous experiences, we have to see whether these plans can be brought to full fruition. A lot will depend on Ukraine’s political climate.

The heroization of OUN and UPA fighters was not without problems. Their popularity does not mean that the majority of Ukrainians accept the fascist ideology of these movements or condone their ethnic cleansings. The political scientist Volodymyr Kulyk asserted that the Russian occupation of Crimea and the separatist movement in the Donbas explains the popularity. Russia’s actions against Ukraine transformed the struggle of the OUN and UPA into a contemporary struggle.¹³⁹ This is a fair point, but the heroization of these nationalists actually helps Russia conduct a propaganda war against Ukraine. The Human Rights activist Ilya Nuzov, claimed that it made little sense to glorify Bandera and Shukhevych when the opponent vilified these figures. Nevertheless, he also asserted that it was senseless to erase these figures from Ukrainian history to show respect for European values.¹⁴⁰ Somehow, Ukraine must find a way to bridge Soviet and nationalist narratives of history, while at the same time complying with its goal of European integration. For all the reasons outlined above, the decommunization laws are counterproductive in this sense.

It is Never Enough: Inconsistencies and Insufficiencies in the Decommunization Laws

The decommunization laws contradicted themselves or copied earlier Soviet practices and put them in a new Ukrainian nationalist form. Several other inconsistencies existed: For instance, the narrative of a single struggle for freedom and independence contained in the law on the independence struggle. The law even recognized ‘fighters’ who did not even want

Kiev na 75 jaar Babi Jar?,” *Raam op Rusland*, last modified September 27, 2016, accessed January 25, 2017, <http://raamoprusland.nl/dossiers/oekraïne/312-hoe-herdacht-kiev-75-jaar-babi-jar>.

136 *Ibid*.

137 “Меморіальний Центр Голокосту ‘Бабин Яр,’” *Меморіальний Центр Голокосту “Бабин Яр,”* accessed April 18, 2019, <http://babynyar.org/>; “Архітектурний Конкурс На Крайній Проект Меморіального Центру Голокосту ‘Бабин Яр,’” *Меморіальний Центр Голокосту “Бабин Яр,”* accessed April 18, 2019, <http://competition.babynyar.org>.

138 “Обрано Переможця Архітектурного Конкурсу На Крайній Проект Меморіального Центру Голокосту в Києві,” *Меморіальний Центр Голокосту “Бабин Яр,”* last modified September 9, 2019, accessed January 22, 2020, <http://babynyar.org/byhmc-news/posts/news/obrano-peremozca-arhitektturnogo-konkursu-na-krasij-proekt-memorialnogo-centru-golokostu-v-kiyev>.

139 Kulyk also refused to describe the ideology of these movements as ‘fascist’ and stuck to ‘integral nationalism’ instead. See: Kulyk, “On Shoddy Laws.”

140 Nuzov, “The Dynamics of Collective Memory,” 152.

to build an independent Ukrainian state.¹⁴¹ The law lumped up various ‘fighters’ with very different ideologies and goals. They included Ukrainian socialists, Russian monarchists, peasant insurgents, Ukrainian far-rightists, and Soviet dissidents. Ukraine’s *pater patriae* Mikhailo Hrushevskyyi (initially) wanted to establish a Ukrainian republic within a democratic Russian federation.¹⁴² Pavlo Skoropadskyyi led a conservative entity under German tutelage. Stepan Bandera (OUN-B) and Andriy Melnyk (OUN-M) fought for a mono-ethnic fascist Ukrainian state. Likewise, the OUN and UPA, the generation of Soviet dissidents of the 1960s, and Rukh in the 1990s had different goals and operated in different contexts.¹⁴³ The narrative of one coherent movement is too simplistic. In addition, many of the Soviet dissidents recognized by the law were even members of the communist Party. The *law on totalitarian regimes* outlaws their communism, but the *law on the independence struggle* bans insulting them or denying their legitimacy.¹⁴⁴

As outlined above, the laws had severe legal consequences. Nevertheless, they also failed to solve the long-standing and thorny issue of rehabilitation of OUN members and UPA fighters. As discussed in chapter 4, the law on rehabilitation adopted in the 1990s withheld rehabilitation to many because of technicalities.¹⁴⁵ Victims of non-judicial repressions or relatives of repressed people who lost the family income also received no compensation. Most importantly, people convicted for taking up arms against the Soviet Union (such as OUN members and UPA fighters) were also illegible.¹⁴⁶ The decommunization laws did not fix such problems but focussed on mainly symbolic declarations: they gave veterans of the nationalist movement a special status as ‘fighters for Ukrainian independence’, but failed to extend social grants equal to those given to Soviet veterans to them.¹⁴⁷ The ruling political parties only introduced legislation to this extent in 2018.¹⁴⁸ Although the extension was consistent with existing government policy, it was also a clear political message: the Rada adopted the law and president Poroshenko signed it in December. The law entered into force in March 2019, some one-and-a-half month before the first round of the presidential elections in which the – unpopular – Poroshenko unsuccessfully campaigned under the slogan ‘army, language faith’ (*armiya, mova, vira*), claiming that he was the only faithful defender of Ukraine.¹⁴⁹ The law was also a gesture to win the nationalist vote share.

141 Haukhman, “The Case of Decommunization.”

142 Gilley and Rudling, “The History Wars”; Haukhman, “The Case of Decommunization.”

143 Haukhman, “The Case of Decommunization.”

144 Ibid.

145 See “4.3. A Story of Heroism: Ukrainian Radical Nationalism during the 1930s and 1940s”, page 100 and further.

146 Анна Олійник, Роман Подкур, and Андрій Когут, *Відновлення прав жертв політичних репресій (Policy Paper)* (Київ: Європейський інформаційно-дослідницький центр, 2015), 8–12, 12–17, accessed September 19, 2017, http://www.cdvr.org.ua/sites/default/files/archive/policy_paper.pdf.

147 Portnov, “How to Bid Goodbye to Lenin in Ukraine.”

148 This law extended these privileges to the ‘persons who took part in all forms of armed struggle for the independence of Ukraine in the 20th century in the ranks of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, The Ukrainian Insurgent Army of Otoman Taras Borovets (Bulba) “Poliska Sich”, The Ukrainian revolutionary people’s army (UNRA), the armed subsection of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, who are recognized by the “Law on the legal status and honouring of the memory of fighters for Ukraine’s independence in the twentieth century” as fighters for Ukraine’s independence in the twentieth century’. For the law, see: П. Порошенко, *Закон України № 2640-VIII про внесення зміни до статті 6 Закону України “Про статус ветеранів війни, гарантії їх соціального захисту” щодо посилення соціального захисту учасників боротьби за незалежність України у XX столітті*, 2018, accessed April 15, 2019, <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/go/2640-19>. See also the bill’s information sheet in the parliamentary database: Юрій-Бордан Романович Шухевич et al., *Проект Закону 8519 про внесення змін до Закону України “Про статус ветеранів війни, гарантії їх соціального захисту” щодо посилення соціального захисту учасників боротьби за незалежність України у XX столітті*, 2018, accessed April 15, 2019, http://w1.c1.rada.gov.ua/pls/zweb2/webproc4_1?pf3511=64282.

149 For Poroshenko’s campaign strategy, see also: Christopher Miller, “Poroshenko Camp In Damage-Control Mode As Ukrainian Election Nears,” *RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty*, last modified March 13, 2019, accessed April 15, 2019, <https://www.rferl.org/a/poroshenko-camp-in-damage-control-mode-as-ukrainian-election-nears/29819376.html>.

Decommunizing the Ukrainian Landscape: A Troubled Exercise

While the Rada adopted the decommunization laws without much discussion, they also lacked wide support in Ukrainian society. The obligatory renaming of geographical places as prescribed by the *law on totalitarian regimes* demonstrated this.

The law set a fixed deadline for local governments to comply: November 21, 2015. By that date, they had to dismantle all communist monuments and rename geographical locations with 'forbidden' names. If a community, city or region failed to change its name, its head would have to decide before February 21, 2016. If the head failed or refused, the local state administration would have to intervene by May 21, 2016. The Verkhovna Rada had to ratify the new names. If a local administration did not make a decision, the Rada would do so based on a recommendation by the Institute of National Remembrance. As Ukraine lacked effective control over the Crimea and parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, local administrations did not comply and the latter procedure – technically – applied to these regions.¹⁵⁰

The Institute of National Remembrance published a list of 52 names subject to decommunization. It included all the usual suspects: Lenin, Marshal Georgy Zhukov (Soviet Chief of Staff in the *Great Patriotic War*) and many other leading Soviet figures. The list contained many functionaries of the Ukrainian Communist Party, but also foreigners such as Diaz Jose (General Secretary of the Spanish Communist Party, 1932-1942) and Palmiro Togliatti (Secretary General of the Italian Communist Party, 1926-1934, 1938-1964). Strangely enough, Stalin's name did not figure on the list. Nevertheless, rationales for inclusion on the list referred to him.¹⁵¹

The institute also published a list of nearly 1000 cities, municipalities etc. affected by the law. It included places named after people on the other list, but also places such as Krasnoarmiysk (Red Army), Krasnoznamenka (Red Banner), Oktyaberske (the October Revolution) and Pervomaysk (First of May). Dnipropetrovsk – Ukraine's third-largest city – was also included because the communist Hrihory Petrovskiy was its namesake.¹⁵²

Finding replacements for the forbidden names was challenging. The institute advised local administrations to revert to place names in use before the communist revolution. If such a name was associated with the Russian Empire, or if there was no pre-revolutionary name available, it suggested using closely related historical elements or geographical features (rivers, mountains etc.). It also considered names of economic or ethnic importance or historical events and persons related to a suitable settlement¹⁵³ The latter advice lent itself to honour events and persons from the Ukrainian Revolution (1917-1921), OUN and UPA, the *Nebesna Sotnya* and the ATO.

Far from all Ukrainians supported decommunization. Local authorities and populations sometimes contested name changes. Most interestingly, names referring to the nationalist canon have seldom replaced communist names on a one-by-one basis: out of the 300 settlements that changed their names by May 2016, only one new name referred to the Ukrainian Revolution. A similar development took place regarding name changes within cities: in Poltava, out of 115 streets, only eight referred to the Ukrainian Revolution. In

150 Kozyrska, "Decomunisation of the Public Space," 135–136.

151 "Список осіб, які підпадають під закон про декомунізацію," *Український інститут національної пам'яті*, accessed December 21, 2017, <http://www.memory.gov.ua/publication/spisok-osib-yaki-pidpadayut-pid-zakon-pro-dekomunizatsiyu>.

152 "Перелік міст і сіл до перейменування," *Український інститут національної пам'яті*, accessed December 21, 2017, <http://www.memory.gov.ua/rename>.

153 "Декомунізація назв населених пунктів та районів України: підстави, процес, підсумки," *Український Інститут Національної Пам'яті*, accessed September 29, 2017, <http://memory.gov.ua/page/dekomunizatsiya-nazv-naselenikh-punktiv-ta-raioniv-ukraini-pidstavi-protses-pidsumki>.

Kharkiv, only one of the 168 renamed streets. Kyiv was an exception; it renamed eight out of twenty-five streets after 'leaders of the struggle for independence' or 'participants in the Ukrainian Revolution'.¹⁵⁴ Western Ukraine was already decommunized in the 1990s and little name changes were necessary. Nevertheless, Western Ukrainian local administrations often chose names unrelated to the nationalist canon: in Lviv and Chernivtsi nostalgia for the Habsburg Empire showed itself.¹⁵⁵

In some cases, local authorities sought to manipulate the process: they kept names as they were, but changed their etymology. In Kharkiv, the local administration proposed to rename Kalinin Street after Konstantyn Kalinin, an aircraft engineer. This way, it no longer referred to the Soviet revolutionary Mikhail Kalinin. Similarly, the Spartakist lane (named after the eponymous 1919 German uprising) was renamed after the Roman slave rebellion of 73-71 BCE.¹⁵⁶ In Dnipropetrovsk, the local administration proposed to name itself after St. Peter instead of the communist Hrihoriy Petrovsky. The city of Illichivysk (named after Vladimir Ilyich Lenin) suggested the prophet Elijah (*Illya*) as its new namesake.¹⁵⁷ The Institute of National Remembrance declared such proposals unacceptable.¹⁵⁸ The opposition also showed itself in other ways: in Kharkiv activists threatened to disrupt hearings that discussed name changes, necessitating their cancellation.¹⁵⁹

Overall, the implementation of decommunization was slow: In December 2015, the responsible Verkhovna Rada Committee ratified only 108 of the proposals by local administrations. It recommended others to reconsider the Institute of National Remembrance's recommendations. The committee deemed 19 new names in violation of Ukrainian legislation. In February 2016, the Rada finally ratified another 175 name changes, which was 18% of the target set by the Institute of National Remembrance. For name changes of local communities, about 47% of the target was reached.¹⁶⁰

Despite such opposition, there was no large-scale active political resistance. A lack of enthusiasm was the main response.¹⁶¹ It is highly questionable, whether the effort is worthwhile while the country is fighting a war and has severe economic and political problems. Attempts to decommunize Ukraine, only highlighted how little the Ukrainian political leaders were concerned with the country's real problems. It seemed like they used nationalist rhetoric and symbols as a smokescreen.

7.6. Beyond the History Laws: Examples of the Anti-Soviet Memory Consensus in Practice

The Institute of National Remembrance not only articulated the anti-Soviet memory consensus in legislation. For instance, it organized several open-air expositions, such as the one on the Maidan to honour the centenary of the Ukrainian Revolution in the fall of 2017. It told the story of the failed military struggle to establish a Ukrainian state at the end of the First World War. The Ukrainian People's Republic (1917-1921), the Western Ukrainian People's Republic (1918-1919) and Pavlo Skoropadskyi's Ukrainian State (The Hetmanate, April – December 1918) were the exposition's focus. It expounded a standard hagiographic nationalist narrative and made no attempt at self-critical attitude. For instance, it did not

154 Kravchenko, "Fighting Soviet Myths," 446–447.

155 Eleonora Narvselius and Niklas Bernsand, "Lviv and Chernivtsi: Two Memory Cultures at the Western Ukrainian Borderland," *East/West: Journal of Ukrainian Studies* 1, no. 1 (August 9, 2014): 69–70.

156 Kravchenko, "Fighting Soviet Myths," 462; Shevel, *Decommunization*, 4.

157 Kozyrska, "Decommunisation of the Public Space," 136–137.

158 *Ibid.*; "Декомунізація назв населених пунктів."

159 Nuzov, "The Dynamics of Collective Memory," 149.

160 Kozyrska, "Decommunisation of the Public Space," 138–139.

161 *Ibid.*, 142.



Figure 25: The Open-Air Exhibition on the Maidan, October 21, 2017.

The main slogan of the exposition, partly visible on the panel on the right, was 'one hundred years of struggle for independence' (Photo: Nicolaas A. Kraft van Ermel)

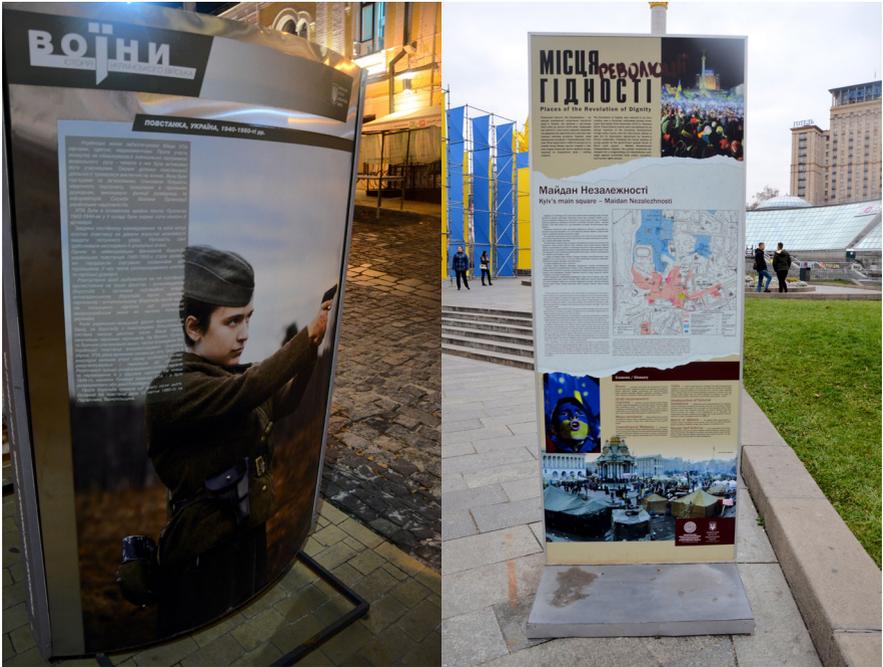


Figure 26: Examples of the Two Open-Air Expositions.

Left: an UPA insurgent, right a panel on the events on the Euromaidan. Photos: Nicolaas Kraft van Ermel, October 20 and 21, 2017.

mention crimes committed by Ukrainian nationalist soldiers, such as pogroms against the Jewish population.¹⁶²

Throughout Kyiv, the institute also installed a series of displays called *Places of the Revolution of Dignity (Mistyra Revolyutsiyi Hidnosti)*. They honoured participants of the Euromaidan, especially the *Nebesna Sotnya*, and meticulously reconstructed the events in 2013–2014. Near Kyiv’s Andriivskiy Uviz, one of the more popular tourist streets, another series of panels called ‘*Soldiers – The history of the Ukrainian Army*’ was installed. These weather-proofed cardboard panels could easily be mass-produced and placed on various other sites throughout the country. This exposition depicted various military outfits throughout history and (re)claims them as Ukrainian. They included ‘ancient’ soldiers from medieval states such as the Kingdom of Galicia, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Kyivan Rus, and the Zaporizhzhian Cossacks. Modern outfits such as WW I and revolution era armies, the Ukrainian Carpathian Sich, the UPA, and present-day fighters in the Donbas were also included. The message was clear: Ukraine had a long history of fighting for freedom and independence and this struggle was still relevant today.¹⁶³

The Ukrainian Second World War Campaign

The narrative of a single united struggle for Ukraine’s freedom during the Twentieth Century also showed itself in other efforts. In 2014, the Institute of National Remembrance launched the campaign ‘*The Ukrainian Second World War (Ukrayinska Druha Svitova)*. This campaign was related to the laws on the Victory over Nazism, on Totalitarian Regimes, and on the Liberation Movement.

As part of the campaign, the Institute of National Remembrance published a 28-page leaflet about Ukraine’s Second World War. It promoted the idea that Ukrainians participated on all fronts: ‘*Ukrainians fought against Hitler and his allies in the Polish, Soviet, Canadian, French, American and Czechoslovak armies on the European, African, Asian theatres of war, and in the Pacific and Atlantic oceans.*’ It also claimed Ukraine as a victim of two totalitarian regimes: ‘*Ukrainians became cannon fodder for two dictators – Hitler and Stalin. Every third man in the Red Army was lost (compared to every 20th in the British army).*’¹⁶⁴ This was just another hagiographic campaign that conjoined various Ukrainians in different outfits, the UPA, the Red Army and other allied forces, in one united struggle to defeat Nazism.¹⁶⁵

The institute launched a well-designed multimedia web-



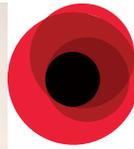
Figure 27: A poster Published by the Institute of National Remembrance Promoting May 8th as ‘Day of Remembrance and Reconciliation’. The poster features UPA Fighter Stepan Patrash and Red Army officer Ivan Zaluzhnyi shaking hands. The text underneath exclaims: ‘Victors over Nazism’. Переможці над нацизмом, n.d., accessed February 6, 2018, http://www.memory.gov.ua/sites/default/files/userupload/peremozhci_nad_nacizmom.jpg.

162 Based on observations on October 21, 2017. Photographs of the open-air exposition are available upon request.

163 Based on observations, October 20 & 21, 2017

164 *Україна у Другій світовій війні. До 70-річчя перемоги над нацизмом у Другій світовій війні* (Київ: Український інститут національної пам'яті, 2015), 4, accessed September 19, 2017, <http://www.wv2.memory.gov.ua/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/ukr-region.pdf>.

165 On the Institute of National Remembrance’s website, an extensive overview of the campaign is provided: ‘Українська Друга світова,’ *Український інститут національної пам'яті*, accessed February 3, 2018, <http://www.memory.gov.ua/page/ukrainska-druha-svitova>.



1939–1945
ПАМ'ЯТАЄМО
ПЕРЕМАГАЄМО

Figure 28: The Second World War Campaign in the Museum of Ukrainian History, Kyiv

Photo: Nicolaas Kraft van Ermel, October 22, 2017. Right: The stylized poppy logo of the campaign with the slogan 'We remember, we prevail'. Source: Український інститут національної пам'яті, "Для завантаження," Українська друга світова, accessed February 5, 2018, <http://www.ww2.memory.gov.ua/dlya-zavantazhennya/>.

site as part of the campaign.¹⁶⁶ It hosted several sections with text, photos, videos, maps, infographics, biographies, and a timeline. The site also displayed digital copies of physical (canvas or cardboard) expositions, like the ones discussed above. The website was mainly in Ukrainian, but it included some English versions of videos. In general, the website displayed a narrative of heroism, without paying attention to human rights violations committed by Ukrainians. On the other hands, it highlighted crimes by others, such as the Soviet deportations of Crimean Tatars.¹⁶⁷

The section 'figures' (*postati*) was particularly revealing. It contained fifteen short biographies of Ukrainian Second World War participants. Some served in the ranks of the Red Army or the NKVD, three in the UPA and five in other Allied armed forces. The institute cunningly put much effort in presenting the supposed 'united' and multi-front Ukrainian war effort in an inclusive way. It included representatives of several ethnic minorities, such as the ethnic Crimean Tatar Amet-Khan Sultan (a Red Army soldier) and Vladimir Chermoshentsev (an ethnic Russian UPA fighter).¹⁶⁸ The website also mentioned US Marine Corps Sergeant Michel Strank, who was of Ukrainian Lemko descent and one of the US servicemen to hoist the American flag at Iwo Jima (made famous by the iconic photo).¹⁶⁹ The institute

166 Український інститут національної пам'яті, "Українська друга світова," *Українська друга світова*, accessed February 3, 2018, <http://www.ww2.memory.gov.ua/>.

167 See: "Карта депортації кримських татар" (UkrInform, 2014), accessed February 3, 2018, http://www.ww2.memory.gov.ua/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/deportatsia_krymskikh_tatar-1-1.png.

168 Український інститут національної пам'яті, "Амет-Хан Султан," *Українська друга світова*, accessed February 3, 2018, <http://www.ww2.memory.gov.ua/amet-han-sultan/>; Український інститут національної пам'яті, "Володимир Чермошентцев," *Українська друга світова*, accessed February 3, 2018, <http://www.ww2.memory.gov.ua/volodymyr-chermoshentsev/>.

169 Український інститут національної пам'яті, "Майкл Стренк," *Українська друга світова*, accessed February 3, 2018, <http://www.ww2.memory.gov.ua/maykl-strank/>.

also included two women, to be as inclusive as possible.¹⁷⁰ The aforementioned leaflet also mentioned Oleksiy Berest, a Soviet Red-Army lieutenant, who was one of the Soviet soldiers who raised the Soviet Banner of Victory over the Reichstag in Berlin in May 1945.¹⁷¹

It is highly questionable whether all these combatants believed they fought the same struggle. Did the diaspora Ukrainians in American or Canadian service see themselves as fighting for Ukraine's freedom? Did Soviet servicemen fight for an independent and free Ukraine or for a Socialist Soviet motherland? Although the campaign's website supposes a unified Ukrainian effort, the institute also claimed that *'until the last day of the war, September 2, 1945, Ukrainians fought on the different fronts of the global conflict, often one against the other'*.¹⁷² The narrative of unity during the war is problematic. The campaign was also inconsistent with *law on totalitarian regimes*. This law designated the Soviet NKVD a criminal organization, but the campaign honoured some NKVD servicemen.

The campaign influenced the National Museum of Ukrainian History in Kyiv, which integrated a display in its standing exposition. It featured the campaigns: a stylized red Poppy flower with a black centre. The similarity to British First World War commemorations was probably no coincidence. The poppy flower's centre also displayed the years 1939-1945 and embedded the war in a pan-European Second World War narrative. The display also depicted the slogan *'Never Again' (Nikoly Znovu)* and featured photos of Nazi and Soviet atrocities during the war. The inclusion of this display was one of the sparse changes to the standing exposition between 2013 and 2017.¹⁷³

The campaign also influenced the newly opened *'Museum of the Occupation of Kyiv' (Muzei Okupatiyi Kyeva)*, a branch of the Historical Museum of the City of Kyiv located in the *Park Partyzanskoyi Slavy (Park of Partisan Glory)*. The museum opened its doors in July 2017. Before, its building housed a museum about Soviet Partisan Warfare during *the Great Patriotic War*.¹⁷⁴

Its website claimed that:

Rethinking historical events in the context of governmental-national policy necessitate a truthful presentation of the city's history in the most dramatic periods of the Ukrainian peoples' life: from the beginning of the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917 to the restoration of state sovereignty and independence in 1991. The museum has the task to demonstrate the features of the numerous occupations of Kyiv during the twentieth century. This forms the basis for the accentuation of its

ary 3, 2018, <http://www.wv2.memory.gov.ua/majkl-strenk/>.

170 Український інститут національної пам'яті, "Євдокія Завалій," *Українська друга світова*, accessed February 3, 2018, <http://www.wv2.memory.gov.ua/yevdokiya-zavaliij/>; Український інститут національної пам'яті, "Галина Кузьменко – «Надя»," *Українська друга світова*, accessed February 3, 2018, <http://www.wv2.memory.gov.ua/galyyna-kuzmenko-nadya/>.

171 Український інститут національної пам'яті, "Українська друга світова," 4, 25. Berest is also discussed in "5.4. Consolidating the Nation: Rehabilitation and Glorification of the OUN and UPA under Yushchenko," page 146 and in "6.4. The Return of (neo-)Soviet Discourse: Yanukovych, the Great Patriotic War and OUN-UPA," page 171.

172 Український інститут національної пам'яті, "Про проект," *Українська друга світова*, accessed February 5, 2018, <http://www.wv2.memory.gov.ua/pro-proekt/>.

173 The structure of the main exposition has only changed to a limited extent: the museum removed some displays promoting Viktor Yanukovych and added some exhibits about the Euromaidan. Besides those changes and the addition of the new Second World War display, the museum's stationary exposition remained the same between August 2013 and October 2017 (Based on personal observations).

174 Since this museum is a municipal organization, it falls under the jurisdiction of the Kyiv City Administration. See: "АНОНС: Відкриття експозиції Музею окупації Києва," *Історична правда*, accessed February 3, 2018, <http://www.istpravda.com.ua/short/2017/06/26/149986/>.

exposition's content.

Two phenomena accompany each occupation regime's existence: resistance and cooperation. They characterize the behaviour of the local population. For contemporary Ukraine, these topics are extremely relevant. Therefore, the museum offers a new look at the occupation regimes, above all, the Soviet one, which's policies in Ukraine are still perceived as controversial.¹⁷⁵

According to the website, the ideologies of the occupation regimes, their terror, and the destruction of Kyiv's urban environment were major topics for discussion.¹⁷⁶



Figure 29: An infographic from the Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance's Campaign. Photo: Nicolaas Kraft van Ermel, October 24, 2017

The museum expounded the narrative of the Soviet Occupation: its exposition started with attempts to establish a Ukrainian state at the end of the First World War, their failure and the subsequent struggle for Ukrainian independence in the 20th century. The contemporary context also showed itself in the exposition, as it discussed the ongoing war in the Donbas. It also displayed an infographic on 'the UPA's Anti-Nazi Front' (*Antinazistskyi Front UPA*).¹⁷⁷ It came from the Institute of National Remembrance's Second World War Campaign and presented many nationalist myths: Such as a more than 2.500 supposedly anti-Nazi actions, the claim that UPA fighters became victims of Nazi persecution. This presentation lauded the OUN and UPA, but lacked critical appreciation of their ideologies or crimes. The museum did clearly not fulfil the promise made on its website: its exposition only accused the

175 "Музей окупації Києва," *Музей історії міста Києва*, accessed February 3, 2018, <http://www.kyivhistorymuseum.org/uk/filiyi-muzeyu/muzey-okupatsiyi-kiyeva>.

176 Ibid.

177 This, and other, infographics can be freely downloaded from the institute's website: "Інфографіка Про УПА," *Офіційний Веб-Сайт УПІІ*, accessed July 29, 2019, <http://www.memory.gov.ua/page/infografika-pro-upa>.

Soviet Union and Nazis of crimes committed against Ukrainians.¹⁷⁸

The museum strongly resembled the narrative told by the Museum of the Soviet Occupation opened in 2007 by the Vasyl Stus Memorial Society with the support of then-president Yushchenko. In 2007, this was still a narrative on the fringes of the debate and only promoted by civil society organisations. Now a government-sponsored museum actively promoted it. The Museum of the Occupation of Kyiv was also in a better financial position: its exposition was much more professional than the one in the Museum of the Soviet Occupation's.¹⁷⁹

Debunking 'Myths': The Institute of National Remembrance's Publications

As part of the memorial campaign, the Institute of National Remembrance also published several books. *War and Myth: The Unknown Second World War* is a particularly interesting example.¹⁸⁰ This book was a joint effort of fifteen Ukrainian historians and published by a Kharkiv-based publisher, the Institute of National Remembrance, the private Study Centre for the Liberation Movement (TSDVR) and the Electronic Archive of the Liberation Movement.

The historian Oleksandr Zinchenko, affiliated with the Institute of National Remembrance, wrote the introduction. He claimed that Soviet propaganda created many myths on Ukrainian Second World War history that are still influential today. Such myths omit and falsify history, or blame enemies for errors committed by the Soviet Union. According to Zinchenko, they shared an underlying narrative that all 'true' Ukrainians fought for the Soviet Union and those who did not were not genuine Ukrainians. This black-and-white Soviet discourse clouded a 'correct view' of the war.¹⁸¹ In the afterword, Viatrovych joined Zinchenko and stressed the need to dispel Soviet myths because Putin uses them as a weapon against Ukraine. They also represented the last remnants of the Soviet identity in Ukraine that needs to be replaced with a Ukrainian identity.¹⁸²

Zinchenko also brought the war in a contemporary context: he lauded the Ukrainian effort to re-evaluate totalitarianism and the Soviet legacy. He contrasted this development with 'Putin's Russia', where historians called Stalin 'an effective manager' and it was impossible to evaluate the Soviet legacy. Zinchenko also accused Russia of a form of Holocaust-denial: Russians did not consider the Holocaust as the greatest catastrophe of the twentieth century, because they view the collapse of the Soviet Union as their seminal tragedy.¹⁸³ Essentially, Zinchenko weaponized the Holocaust against Russia. This is hardly compatible with the European creed of the Holocaust's uniqueness.

The book seeks to debunk fifty supposed Soviet myths. Some of them are essentially different perspectives on the war: For instance, the book asserted that the *Great Patriotic War* was an incorrect name for the *Second World War*.¹⁸⁴ Similarly, the book disclaims that the

178 Based on observations on October 24, 2017. A limited number of photographs of the museum's exposition are available upon request.

179 Based on observations on October 24, 2017.

180 The Ukrainian title of the book *Війна and Миф* clearly echoes the title of Tolstoy's epic *War and Peace* (Rus.: *Война і Мир*; Ukr: *Війна і Мир*). See: Олександр Зінченко, Володимир В'ятрович, and Максим Майоров, eds., *Війна і Миф. Невідома друга світова* (Харків: Клуб Сімейного Дозвілля, 2016).

181 Олександр Зінченко, "Війна міфам," in *Війна і Миф. Невідома друга світова*, ed. Олександр Зінченко, Володимир В'ятрович, and Максим Майоров (Харків: Клуб Сімейного Дозвілля, 2016), 6–9.

182 Володимир В'ятрович, "Післямова, або Міфи і війна," in *Війна і Миф. Невідома друга світова*, ed. Олександр Зінченко, Володимир В'ятрович, and Максим Майоров (Харків: Клуб Сімейного Дозвілля, 2016), 249–254.

183 Зінченко, "Війна міфам," 10.

184 Яна Примаченко, "Велика Вітчизняна війна," in *Війна і Миф. Невідома друга світова*, ed. Олександр Зінченко, Володимир В'ятрович, and Максим Майоров (Харків: Клуб Сімейного Дозвілля, 2016), 13–16.

Soviet Union was always an irreconcilable enemy of Nazi Germany.¹⁸⁵ Some of the supposed myths are essentially easily disproved falsifications. For instance, the Soviet claim that the Nazis destroyed the Dniprohes Dam at Zaporizhzhia, as well as the Kreshchatyk and Cathedral of the Assumption in Kyiv is clearly false: they were actually destroyed by Soviet forces to deny the Germans their use.¹⁸⁶

While the book debunked such myths, it replaced them with many nationalist myths. For instance, the book argued that the UPA wanted to establish an independent, unified, and multi-ethnic Ukrainian state. Many ethnic minorities also supposedly participated in the UPA. The OUN and UPA were also not antisemitic: they only considered Jews who supported the Soviet regime a problem. Some Jews even served as doctors in the UPA (but the book failed to mention that the UPA later killed them).¹⁸⁷ While the book recognized Ukrainian participation in the Holocaust, it claimed that Ukrainians never organized such violence themselves. It also dispelled the idea that the OUN-affiliated *Nachtigall* battalion participated in the 1941 Lviv pogroms or that OUN members participated in the Babyn Yar massacre.¹⁸⁸ As we mentioned in the introduction, the *Nachtigall battalion* was present in Lviv during the pogroms. The unit did not participate, but individual members might have (they at least had the opportunity). At the same time, we know that members of the OUN-M provided logistical support for the Babyn Yar massacre.

The new myths created by the book are problematic from the perspectives of historiography, domestic policy, and European integration. It does little to bring Ukraine closer to Europe since the new myths are inherently incompatible with the EU's *acquis historique*. Much like the decommunization laws, it also helped Russia to promote an image of an ultra-nationalist (neo)-fascist Ukraine.

War and Myth was but one example: after the Euromaidan, the number of nationalist publications surged. Almost every Ukrainian bookstore now offers a range. Volodymyr Viatrovych is one of the most prolific writers in this genre. He even went as far as to publish a volume of fictional romanticized 'could-be-true' historical stories. These stories feature real or fictional historical figures who reflect on their actions. In one story, a UPA fighter and Red Army veteran meet and conclude they both fought for Ukraine. Their story ends with an alcoholic toast on their grandsons, who both currently serve in the Donbas.¹⁸⁹ This book promoted a narrative of unity during the war, in a form of prose. Should a historian with Viatrovych's public exposure use fiction to promote his dubious historiographical claims?

The publication of a non-fiction literary work by Viatrovych resembled similar publications in Russia (Perhaps showing a shared development or root in the Soviet era?). Russia has an enormous market for 'alternative history' publications: they combine nationalist views with other ideas such as antisemitism, neo-paganism, and conspiracy theories.¹⁹⁰ Within this genre, neo-Stalinism is a popular sub-genre. Authors such as Nikolay Starik-

185 Максим Майоров, "Радянський Союз завжди був непримиреним противником," in *Війна і Міф. Невідома друга світова*, ed. Олександр Зінченко, Володимир В'ятрович, and Максим Майоров (Харків: Клуб Сімейного Дозвілля, 2016), 17–20.

186 Горобець, "Дніпрогес у Запоріжжі, Хрещатик та Успенський собор у Києві підірвали нацисти," in *Війна і Міф. Невідома друга світова*, ed. Олександр Зінченко, Володимир В'ятрович, and Максим Майоров (Харків: Клуб Сімейного Дозвілля, 2016), 81–58.

187 Володимир В'ятрович, "УПА боролася за моноетнічну державу," in *Війна і Міф. Невідома друга світова*, ed. Олександр Зінченко, Володимир В'ятрович, and Максим Майоров (Харків: Клуб Сімейного Дозвілля, 2016), 173–178.

188 Сергій Рябенко, "Український націоналісти масово винищували євреїв під час війни, особливо у Львові та Бабиному Яру," in *Війна і Міф. Невідома друга світова*, ed. Олександр Зінченко, Володимир В'ятрович, and Максим Майоров (Харків: Клуб Сімейного Дозвілля, 2016), 139–144.

189 Володимир В'ятрович, *Неісторичні мити. Нариси про минулі сто років* (Харків: Клуб Сімейного Дозвілля, 2017), 166–171.

190 Marlène Laruelle, "Conspiracy and Alternate History in Russia: A Nationalist Equation for Success?," *Russian Review* 71, no. 4 (2012): 565–580.

ov¹⁹¹ and Arsen Martirosian rely on such devices to promote revisionism of Stalin's role in (world) history. Such histories often employ a semi-fictionalized format and only sparsely use scholarly references.¹⁹²

Less fictional, but no less problematic was the publication of a series of books, *Likbez: Istoria bez tsenzury (Fighting illiteracy: History without censorship)*, published by the same Kharkiv-based publisher as most of Viatrovych's books. It was an initiative by the Kyiv-based historian Kyrylo Halushko, affiliated with the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences.¹⁹³ The series contains ten volumes that propose alternatives to established 'anti-Ukrainian myths', resembling the *War and Myth* approach. The Institute of National Remembrance's campaigns clearly influenced the series: The volume on Soviet Ukraine has the subtitle *Illusions and Catastrophes*. The volume on the Second World War bears the subtitle *From the Reichstag to Iwo Jima. In the heat of the war. Ukraine and Ukrainians in the Second World War*.¹⁹⁴ Another volume is dedicated to Ukraine's military history and resembles the open-air exposition discussed above: it presents the history of the Ukrainian military from the Middle Ages to the contemporary war in the Donbas.¹⁹⁵ In its chapter on the Second World War, it uses the narrative of a unified struggle of all Ukrainians against totalitarianism:

*Ukraine was the main object of desire for both dictators. Stalin needed Ukrainian resources for the successful implementation of industrialisation, but without a powerful army, it was impossible to implement the idea of a world revolution. Hitler perceived the Lebensraum for German colonization and the creation of the thousand-year Reich in Ukraine. In addition, the collision between the Soviet Union and Germany was inescapable.*¹⁹⁶

The volume is as problematic as all examples discussed thus far: it failed to discuss collaboration with the Germans, Ukrainian nationalist ideology, and wartime conduct stayed undiscussed. It does, however, discuss UPA's supposed democratic turn in 1943.¹⁹⁷ For the most, the book was yet another hagiographic history of the Second World War in Ukraine that shifted the blame for crimes on Poles, Germans, and Soviets, and failed to criticize Ukrainians.

This book, and other publications shows the great influence of the Institute of National Remembrance on historical interpretations in Ukraine. The institute essentially uses the

191 Starikov has published many works on all episodes of Russian and Soviet history and on contemporary issues. The book *Who forced Hitler to attack Stalin* is but one example. In it, Starikov put forward the thesis that Hitler was essentially a British agent; He attacked the Soviet Union supposedly because the British forced him: *Once Hitler decided to attack the USSR, it meant that England blessed him for this campaign. It cannot be another way. Precisely Great Britain systematically set off Germany against Russia, and eventually the English managed to force the Führer to attack our country*. See: Николай Стариков, *Кто заставил Гитлера напасть на Сталина?*, Erub ebook edition. (Москва: Питер, 2008). Such works are also similar to those of Russia's Minister of Culture, Vladimir Medinskiy (discussed in "3.6. The Great Patriotic War again Centre Stage: A Recycled National Myth under Putin and Medvedev", page 79).

192 Philipp Chapkovski, "'We Should Be Proud Not Sorry': Neo-Stalinist Literature in Contemporary Russia," in *War and Memory in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus*, ed. Julie Fedor et al. (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2017), 189–207. See especially page 192.

193 See also a review of the series: Iryna Vushko, "Historians at War: History, Politics and Memory in Ukraine," *Contemporary European History* 27, no. 01 (February 2018): 112–124.

194 For a complete overview of the series, see: Дар'я Кучеренко, "«Історія без цензури» від «Клубу Сімейного Дозвілля», *Друг читача*, January 12, 2016, accessed February 6, 2018, <https://vsiknygy.net.ua/news/43185/>.

195 Кирило Галушко, ed., *Поле битви - Україна. Від володарів ступу до кіборгів. Воєнна історія України від давнини до сьогодення* (Харків: Клуб Сімейного Дозвілля, 2016).

196 Андрій Руккас, "Україна та Українці у другій світовій війні," in *Поле битви - Україна. Від володарів ступу до кіборгів. Воєнна історія України від давнини до сьогодення*, ed. Кирило Галушко (Харків: Клуб Сімейного Дозвілля, 2016), 290–291.

197 *Ibid.*, 330.

present-day war situation to monopolize the historical debate. It pushed other interpretations off as ‘unpatriotic’ or ‘anti-Ukrainian’. Combined with the all-out incredibility of the (neo)-Soviet narrative since the Euromaidan, there was just little room for liberal voices to make themselves heard.

The Museum of the Second World War

In previous chapters, we have discussed the Museum of the *Great Patriotic War* in Kyiv. The Institute of National Remembrance’s efforts have also influenced it. Vyacheslav Kyrylenko, the Minister of Culture, changed its name to *Museum of the Second World War* in 2015.¹⁹⁸ The museum also altered its standing exposition to display an interesting Soviet and Ukrainian nationalist amalgam. The museum is still located in a Soviet environment: underneath the Mother-Motherland statue in the *Park Slavy*. The same Soviet sculptures that depict the Red Army’s defence of Kyiv in 1941 and other heroic efforts still greet the visitors. However, the speakers in the park no longer sound Soviet war songs.

A modern T-64BV tank now stands in front of the museum. Ukrainian forces captured it near the town of Slovyansk in the Donetsk oblast. A sign explains that the tank was never a part of the Ukrainian army’s inventory, had Russian military markings and contained a battery produced in Russia. In short: this was a Russian tank, used to aid the separatists in the Donbas. The tank’s addition to the Park Slavy was no coincidence: the museum’s standing exposition also gave much attention to the war in the Donbas. It displayed self-made armoured vehicles and personal belongings of deceased soldiers and volunteers. In Octo-



Figure 30: Contemporary Elements in the Museum of the Second World War in Kyiv.

Top left: The Russian tank in front of the museum. Top right: a homemade armoured vehicle used in fighting in Slovyansk in May 2014. Bottom left: one of the exhibits in the exposition ‘objective history’ showing UPA fighters Petro Melnyk and Vasyl Kyziv in 1946 and a reconstruction of the picture with Vitaliy Halchynskyi and Volodymyr Panin, fighters in the Donbas in June 2016. Bottom right: the personal belongings of Ukrainians defending the Donetsk Airport in 2014. Photos: Nicolaas A. Kraft van Ermel, October 22, 2017.

198 “Музей Великої Вітчизняної війни буде переіменовано,” *Міністерство культури України*, last modified May 16, 2015, accessed February 5, 2018, http://mincult.kmu.gov.ua/control/publish/article?art_id=244926511.

ber 2017, the museum also hosted a temporary exposition called ‘*Objective History*’. This exposition showed photo’s in pairs: a historical photo of UPA insurgents and a re-enactment by contemporary Ukrainian soldiers and volunteers in the Donbas. The new addition to the standing and temporary expositions claimed continuity between the UPA’s anti-Soviet struggle and the present-day war against separatists, mimicking the narrative of the Institute of National Remembrance.¹⁹⁹

The standing exposition did not change much. It still presented Ukraine’s war history through the narrative lens of the *Great Patriotic War*. The museum had already brought its exposition more in line with international perceptions before 2014. For instance, the exposition acknowledged the existence of the secret clauses of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact. Unlike the *Law on the Second World War*, the exposition still claimed 1941 as the beginning of the war. The exposition was still much a story of the unsuccessful, but a heroic defence of the Soviet motherland, the horrors of Nazi occupation, and the subsequent heroic and glorious victory over fascism. The exposition still ended in the unquestionably Soviet ‘*Hall of Glory*’ (Zal Slavy), which contains the names of all Ukrainians decorated as ‘*Heroes of the Soviet Union*’ during the *Great Patriotic War*.

One part of the exposition changed drastically: Exposition room eight was previously devoted to Soviet partisan warfare in Ukraine. It kept this dedication, but the museum added references to the ‘*Ukrainian resistance movement*’. The room’s information leaflet explained:

In the Hall, two the main directions of struggle of Ukrainian people during the Nazi occupation are represented by two Roads of War. They divide the Hall in two parts. On the one hand, there are a cart with weapons, equipment, uniforms and household items of those patriots who in the ranks of the nationalist or rebels struggled not only with the Nazis but against all other occupants of their native land, for an independent Ukrainian state.

On the other hand, on the Road of War there are the relic materials of Soviet partisans and members of underground organizations, including weapons and equipment, a so-called “clandestine corner” with improvised printing devices, in the hall there is a dugout with authentic items in it.²⁰⁰

The new display only mentioned that UPA fought against the Soviet Union implicitly; the idea that all Ukrainians fought a unified struggle against Nazi Germany was central.

The museum wanted to present the Ukrainian war effort as part of a common European experience: ‘Materials displayed in the hall prove that the Resistance movement in Ukraine was part of a pan-European one during the Second World War’.²⁰¹ The idea behind this is that Ukraine is a European country. Yet, the standing exposition failed to do so in many accounts: it did not account for black pages of Ukrainian history, the collaboration of Ukrainian nationalists with Germany, war crimes and the destruction of the Ukrainian Jewry.

The museum also exposed the inherent contradiction of Ukraine’s decommunization ef-

199 Based on observations on October 22, 2017.

200 Each room in the museum offers information leaflets at their entrance. They are available in several languages, but neither in Russian nor in Ukrainian. This text is taken from the English language text (obviously a translation from a Slavic original). A photograph of this information leaflet is available upon request. Based on observations on October 22, 2017.

201 A photograph of this information leaflet is available upon request. Based on observations on October 22, 2017.

fort: in every description of Ukraine's Second World War, the Red Army keeps appearing. Too many Ukrainians fought in the Red Army to dismiss it as 'unukrainian'. Since the Red Army served a regime inspired by communist ideology, this also showed the salience of the communist and Soviet past in the Ukrainian present. The decommunization based on a denial of communism as part of Ukrainian history will not work.

Burying the Dead: Intertwining Contemporaneity and Past at the Lychakiv Cemetery

The anti-Soviet memory consensus also displayed itself on the Lychakiv cemetery in Lviv. As discussed in chapter 4, the cemetery caused controversies before, because of the dual use as both a Ukrainian and Polish revolution era military cemetery.²⁰² After 1991, the cemetery gained two new burial fields. The first directly located beside the Polish *Cmentarz Orłąt Lwowskiach*, the second next to the cemetery's entrance. Both fields contained the final resting places of Revolution era Ukrainian soldiers and OUN and UPA veterans. The latter field also hosted a cenotaph for UPA leader Roman Shukhevych. After the Euromaidan, the cemetery gained even more conflicting layers of memory: five of the 'Nebesna Sotnya' found their graves on the second field'.²⁰³ The first field was extended and several as well: several soldiers and volunteers who died in the 'Anti-Terrorist Operation' in the Donbas were buried there. In 2019, their number was 59, but since the conflict is still ongoing, this



Figure 31: Impressions at the Lychakiv cemetery.

Top left: OUN and UPA graves next to the Polish *Cmentarz Orłąt Lwowskiach*. Top right: new graves with fallen soldiers and fighters in the Donbas. Bottom left: Nationalist graves close to the entrance of the Lychakiv cemetery, the big black grave monument in the top right corner is the cenotaph for Roman Shukhevych. Bottom right: the graves of Volodymyr Boykiv and Bohdan Ilkiv, two of the 'Nebesna Sotnya' buried at the Lychakiv cemetery. Photos: Nicolaas A. Kraft van Ermel, October 28, 2017.

²⁰² See "4.4. Coping with Black Pages: The Difficulty of Accounting for the Ukrainian Role in the Holocaust and Other Ethnic Violence", page 116..

²⁰³ "На Личаківському кладовищі друзі та близькі навідують Героїв Небесної Сотні," last modified February 20, 2017, accessed February 3, 2018, http://tvoemisto.tv/news/na_lychakivsomu_kladovyshchi_druzi_ta_blyzki_naviduyut_geroiv_nebesnoi_sotni_84045.html.

will probably increase.²⁰⁴ On both fields, the graves had the same style headstones as the other nationalist buried there.

The practice of burying present-day soldiers with past nationalists intertwines them and supports the Institute of National Remembrance's efforts. This is a problematic practice because it is questionable whether all buried at the Lychakiv cemetery fought for the same goals. How do the *Nebesna Sotnya's* protests against the corrupt and autocratic Yanukovych regime fit with the struggle for a fascist mono-ethnic Ukrainian state by the OUN and UPA? How does the fighting in defence of one's own country against Russian-backed separatists compare struggle of the OUN and UPA? Its current use risks legitimizing the goals of the OUN and UPA in the light of the ongoing war in Eastern Ukraine. In any case, the Lychakiv cemetery shows that the self-critical approach to Ukrainian history is still missing.

7.7. Chapter Summary

The Euromaidan initiated major political changes. The autocratic and corrupt Yanukovych regime collapsed and a new oligarch-backed regime formed. The political landscape changed, but existing oligarchic divisions shaped this process. Some oligarchs lost their influence; others enlarged theirs. The Party of the Regions disintegrated and the Opposition Bloc, its successor, did not manage to replace it. Likewise, the Communist Party dwindled and became irrelevant. Their ideological platform has also become irrelevant and nationalist narratives gained almost free play.

The Euromaidan normalized nationalist symbols, such as the Red-Black flag and slogan '*Glory to Ukraine! Glory to the Heroes*'. Several factors contributed to this: First, Yushchenko's history policies legitimized them. Second, Ukraine currently faces Russian aggression and a war in the Donbas. Third, nationalism was politically expedient to the new regime. It serves as a kind of window dressing to conceal inadequate handling of political and economic reforms and corrupt practices.

The popularity of nationalist symbols did not mean that the majority of the population accepted radical Ukrainian nationalism as a political ideology. The Maidan was a rather diverse protest movement and not necessarily nationalist. On the contrary, the Ukrainian radical right polled meagrely in subsequent elections. Furthermore, post-Euromaidan Ukraine has become more united as both Ukrainian speakers and Russian speakers accept each other as part of the same national collective.

The government used nationalist symbols as a platform for nation-building. They divorced them from their radical right-wing and fascist ideology and imbued them with a meaning that supports a new 'anti-Soviet memory consensus'. The new regime sought to institute it via the so-called decommunization effort, which continued unofficial and spontaneous dismantling of communist monuments in 2013-2014 (the *Leninopad*, or Lenin's fall).

The anti-Soviet memory consensus's main tenet is that Ukraine fell victim to foreign oppression throughout the 20th century. The Soviet Union and Nazi-Germany were the main culprits. The narrative transformed Ukrainian efforts to resist these regimes into one unified heroic struggle against oppression and occupation. From a historiographical viewpoint, this is problematic: it is questionable whether there was a Soviet occupation; Many Ukrainians supported communism and played leading roles in the Soviet Union. In addition: did

204 During a visit in October 2017, there were still fresh graves, without any final headstones, but simple wooden crosses and sand heaps. For the figure of 59, see: "Поле почесних поховань № 76 (Меморіал УГА)," *Личаківський некрополь*, accessed April 24, 2019, <http://lviv-lychakiv.ukrain.travel/uk/uchasnyky-ato/pole-pochesnykh-pokhovan-76-memorial-uga.html>.

the unity of Ukrainians promoted by the narrative exist? Did the socialists of the Ukrainian People's Republic, the conservatives of the Ukrainian State (Hetmanate), the fascist nationalists of the OUN and the UPA, the 1960s dissidents, the *Nebesna Sotnya* (i.e. those who died on the Maidan in 2013-2014) and those fighting in the Donbas after 2014 really fight for the same cause? Did they really share the same ideology? (At times, some of them have even opposed one another!). There was no single Ukrainian movement against Nazi Germany on all fronts of the war. (Diaspora) ethnic Ukrainians indeed fought in all theatres of the Second World War. The question whether they considered themselves part of one effort to liberate Ukraine remains unanswered.

It is also problematic that the narrative legitimizes the undemocratic OUN and UPA because of a present-day struggle against Russian aggression. Of course, not all Ukrainians share the OUN's and UPA's ideology, but slopes can be very slippery. Does one really honour the memory to the *Nebesna Sotnya*, who gave their lives protesting an undemocratic corrupt regime, by including them in one hagiographic history with undemocratic figures from the past?

The narrative's treatment of the Second World War was also problematic. It seeks to present Ukraine as a regular European country by referring to the war as the '*Second World War, 1939-1945*', as opposed to the Soviet '*Great Patriotic War, 1941-1945*'. The transition from one narrative to the other was not problematic, but the idea that Ukrainians were the main victim of the Second World War is. How does one prove it? How does this compare to the European dictum that the Holocaust has been the greatest crime in European history?

Furthermore, it proved difficult to exclude the Soviet war effort against Nazi Germany from Ukraine's Second World War. Too many Ukrainians fought in the ranks of the Red Army to cast it outside of Ukrainian history. It is futile to claim communism was not a part of Ukrainian history, because it was an integral part of Ukraine's historical experiences.

The present-day tense situation around Ukraine informed the anti-Soviet memory consensus. The new narrative was an answer to Russia's aggressive policy. Proponents of decommunization see it as an ideological weapon. Nevertheless, the policy defeated itself: It helped Russia to conduct propaganda against Ukraine. The heroization of OUN and UPA only aided Russia in promoting ideas about a fascist coup in Kyiv in 2014 and the stereotype of an ultra-nationalist fascist Ukraine. Ukrainian nationalism and Russia's assertive politics in Eastern Europe depend on each other, as they provide each other with raw materials.

The Holodomor featured as part of the anti-Soviet memory consensus but became less important. It lost its prominence for government policy. This was mainly because Yushchenko's policies already established the narrative of Ukrainian victimhood in the Holodomor. In addition, political use of the Holodomor always was subject to political imperatives. In the current political situation, there was no political necessity for a confrontation with domestic proponents of the (neo)-Soviet narrative of history. On the other hand, it was important to confront Russia. Other historical subjects, such as the OUN UPA and the Second World War were better suited to do that.

The Institute of National Remembrance spearheaded the institutionalization of the anti-Soviet memory consensus. It published books and undertook public campaigns to promote its narrative. Its efforts also influenced (museum) expositions and monuments throughout the country.

The introduction and implementation of four so-called '*decommunization laws*' was its main effort. They were an integral government policy to promote pride in a heroic Ukrainian past and diminished the status of communism in Ukrainian history. One of the laws aimed to perpetuate Ukraine's victory over Nazism in the Second World War (as opposed to the Soviet *Great Patriotic War* narrative). Another penalized using communist and Nazi sym-

bols. Consistent with this law, the Communist Party lost its recognition and could no longer participate in elections. The law also forced local governments to change their names or to rename streets and squares in their jurisdiction in order to remove all references to Communism from Ukraine's topography. A third declared publicly denying the legitimacy of the struggle for Ukrainian independence 'unlawful'. This made it more difficult to criticize the legacy of radical Ukrainian nationalism. A final law opened all archives of communist and Nazi oppressive organs and transferred them to the administration of the Institute of National Remembrance, possibly allowing for their ideological exploitation.

The history laws had many problematic aspects: they violated the rule of law and human rights. The laws were also vague and could be applied arbitrarily. They even reminded some scholars of Soviet methods for regulating history. The history laws showed how the legacy left by the communist system still influences Ukraine. Citing such concerns, scholars worldwide and several European institutions objected. They also troubled relations with Poland, because of the mass murder of Poles committed by the UPA in 1943. Ukraine risks losing a key regional ally if it keeps disregarding Polish sensibilities. The persistent denial of Ukrainian collaboration with the Nazis could also cause problems in Ukrainian-German relations. The decommunization laws were also incompliant with the *acquis historique*. They promoted an equivalency of Nazi and communist crimes. Even if we allow for the inclusion of communist crimes in the *acquis*, Ukraine fails to show the required self-criticism and the commemoration of Holocaust victims.

In a democratic society, it is also necessary for laws to have some public support. It is highly questionable whether this is the case, as the Rada adopted them without any real discussion. Obstruction of the laws' implementation, for instance not or inadequately changing topographic names, seems to indicate resistance to the history laws.

Overall, government policies during Poroshenko's presidency were problematic: they caused more problems than they solved and did not help Ukraine to introduce the necessary reforms to make the country future-proof.

Conclusion

The Inseparability of History, Memory and Politics

History is a key element of the so-called Ukraine crisis. This is not a novelty, as politicians have always used and abused history. As social constructions, history and memory are inherently political. They form the backbone of collectives such as nations. Social entities have a ‘collective’ or ‘social memory’, as first elaborated by the sociologist Maurice Halbwachs. The scholars Jan and Aleida Assman explained that an intricate social and political dynamic shapes it. Political power plays an important role in these ‘politics of memory’.

History is a form of social memory. The political use of history is a mode for the establishment of a collective canon that shapes social memory. The historians Edgar Wolfrum and Aleksei Miller called it the ‘politics of history’. Miller elaborated that politicians use history not so much out of a concern for the subject, but because a certain interpretation of history favours their political platforms.

In post-communist Eastern Europe, politicians used several instruments in their quest to establish their views of history, such as mass media, museums, monuments, and the education system. They also created special commissions or – sometimes – even special institutions (the so-called ‘institutes of national remembrance’). Furthermore, they introduced legislation to regulate history and enforced it through the legal system. This study calls such efforts ‘history policies’.

Ukraine’s Nation-Building Challenge

After independence, Ukrainian politicians introduced *history policies*. Their challenge was to build a new state and to supply it with a shared identity among citizens (i.e. nation-building). The ‘nation builders’ could not approach this subject in a vacuum, as several options were available. Ukraine could be a ‘narrow’ ethnic nation (limited to ethnic Ukrainians), or a ‘broad’ civic nation (open to all loyal Ukrainian citizens). They could also envisage Ukraine as a European nation, closely related to Russia, a Soviet construct, or a category of its own. All such conceptions required different historical narratives and therefore different history policies.

Politicians focused on Ukrainian history from its medieval antiquity to the present. Nevertheless, two episodes were most contentious and important: First, the artificial famine created by the Soviet regime in 1932-1933 to collectivize agriculture. Second, the difficult era of the late 1930s, and World War Two. The main famine-related question was whether Ukrainians fell victim as a nation (and the famine was, therefore, a genocide) or for other (political) reasons. The 1930s and the Second World War were even more difficult to digest. During this period, a radical fascist strand of nationalism rose to prominence. Ukraine also felt the destructive force of war, genocide, and ethnic cleansing. Interpreting it meant answering many difficult questions: To name but a few: Who was a true Ukrainian? How to deal with crimes committed against Jews, Poles, and other Ukrainians by nationalists? How is the collaboration of these nationalists with Nazi-Germany before and during the war best understood? Did the Soviet Red Army liberate Ukraine in 1944 or did it start a new period of foreign occupation?

Conclusion

After the Second World War, all European societies had to answer such questions. They did so in disparate ways. We have identified three generic models and used them as ideal types to gauge Ukraine's heading. These models evolved over time and were not static. They are also still changing. Furthermore, they had their own problems, inherent simplifications, and one-sided explanations of the past. Nevertheless, they are good lenses to look at developments in Ukraine. We have to be careful: they should not cloud our judgement; we cannot rule out the possibility of a specific 'Ukrainian model'.

Western Europe: History, European Integration and the Holocaust

A general Western European model served as the first ideal type. The horrors of the Second World War shocked Western European societies. They desired to prevent it from ever happening again. Societies united behind a so-called 'anti-fascist consensus': Europe supposedly resisted the evil of fascism. Europeans had to secure this achievement by building welfare states and by economic and political cooperation between states. (Supranational) European integration was a way to support it. The Cold War and the perceived threat from the communist East served as further catalysts: in the 1950s, many considered Soviet communism and Nazism as expressions of equally criminal '*totalitarianism*'.

In the 1960s, the baby boom generation was no longer satisfied with the established consensus. They expected answers from their (grand)parents about the war. It no longer seemed reasonable to claim that European societies simply resisted fascism or that Germany alone was to blame. The new generation also gave much attention to Holocaust victims. The genocide of the Jews became the seminal crime of history. As societies made a turn to the political left, it was also less logical to view the communist Soviet Union as totalitarian and on par with Nazi-Germany. From the 1970s and well into the 1980s, when the economy was in decline, right-wing revisionism was on the rise and it became increasingly possible to question the anti-fascist consensus. Nevertheless, it remained an important ethical force.

European integration was a key post-war political project. It soon proved that mere economic integration was not enough. An overarching European identity was necessary to secure economic and political integration. As persistent Eurosceptic attitudes demonstrate, this was a difficult enterprise. A few common ideas informed attempts to construct a shared identity. Fabrice Larat and Chiara Bottici identified an *acquis historique communautaire*. It functions like the *acquis communautaire*, the combined body of European Law. Integration within the European Union means engagement with *acquis historique*, although it is not legally binding. The *acquis historique* is centred around the notion that Europe was '*born out of war*'. Because of this, the continent has the duty to preserve peace and stability and to protect democracy, human rights, and freedoms. Furthermore, Europe must overcome division on the continent. A strong insistence to come clean with the black pages of history is equally important. It is generally claimed that post-war Germany set an example to follow. Of course, the political context in Germany is so unique that repeating its comprehensive *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (working through or processing the past) is impossible. Nevertheless, Germany earned much credit and was even able to discuss notions of German victimhood in the 1990s. Atonement for one's difficult pasts, the commemoration of the Second World War and the idea that Nazi crimes, especially the Holocaust, are the lowest point in history form a baseline of the *acquis historique*. Linked to this is Tony Judt's suggestion that '*recognition of the Holocaust is today's entry-ticket to Europe*'. Any society that seeks to be European needs to confront its own role in the Holocaust and similar violent criminal acts. In any case, being European requires historical self-criticism and an unequivocal repudiation of antisemitism.

Post-Communist Eastern Europe: Revaluating Nazism and Communism

An 'anti-fascist consensus' also existed in communist Eastern Europe during the Cold War. The communist regimes used it as a propaganda tool. The Red Army's supposed '*Victory over Fascism*' legitimized their rule, as regimes labelled all opponents fascists. It also covered up the communist regimes' failures. This made it difficult for Eastern European societies to discuss their complicated pasts and mutual antagonisms. It blocked any true self-critical attitude to history. The fall of communism enabled Eastern European countries to re-envision their pasts. In part they arrived at what could be called 'post-communist totalitarianism'. It would be false to assert that there is only one version of it': Each post-communist society formed its own version. Even within them, various social groups developed divergent ideas. Nevertheless, these post-communist narratives concluded that Nazism and Communism were equally criminal, destructive and above all *totalitarian* systems. In this sense it is an intellectual framework that recycles elements from early Cold War ideas about totalitarianism formulated by Western (social) scholars. That we refer to this post-1991 intellectual framework as 'post-communist totalitarianism' does not imply that it is totalitarian in nature. The nomenclature merely reflects that its subscribers use the notion of totalitarianism to form their visions of history (and initiate policy changes based on that).

Post-communist totalitarianism is the second ideal type of this study. It clashed with the European Union's *acquis historique*. Not only did the two evaluate the past differently, but Eastern European politicians sought recognition for their historical plight. In some instances, they succeeded: For instance, both the European Parliament and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe adopted resolutions that called for the inclusion of communist crimes in a common European narrative.

Integrating Western and Post-Communist Europe: An Agenda

Both the Western European and post-communist models are inherently simplistic. It is necessary to discuss history in Europe: New member states deserve that their views are taken seriously. This must not result in the uncritical adoption of highly problematic aspects, such as a lack of reckoning with black pages in national histories (collaboration with the Nazis, participation in the Holocaust, right-wing extreme nationalism etc.) and the idea that Eastern Europe fell victim to a double Nazi and Soviet genocide. It must not result in an apologia for severe crimes and human rights abuses.

Currently, Western Europe is insufficiently interested in what Eastern Europe is trying to tell: a reevaluation the role of Nazi and communist dictatorships and their crimes in European history is necessary. We have to develop a new consensus that Western and Eastern Europe can share: Western Europe will have to reflect on the meaning of communism, Eastern Europe will have to engage in self-criticism, atonement and Holocaust remembrance.

I have identified two distinct historiographical controversies that could help to foster such a pan-European debate. First, Timothy Snyder's *Bloodlands. Europe between Hitler and Stalin* (2010). Snyder wrote an integrated history of mass killing in Eastern Europe and exposed many similarities of Nazism and communism. *Bloodlands* was not without its flaws, but it can offer a way of revaluating the two totalitarian systems while being self-critical and without diminishing victimhood and the status of the Holocaust too much.

If Nazi and communist crimes are more equal than previously claimed, a debate on their causes is also in place. In the 1980s the right-wing conservative German historian Ernst Nolte suggested that the First and Second World Wars and the interwar years constituted a '*European Civil War*'. In it, the Enlightenment (Liberalism, Socialism, and communism) and

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anti-revolutionary conservatism (traditional conservatism, fascism, and Nazism) clashed. In 1995, the left-wing French historian François Furet advocated similar views. The concept's main problem is that Nolte used it to exculpate Germany from guilt for Nazi crimes. He claimed that these crimes, especially the Holocaust, were a response to communist atrocities and that Jews were a legitimate target as a supposed belligerent party. The idea that fascism was an anti-revolutionary response to radical enlightenment philosophies (such as Bolshevism) does not have to lead to an excuse for crimes committed in its name.

Like *Bloodlands*, the concept of a European Civil War offers an elegant solution to create a shared European narrative of history that includes the horrors of communist and Nazi dictatorships (as well as other conservative right-wing dictatorships). It allows us to ask all kind of difficult questions about European societies and can help to foster an even more self-critical attitude. It also complicates our understanding and evaluation of Nazi and communist crimes.

Historical interpretations in Europe are currently changing and no longer uncontested. Nevertheless, a country that seeks to integrate into Europe will have to show some kind of atonement and a self-critical attitude to its own history, because they help to foster democracy; they should also show commitment to Holocaust commemoration.

Russia: Glory and Legitimization

Despite their differences, the Western European and post-communist models agreed that the Second World War was a tragedy. The Soviet and Russian tradition referred to it as the *Great Patriotic War* and considered it a glorious triumph. The Red Army's 'victory over fascism' supposedly saved the Soviet people and the world from enslavement. This narrative serves as the final ideal type in this study. Various Soviet and Russian leaders used it to legitimize their rule and to unite the people in one community. Successive governments carefully managed it as a propaganda tool that masked socio-economic inadequacies and political failures. The narrative was (and is) also an instrument for foreign policy.

The *Great Patriotic War* was no static narrative, as various Soviet and Russian leaders required different variants. The role of the Russian nation was constantly reinterpreted. Likewise, the role of the Soviet dictator Stalin shifted significantly over time, from outright heroization, his banishment from history to the highly ambiguous position in the present.

The narrative holds that the Soviet (or Russian) people beat the evil of fascism in unity. This left no room to discuss uneasy aspects of Soviet history. It made it difficult to assess Stalin's rule of terror (that contributed significantly to early Soviet losses) or to discuss the Soviet Union's role in the outbreak of the Second World War (i.e. the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact). As the narrative considered the Soviet people as the Nazis main victim, Jews could not commemorate the Holocaust as their tragedy.

In the late 1980s and the 1990s, Russians tried to evaluate their past critically, but never fully succeeded in this effort. The glory-centred *Great Patriotic War* narrative's strong force made it difficult to repudiate communism fully. Furthermore, the post-Soviet Russian government never really proposed any alternatives.

The present-day Russian regime uses a mix of Russian nostalgic patriotism and a (neo)-Soviet narrative of the *Great Patriotic War*. The narrative has the same legitimacy force as during the Soviet era. It supports the claim that Russia had its own distinctive path of development and is a *sovereign democracy*. The war supposedly proved that Russia always had a strong state and that Russians should be united at all times. The regime also accuses foreign and domestic opponents of being fascists. The *Great Patriotic War* is also a strong

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component of the ideology of the *Russkiy Mir* (Russian World), according to which Russia is a distinct (Orthodox) civilization that has to reintegrate the post-Soviet space.

Change in continuity: Ukrainian Politics since 1991

Combining the concept of the *politics of history* and European, post-communist and Soviet/Russian models, this study directed its attention to Ukrainian politician's *history policies*. As they depend on political imperatives, it is necessary to discuss the main political developments briefly.

Since 1991, Ukrainian politics seemed volatile: there were two revolutionary power changes in 2004 and 2014 and 'pro-European' and 'pro-Russian' presidents and governments rotated in and out of office. Outward appearances are deceptive: Politics were highly continuous. Political elites shifted from one policy to the next and changed their loyalties to remain in power. This started in 1991 when part of the communist establishment suddenly supported independence. They made an informal deal with the Ukrainian nationalist opposition, the so-called '*grand bargain*': nationalists would get independence, but the elite would remain in power. As nationalism was only a '*minority faith*', the former communist Leonid Kravchuk became the first president. He enacted nation-building and ukrainization policies, causing resentment with a segment of the population, especially in the highly Russified and Sovietized East. Consequently, Leonid Kuchma, who represented another part of the establishment, took over the reins in 1994 and scaled down many of Kravchuk's policies. Under his leadership, the oligarchs (the happy few who gained from privatization and economic transition) consolidated their power. Initially, the country fared better under Kuchma: the economy slowly stabilized and Kuchma proved an effective administrator and compromise maker. As Kuchma and his clique wanted to preserve their power, the regime turned authoritarian during the president's second term (1999-2005).

Many Ukrainians were unsatisfied with Kuchma's rule. An opposition movement grew and former Prime Minister Viktor Yushchenko became its face. The falsification of the 2004 presidential elections in favour of Kuchma's anointed successor, Viktor Yanukovich, was a strong catalyst for mass demonstrations. As Yushchenko eventually became president, the 'Orange Revolution' – after Yushchenko's campaign colours – resulted in an apparent change of government. Despite mass protests, this was only possible because of a political agreement. It assured oligarchs loyal to the old regime of continued political influence. Constitutional changes enlarged parliamentary and governmental powers and diminished the president's. In addition, some oligarchs changed sides to the anti-Kuchma opposition before the elections. They essentially bankrolled and (partly) organized the Orange movement. Subsequently, Ukrainian politics became embroiled in a tripartite power struggle: political forces in the 'Orange camp' not only struggled against a resurgent Viktor Yanukovich but also against each other. Yushchenko and his number two, Yulia Tymoshenko had personal antagonistic relations because they both depended on the same electorate and were unhappy with the division of power between them. A number of governments headed by Tymoshenko and Yanukovich succeeded each other at a quick pace. Meanwhile, the powerless president Yushchenko pushed a nationalist agenda, polarizing the country.

By 2010, disenchanted pro-Orange Ukrainians stayed at home during presidential and parliamentary elections or gravitated towards the extreme nationalist fringe of the political spectrum. Yushchenko was voted out of office and Yanukovich succeeded him. The new president built an autocratic system, relying on electoral and legislative machinations and the judicial system (for instance, he jailed Tymoshenko). The Supreme Court also restored the pre-Orange Revolution constitution. Having secured his power, Yanukovich privatized the state for his family and close associates.

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When Yanukovych refused to sign the long-awaited and long-negotiated Association Agreement with the European Union in November 2013, many Ukrainians could no longer bear the situation. A new round of public protests erupted: the 2013-2014 Euromaidan. These ended violently in February 2014, after which Yanukovych fled the country and parliament deposed him. Who ordered the violence remains unclear to date. Parts of the elite were quick to back an interim government led by acting president Oleksandr Turchynov and Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk (both from Tymoshenko's *Fatherland* party). After new presidential and parliamentary elections, a part of the oligarchic elite quickly consolidated power: the oligarch Petro Poroshenko became the new president. He entered into two successive coalition governments led by Yatsenyuk (prime minister 2014-2016) and Volodymyr Hroysman (prime minister 2016-2019). While Yanukovych's autocracy was quickly abandoned for a pluralist system, little progress was made in fighting corruption and introducing other reforms (both key Euromaidan demands). In 2019, Poroshenko lost the presidential elections to TV comedian Volodymyr Zelenski, who campaigned on an anti-corruption and anti-establishment platform. Dissatisfaction with the establishment ensured Poroshenko's defeat.

Ukrainian History Policies: An Overview

Laying Foundations: Kravchuk's History Policies

As political circumstances changed, politicians required different history policies. Leonid Kravchuk initiated a paradigmatic shift as his administration adopted the standard Ukrainian national(ist) model of history developed by the nationalist historian Mikhaïlo Hrushevskiy (1866-1934); the founding-father of Ukrainian national historiography). Ukraine supposedly was a freedom-loving historical nation with a 1000-year tradition of statehood that was continuously suppressed by its neighbours (mainly Russia and Poland). Meanwhile, Ukrainians continuously struggled for independence. The difference with the communist era could not be greater: Soviet politics depicted Ukraine as Russia's 'little brother', without independent existence.

The Kravchuk administration introduced history policies to support this conception of the Ukrainian nation. They transformed the 1932-1933 famine into the 'Holodomor' (i.e. *to kill by hunger*): Ukraine fell victim of a crime committed by an 'illicit totalitarian regime' to subdue the Ukrainian nation into submission by genocidal force. Likewise, the government turned its attention to radical Ukrainian nationalists of the *Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists* (OUN) and the *Ukrainian Insurgent Army* (UPA). Kravchuk rehabilitated some members of both nationalist movements and sought to reconcile them with veterans of the Red Army (whom the communist regime always depicted as Ukraine's liberators and unifiers).

These policies proved difficult: Nationalists often wanted more than Kravchuk could deliver: a Nuremberg-style trial of Holodomor perpetrators and full equal treatment of veterans of the nationalist movements and the Red Army were a bridge too far. Many, especially in the East, strongly believed in the opposing Soviet narrative of Ukrainian history. In the end, Kravchuk achieved remarkably little concrete policies. The confrontation between nationalist and Soviet viewpoints of history and the introduction of the nationalist narrative as a framework for government policy were his main legacies.

From Scaling Down to Polarization: History Policies under Kuchma

Leonid Kuchma campaigned against Kravchuk's policies and promised to undo them. He

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never delivered, because he had to secure the state with a shared sense of nationhood. He merely scaled down on ukrainization policies. Kuchma cared little for ideology: Nationalist narratives again gained prominence at the end of his first term. There was an acute risk of a communist backlash (in the 1998 parliamentary elections, the communists came in first!). Appealing to a Western and more nationalist electorate was his only chance at re-election. In his second term, political imperatives again shifted as a political scandal exposed Kuchma's autocratic tendencies. Nationalists now joined the opposition. The regime's policies became increasingly ambivalent: it served different audiences with whatever historical message they wanted to hear. It addressed Western and Central Ukrainians with moderate nationalist histories, while it used (neo)-Soviet narratives (increasingly focusing on the glory in the *Great Patriotic War*) in Eastern Ukraine. The increasing use of such (neo)-Soviet narratives was another characteristic of Kuchma's second term. History became one of the key battlegrounds between the regime and the opposition. The latter included 'democrats' such as Yushchenko and Tymoshenko and the left (the Socialist and Communist Parties). The opposition agreed that Kuchma had to go but strongly disagreed on history. As a result, Kuchma's policies swung back and forth between nationalist and Soviet views of history, while the debate increasingly polarized between these extremes.

Despite – or maybe even because – of all these convolutions, Kuchma established a large policy legacy. He laid the groundwork for victim-centred commemorative practices of the Holodomor and achieved the first legal – although not binding – parliamentary recognition of the famine as genocide in 2003. The Kuchma regime consolidated the use of nationalist narratives in the education system, despite resistance against it.

The early Kuchma regime initiated hybrid remembrance of the OUN, UPA, and the Red Army. For example, Kuchma created a new highest state decoration (Hero of Ukraine); it mixed Soviet elements related to the *Great Patriotic War* with nationalist elements that referred to the OUN, UPA and other nationalist movements. Nevertheless, the regime failed to find any true solution to the issue of rehabilitation of OUN and UPA members. It continuously pushed it forward by creating a commission (and a subordinated working group of historians) to study the issue. In 2004, the working group published its findings. They neither supported nor opposed rehabilitation and heroization of the OUN and UPA. At that time, the government also required history policies reliant on (neo)-Soviet views of history, because the opposition monopolized Ukrainian nationalism. The regime, therefore, left the issue unsolved for future administrations. Without a doubt, polarisation was Kuchma's greatest legacy.

A Story of Consolidation and Further Polarization: History Policies after the Orange Revolution

The polarization of society around the nationalist and (neo)-Soviet narratives continued after the Orange Revolution. As Western and Central Ukraine joined forces in 2004 for the first time, Ukraine was more unified as a (political) nation. The freshly elected president Viktor Yushchenko naively believed that he could use nationalist history policies to consolidate this development and to integrate the East. He consistently pushed for ever-elaborate Holodomor commemorations and for legally binding recognition of the Holodomor as genocide. He also, unsuccessfully, sought to reconcile OUN, UPA, and Red Army veterans.

The tripartite political power struggle of the time subsumed his policies. Other political players had different political requirements. 'Orange' Tymoshenko favoured whatever historical position had a positive effect on her political position. She was mostly agnostic and adhered neither to nationalist nor (neo)-Soviet policies. The anti-orange camp, comprised of Yanukovich's Party of the Regions, the Socialist Party, and the Communist Party, opposed

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the president's policies outright.

As Ukraine went through one political crisis to the next, history policies increasingly radicalized. Having codified the Holodomor as genocide in law in 2006, Yushchenko attempted to criminalize denial of the Holodomor, imposing harsh fines and prison terms. The Security Service (SBU) also conducted criminal proceedings against the Holodomor's perpetrators to affirm the genocide thesis and to bolster Yushchenko's political image with nationalist voters.

The newly founded *Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance* (est. 2006) aided the president's efforts: it had extensive tasks and goals and administered sites such as the national Holodomor memorial and museum that Yushchenko opened in 2008. Jointly, the institute and the SBU established whitewashed histories of the OUN and UPA that absolved or outright denied both organizations' crimes, ideology, and collaboration with Nazi-Germany. Such histories of the nationalist movement, cleansed from unsavoury elements, helped Yushchenko to introduce policies that heroized nationalists as freedom fighters. For example, he made the UPA leader Roman Shukhevych a *Hero of Ukraine* in 2007 and most provocatively extended the same honour to OUN-B leader Stepan Bandera in 2010, at the very end of his presidency.

Meanwhile, anti-orange forces proposed alternative policies that relied on the (neo)-Soviet narrative of Ukrainian history. For instance, they erected monuments to victims of the OUN and UPA or to figures from Russian national history. They also sought to sabotage the president's policies. For example, they cut the budget for the *Institute of National Remembrance* or simply refused to execute Yushchenko's policies. They could do this because they controlled many regional administrations tasked with certain aspects of Yushchenko's history policies. In addition, under the constitutional compromise of 2004, the national government was the competent authority for many of the president's initiatives. As Yanukovych controlled the national government from 2006 to 2007, he could directly frustrate them. When Tymoshenko was prime minister in 2005 and from 2007 to 2010, she did little to support Yushchenko.

How hard Yushchenko fought for his agenda, most of his achievements were only symbolic: they included the establishment of some monuments and museums and the awards of Shukhevych and Bandera. The adoption of the 2006 Holodomor law was hardly a victory. It was a compromise brokered by the Socialist party and contained no legal tools to enforce the genocide thesis. This made it essentially useless for the president. Yushchenko also failed to consolidate the Ukrainian nation. When he left office in 2010, the country was even more divided and polarized around the nationalist and (neo)-Soviet narratives. The normalization of radical nationalist viewpoints of history and the political forces that supported them was Yushchenko's main legacy. Meanwhile, other important items, such as reforms and anti-corruption measures (important aspects of the Orange Revolution's platform) lay neglected.

Rewinding Yushchenko's Policies: Yanukovych's History Policies

President Yanukovych's and his party's (neo)-Soviet history policies continued to polarize the country. History policies galvanized the nationalist electorate against the government and made many gravitate towards the fringe nationalist Svoboda (Freedom) party. We already discussed how Yanukovych disabled the moderate opposition by prosecuting its leaders (Tymoshenko). Moderate voters had almost no place to go. This helped Yanukovych to consolidate his power. He did not have to realize any concrete policies: making radical propositions was enough. This also enabled him to water down his rhetoric when

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enough polarization was achieved or when political imperatives required different strategies and policies.

Yanukovych's history policies were a full onslaught on Yushchenko's achievements: He cut the budget of the *Institute of National Remembrance* and, reorganized it, diminishing its tasks and prerogatives. Yanukovych also replaced its nationalist head with a communist. Most controversially, he appointed Dmytro Tabachnyk, a long-time (neo)-Soviet and Russkiy Mir ideologue as minister of education.

Shortly after coming to office, Yanukovych publicly denied that the Holodomor was a genocide. Subsequently, his party proposed to water down the 2006 Holodomor law. These proposals were provocations since they were never adopted. Nevertheless, Yanukovych continued to commemorate the Holodomor with the practices that his predecessors established. These commemorations were less extensive and Yanukovych never referred to the famine as a genocide. Previous administrations' history policies left a non-ignorable legacy. Yanukovych had to commemorate the Holodomor as a crime, even if he did not profess the genocide thesis.

Yanukovych's policies on the Second World War and Ukrainian nationalism were similarly provocative. Consistent with the (neo)-Soviet narrative, the government again commemorated the *Great Patriotic War* as a moment of glory and as a common achievement of Ukraine, Russia and other Soviet republics. Logically, the government downplayed the legacy of the OUN and the UPA. As this was only a baseline, Yanukovych was somewhat flexible: after provocations between 2010 and 2012, he suddenly called for 'reconciliation' between Red Army, OUN, and UPA veterans.

Most of Yanukovych's legislative initiatives were moribund. A 2010 law that mandated the official use of the Soviet Victory Banner in *Great Patriotic War* commemorations was one of them. Yanukovych signed it into law, but the constitutional court (controlled by Yanukovych) subsequently annulled it. Similarly, the regime proposed to criminalize heroization of the OUN and UPA and to cancel existing formal legal rehabilitation of some OUN and UPA fighters. This bill was never adopted. These legislative initiatives only meant to provoke. The annulment of the *Hero of Ukraine* award to Bandera and Shukhevych by a Donetsk-based court in 2010 served the same purpose.

Yanukovych's policies worked: there were some violent confrontations between Ukrainian nationalists and pro-Russian activists. As nationalists controlled regional administrations in Western Ukraine, they responded with radical counter-policies (such as a surge in the construction of Bandera memorials). Yanukovych essentially forged the appearance of a fascist Western Ukraine. His provocations strengthened the appeal of radical nationalism. This strategy was inherently risky: one can only infuriate political opponents to a certain extent. Therefore, it was no surprise that radical nationalism was an important rallying cry and political force during the Euromaidan. Yanukovych's policies also created much of the ideological material used by pro-Russian separatists in the Donbas and by Russia afterwards.

The Supremacy of Post-Communist Totalitarianism: History Policies after the Euromaidan

As nationalism was a potent force during the Euromaidan, the nationalist narrative gained further traction. The aggressive Russian attitude to the developments in Ukraine also contributed tremendously. Furthermore, the annexation of the Crimea and the existence of the *de-facto* self-ruled Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics essentially removed the main political opposition to the Ukrainian nationalist narrative.

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Consequently, history policies shifted to a nationalist narrative and displayed all characteristics of post-communist totalitarianism. ‘Decommunization’ became the new policy buzzword. It continued on spontaneous ‘wild’ decommunization during the Euromaidan: the so-called *Leninopad* (i.e. the toppling of Lenin statues and other communist monuments by protesters).

Government policy followed a consistent narrative: Ukrainian ‘freedom fighters’ (i.e. nationalists) tried to liberate Ukraine from foreign rule at the end of the First World War and the Russian Revolution. They also sought to establish Ukrainian (nation)states in the process. All these attempts were to no avail, and subsequently, Moscow imposed Bolshevik dictatorship on the Central and Eastern parts of the country. At the same time, Poland introduced harsh anti-Ukrainian measures in Western Ukraine. The situation only worsened when Stalin came to power. He imposed his oppressive rule and limited opportunities to express ‘Ukrainianness’. The Holodomor, a genocide, was Stalin’s main anti-Ukrainian measure. After the Soviet Union colluded with Nazi-Germany and signed the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, communist totalitarianism was extended to Western Ukraine. During the interwar years and the Second World War, the OUN and UPA unsuccessfully continued the struggle for freedom and independence.

After the German invasion of the Soviet Union, the Nazis imposed an equally evil and criminal regime on Ukraine. When the Red Army drove the Germans away, another totalitarian occupation began. As external forces imposed communism, this was not a genuine part of Ukrainian history. Meanwhile, dissidents and the perestroika-era nationalist Rukh-movement continued the struggle for freedom and independence. This goal was finally achieved in 1991. Even then, it was not secure: insufficiently ‘decommunized’ domestic forces and Russia (essentially a resurgent Soviet Union) supposedly continued to undermine a free Ukraine. Protesters in 2004 and 2013 protected their fatherland against this threat. Ukrainian soldiers and nationalist militia’s fighting in the Donbas continue this struggle.

The *Institute of National Remembrance* played a key role in the government’s efforts as most policy initiatives originated there. The young, dynamic, and ambitious nationalist historian Volodymyr Viatrovych was appointed as its head and its budget greatly increased. As the president and his coalition partners felt the need to support nationalist history policies, there were little political obstacles.

These policy initiatives mainly focussed on Ukrainian nationalism and the Second World War. The Holodomor was of secondary importance. The government continued to observe commemorative and called the famine a genocide, but there were no real new policies. This was because of two factors: First, Yushchenko already entrenched the notion of a famine-genocide in Western and Central Ukraine. Second, domestic political opposition to the genocide thesis disappeared. Therefore, it made little sense to continue extensive Holodomor policies (as they would not resonate politically). On the other hand, the government consistently played the Russia card: the Eastern neighbour supposedly threatened Ukraine’s freedom. A focus on Ukrainian nationalism, the Second World War, and the idea of a Soviet occupation strongly clashed with Russian viewpoints and could mobilize Ukrainians. A drive on these subjects was, therefore, more logical.

In 2015, parliament adopted four so-called ‘decommunization laws’ proposed by the *Institute of National Remembrance*. Many have called them ‘history laws’ because they regulated history. They formed the basis for government policy and codified an anti-Soviet memory regime.

One of the laws arranged the state-endowed heroization of various nationalist ‘freedom fighters’ and gave them (and their relatives) certain social guarantees such as pensions.

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Most controversially, the law declared publically offending them unlawful. The law also disallowed public denial of the legitimacy of their struggle for independence (making it more difficult to criticize the OUN and UPA for their ideology and crimes).

A second law judged communism and Nazism as totalitarian, destructive, and criminal forces. It banned propaganda for these regimes and their symbols, imposing harsh penalties. As the law mainly targeted communism, it overtly emphasized communist symbols (the Communist Party was even banned because of its name!). Consistent with its narrative, the law also arranged for the renaming of public spaces and administrative entities and the removal of communist monuments (formally, it also applied to similar references to Nazism).

A third law decommunized commemoration of the Second World War. It implied a sacred duty to show a respectful attitude to the '*victory over Nazism*' and veterans of the '*Ukrainian liberation movement*' and the Red Army. The law cancelled all official government commemoration of the *Great Patriotic War* but kept *Victory Day* (May 9) as a national holiday. It now celebrated victory in the *Second World War*. In addition, the law complemented it with a '*Day of Memory and Reconciliation*' on May 8.

A final, fourth law arranged the transfer of communist security service archives to the *Institute of National Remembrance* and opened them to the public and researchers. Unlike the other laws, it lacked narrative elements and did little to 'decommunize' Ukraine. Theoretically, the *Institute of National Remembrance* could use its administration of the archives as a regulatory tool on information, but there were no indications that this happened.

The government implemented these laws: Streets, towns and cities were renamed and new commemorations observed. The narrative also showed itself in (museum) expositions sponsored by the national and local governments. Especially the Kyiv Museum of the Second World War (the former Museum of the *Great Patriotic War*) did much to integrate the ongoing struggle in the Donbas and the OUN's and UPA's struggle in its exposition. Involvement of the Institute of National Remembrance was also visible in this and other museums. The institute also sponsored many publications.

Twenty-Eight Years of History Policies: An Evaluation

Various Ukrainian administrations developed their own history policies based on different narratives, fluctuating between variations of a Ukrainian national(ist) post-communist narrative and a (neo)-Soviet counterpart. In this tug-of-war, the now dominant post-communist narrative formed. All Ukrainian administrations contributed: Kravchuk's and Kuchma's policies laid the groundwork. Its current dominant position could also not have been possible without the (neo)-Soviet provocations of Kuchma's second term and Yanukovich's presidency. Likewise, Yushchenko's nationalist history policies essentially normalized many of the radical viewpoints that form the core of the post-communist narrative. The Poroshenko administration codified it as the dominant position, against the background of mobilisation against foreign and domestic opponents of Ukraine.

As a logical consequence, compared to the three ideal types of twentieth-century history in Europe, Ukraine mostly resembled generic Central and Eastern European post-communist history. Nevertheless, the Ukrainian post-communist model does not fully reckon with the legacy of communism (as I will discuss below). Ukraine essentially developed its own 'Ukrainian' model that drew from European, Central-European, Soviet, and Ukrainian sources.

Ukraine and the *Acquis Historique*

How sincere was Ukraine's self-stated willingness to integrate with European institutions and structures? All Ukrainian administrations made such claims. Of course, history policy is just one of the many aspects involved, as policy fields such as economy, human rights, and democracy are of even greater importance. Seen from the viewpoint of the European Union's *acquis historique*, Ukraine's commitment to European integration was doubtful at best.

The self-critical approach to national history was absent from the history policies of all Ukrainian administrations, as both the nationalist and (neo)-Soviet narratives lack it. If politicians criticized historical events, figures, or eras, they were always important for an opposing narrative. They introduced history policies as a zero-sum game: they believed that showing repentance for past wrongs was a gain for others.

Consequently, none of the administrations sufficiently engaged in Holocaust commemoration. Since Soviet times, the situation improved greatly: Jews can now commemorate the Holocaust. Sometimes, Ukrainian politicians even expressed their empathy with Jewish plights, but mainly in international contexts. Politicians have not understood that commitment to Holocaust commemoration is a continuous obligation with consequences for domestic policy. History policies depicted the Holocaust as an event in European or world history, without any specific significance for Ukraine. As a significant part of pre-war European Jewry lived in Ukraine, it was a key site of the Holocaust. Ukrainians were a part of this history as co-perpetrators, profiteers, innocent bystanders, and rescuers (often in complicated overlapping ways). The presentation of the Holocaust as something external to Ukrainian history is therefore hard to sustain.

Ukrainian politicians did engage with Holocaust commemoration in other ways. After the Cold War, Holocaust commemoration internationalized as even neutral countries such as Sweden and Switzerland started to engage with its moral lessons and recognized their roles in the destruction of the European Jewry. Consequently, the Holocaust became a kind of prototype for the commemoration of other genocides and ethnic cleansings. In their attempts to establish commemorative practices for the Holodomor, Ukrainian politicians often used Holocaust remembrance as a template. They copied essential elements such as the gathering and publication of the victims' names. Foreign laws against Holocaust denial also served as an example and an excuse for attempts to ban denial of the Holodomor.

Successful European integration also requires good neighbourly relations. Countries in the European Union may clash with one another over certain policies and interests, but infuriated historical feuds are unacceptable. The *acquis historique* prescribes a duty to reconcile with one another and to take away sources of mutual enmity. Good relations with Poland are essential for Ukraine. Ukrainian history policies brought the two countries in conflict on multiple occasions. Polish governments and many ordinary Poles have taken the veneration of the OUN and UPA as an offensive provocation. Many Poles consider these organizations criminal, because of the OUN's terrorist activity in pre-war Poland and the UPA's ethnic cleansing of Poles in Volhynia in 1943. Until now, these clashes have not resulted in Poland ending its commitment to Ukraine, but every relationship can be strained only to a certain extent.

The rule of law, due legal process and respect for essential human rights and freedoms are also an essential part of European integration. Legislative initiatives, both those related to the Holodomor and the 2015 'history laws' limited (or sought) the freedom of expression in ways incompatible with European standards. Ukrainian legal experts, the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe all pointed to such deficiencies. The use of the justice system for history policies, like the 2010 trial of Holo-

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domor perpetrators, have similarly disregarded the rule of law, due legal process and the rights of defendants.

The Problems of Ukrainian Post-Communist Totalitarianism

The Ukrainian variant of post-communist totalitarianism asserted that communism was not a genuine part of Ukrainian history. This is problematic: It is hard to sustain that such an influential ideology was not a part of national history. Nationalists claim that external forces imposed communism on Ukraine. Even if this was the case, the ideology greatly influenced the country's development. Therefore, it was part of national history, whether they like it or not. Soviet rule was brutal and criminal, and Ukrainians have every right to evaluate it as a negative experience. Recently, it has increasingly become impossible to consider positive achievements during Soviet rule. The price might have been high: but the Soviet regime developed Ukraine from a relatively backward agricultural region to an industrialized and modernized country. Soviet rule also enabled tremendous upwards social mobility and general literacy and provided more possibilities for the Ukrainian language and culture.

Present-day Ukraine is essentially a Soviet creation as Soviet politicians established its borders. Soviet policies also created many of the building blocks for post-1991 nation-building policies. For instance, the Ukrainian language would not be as dominant today without Soviet nationality policies. Throughout the twentieth century, some Ukrainians even envisioned a communist Ukraine. Not only after Soviet propaganda influenced the country, but also during the chaotic years of the Russian Revolution. In addition, the Ukrainian Communist Party was one of the essential powerhouses of Soviet politics, as Nikita Khrushchev's and Leonid Brezhnev's powerbase.

Writing out communism from Ukrainian national history is a futile denialist exercise. Ukrainian history policies demonstrated this well before and after 2014. The continuing relevance of the Red Army in government commemorations was but one example. The hybrid commemoration of OUN, UPA and the Red Army veterans as *'fighters for Ukraine'* is a further indication. The general lack of enthusiasm for full decommunization of Ukraine's public space (as prescribed by one of the history laws) is another.

Communism and its legacy continue to be relevant for Ukraine. Many aspects of Ukraine's post-communist transition displayed a large degree of continuity with the Soviet era. The introduction of the nationalist narrative of history was no exception. The Ukrainian historiographical establishment did the same as many communist politicians in 1991: In order to keep employment, they had to make themselves relevant for the new state. This way, they enabled history policies. These historians previously used a Soviet narrative of Ukrainian history. They approached the new nationalist narrative with the only toolkit they knew and transferred many structural elements of Soviet historiography to it. Such elements included an overblown emphasis on linear development, ethnic exclusivity, determinism and obligatory patriotism.

One of the more persistent Soviet legacies is the idea that history is a zero-sum game in which only one side can win. It is one of the reasons for the inability to admit to the OUN's and UPA's crimes and fascist ideology. This not only damaged Ukraine's European credentials, but the ongoing heroization and glorification also gave Russia much of the propaganda materials it uses against Ukraine. It made it easy for Russia to claim that a 'fascist coup' overthrew the legitimate Ukrainian government in 2014.

Some nationalists think that admitting that OUN's and UPA's crimes and ideology would be an obstacle for Ukraine's European future. This argument is clearly false: it would be high-

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ly surprising if Ukraine did not have a fascist movement in the first half of the Twentieth Century, as this was a general current of European history. The same argument also applies to communism, since this ideology was a similar European trend. Why would Ukraine be an exception?

In the twenty-eight years surveyed in this study, Ukrainian politicians and historians have constructed a hybrid narrative with various Ukrainian and (neo)-Soviet constituent elements. They have also blended in views from Western, and Central and Eastern Europe. Hybridity has been part of the process from the onset, but its prominence has increased after the Orange and Euromaidan revolutions. The interweaving of the nationalist movement of the (inter)war years and the Soviet Red Army war effort in one '*struggle for Ukrainian freedom and independence*' was one of the clearest examples. The veracity of such hybrid historical claims is doubtful at best: Propaganda indoctrinated Ukrainian nationalists and Red Army soldiers to see the other as the enemy. Even if Soviet soldiers thought that they fought for Ukraine, they would have done so for a different Ukraine. The idea is also incoherent with the nationalist claim that the Soviet Union did not liberate Ukraine in 1944, but started a new occupation.

The idea that various Ukrainian nationalist movements formed one continuous '*Ukrainian liberation movement*' in the twentieth century suffers from similar inherent flaws. These movements combined their nationalism with various other ideologies and convictions, such as, among others, liberalism, socialism, communism, conservatism, fascism, democracy and Christianity. The notion of a '*Ukrainian liberation movement*' is simplistic and cannot account for the full complexity of twentieth-century Ukrainian history.

We have discussed the Ukrainian history policies as domestic developments, as a tug-of-war between two mutually exclusive viewpoints of Ukrainian history. In it, we highlighted narrative differences and structural similarities of the Ukrainian nationalist and (neo)-Soviet narratives of Ukrainian history. Ukrainian history policies also closely resembled policies throughout post-communist Europe. They relied on the same kind of arguments and instruments. For instance, politicians in Russia and Poland have proposed and introduced laws similar to those mentioned in this study. Developments in neighbouring countries could also be a driver for history policies in Ukraine and vice versa: the increasing promotion of Ukrainian nationalist policies could be a response to equally intensive (neo)-Soviet policies in Russia and attempts by the Russian government to counter '*falsifications of history*'. The concept of politics of history does not rule out interaction between different countries. Alexey Miller even suggested that such a mechanism could be at work.¹ In this study, we have shown that Polish politicians responded to some aspects of Ukrainian history policies. A similar dynamic could be in play in Ukrainian-Russian relations. In this study, we have found little empirical evidence that Ukraine responded to Russian history policies: if anything, Russia served as a negative example from which Ukraine had to distance itself. Yet, the structural similarities between Russian and Ukrainian laws directed against '*falsifications of history*' are undeniable. Some sort of interaction could be in play. Another kind of – comparative – study, that puts Ukrainian and Russian history policies in a dialogue with each other might be able to uncover it. Such a study might bring even more to light if it also takes history policies from other former Soviet republics into consideration. This is a suggestion for further investigation that could open a new field of interpretation, like most scholars who write about history policy still use the nation-state as a frame of reference.

1 Miller claims that the impetus for the politics of history in post-communist Europe came from Poland and that other countries soon followed suit. See: Миллер, "Россия: власть и история," 8–9.

On the Role of Historians

As discussed above, historians played an essential role in the introduction of history policies in Ukraine. Some historians went further and assumed an explicit and active political role. For example, the (neo)-Soviet historian Dmytro Tabachnyk and the leader of the Socialist Party (1991-2012), Olexander Moroz, mixed the roles of historian and politician. Most historians worked in the background and sometimes they did not even realize they supported partisan political projects and sincerely believed they helped Ukraine to overcome or salvage the legacy of Soviet communism. Stanislav Kulchytskyi was the foremost of them. This Soviet-trained historian was a leader in the ukrainization historiography in the 1990s and the early 2000s. In recent years, Volodymyr Viatrovych took over this role (but much more in the foreground). The work of such historians was naïve at best: they established simplistic, one-sided and uncritical explanations of Ukrainian history. Often they also read sources selectively and twisted the evidence to fit their narrative.

Nationalizing historiography was the mainstream but was not without opposition. The work of (neo)-Soviet historians speaks for itself. It was equally simplistic, one-sided and uncritical. A liberal alternative also existed, but it was marginal. Heorhii Kasianov put much effort into studying Ukrainian *politics of history* (and was one of their most vocal opponents). Other historians, such as Andriy Portnov and Yaroslav Hrytsak called for an inclusive and self-critic approach. They also criticized several aspects of history policies. Hrytsak also has been a strong proponent of reckoning with Ukrainian participation in the Holocaust and crimes against Poles. Nevertheless, even liberals as Portnov and Hrytsak argued that the hero cult surrounding Bandera was unproblematic.² Ukraine's liberals were unwilling or unable to engage fully with an agenda of self-criticism and accounting for the past. Recent political developments disarmed liberal approaches: opponents now argue that self-criticism harms Ukraine's interests and strengthens Russia.

In 1995, after the first nationalizing tendencies regarding history showed themselves, the American historian Mark von Hagen staked the claim that Ukraine and its historians should not try to introduce nationalist history. According to Von Hagen, this could only result in simplistic and problematic histories of the type that this study has exposed. Von Hagen laid out an alternative: the integration of all competing and mutually exclusive ideas about Ukrainian history. Ukraine could be a textbook case for the development of post-modern history that embraces subnational, transnational and international diversity.³

Until now, Ukrainian historians and politicians failed to engage in such work, as acute political imperatives were more important to them. It is not impossible to develop conceptions of history that could help Ukrainians digest their complicated, multilayered and difficult pasts. Accepting that there is no single true history, but a multitude of interlinked and conflicting histories on which agreement is neither possible nor necessary would be a more solid foundation for Ukraine as a community. Such an 'agreement to disagree' would take away some – but not all – grounds for domestic and international confrontation. It is not too late, but every year the post-communist national narrative becomes more entrenched

2 According to Portnov, Ukrainians saw Bandera as a symbol of desovietization and did not accept Bandera's political programme. To be fair, Hrytsak warned for Bandera's divisive potential in Ukrainian society and relations with Poles and Jews. Nevertheless, he later claimed that Ukraine had a right to '*uncomfortable*' heroes such as Bandera. According to Hrytsak, was '*not whether he [Bandera] was a fascist, but whether the majority of people who worship him, worship him as a fascist*'. See: Андрій Портнов, "Контекстуалізація Степана Бандера," in *Страсті за Бандерою: статті та есеї*, ed. Такрік Сиріл Амар, Ігор Балинський, and Ярослав Грицак, De profundis (Київ: Грані-Т, 2010), 388–393; Ярослав Грицак, "Ще раз про Ющенка, ще раз про Бандеру," ZAXID.NET, last modified January 27, 2010, accessed April 4, 2017, http://zaxid.net/news/showNews.do?shhe_raz_pro_yushhenka_shhe_raz_pro_banderu&objectId=1094617; Ярослав Грицак, "Клопоти з пам'яттю," ZAXID.NET, last modified March 8, 2010, accessed April 4, 2017, http://zaxid.net/news/showNews.do?klopoti_z_pamyat_tyu&objectId=1097756.

3 von Hagen, "Does Ukraine Have a History?," 666–672.

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in society. This will make the challenge more difficult. We can only wish that the next generation, currently in their twenties and thirties, can tackle the problems of Ukrainian history in a more open and inclusive way. They have a better chance because the structural features of the Soviet system have influenced them less. Their familiarity with an interconnected world will hopefully make it easier for them to accept less ideologically rigid ideas.

Twentieth-Century European History and the Present Political Condition: A Coda

Ukrainian politicians and historians are not the only ones to face this problem: Europe, Ukraine and Russia all have their own challenges related to with their (twentieth-century) histories. We defined our histories differently and drew contrasting lessons. This makes it increasingly difficult to agree on contemporary problems. Our past, present and future are intricately linked. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance to gain more insight into how these differences arose. Such efforts must include both the underlying history and the post-factum social and political processes that shaped our historical thinking. Historians and our colleagues from various social sciences have an important role to play as mediators.

As long as Western European historians keep to their 'egocentric' explanations of European history, our societies cannot fully understand why Central and Eastern Europeans look at contemporary situations differently. Similarly, if Ukrainian historians keep to Ukrainocentric explanations, the country will not be able to complete its post-Soviet transition. If critical and hard questions about Ukrainian history are not raised, it will be difficult to build a solid and stable democracy and to fight the corrupt system that is still in place. Likewise, as long as Russian historians keep to their mix of glory in the *Great Patriotic War*, a notion of a Russian *Sonderweg* and idea of a unique *Russian civilization* (i.e. the *Russkiy Mir*) and the perceived international neglect of the country during the 1990s, they will not help the country to develop further.

History is not a simple neutral scientific and Rankean exercise to 'show what really happened', as it is a subjective interpretation of historical events and developments. It is also a social enterprise with corresponding responsibilities. Historians must build bridges between different European societies, regardless of our national and ideological affiliations. We will have to get rid of many established viewpoints of various historical narratives. We cannot do that without constructing a new pan-European narrative of history in which all Europeans, from the West and East, can recognize themselves. Such a narrative must not become rigid and restrictive and must allow for differences between historical interpretations of various nations, social groups etc. Ukraine, Europe and Russia remain at the crossroads of history. It is our choice which way we will head.

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Annex I. Timeline 1987-1994



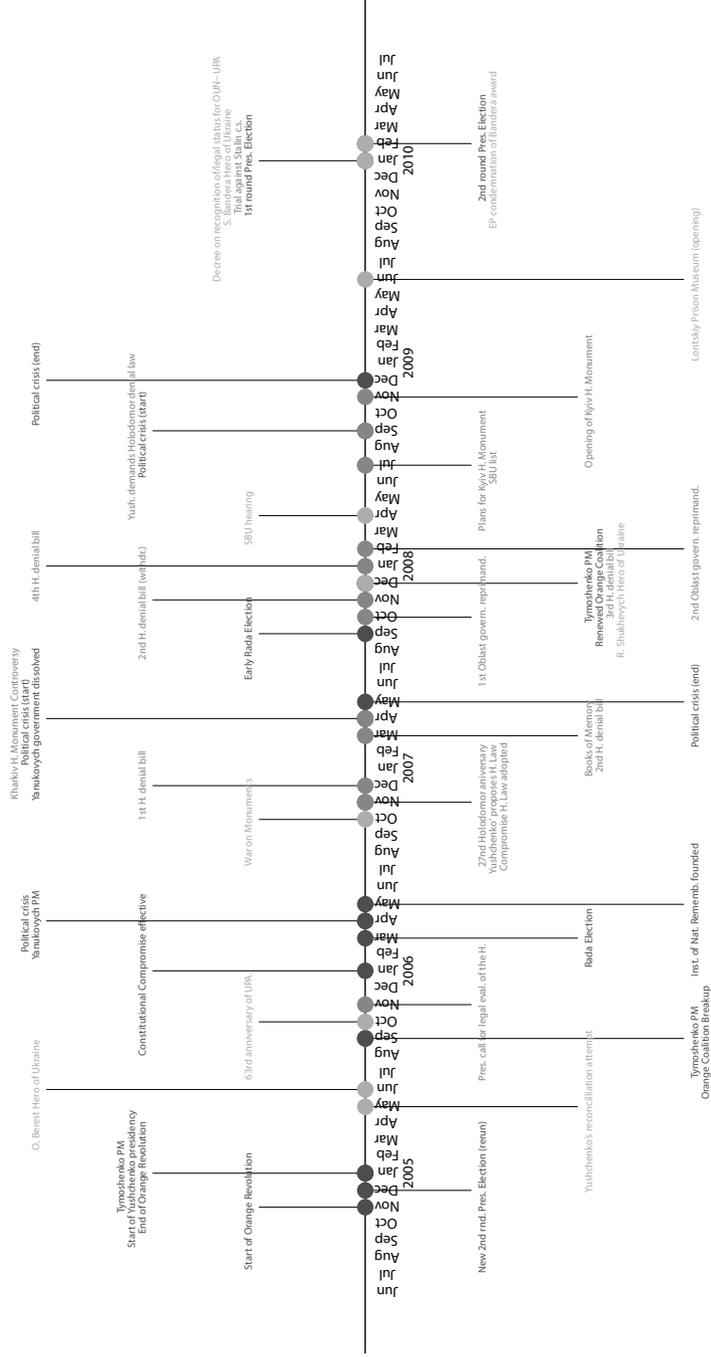
Type of Event ● Political ● Holodomor ● Nationalism & World War II ● Holocaust

Annex II. Timeline 1994-1999

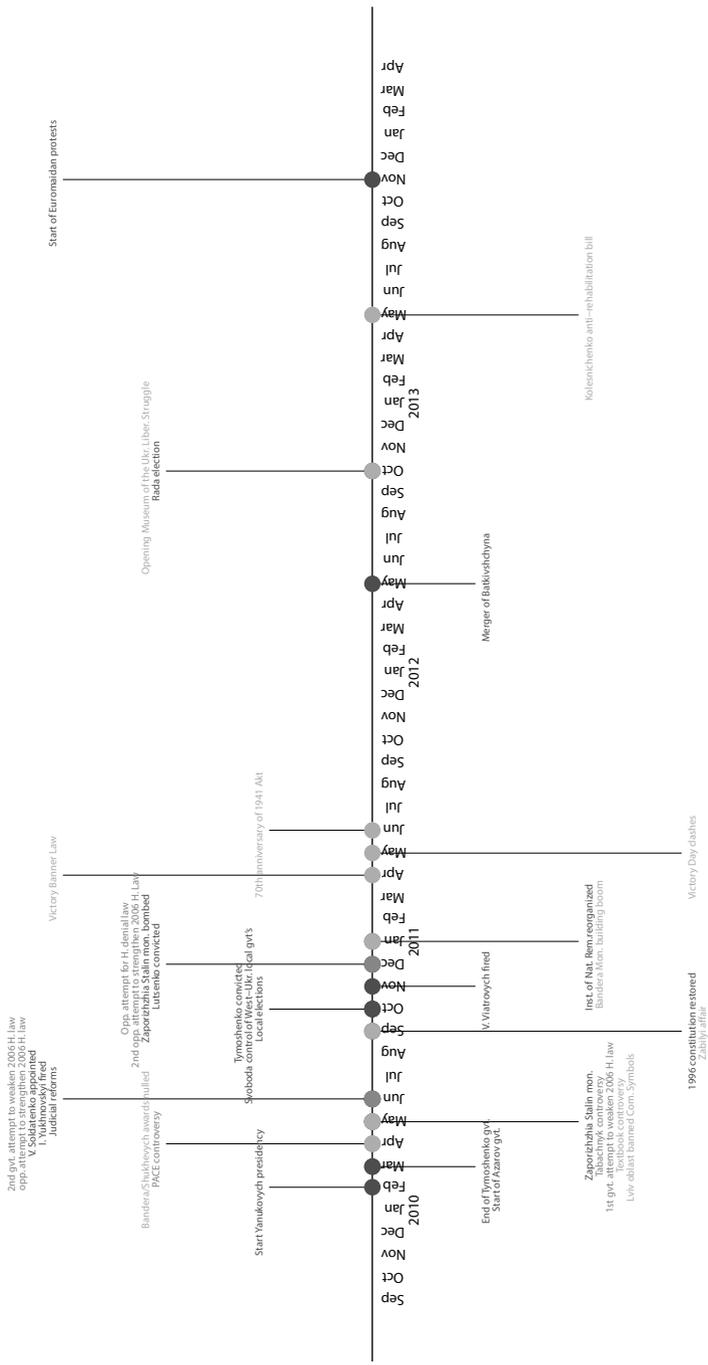


Type of Event ● Political ● Holocaust ● Nationalism & World War II ● Holocaust

Annex IV. Timeline 2004-2010



Annex V. Timeline 2010-2013



Type of Event ● Political ● Holodomor ● Nationalism & World War II ● Holocaust

Annex VII. An Overview of Holocaust Denial Laws in selected European Countries

Country	Holocaust Denial is Considered a Specific Offence	Holocaust denial can be prosecuted under generic laws against hate speech, discrimination etc.	Explicit Ban on Denial of Communist Crimes	Punishable by	Status
Austria	✓	×	×	Imprisonment up to twenty years	In 1992, the Verbotsgesetz 1947 was amended to prohibit denial or gross minimalization of the Holocaust
Belgium	✓	×	×	Prison sentence of eight days to one year and a fine of up to twenty six francs (€ 0.64) to five thousand francs (€ 123.95). For repeated offenders civic rights can be suspended.	Holocaust denial was made illegal in 1995 via the Negationism Law.
Czech Republic	✓	×	✓	Imprisonment from six months to three years.	Criminalized in 2001 in the Law Against Support and Dissemination of Movements Oppressing Human Rights and Freedoms. It also criminalized denial of communist crimes.
Denmark	×	✓	×	Fine or imprisonment up to two years	According to Danish Law Holocaust, denial is not illegal. However, it is undertaken with the intent to threaten one group of people on the grounds of their race, skin colour, ethnic origin, religion or sexual orientation it can be prosecuted under section 266b of the Criminal Code (which is directed against racism)

Country	Holocaust Denial is Considered a Specific Offence	Holocaust denial can be prosecuted under generic laws against hate speech, discrimination etc.	Explicit Ban on Denial of Communist Crimes	Punishable by	Status
European Union	X	✓	X	Framework Decision does not prescribe a specific punishment	The European Framework Decision for Combating Racism and Xenophobia (2007) prescribes that publicly condoning, denying or grossly trivializing crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes directed against a group of persons (or a member of such a group) defined by race, colour, religion, descent or national or ethnic origin should be a criminal offence in all member states. This provision also applies to crimes defined by the Nuremberg Tribunal.
France	✓	X	X	Fine or imprisonment from one month to a year	The Gayssot Act (1991) makes it illegal to question the existence of crimes judged in Nuremberg. The Constitutional Court ruled its extension to the Armenian Genocide an unconstitutional violation of the freedom of speech.
Germany	✓	✓	X	Fine or imprisonment from three months to five years (§130) Fine or imprisonment up to two years (§189)	Prosecuted under the law against Volksverhetzung (§130 of the Criminal Code; Incitement of the People). The law explicitly bans approving, downplaying or denying acts of genocide committed during National Socialist rule, but also bans general incitement against segments of the population. In addition §86a of the Criminal code bans symbols of unconstitutional organisations such as the Nazi party and ISIS. § 189 of the Criminal Code also makes it illegal to disparage the memory of deceased persons.

Country	Holocaust Denial is Considered a Specific Offence	Holocaust denial can be prosecuted under generic laws against hate speech, discrimination etc.	Explicit Ban on Denial of Communist Crimes	Punishable by	Status
Greece	✓	X	X	Fine between five and twenty thousand euros and imprisonment from three months to three years	In 2014, the law 'On the penalization of actions or activities intending into racial discrimination' (N 927/1979) was amended to criminalize denial of the Holocaust and other crimes against humanity committed by the Nazis.
Hungary	✓	X	✓	Imprisonment up to three years.	Holocaust denial was criminalized in 2010. The law was amended later that year to also criminalize denial of genocides and other crimes against humanity committed by communist regimes.
Italy	✓	X	X	Imprisonment from two to six years	In 2016, the 1975 anti-racism law was amended to criminalize Holocaust denial
Lithuania	✓	X	✓	Imprisonment from two to six years	It is forbidden to condone, deny or belittle international crimes, crimes of the USSR or Nazi Germany against the Republic of Lithuania (article 170(2) of the criminal Code)
Luxembourg	✓	✓	X	Fine and/or imprisonment between eight days to six months	Since 1997, article 457-3 of the Criminal Code outlaws Holocaust denial and the denial of other genocides.
Netherlands	X	✓	X	Fine or imprisonment up to one year	Denial of the Holocaust is not explicitly forbidden. However, if denial is undertaken with the intent to spread hatred it is considered a criminal offence according to general laws against discrimination against a particular group (articles 137c and 137d) of the Criminal Code

Country	Holocaust Denial is Considered a Specific Offence	Holocaust denial can be prosecuted under generic laws against hate speech, discrimination etc.	Explicit Ban on Denial of Communist Crimes	Punishable by	Status
Poland	✓	✓	✓	Fine or a penalty up to three years	The 1998 law on the Institute of National Remembrance bans denial of Nazi and Communist Crimes and other crimes that constitute crimes against peace, crimes against humanity or War Crimes.
Portugal	×	✓	×	Imprisonment from six months to five years	Holocaust denial is not explicitly illegal in Portugal but it prohibits denial of war crimes if it is used to incite to discrimination (article 240 of the Criminal Code).
Romania	✓	×	×	Imprisonment from six months to five years	Emergency Ordinance No. 31 (2002) bans denial of the Holocaust in public
Russia	✓	×	×	Fine up to 500,000 roubles or imprisonment up to five years. Additionally, a convicted person can be excluded from certain posts and professions for another three years and/or up to one year of community service.	The 2014 law against the rehabilitation of Nazism bans denial of Nazi crimes or portraying Nazis as heroes.
Slovakia	✓	×	×	Imprisonment from six months to three years.	Holocaust denial has been a crime since 2001 (law 485/2001) and is punished according to penal law (law 485/2001)
Spain	×	✓	×	Imprisonment from one to two years (for justification of genocide or calling for rehabilitation of perpetrating regimes/institutions)	Denial of genocide was an offence in Spain until the Constitutional Court ruled the law against it unconstitutional. Nevertheless, justifying the Holocaust or any other genocide is an offence.

Country	Holocaust Denial is Considered a Specific Offence	Holocaust denial can be prosecuted under generic laws against hate speech, discrimination etc.	Explicit Ban on Denial of Communist Crimes	Punishable by	Status
Sweden	X	✓	X	Fine or imprisonment up to two years	Holocaust denial is not explicitly illegal in Sweden, but it can be punishable if it is directed against a group of people (e.g. incitement of hatred, according to Chapter 16, Section 8 of the Criminal Code)
Switzerland	X	✓	X	Fine or imprisonment up to three years	Holocaust denial is not explicitly illegal in Switzerland, but denial of genocides and other crimes against humanity is (art. 261bis 1 of the Criminal Code)
United Kingdom	X	✓	X	Fine and/or imprisonment up to six months (Communications Act 2003 and Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994) Fine and/or imprisonment up to seven years (Public Order Act 1986).	Holocaust denial is not explicitly illegal in the United Kingdom. However, according to the Communications Act 2003, it is forbidden to use a public electronic communications network to send a message or other matter that is 'grossly offensive or of an indecent, obscene or menacing character'. Courts have created legal precedent for considering Holocaust denial as such. In addition, if Holocaust denial is intended as hate speech, it is considered illegal under the Public Order Act 1986 (with amendments under the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 and the Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006.)

Summary (in English)

In 2014, a seemingly unexpected geopolitical crisis erupted over Ukraine, the largest country that is entirely located in Europe. Ever since, Western countries, Ukraine and Russia have clashed with dramatic consequences: the first large scale annexation of a European state's sovereign territory since the Second World War, the destructive war in Ukraine's Eastern Donbas region and the terrible drama of Malaysian Airlines flight MH17.

The crisis was not as surprising as it seemed, as it was already long in the making. This PhD thesis delves into one of the constituent elements of the ongoing tense situation: the various politically contested conceptions of Ukrainian history and the definitions of Ukrainian nation- and statehood that correspond to them.

Ukraine has a complicated history: Ukrainian nationalists think of Ukraine as a historical nation with a thousand-year tradition of statehood that was consistently suppressed by foreigners (mainly from Russia and Poland). Most Russians see Ukraine as the cradle of their own nation and Ukrainians as their brothers within the Russian nation (as do some Ukrainians). Throughout the centuries, various empires, such as Russia, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and the Habsburg and Ottoman empires ruled and contested each other over territories that are nowadays part of Ukraine.

This thesis zooms in on two contentious episodes from twentieth-century Ukrainian history to show how thinking about history and the use of history as an instrument for domestic politics contributed to the Ukrainian crisis. Ukraine's twentieth century is complicated: After the Russian Revolution, nationalists unsuccessfully sought to establish multiple independent Ukrainian states. After several successive wars, the newly independent Polish state and the Soviet Union divided the bulk of Ukraine's present-day territory in 1921. Soviet Ukraine felt the full destructive force of utopian Communist ideology: it went through several Stalinist purges and in 1932-1933, a large proportion of the agricultural population perished in a famine that the regime willfully created. The political use of the famine's legacy is the first issue under discussion in this thesis.

With the country divided by powers that essentially opposed Ukraine's existence as a nation-state, during the interwar years a radical strand of nationalism saw the light of day: The *Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists* (OUN), which had a fascist and antisemitic ideology and wanted to establish a mono-ethnic Ukrainian nation-state by all possible means. During the Second World War, the Melnykite and Banderite factions that arose from the OUN collaborated with the Germans in various ways and took part in the extermination of Ukraine's (and Belarus') sizable Jewish community. The so-called *Ukrainian Insurgents Army* (UPA), controlled by the Banderite faction of the OUN, also committed itself to the ethnic cleansing of Poles from Western Ukraine. If not targeting ethnic minorities, the OUN and UPA terrorized Ukrainians who did not agree with their political programme. During the war, Ukraine also felt the oppressive force of both Soviet and Nazi totalitarian rule. The legacy of radical Ukrainian nationalism and its wider context forms the second historical issue under discussion in this thesis.

History is not a neutral exercise, especially when we discuss how collective entities such as nations devise historical narratives to support a collective identity. Every historical narrative is a social construction and therefore inherently political in nature. To explain this, the thesis borrows concepts from the social sciences, such as *collective memory* (Maurice

Halbwachs), and from the interdisciplinary field of memory studies (especially the work of Jan and Aleida Assmann on how societies form their collective memories). From these concepts, we learn that in a large part political power dictates the social construction of historical narratives. Yet, they have little to say about how politicians mingle in this process. To explain this, the thesis employs the concept of *'politics of history'* mainly developed by the Russian historian Alexei Miller. This concept explains that politicians in post-communist states (such as Ukraine) use history as a policy tool, not because they want to construct certain depictions of the past, but because they see history as a tool to attain other unrelated political goals. The concept also explains which policy instruments politicians employ to enact what this thesis calls *'history policies'*: the education system, museum exhibitions and monuments, laws and other regulations, and the so-called institutes of national remembrance (special research and archive institutions under political supervision).

Ukraine is not unique: the Ukrainian politics of history are part of a larger international political discussion about Europe's twentieth-century history. After the fall of communism and the end of the Cold War, the existing historical narratives that confronted the capitalist and communist worlds against each other were no longer satisfactory. Western European societies and former Communist countries had to devise new explanations of history that suited new political realities. This thesis, therefore, contextualizes the Ukrainian politics of history within this international redefinition of twentieth century history. It does so by comparing the Ukrainian experience with three ideal types or models:

1. *A generic Western European model* describes a part of twentieth-century European history as a tragedy. It emphasizes that crimes committed by the Nazis (especially the Holocaust) form the lowest point of history. The legacies of negative experiences of the twentieth-century history also were the impetus for European integration: through collaborating with each other and by sharing sovereignty over vital policy areas, European nations could prevent another destructive war. The EU has institutionalized this conception of history in an informal *Acquis Historique Communautaire*, a set of semi-compulsory views of history to which EU member states must subscribe (an idea developed by Fabrice Larat and Chiara Bottici).
2. The *narrative of post-communism* constructed in former communist countries. This model also views part of the twentieth century as a tragedy. Yet it disagrees with the Western European model in what the lowest point of European history was. The narrative employs the concept of totalitarianism to emphasize that Nazi and communist (Stalinist) rule were – at a minimum – equally evil. The difference of opinion about the equality of Nazi and Communist crimes has become extremely poignant because since 2004 many former communist countries joined the European Union and started to demand the European engagement with the post-communist narrative of history.
3. *In the Soviet Union and Russia*, the Second World War does not count as a tragedy but as a moment of glorious heroism. The Soviet Union required a narrative that could bind members of various nations together in one Soviet collective. The Soviet regime promoted the concept of the *Great Patriotic War*. During the war, the Soviet people came together and fought a struggle to the death with the mortal enemy of humanity, the evil of fascism. From it, the Soviet Union arose victoriously. After 1991, independent Russia also struggled with the question of what its history should be; especially after Vladimir Putin came to power in 2000, the answer was again sought in the *Great Patriotic War*.

These three narratives did not form at an instant, but they were constructed over multiple decades, as the thesis explains. The narratives are also not without their problems: as political narratives of history, they emphasize certain historical experiences above others. This makes it difficult for minority groups who do not share their core concepts to remember their history, as they want to. They also make societies close their eyes to their

own crimes and ignore other ways in which they contributed to negative experiences in the twentieth century.

As a side story to the main research problem, this thesis devotes attention to the political conflict between the Western European and the post-communist models. As they clash over essential concepts, the inability of Western and Eastern European countries to agree about history makes it more difficult for them to agree on various policies of the European Union. This might become problematic in a time when Europe faces important policy discussions (to name just a few: Brexit, climate change, a resurgent Russia, the rise of China as a great power). This thesis, therefore, argues that Europeans should engage in a thorough discussion about what kind of history should serve as the foundation of the European Union. It also proposes that recent historiographical debates (the controversy about Timothy Snyder's *Bloodlands*) on the comparability of Communist and Nazi crimes provide a way to solve the problem. In the end, Western European countries will have to engage with the legacy of Communist rule while Eastern European countries will have to look at their own (negative) role in history in a critical way.

Between 1991 and 2019, Ukrainian politicians oscillated their history policies between a Ukrainian nationalist and a (neo)-Soviet narrative of history, depending on their political imperatives. While the substance of their policies changed, they relied on the same resources and instruments. Because these policies focussed on mutually exclusive extremes, the history policies polarized the country. President Leonid Kravchuk (1991-1994) and his followers initiated Ukrainization policies and transitioned state policy to a Ukrainian nationalist narrative. They transformed the 1932-1933 famine into a genocide of the Ukrainian nation (the so-called *Holodomor*). Likewise, they sought to reconcile OUN members and UPA fighters with their erstwhile opponents, Red Army veterans. In any case, the status of the former was upgraded to one of national importance, instead of the all-out condemnation during Soviet times. Such policies caused discontent in the Russified East of the country. Kravchuk's successor Leonid Kuchma (1994-2005) was elected on the promise to end Ukrainization, but merely scaled these policies down. As Kuchma cared little for ideology, he ventured any course that benefited the position of his regime. During the elections in 1998, he was re-elected against the possibility of a communist backlash and campaigned with nationalist policies. At the same time, he stood at the apex of a corrupt political system in which a happy few (the oligarchs) who gained from the transition from a communist command economy to a capitalist free-market economy dictated policy. During Kuchma's second term, his history policies became increasingly ambivalent and served audiences with whatever narratives they wanted to hear. As the corruption of his regime was exposed and he lost the support of the nationalist opposition, Kuchma slowly started to rely on an Eastern Ukrainian electorate with corresponding (neo)-Soviet history policies. Despite all this, his regime consolidated the nationalist narrative further. At the same time history policy became a major political battleground between the regime and the opposition, polarizing the country even further along the nationalist-(neo)-Soviet axis.

In 2004, the regime unsuccessfully tried to install a successor to Kuchma with falsified elections. Mass protests, the so-called *Orange Revolution*, and political pressures from within the system ensured another outcome: the opposition candidate Viktor Yushchenko (2005-2010) would become president, but his powers were severely curtailed. Yushchenko believed that he could use nationalist history policies to consolidate what he perceived as a political achievement: During the protests, the West and Centre of the country first formed one political community.

On the other hand, political opponents started to appeal to opposing political niches. Viktor Yanukovich – whom Kuchma had anointed as his would-be successor – and his Party of the Regions, started to appeal to the (neo)-Soviet narrative. His political partners, the Commu-

nist and Socialist Parties did the same. Yuliya Tymoshenko, an oligarch who supported the *Orange Revolution* whom Yushchenko soon forced out of government. She held less ideological attachment, had an ambivalent approach to history, and persistently switched between agnostic and nationalist positions. As Ukrainian politics turned volatile, politicians directed their attention to history but neglected other important issues at hand, such as the failing economy. Ukrainian society now strongly polarized between ideological extremes.

Yushchenko failed to gain something substantial during his presidency and Yanukovych won the 2010 presidential elections, as moderate voters had no place to go to in this polarized political landscape. As he consolidated his power and turned Ukraine into his personal autocracy, Yanukovych quickly rewound Yushchenko's history policies. His strategy was to polarize the country even further between the nationalist and (neo)-Soviet narratives so that he could dissuade moderate voters from participating in the electoral process. This way he could consolidate his power.

This policy returned like a boomerang when Yanukovych, forced by Russian pressure – refused to sign an association agreement with the European Union in 2013. From November – February protesters (the so-called *Euromaidan*) and the government confronted each other ending in a – yet not sufficiently investigated – bloodbath and Yanukovych's flight from Ukraine. After the Euromaidan, the new authorities – essentially another faction within Ukraine's oligarchic establishment led by Petro Poroshenko (president 2014-2019) – quickly reconsolidated power. They resorted to nationalist policies. The Russian annexation of Crimea and the war in the Donbas effectively excluded these two regions from the Ukrainian body politic. Combined with the fact that radical nationalist positions were normalized by previous history policies and that extreme nationalism was the only real opposition against Yanukovych's autocracy, there was almost no political opposition against the new nationalist history policies.

Based on a thorough analysis of history policies since 1991, this thesis concludes that there was much continuity between the nationalist and (neo)-Soviet narratives of history. All Ukrainian administrations contributed to the post-communist nationalist narrative that has by now come to dominate the public discourse. In addition, the nationalist and (neo)-Soviet narratives share the same exclusionary logic; they present history as a kind of zero-sum game in which there has to be a single truth and in which only one side can win.

History policies also proved to be problematic in various aspects: the zero-sum conception of history did not help Ukraine to become a fully functional democracy. History policies showed little respect for due legal process and essential human rights and freedoms. The history policies also did not enable Ukraine to digest its complicated past in a way that allows for a critical appraisal. The (neo)-Soviet narrative presents Ukrainians as fascists and murderous nationalists, while the nationalist narrative puts Ukrainians in the role of the victim only and makes heroes out of perpetrators of severe human rights abuses and mass murder. This contradicts the outcomes of many historiographical studies of twentieth-century Eastern European history: successive dictatorial regimes, complicated demographic and social compositions of states and the overall horrors of successive wars, death, and mass murder made history so complicated that one needs more than just black-and-white tones to give an accurate description. The history policies not only stained Ukraine's democratic credentials but they also make it harder for the country to get closer to Europe. Not only is the logic of the nationalist narrative incompatible with European integration, it also has the potential to strain relations with neighbouring countries such as Poland. These policies also give ample room to Ukraine's main foreign opponent, Russia, to claim that the country's government is comprised of 'fascists' who committed a coup in 2014.

Another major currently dominant problem with the post-communist nationalist narrative

Summary (in English)

is that it seeks to write out communism as a constituent part of Ukrainian history. It claims that external forces imposed this oppressive ideology on the country. Yet, this thesis argues that this claim does not stand the test of reason: there were Ukrainians who wanted a communist Ukraine and present-day Ukraine was a Soviet (e.g. communist) creation. That the Ukrainian state kept honouring Soviet Red Army War veterans, even after the introduction of extremely nationalist history policies, also shows that the country tries to eradicate an ineradicable constituent element of its own history.

In the twenty-eight years surveyed in this thesis, Ukrainian politicians have constructed a hybrid narrative of Ukrainian and (neo)-Soviet elements. It mixes nationalist content with a Soviet structure. For all the reasons explained above, this hybrid narrative is problematic. Flawed logic, gross simplifications, and selective reading of history form its basis. While politicians initiated these policies, many – but not all – Ukrainian historians aided them by producing works supporting either the nationalist or (neo)-Soviet narratives. Ukrainian historians have thus far failed to understand that history is not a single true depiction of the past, but a discipline in which a multitude of interlinked and conflicting histories can (and must) coexist. In this sense, most Ukrainian historians failed in describing in a proper way the history of their own society. If Ukraine wants to succeed in confronting its past, historians would have to engage with history in a more open and inclusive way and convince their politicians and society of this necessity as well.

Historians in Western and Eastern Europe and Russia face the same challenge. We all have our own problems with twentieth-century history. We defined our histories differently and drew contrasting lessons. At present, this makes it increasingly difficult to agree on contemporary problems. This thesis, therefore, concludes that gaining insight into these differences should be a key problem for historians since history is both a science and a social enterprise. We have to find ways to bridge our differences and have to agree on more inclusive and more open historical narratives. This would be the first step to find new explanations of history that Europeans in both the West and East can share. Until that moment, Ukraine and Europe will remain at the ‘crossroads of history’.

Samenvatting (in het Nederlands)

In 2014 brak er een ogenschijnlijk onverwachte geopolitieke crisis uit rondom Oekraïne, het grootste land dat geheel in Europa is gelegen. Sindsdien botsen westerse landen, Oekraïne en Rusland, met dramatische gevolgen: de eerste grootschalige annexatie van het soevereine grondgebied van een Europese staat sinds de Tweede Wereldoorlog, de verwoestende oorlog in het Oostelijke Oekraïense Donetsbekken en het verschrikkelijke drama rondom Malaysian Airlines vlucht MH17.

Toch was de crisis niet zo verrassend zoals vaak gesuggereerd wordt, daar de spanningen al lange tijd aan het opbouwen waren. Dit proefschrift onderzoekt een van de wezenlijke elementen van de huidige gespannen situatie: verscheidene politiek omstreden concepties van Oekraïense geschiedenis en daarmee corresponderende definities van Oekraïne als een natie en een staat.

De geschiedenis van Oekraïne is complex: nationalisten definiëren Oekraïne als een historische natie die een eeuwenoude traditie van staatkundige eenheid kent en continu door buitenlanders (met name uit Rusland en Polen) onderdrukt is. Veel Russen zien Oekraïne daarentegen als de wieg van hun eigen natie en beschouwen Oekraïners als broeders binnen éénzelfde Russische natie (een mening die ook door sommige Oekraïners wordt gedeeld). Door de eeuwen heen hebben diverse grootmachten, waaronder Rusland, het Pools-Litouwse gemenebest, het Habsburgse en het Ottomaanse rijk het land beheerst en onderling betwist.

Dit proefschrift legt de nadruk op de twee meestomstreden episodes uit de Oekraïense geschiedenis om te laten zien hoe het denken over geschiedenis en het gebruik van geschiedenis als een binnenlands-politiek instrument hebben bijgedragen aan het ontstaan van de Oekraïne-crisis. Oekraïne's twintigste eeuw was gecompliceerd: na de Russische revolutie poogden Oekraïense nationalist, zonder succes, meerdere onafhankelijke Oekraïense staten uit te roepen. Na diverse opeenvolgende oorlogen verdeelden de nieuwe onafhankelijke Poolse staat en de Sovjet-Unie in 1921 het leeuwendeel van territorium van de huidige Oekraïense staat onderling. Sovjet-Oekraïne werd daarmee overgeleverd aan de verwoestende kracht van de utopische Communistische ideologie: het maakte diverse Stalinistische zuiveringen door en in 1932-1933 stierf een aanzienlijk deel van de plattelandsbevolking de hongerdood ten gevolge van een hongersnood die bewust door het regime was gecreëerd. Omgang met de erfenis van deze hongersnood vormt het eerste thema dat door dit proefschrift wordt onderzocht.

Tijdens het interbellum was Oekraïne verdeeld tussen twee mogendheden die beiden gekant waren tegen het bestaan van Oekraïne als natiestaat. Onder die omstandigheden ontwikkelde zich een radicale vorm van nationalisme. De *Organisatie van Oekraïense Nationalisten* (OOeN) kende een fascistische en antisemitische ideologie en wenste een mono-etnische Oekraïense natiestaat te vestigen. Om dat doel te bereiken was ieder middel gerechtvaardigd. Gedurende de Tweede Wereldoorlog werkten de Melnyk- en Bandera-facties die uit de OOeN ontstaan waren op diverse manieren samen met de Duitsers en collaboreerden met hen bij de vernietiging van de aanzienlijke Joodse bevolking van Oekraïne (en Belarus). Het zogenoemde *Oekraïense Opstandelingenleger* (OePA), dat werd gecontroleerd door de Bandera-factie van de OOeN, maakte zich in West-Oekraïne bovendien schuldig aan etnische zuivering van Polen. Als zij geen etnische minderheden in het vizier hadden, dan terroriseerden de OOeN en de OePA wel Oekraïners die zich niet in hun politieke programma

konden vinden. De nalatenschap van dit radicale Oekraïense nationalisme en diens bredere context vormt het tweede historische thema dat in deze dissertatie wordt behandeld.

Geschiedenis is geen neutrale exercitie, zeker wanneer we het hebben over de vraag hoe collectieven (zoals naties) geschiedverhalen vormen om daarmee een collectieve identiteit te ondersteunen. Elk geschiedverhaal is een sociale constructie en is daarom inherent politiek. Om dit te verklaren leent dit proefschrift het concept van *collectief geheugen* (Maurice Halbwachs) uit de sociologie. Ook wordt geput uit het interdisciplinaire onderzoeksveld van de geheugenstudies, waarbij met name gedacht moet worden aan het werk van Jan en Aleida Assmann dat verklaart hoe samenlevingen hun collectieve geheugens vormgeven. Uit deze concepten valt op te maken dat politieke macht een grote invloed heeft op de sociale constructie van geschiedverhalen. Toch vertellen deze theorieën ons weinig over hoe politici zich in dit proces mengen. Om dat te kunnen verklaren wordt het concept van *geschied-politiek*, dat met name door de Russische historicus Aleksei Miller is ontwikkeld. Het concept legt uit dat in postcommunistiche staten (zoals Oekraïne) politici geschiedenis niet gebruiken om bepaalde geschiedverhalen vorm te geven, maar als een politiek instrument om andere niet-gerelateerde doelen te bereiken. Het concept legt ook uit welke instrumenten politici gebruiken om, wat in deze dissertatie *geschiedenisbeleid* genoemd wordt, in te kunnen voeren. Dit zijn: het onderwijsstelsel, museumexposities en monumenten, wetten en andere regelgeving en de zogenoemde ‘instituten van nationale herinnering’ (speciale politiek aangestuurde onderzoeks- en archiefinstellingen).

Oekraïne is hierin niet uniek: de Oekraïense geschiedpolitiek is onderdeel van een veel grotere internationale discussie over Europa’s twintigste-eeuwse geschiedenis. Na de val van het communisme en het einde van de Koude Oorlog bleek dat de bestaande geschiedverhalen die de kapitalistische en communistische werelden tegenover elkaar plaatsten niet langer als afdoende werden gezien. West-Europese samenlevingen en voormalige Communistische landen dienden nieuwe verklaringen van het verleden te vinden die overeenkwamen met de nieuwe politieke realiteiten. Daarom wordt in dit proefschrift de Oekraïense geschiedpolitiek gecontextualiseerd binnen deze internationale herdefinitie van twintigste-eeuwse geschiedenis. Dat wordt gedaan door de Oekraïense realiteit te vergelijken met drietal ideaaltypen:

1. Een *algemeen West-Europees model* ziet een deel van de twintigste-eeuwse Europese geschiedenis als een tragedie. Het benadrukt dat Nazimisdaden (met name de Holocaust) het dieptepunt van de geschiedenis zijn. De erfenis van de negatieve ervaringen in de twintigste eeuw hebben er ook toe geleid dat Europese staten met elkaar zijn gaan integreren: door samen te werken en hun soevereiniteit over vitale beleidsterreinen te delen konden Europese naties een nieuwe verwoestende oorlog voorkomen. De Europese Unie heeft deze conceptie van geschiedenis geïnstitutionaliseerd in een informeel *Acquis Historique Communautaire*, een set semi-verplichte geschiedopvattingen die alle EU-lidstaten dienen te onderschrijven (een concept ontwikkeld door Fabrice Larat en Chiara Bottici).
2. Het *perspectief van postcommunisme* uit de voormalige communistische landen. Dit model ziet delen van de twintigste-eeuwse geschiedenis ook als een tragedie. Over de vraag wat het dieptepunt van de geschiedenis was, verschilt het echter van mening met het West-Europese model. Het postcommunistiche perspectief maakt gebruik van het concept van totalitarisme om te betogen dat Nazi en communistische (Stalinistische) overheersing minimaal even kwaadaardig waren. Het meningsverschil over de vergelijkbaarheid van Nazi- en communistische misdaden is bijzonder doordringend geworden, zeker nadat voormalige communistische staten vanaf 2004 lid zijn geworden van de Europese Unie en Europese engagement met het postcommunistiche geschiedverhaal begonnen te eisen.
3. In de *Sovjet-Unie* en *Rusland* gold en geldt de Tweede Wereldoorlog niet als een

tragedie maar als een moment van glorieuze heldenmoed. De Sovjet-Unie had behoefte aan een verhaal dat diverse naties in één Sovjetcollectief kon verbinden. Het regime gebruikte daartoe het concept van de *Grote Vaderlandse Oorlog*. Tijdens deze oorlog kwam het Sovjetvolk hoegenaamd samen om als eenheid een doodstrijd te voeren met de ervijand van de mensheid, het kwaad van het fascisme. Uit deze strijd kwam de Sovjet-Unie als overwinnaar naar boven. Na 1991 diende ook het nieuwe onafhankelijke Rusland de lastige vraag te beantwoorden wat 'de Russische geschiedenis' nu precies was. Zeker nadat Vladimir Poetin in 2000 aan de macht kwam, werd het antwoord steeds meer gezocht in de *Grote Vaderlandse Oorlog*.

Deze drie geschiedverhalen zijn niet van de ene op de andere dag ontstaan, maar zijn geconstrueerd gedurende meerdere decennia. Dit proefschrift legt daarom ook uit hoe deze zijn ontstaan en betoogt dat ze zeker niet zonder problemen waren: als politieke geschiedverhalen benadrukken ze bepaalde historische gebeurtenissen ten koste van andere. Dit maakt het moeilijk voor minderheidsgroepen die de kernconcepten van deze geschiedverhalen niet delen, zich hun verleden te herinneren zoals zij dit willen. Evengoed maken ze samenlevingen blind voor hun eigen misdaden en andere manieren waarop zij hebben bijgedragen aan de negatieve gebeurtenissen uit de twintigste eeuw.

Deze dissertatie schenkt, als een nevenprobleem, ook aandacht aan het politieke conflict tussen de West-Europese en postcommunistische modellen. Daar hun kernconcepten onverenigbaar zijn, maakt dit het moeilijk voor West- en Oost-Europese landen om het eens te worden over hun gemeenschappelijke geschiedenis. Dat maakt het op zijn beurt weer moeilijker om het eens te worden over diverse beleidsbeslissingen binnen het verband van de Europese Unie. Dit kan problematisch worden, zeker in een tijd waarin Europa diverse belangrijke beleidsbeslissingen dient te nemen (denk bijvoorbeeld aan de Brexit, klimaatsverandering, het hernieuwd assertieve Rusland en de opkomst van China als grote mogendheid). Dit proefschrift beargumenteert dan ook dat Europeanen een diepgaand debat moeten voeren over welke geschiedenis moet dienen als fundatie voor de Europese Unie. Het stelt ook voor om recente historiografische discussies over de vergelijkbaarheid van communistische en nazi-misdrijven (de controverse over Timothy Snyders *Bloodlands*) te gebruiken als een manier om het probleem op te lossen. Uiteindelijk zal dit erop neer moeten komen dat West-Europese landen zich zullen moeten engageren met de erfenis van communistische overheersing, terwijl Oost-Europese landen hun eigen (negatieve) rol in de geschiedenis kritisch onder ogen moeten zien.

Tussen 1991 en 2019 hebben Oekraïense politici hun geschiedenisbeleid laten laveren tussen een Oekraïense-nationalistische en (neo)-Sovjet geschiedverhalen. Daarbij lieten ze zich vooral leiden door hun politieke belangen. Hoewel de inhoudelijke invulling van hun beleid veranderde, maakten zij gebruik van dezelfde hulpmiddelen en instrumenten. Omdat het beleid zich richtte op onderling uitsluitende extremen leidde de invoering van geschiedenisbeleid ertoe dat het land gepolariseerd raakte. President Leonid Kravtsoek (1991-1994) zette een beleid van Oekraïnisering in en gebruikte het Oekraïens nationalistische geschiedverhaal als basis voor het overheidsbeleid. Dit beleid transformeerde de hongersnood van 1932-1933 tot een genocide van de Oekraïense natie (de zogenoemde *Holodomor*). Het beleid poogde ook leden van de OeN en strijders van de OePA te verzoenen met hun voormalige tegenstanders, veteranen uit het Rode Leger. In ieder geval werd de status van nationalistische strijders verhoogd en werden zij niet langer verguisd zoals in Sovjettijden. Zulk beleid leidde tot grote ontevredenheid, met name in het gerussificeerde Zuidoosten van het land. Kravtsoeks opvolger, Leonid Koetsjma (1994-2005) werd dan ook verkozen met de belofte dat hij een einde aan het Oekraïeniseringsbeleid zou maken. Toch verkleinde hij slechts de omvang van dit beleid. Omdat Koetsjma weinig om ideologie gaf, kon hij elke koers inslaan als dit op een gegeven moment gunstig was voor zijn eigen positie of die van zijn regime. Tijdens de verkiezingen van 1998 werd Koetsjma herkozen tegen de

achtergrond van een dreigende communistische terugslag en hij maakte gebruik van nationalistisch beleid. Tegelijkertijd stond Koetsjma ook aan de top van een corrupt politiek systeem, waarin een paar gelukkigen (oligarchen), die hadden weten te profiteren van de transitie van een communistische planeconomie naar een kapitalistische vrije markt, een zwaar stempel wisten te drukken op het overheidsbeleid. Koetsjma's geschiedenisbeleid werd gedurende zijn tweede ambtstermijn steeds ambivalenter: hij bediende elk publiek met precies die boodschappen dat het wenste te horen. Daar de grootschalige corruptie van het regime steeds verder blootgelegd werd, vervreemde Koetsjma zich van met name de nationalistische oppositie en zocht hij zijn toevlucht tot een (neo)-Sovjetgeschiedsverhaal om een Oost-Oekraïens electoraat tevreden te stellen. Ondanks alle ommezwaaien consolideerde het regime van Koetsjma het nationalistische geschiedverhaal wel verder. Tegelijkertijd werd geschiedbeleid één van de belangrijke politieke slagvelden tussen het regime en de oppositie, waardoor het land nog verder werd verdeeld tussen het nationalistische en (neo)-Sovjetgeschiedverhaal.

In 2004 pogde het regime een opvolger voor Koetsjma te installeren via vervalste verkiezingen. Massaprotesten hiertegen, de zogenaamde *Oranjerevolutie*, en druk vanuit het politieke systeem zorgden echter voor een andere uitkomst. Oppositiekandidaat Viktor Joesjtsjenko (2005-2010) zou president worden. Tegelijkertijd werd de presidentiële macht sterk ingeperkt. Joesjtsjenko was ervan overtuigd dat hij nationalistisch geschiedenisbeleid kon gebruiken om datgeen te consolideren wat hij als een politieke verworvenheid zag: tijdens de protesten kwamen West- en Midden-Oekraïne voor het eerst samen als een politieke gemeenschap.

Joesjtsjenko's politieke tegenstanders begonnen zich te richten op tegengestelde politieke niches. Viktor Janoekovytsj, die door het regime was aangewezen als Koetsjma's opvolger, en de Partij van de Regio's richtten zich op het (neo)-Sovjetgeschiedverhaal. Zijn politieke partners, de Communistische en Socialistische partijen, deden hetzelfde. Joelija Tymosjenko, een oligarch die de Oranjerevolutie steunde, maar reeds snel door Joesjtsjenko uit de regering werd gezet, hield er een minder ideologisch engagement op na. Zij had een ambivalente houding tot geschiedenis en wisselde voortdurend tussen agnostische en nationalistische standpunten. Terwijl de Oekraïense politiek steeds grimmiger werd hadden politici steeds meer aandacht voor geschiedenis maar lieten andere belangrijke kwesties, zoals de falende economie, links liggen. Als gevolg van dit alles raakte de Oekraïense samenleving enkel nog meer gepolariseerd tussen de twee ideologische extremen.

Janoekovytsj won de presidentsverkiezingen van 2010 omdat gematigde kiezers zich door geen der partijen nog gehoord voelden en Joesjtsjenko gedurende zijn presidentschap weinig substantieels had gepresteerd. Terwijl Janoekovytsj zijn macht consolideerde en Oekraïne in zijn persoonlijke autocratie transformeerde, draaide hij het leeuwendeel van Joesjtsjenko's geschiedenisbeleid terug. Zijn strategie was erop gericht het land nog verder te verdelen tussen het nationalistische en (neo)-Sovjetgeschiedsverhaal. Dit zou ervoor zorgen dat hij gematigde kiezers weghield van het electorale proces, dat maakte het Janoekovytsj makkelijker zijn zijn macht nog verder te versterken.

Dat beleid zou zich echter als een boemerang tegen Janoekovytsj keren nadat hij – onder Russische druk – in 2013 weigerde een associatieverdrag met de Europese Unie te tekenen. Van november tot februari stonden demonstranten (de zogenaamde *Euromajdan*) en het regime lijnrecht tegenover elkaar. Dit eindigde in een – tot op heden onopgehelderd – bloedbad, waarna Janoekovytsj het land ontvluchtte. Na de Euromajdan consolideerde een nieuw regime in snel tempo zijn machtspositie. In feite nam een andere factie uit Oekraïne's oligarchische establishment, geleid door Petro Porosjenko (president 2014-2019), de teugels in handen. Het nieuwe regime nam zijn toevlucht tot een nationalistisch beleid. De Russische annexatie van de Krim en de oorlog in het Donetsbekken sloten effectief deze re-

gio's uit van deelname aan het Oekraïense politieke leven. Dat, gecombineerd met het feit dat extreem nationalisme de enige echte oppositiekraacht tegen Janoekovytsj's autocratie geweest was, betekende dat er nauwelijks oppositie bestond tegen het nieuwe nationalistische geschiedbeleid.

Gebaseerd op een grondige analyse van het geschiedbeleid dat sinds 1991 gevoerd is, concludeert dit proefschrift dat het beleid gekenmerkt wordt door een grote mate van continuïteit tussen het nationalistische en (neo)-Sovjetgeschiedverhaal. Alle Oekraïense regeringen droegen bij aan de vorming van het postcommunistische nationalistische geschiedverhaal dat vandaag de dag het publieke debat domineert. Daarnaast zijn het nationalistische en (neo)-Sovjetgeschiedverhaal gebaseerd op dezelfde elkaar wederzijds uitsluitende logica; zij presenteren geschiedenis als een soort nulsomspel waarin slechts één waarheid kan bestaan en waarin slechts één kant kan winnen.

Het gevoerde geschiedenisbeleid was problematisch vanwege een veelvoud aan aspecten: de nulsomspelopvatting van geschiedenis hielp Oekraïne niet om een volwaardige en goedwerkende democratie te worden. Het geschiedenisbeleid toonde ook weinig respect voor de rechtstaat, essentiële mensenrechten en vrijheden. Het geschiedenisbeleid stelde Oekraïne ook niet in staat om op een kritische manier zijn gecompliceerde verleden te verwerken. Terwijl het (neo)-Sovjetgeschiedverhaal een deel van de Oekraïners presenteert als fascisten en moorddadige nationalistien, geeft het nationalistische perspectief hen slechts de rol van slachtoffer en maakt helden van daders van ernstige mensenrechtenschendingen en massamoordenaars. Dit alles is in tegenspraak met vele historiografische studies van de twintigste-eeuwse Oost-Europese geschiedenis, die juist laten zien dat geschiedenis in deze regio niet in zwart-wit-tonen kan worden beschreven. De erfenis van opeenvolgende dictatoriale regimes, een gecompliceerde demografische en sociale samenstelling van staten en de gruwelende van opeenvolgende oorlogen, dood en massamoord, maken geschiedenis hier simpelweg te complex voor. Het geschiedenisbeleid besmeurde niet enkel Oekraïne's democratische geloofsbrieven, maar maken het voor het land ook moeilijker om dichter naar Europa toe te groeien. Niet alleen is de logica achter het nationalistische geschiedbeleid incompatibel met de grondgedachte achter Europese integratie, het heeft ook nog eens de potentie de relaties met buurlanden, zoals Polen, te verslechteren. Het beleid geeft Rusland, Oekraïne's belangrijkste buitenlandpolitieke opponent, ook voldoende bewegingsruimte te beweren dat het land in 2014 in handen is gevallen van een 'fascistische coup'.

Een ander belangrijk probleem van het thans dominante postcommunistische nationalistische geschiedverhaal is dat het poogt het communisme uit de Oekraïense geschiedenis te schrijven. In plaats van het communisme als een van de kernelementen van de nationale geschiedenis te zien, wordt beweerd dat externe mogendheden deze onderdrukkende ideologie simpelweg aan het land hebben opgedrongen. Deze dissertatie beargumentteert dat deze claim geen stand kan houden: er bestonden weldegelijk Oekraïners die een communistische staat wilden opbouwen en de huidige staat is een Sovjet (en daarmee communistische) creatie. Dat de Oekraïense staat, zelfs na de introductie van zeer nationalistisch geschiedenisbeleid, nog altijd (Sovjet) Rode-legersoldaten blijft eren, toont dat het land feitelijk een onuitwisbare en belangrijke component uit zijn eigen geschiedenis poogt te verwijderen.

In de achtentwintig jaar die in dit proefschrift bestudeerd zijn, hebben Oekraïense politici feitelijk een hybride geschiedverhaal van Oekraïense en (neo)-Sovjetelementen geconstrueerd. Zij combineren nationalistische inhoud met een Sovjetstructuur. Vanwege alle bovengenoemde redenen, is dit geschiedverhaal problematisch. De basis wordt gevormd door een valse logica, grove simplificaties en een selectieve lezing van de geschiedenis. Terwijl politici tot de vorming hiervan de aanzet hebben gegeven, hebben vele – maar niet alle – Oekraïense historici hun bijdrage geleverd door werken te publiceren die ofwel het

nationalistische ofwel het (neo)-Sovjetgeschiedverhaal ondersteunden. Veel Oekraïense historici hebben tot op heden nog niet begrepen dat geschiedenis geen ene ware afbeelding van het verleden is, maar een discipline waarin een veelvoud aan onderling verbonden en conflicterende geschiedenissen naast elkaar kunnen (en dienen te) bestaan. In deze zin zijn Oekraïense historici bij het beschrijven van hun samenleving tekortgeschoten. Als zij erin willen slagen het verleden van Oekraïne een plaats te geven, dan zullen historici het verleden op een open en inclusieve manier moeten gaan benaderen. Zij zullen politici en de verdere samenleving hier dan ook van moeten overtuigen.

Diezelfde uitdaging ligt er ook voor historici in West- en Oost-Europa en Rusland. Ook zij hebben hun eigen problemen met de twintigste-eeuwse geschiedenis. We hebben onze geschiedenissen verschillend gedefinieerd en hebben er contrasterende lessen uit getrokken. Dit maakt het vandaag de dag moeilijk om het eens te worden over onze huidige problemen. Deze dissertatie concludeert dan ook dat het verkrijgen van inzicht in deze verschillen één van de belangrijke problemen voor historici zou moeten zijn, omdat geschiedenis zowel een wetenschappelijke als een maatschappelijke opgave heeft. Europeanen zullen manieren moeten vinden hun verschillen te overbruggen en nieuwe inclusieve en opener geschiedverhalen overeen moeten komen. Dit zou een eerste stap moeten zijn om nieuwe verklaringen voor het verleden te vinden die in zowel West- als Oost-Europa gedeeld kunnen worden. Zolang dat niet het geval is, zullen Oekraïne en Europa op een *kruispunt der geschiedenis* stil blijven staan.

Publiekssamenvatting (in het Nederlands)

Sinds de ongelukkige gebeurtenissen van 2013-2014 wordt Oekraïne gekenmerkt door binnen- en buitenlandse beroering. De Russische inlijving van de Krim was de eerste annexatie sinds de Tweede Wereldoorlog. Het neerhalen van Malaysia Airlines vlucht MH17 choquerde eveneens de wereld.

Tijdens deze verwikkelingen deden binnen- en buitenlandse politici regelmatig een appel op de geschiedenis. Conflicterende percepties van het verleden zijn essentiële elementen van de zogenaamde 'Oekraïne-crisis'. Deze studie laat zien dat het politieke gebruik van geschiedenis niet zomaar uit de lucht is komen vallen. Sinds Oekraïne in 1991 onafhankelijk is geworden hebben politici en historici geprobeerd de gecompliceerde geschiedenis van het land te herinterpreteren. Geïnspireerde door nationalistische ideologie poogden zij Oekraïne een "Europese geschiedenis" te geven. Daarop volgde een krachtige reactie door aanhangers van de oude Sovjetinterpretatie van de Oekraïense geschiedenis. Dit politieke spel creëerde een geladen atmosfeer waarbinnen beide kampen de Oekraïense samenleving polariseerden rondom twee extremen.

Oekraïne is hierin niet uniek: sinds 1991 hebben historici en politici in Europa en Rusland ook geprobeerd hun geschiedenis opnieuw te interpreteren. Terwijl Postcommunistisch Europa een herwaardering wenste van de betekenis van totalitaire heerschappij van Communisten en Nazi's, poogde West-Europa juist een narratief dat nazimisdaden ziet als de zwartste bladzijde van de geschiedenis te beschermen. Rusland daarentegen is steeds afhankelijker van het beeld van de Tweede Wereldoorlog als een grootse triomf. Door de ontwikkelingen in Oekraïne met andere Europese en Russische ervaringen te contrasteren stelt deze studie broodnodige vragen over wat de geschiedenis in ons heden betekent.

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