



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Public Policy of National Memory in Ukraine in the First Year of the Full-Scale Russian-Ukrainian War

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: Jul 21, 2024 Accepted: Sep 11, 2024	The full-scale war against Ukraine unleashed by the Russian Federation on February 24, 2022, has actualized many social and political processes in Ukrainian society. It has also led to the unification of Ukrainians to oppose Russian aggression. The public policy of national memory plays an important consolidating role in this process. In the context of war, such a policy is aimed at informing Ukrainian society and the international community about the crimes committed by Russia on Ukrainian territory. It also seeks to restore historical truth, refute Russian historical myths and narratives, and overcome the common colonial past with Russia in the public space. The main goal is to study the key directions of national memory policy in Ukraine in the first year of the full-scale Russian-Ukrainian war, to study the activities of the main actors of such policy, as well as the forms and mechanisms of its implementation. A legal framework is being formed in Ukraine to ensure the implementation of the public policy of national memory. This includes the socio-political processes in the field of national memory, which were actualized by the full-scale Russian-Ukrainian war. First and foremost, the subjects of this policy are state authorities, local governments, and civil society institutions. Their activities are aimed to meet the needs of Ukrainian society and ensure the national security of the state. The research findings will contribute to a better understanding of the impact of the Russian-Ukrainian war on the formation and development of national memory in modern Ukraine.
Keywords Public policy State authorities National memory Historical memory Decommunization Russian-Ukrainian war	
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INTRODUCTION

The beginning of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russian troops on February 24, 2022, was a huge test for the Ukrainian people. Nowadays, Ukraine is fighting not only for the existence of a sovereign democratic state but also for the life of the Ukrainian nation. After all, Russia deliberately destroys Ukrainians on a national basis, committing crimes defined by the 1948 United Nations General Assembly Convention as genocide. It involves murder, violence, and torture, the forced removal of children from Ukraine, and the deliberate creation of living conditions that lead to physical destruction (Tams et al., 2014). As early as April 14, 2022, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted a statement recognizing the actions of the Russian Federation on the territory of Ukraine as genocide against the Ukrainian people. The state also appealed to international organizations, governments, and parliaments of other countries to recognize and condemn this genocide, as well as war crimes committed by Russia in Ukraine after February 24, 2022 (VRU, 2022_a).

On the anniversary of the full-scale war outbreak, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine again appealed to the relevant international organizations. It stated that the Russian Federation's forced deportation

of children from the temporarily occupied territory of Ukraine qualifies as genocide of the Ukrainian people (VRU, 2023_a). One of the essential achievements of Ukrainian international policy in this area during the first year of the full-scale Russian war was the adoption by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg on October 13, 2022, which recognized the Russian regime as a terrorist one (VRU, 2022_b).

In fact, criminalizing rashism (russian fascism) at the international level is essential in the fight against crimes against humanity, as it happened in the case of Nazism and communism, which contributed to the institutionalization of the moral assessment of the totalitarian legacy. In this case, it would be appropriate to recall the term “politics of recognition”, which Mälksoo once used to characterize the struggle for a pan-European moral and political condemnation of the communist totalitarian regime and equal legal treatment of communist and Nazi crimes (Mälksoo, 2014).

The response of Ukrainian society to the full-scale armed aggression of the Russian Federation was a national upsurge and unity. It was manifested in the urgent need of Ukrainians to openly declare their belonging to a single national community through language, symbols, traditions, and history. Such social processes testify to the existence of a consolidated and mature Ukrainian nation. After all, according to Ukrainian philosopher Artyukh (2013), we can talk about the formation of a nation when the vast majority of the country's population identifies with this nation in the past, present, and future. At the same time, the concept of a “political nation” should be taken into account as a civic community that unites all nations living within the borders of Ukraine. According to the Constitution of Ukraine, the state actively supports the strengthening and promotion of the Ukrainian national identity, its rich heritage, traditions, and culture, as well as the development of all aspects of the ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and religious identity of all peoples living on the territory of Ukraine (VRU, 2020).

Since national memory is an essential component of the self-identification and consolidation of the Ukrainian people, Ukraine has paid great attention to the public policy of national memory during the full-scale Russian war. The national memory policy aims to shape the scope and nature of the collective national memory (Bergmann & Wolff-Powęska, 2014). This policy is strategic and involves the actions of interested actors who are involved in planning, negotiating, and understanding this memory (Yurchuk, 2014).

The subjects (actors) of the public policy of national memory in Ukraine are public authorities, civil society institutions, and local governments. Their interaction is an essential condition for the successful implementation of such a policy. The central executive authorities that implement the memory policy in the relevant sector of public administration include:

- the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine;
- the Ministry of Youth and Sports of Ukraine;
- the Ministry of Digital Transformation of Ukraine;
- the Ministry for Communities, Territories and Infrastructure Development of Ukraine;
- the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory, and others.

At the regional level, such policy is implemented by local executive authorities (regional, district, and city military administrations created by Presidential Decree No. 68/2002 of February 24, 2022) and local self-government bodies (VRU, 2022_c).

The Ukrainian Institute of National Memory (UINM) was founded in 2006 as a specialized central executive body. It plays a vital role in the development of public policy on national memory. The Institute's activities are coordinated with the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine. The main tasks of the UINM include:

- a comprehensive study and popularization of the history of Ukraine, Ukrainian statehood, and the struggle for its restoration;
- the implementation of measures to perpetuate the memory of participants in the liberation struggle, fighters for independence, victims of the criminal policy of the communist totalitarian regime, etc.

The UINM plays an essential role in restoring national memory, strengthening national identity, fostering patriotism in Ukrainian society, overcoming historical myths, shaping the memory of the current Russian-Ukrainian war, etc.

Some Ukrainian citizens, as well as civil society organizations and political parties representing their interests, are actively involved in the implementation of the public policy of national memory. Such organizations include:

- the Center for Research of the Liberation Movement;
- the Center “Mnemonika”;
- the Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group;
- the Ukrainian Holodomor Research and Education Consortium;
- the Reanimation Package of Reforms Coalition, etc.

Their activity in this area consists of public mobilization, including actualizing issues of national memory, participating in legislative processes, functioning public councils and advisory bodies under executive authorities, and holding actions and other events to inform society and popularize the issues of national memory of the Ukrainian people.

The main goal of this research is to study the main directions of the public policy of national memory in Ukraine in the first year of the full-scale Russian-Ukrainian war. The article also focuses on the activities of the main actors of such policy, as well as the forms and mechanisms of its implementation.

This paper reveals the importance of national and civic identity for Ukraine, as well as the need to revise the system of values and promote national symbols. In addition, the study analyzes the public policy of national memory in the first year of the full-fledged war with the Russian Federation, which began on February 24, 2022.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The increasing role of information confrontation in modern warfare has determined one of the key areas of public policy of national memory in Ukraine, which is information activities. Danilyan and Dzoban (2022) emphasize that information warfare is a strategic influence on the minds of the enemy to achieve information superiority and political or military goals. They also note that Russian information agencies are constantly changing their narratives, aiming to divide Ukrainian society.

Since 2014, Ukraine has been actively countering the Russian information offensive. However, Buchyn and Kurus (2018) noted that Russia gained an advantage in the information war, while the Ukrainian media space remained vulnerable to information attacks. The scholars identified key tools for the Ukrainian side in conducting information confrontation, such as:

- the formation of an effective system of information warfare;
- the development of strategies for attracting information specialists;
- the maintenance of the state's image;
- the improvement of media coverage of reliable information.

The conditions of a full-scale war have raised the issue of national identity to a new level of relevance. Borysenko (2022) emphasizes the importance of cultural heritage and history in identity formation. Historical memory plays a vital role in this process. According to Piskun (2011), it is an influential factor of social unity. Particular attention is paid to refuting historical myths and narratives disseminated by the Russian ideological and propaganda system to split Ukrainian society.

The outbreak of a full-scale war in Ukraine has been reflected in the need to get rid of any reminders of the aggressor country, which for centuries has sought to annex the territory and assimilate the Ukrainian people. The decolonization policy has been pursued in Ukraine since the restoration of state independence in 1991. It is mainly concerned with the symbols of communism and the Soviet empire. Gnatiuk et al. (2022) consider decolonization as a policy to break symbolic ties with the USSR and the Russian Empire. In fact, this actually means de-Russification and getting rid of Soviet and Russian symbolic markers.

The process of decommunization in Ukraine was unsystematic and wave-like, depending on the political situation in the country. The transition to the active phase of decommunization, including the renaming of toponyms, is dated by Hyrych (2017) to the first half of 2016. After the outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian war in 2014, there were significant changes in the socio-political sphere that significantly affected the public policy of national memory and intensified the decommunization process.

An essential stage in this process was the adoption of the “decommunization package” of laws. In particular, the Law of Ukraine “On the Condemnation of Communist and National Socialist (Nazi) Totalitarian Regimes in Ukraine and the Prohibition of Propaganda of Their Symbols” (2015) has become a significant milestone. The status of the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory as a central executive body was also restored. It is also necessary to take into account the regional peculiarities of decommunization. In the western regions of Ukraine, particularly in Halychyna, Soviet symbols were eliminated in the early 1990s. However, these symbols remained in public space in the eastern and southern regions.

METHODS

The methodological framework for preparing this article included the application of general scientific, interdisciplinary, and disciplinary research methods. An integrated approach to their use allowed us to achieve the set goal, to reveal the tasks, and to track the multifaceted nature of the studied issue. Analysis was the leading method of researching public policy in the field of national memory in Ukraine in the first year of the full-scale Russian-Ukrainian war. This method was employed to study documentary, media, and academic sources. During the analysis, both Ukrainian and foreign scholars were taken into account. Significant attention was paid to the legal aspect of the national memory.

First, we conducted a comprehensive analysis of legal acts related to the policy of national memory: laws of Ukraine, resolutions of the Verkhovna Rada, Presidential decrees, orders, and other acts of central executive bodies. For this purpose, we employed functional analysis, a formal legal approach, and legal hermeneutics methods. Such regulatory acts, particularly relevant in the context of countering the ideological component of Russian aggression, include the following laws:

- “On the Rehabilitation of Victims of the Repressions of the Communist Totalitarian Regime of 1917–1991” (VRU, 2024_b);
- “On the Legal Status and Commemoration of Fighters for the Independence of Ukraine in the 20th Century” (VRU, 2023_d);
- “On Condemnation of the Communist and National-Socialist (Nazi) Totalitarian Regimes in Ukraine and Prohibition of Propaganda of Their Symbols” (VRU, 2015);
- “On the Prohibition of Propaganda of the Russian Nazi Totalitarian Regime, the Armed Aggression of the Russian Federation as a Terrorist State Against Ukraine, Symbolism of the Military Invasion of the Russian Nazi Totalitarian Regime into Ukraine” (VRU, 2023_e);
- “On Condemnation and Prohibition of Propaganda of Russian Imperial Policy in Ukraine and Decolonization of Toponymy” (VRU, 2023_b).

Also, taking into account the peculiarities of implementing public policy during martial law, the regulatory framework of the research includes the Law of Ukraine “On the Legal Regime of Martial Law” (VRU, 2023_c) and the Decree of the President of Ukraine “On the Introduction of Martial Law in Ukraine” (VRU, 2024_a).

The analysis of official documents of public authorities, statements of civil society representatives, research papers, and other materials related to national memory in Ukraine, in particular, during the Russian-Ukrainian war, made it possible to identify the main directions of public policy in this area. It also allowed us to assess the changes in this area in the context of the war during the first year of full-scale Russian aggression. In addition, the analysis examined the role of the media in the national memory policy during a full-scale war.

Functional analysis was used to study the activities of public authorities at various levels, their interaction in the field of public policy of national memory, etc. The research objects were central executive authorities. The focus was on the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine, the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory, and others. The method of logical analysis was employed to

characterize the directions of public policy on national memory during the full-scale Russian-Ukrainian war.

The semantic method of cognition was used to define the concepts and terms used in the preparation of the article (public policy, memory policy, national memory, national identity, decolonization, de-Russification, decommunization, genocide, etc.) At the same time, the meaning of the terms used in the legislative acts of Ukraine regulating the policy of national memory, as well as in certain international acts, in particular, the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide by the UN General Assembly, was taken into account (Tams et al., 2014).

Using such methods as comparison and analogy allowed us to compare theoretical and methodological concepts to understand the essence and content of the public policy of national memory. Moreover, they helped to identify the specifics of its aspects and directions. In addition, the use of the sociological method allowed us to analyze the processes of formation and mutual influence of systems of social and administrative values.

The historical method allowed us to study the historical context and events that preceded the war, as well as to analyze the impact of these events on the formation of national memory policy. A general scientific method of cognition, namely concretization, was employed to highlight certain features and interrelationships of events and consequences in the implementation of this policy, as well as to study certain facts and events.

The use of the statistical method made it possible to track quantitative indicators, the state and dynamics of the implementation of the public policy of national memory, in particular, overcoming the Russian imperial and Soviet communist past in the public space of Ukraine, etc. In addition, the statistical method contributed to the study of public opinion on certain issues of national memory policy.

In addition, one of the most common empirical research methods, i.e., observation, was used while preparing the article. Through targeted passive research, primary information was collected on the processes that took place in Ukrainian society in the first year of the full-scale Russian-Ukrainian war. In this case, since the authors of the article were participants in public events, they received information through their own feelings, perceptions, and ideas. At the same time, we analyzed the speakers' speeches, observed, studied, and compared the personal feelings and reactions of the participants of the events. For example, we analyzed the speeches during the ceremonial presentations and independent visits to the exhibitions. Repeated observation of the same objects with the participation of other actors was used in these studies to avoid any bias.

In addition, we used logical research methods, such as induction and deduction, while working on the article. The deduction method was employed to characterize the memory policy based on its features, existing elements, and implementation principles. In turn, the induction method made it possible to assess the effectiveness of the public policy of national memory during the full-scale war of the Russian Federation against Ukraine based on the adopted legislative norms and implemented various measures. Each of these methods prevailed at different stages during the preparation of this article. However, throughout the process of cognition, inductive and deductive methods were inextricably linked. This allowed us to summarize the results of observation and analysis. In addition, the application of the synthesis method made it possible to combine all the constituent elements of public policy into a holistic unit to characterize it.

At the final stage, the results and arguments obtained in the course of the study were summarized to prove the author's hypothesis and formulate the main conclusions. By using the forecasting method, taking into account the needs, interests, and trends characteristic of modern Ukrainian society, as well as the consequences of Russian aggression and its threat to national security, we have identified promising areas of public policy of national memory in Ukraine that require further development and attention of the state and civil society in the near future.

RESULTS

One of the priorities of the public policy of national memory in Ukraine during the Russian-Ukrainian war is to counteract the information aggression of the Russian Federation against the Ukrainian people. Therefore, today, it is vital for state and local authorities, public initiatives, and citizens to actively work on uncovering the crimes committed by the Russian Federation on Ukrainian territory. This is carried out by informing Ukrainian society and the international community through television, radio, the Internet, and other national and international media resources.

At the time, an essential and justified step in this direction was the launch of the national television marathon "United News" on the first day of the full-scale war. Such prompt decisions and actions were made possible by the Unity TV marathon held on February 16, 2022, at the initiative of the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine, which involved leading Ukrainian TV channels. After the announcement of martial law on February 24, 2022, a single information platform, #UAtogether, was created by merging Ukrainian media outlets 1+1 media, StarLightMedia, Media Group Ukraine, and Inter Media Group. In addition, on February 26, 2022, the Ministry of Culture and Ukrainian media groups appealed to international television providers to block the broadcasting of Russian channels on European satellites (Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine, 2022_a).

Undoubtedly, as during the early months of the war, the national telethon "United News" is now an essential source of information not only for Ukrainians within the country and our citizens abroad but also for foreign citizens worldwide. In just the first hundred days of the war, about 24,000 hours of broadcasting were conducted in a single news release format, almost 5,000 reports were shown, and about 12,000 live broadcasts from Ukraine and other countries were made (Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine, 2022_b).

Despite criticisms of the United News telethon regarding violations of freedom of speech and the existence of censorship in Ukraine (Bondarenko et al., 2023), we can talk about the expediency of making a decision to unite the media in the first days of the full-scale Russian invasion. The results of a survey conducted in May 2022 by the Gradus Research Company at the request of the National Institute of Media and Information Policy of Ukraine are interesting for studying this issue: 42% of respondents received information from national television, as well as 91% were aware of the telethon, and 75% had trust in it (Detector media, 2022).

It should be noted that the full-scale war between Ukraine and the Russian Federation is currently one of the most acute and influential geopolitical crises of our time. Therefore, it is worth focusing on the importance of informing people about this war, as well as on the role of the media in shaping global understanding and response to this complex and dangerous situation. Thus, from the very beginning of the full-scale Russian aggression, the task of the public policy of national memory was to counteract Kremlin propaganda and inform Ukrainian society and the international community about the war, the struggle and resistance of the Ukrainian people, and the war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by the Russian aggressor in Ukraine.

In the first year of the full-scale Russian-Ukrainian war, information confrontation with the Russian aggressor was carried out by organizing exhibition projects, creating information content for media resources, etc. Among the first exhibitions to be widely disseminated not only in Ukraine but also abroad was the exhibition “Ukraine. War in Europe”, presented on May 8, 2022, in Kyiv by Oleksandr Tkachenko, the Minister of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine. The exhibition told the story of Ukrainian history, the preconditions and course of the full-scale Russian war, the heroic resistance of Ukrainians, and the terrible destruction and massive human losses caused by Russian troops (Each of us is a warrior, 2023). On May 9, the exhibition was shown in Warsaw and Vilnius and later in Berlin, Frankfurt, Brussels, and other European cities.

In June 2022, the exhibition “Communism=Rashism” was exhibited in Kyiv. It described the fates of Ukrainians who were crippled by the Soviet and Russian authorities (Sectoral State Archive of Ukrainian Institute of National Memory, 2022). And in December, it was seen by citizens of the Baltic states. In particular, in Latvia, the exhibition was exhibited in seven cities. In Riga, it was opened in the presence of the President of the Republic of Latvia, Egils Levits. In the Lithuanian capital, Vilnius, the exhibition “Communism=Rashism” was opened at the Museum of Occupations and the Struggle for Freedom. Finally, in Estonia, the exhibition was displayed in the center of Tallinn after a presentation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

“Each of Us is a Warrior” is another unique exhibition project that reveals the topic of the Russian Federation's full-scale war against Ukraine and honors the heroes of this conflict. This project is dedicated to the Territorial Defense soldiers who stood up to defend their homeland from the very first days. Created jointly by the Territorial Defense Forces (TDF), the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU), and the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory (UINM), it was presented in Kyiv on the eve of Ukraine's Independence Day on August 22, 2022 (Ukrainian Institute of National Memory, May 8, 2022).

The educational project “Dialogues about the War” was aimed at a children's audience and had a unique format and content. It was initiated by the Hero of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zhemchuhov, and implemented by the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory. The project took the form of a conversation between a schoolgirl and veterans who shared their experiences and told her about the Russian war (Ukrainian Institute of National Memory, 2024_c).

In February 2023, on the anniversary of the beginning of the full-scale Russian-Ukrainian war, the Center for Military History Research of the Armed Forces of Ukraine organized and opened the exhibition “February: Facets of Invincibility” in Kyiv. This exhibition allows visitors to relive the defensive battles in the first months of the war and honor the heroic resistance of Ukraine's defenders (Tylishchak, 2023).

In addition, from the first days of the full-scale invasion, the need to record, document, collect, and preserve evidence of the war became apparent. Various online resources have been created in Ukraine to properly document and publicize war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by Russian troops. In particular, in March 2022, the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory, together with the NGO “Ukrainian Women's Guard”, created an interactive map of the large-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russian troops, which systematized information about war crimes, resistance of the Ukrainian people, and other information (Ukraine war today, 2024). After the outbreak of the full-scale war, the “Virtual Museum of Russian Aggression” (founded in October 2021) began to receive information about the full-scale aggression. Currently, the museum tells about events dating back to 2014 (Virtual Museum of Russian Aggression, 2021).

In April 2022, the online archive “Russia’s War Crimes” was launched by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine and its partners. The archive contains documented evidence of murders, attacks, torture, rapes, illegal deportations of civilians, destruction of Ukrainian cities and villages, and other war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by Russia on the Ukrainian territory. This archive is part of the online resource “Russia Invaded Ukraine” (2023) on the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine.

Numerous virtual projects aimed at informing Ukrainian society and the entire civilized world about the horrific realities of the war have been launched on the websites of public authorities, government agencies, and NGOs:

- the Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance created a special section with informative material about the war (Ukrainian Institute of National Memory, 2024_a);
- the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine implemented the project “100 Days of War” (Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2024);
- the National Museum of the History of Ukraine (2024) in World War II offered an online project called “Chronicle of the War” with daily coverage of its course and many others.

Exhibitions of Russian military equipment destroyed by the Armed Forces of Ukraine on the battlefields were repeatedly exhibited in European cities. Among the very first was an exhibition organized in June 2022 by the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine and the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Poland in Warsaw. Defense Minister Oleksiy Reznikov said that this was the first demonstration of the defeated weapons of the once “second army of the world” on the territory of NATO and the EU (European Truth, 2022). In July 2022, the same exhibition was opened in Prague by the Ministers of Internal Affairs of Ukraine Denys Monastyrsky and the Czech Republic Vit Rakusan (Embassy of Ukraine in the Czech Republic, 2022). Later, the neutralized weapons of the Russian aggressor were demonstrated in cities around Europe, telling the public about the criminal and terrorist policy of the Russian Federation on Ukrainian territory.

The online platform United24, launched in May 2022 by the Ukrainian government, requires special attention. While the main function of this platform is to raise funds all over the world in support of Ukraine, it is a powerful information resource about the events of the full-scale war of the Russian Federation against Ukraine (United24, 2024).

As tensions between Ukraine and Russia have grown, there has also been a growing need to study and refute Russian historical myths and narratives. This is becoming an urgent problem in the context of the current political situation when the Russian Federation is actively using historical manipulations to influence public opinion in Ukraine and abroad. Therefore, along with informing the Ukrainian and international community about the full-scale Russian war, the public policy of national memory also aims to cover Ukrainian history in general and refute historical myths and narratives that fill the information space. Such projects aim to convey the historical truth instead of the falsified and distorted history of Russia’s propaganda.

The first project designed to refute historical myths was the project called “Historical Resistance” (later renamed “Historical Resistance”) (Ukrainian Institute of National Memory, 2022). It was launched on April 8, 2022, as part of the national telethon “United News” and involved historians discussing specific issues of Ukrainian history, refuting Russian historical myths, and analyzing

Russia's intentions towards Ukraine through parallels from the past. In particular, the following questions were raised:

- What is “racism”, and who is responsible for the crimes of the “Russian world”?
- How did the myth of “brotherly peoples” arise, and how do we eliminate it?
- What are the historical differences between Ukrainians and Russians?
- Who started World War II?
- Why is historical truth prohibited in Russia?

Honoring the memory of those who died as a result of the Nazi regime's crimes on the territory of Ukraine is an issue that becomes increasingly relevant in the light of contemporary events and processes in society (see Figure 1). Preserving and honoring the historical truth about the terrible events of the Holocaust and other crimes against humanity is essential for the formation of national memory, preserving dignity, and preventing the recurrence of such tragedies in the future.

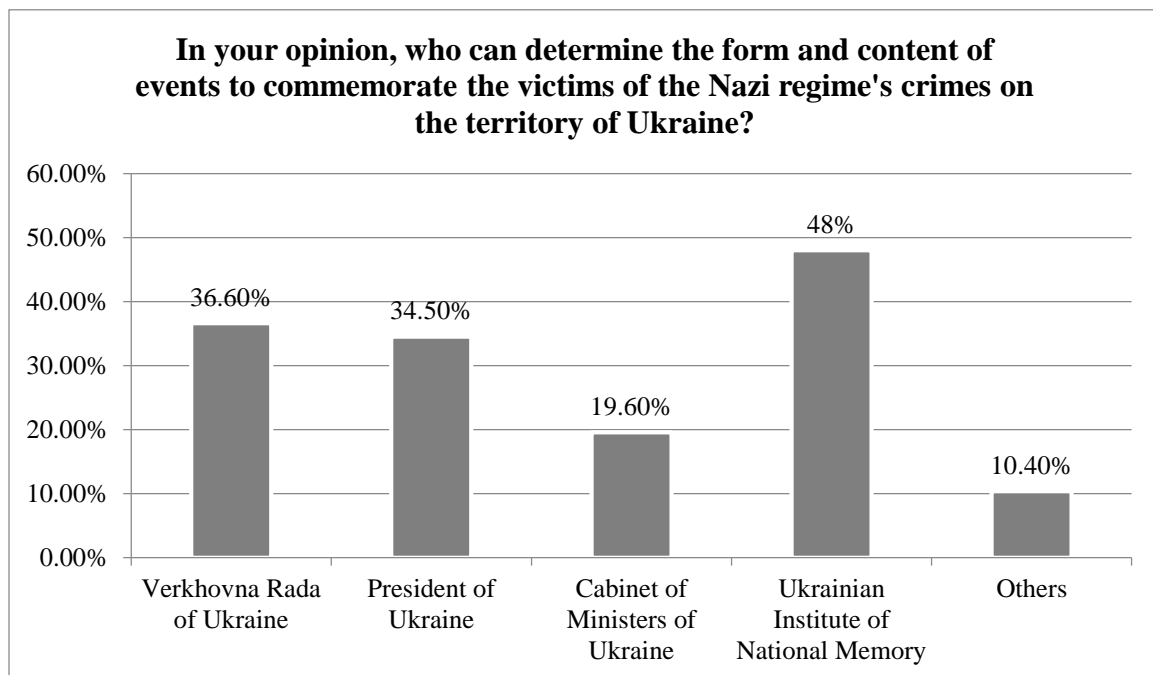


Figure 1: Public opinion on commemorating the victims of the Nazi regime's crimes on the territory of Ukraine

Source: compiled by the authors based on (Historical Truth, 2021)

In the context of a full-scale war, Russian narratives about the history of World War II are especially relevant for both Ukraine and Europe. In particular, the international community was outraged by the Kremlin's attribution of the victory over Nazism to the Russians alone. Ukraine gives a worthy response to such manipulations of historical facts. Thus, on May 3, 2022, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine stated the inadmissibility of attributing the victory over the Nazi regime to Russia. The statement emphasized the significant contribution to the victory of Ukrainians who, during the war, demonstrated their heroism and self-sacrifice in all battlefronts and as part of various armies of the Anti-Hitler Coalition (VRU, 2022_d).

In an effort to inform Ukrainian society as much as possible about the history of Ukraine in World War II, the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory continued to create various projects on this topic. In particular, on the occasion of the Day of Memory and Reconciliation in 2022, the “War and Myth” project created educational videos about Soviet and Russian myths about the significance of the Lend-Lease, the so-called “Liberation of Ukraine by the Soviet army” in 1943–1944, etc. (Ukrainian Institute of National Memory, May 9, 2022). In addition, the UINM website has a permanent online information resource, “Ukrainian World War II 1939–1945” (Ukrainian Institute of National Memory, May 4, 2022).

In this context, it is worth noting the relevance of the topic of overcoming the Russian colonial past. It becomes necessary for the further development of countries that have experienced the influence of the Russian Empire or the Soviet Union. Excessive centralization of power, repressive policies, cultural assimilation, and other aspects of Russian colonial policy have left a deep mark on the social and cultural perceptions of many nations.

It is crucial to get rid of the past linked to the Russian state entities that existed throughout their history and constantly encroached on Ukrainian lands in order to counter Russian aggression and prevent it in the future. Therefore, the process of overcoming the colonial legacy of Russia is becoming a key element of the public policy strategy of national memory in Ukraine during the first year of the full-scale war, and more so today. These processes consist of eliminating Russian imperial and Soviet communist toponyms, memorials, symbols, etc., from the Ukrainian public space.

It should be emphasized that decommunization in Ukraine has taken place throughout its independence. However, it has become particularly intense only after the Revolution of Dignity and the beginning of Russian aggression in 2014. After the outbreak of the full-scale war of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, de-Russification processes became particularly active within the framework of the public policy of national memory. These measures include changing the names of settlements and streets associated with the Russian imperial past, dismantling Russian memorial signs and symbols, removing books by Russian authors from libraries and archives, etc. This allows Ukrainians to permanently get rid of all traces of the aggressor country and break ties with it, even at the level of symbols.

In May 2022, three roundtables organized by the Ministry of Culture in cooperation with UINM were held in Ukraine. These assemblies focused on de-Russification, decommunization, and decolonization in the Ukrainian public space, where experts from various fields devotedly discussed the issues of place names, monumental art, and the presence of Russian works, artists, and figures in the Ukrainian cultural space while developing recommendations. In June 2022, the Ministry of Culture's Expert Council on Overcoming the Consequences of Russification and Totalitarianism was established (VRU, 2022_e). In cooperation with the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory, recommendations were developed for use by state and local authorities and state and public organizations to overcome the consequences of Russification and totalitarianism. The adoption by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine of the Law of Ukraine “On Condemnation and Prohibition of Propaganda of Russian Imperial Policy in Ukraine and Decolonization of Place Names” (Ukrainian Institute of National Memory, 2024_b) was crucial for the implementation of the policy of public space decolonization.

As a result of this policy, by the end of 2022, 9,859 toponyms were renamed in Ukraine, and 145 monuments related to the Russian imperial and Soviet past were dismantled. For example, 28 monuments to the poet Alexander Pushkin, symbolizing Russian imperial policy, 9 monuments to the Soviet writer Maxim Gorky, more than 20 monuments and memorials in honor of the so-called “Soviet liberators”, and many others were dismantled (Mykhailov, 2023). Also, in December 2022, the

monument to Russian Empress Catherine II in Odesa was dismantled, as the image of the “founder of Odesa” created by imperial ideology had dominated for centuries. However, in the history of Ukraine, she played the role of destroyer of Ukrainian statehood in the XVIII century.

In this context, it should be noted that the consequences of the historical tragedies that took place on the territory of Ukraine indeed leave their mark on modern society. One of the most horrific aspects of the past is the terror of the Soviet regime, which manifested itself in the Holodomor of 1932–1933 (Honcharenko & Ivanenko, 2023). This tragedy not only claimed the lives of millions of Ukrainians but also left irresponsibility and uncertainty about the people who became its victims. Primarily due to the silence and falsification of historical facts in Soviet times, information about the Holodomor became available only with the collapse of the USSR and the opening of archives. However, even now, it remains virtually impossible to identify the victims accurately and by name.

The current public opinion on honoring the memory of those who died as a result of the Soviet regime's crimes on the Ukrainian territory is almost unanimous. The data from sociological surveys conducted by the Sociological Group Rating indicate a negative attitude of citizens toward the oppression of Ukrainians and other peoples by the Soviet regime and identify the main trends in their perception of historical truth (see Figure 2).

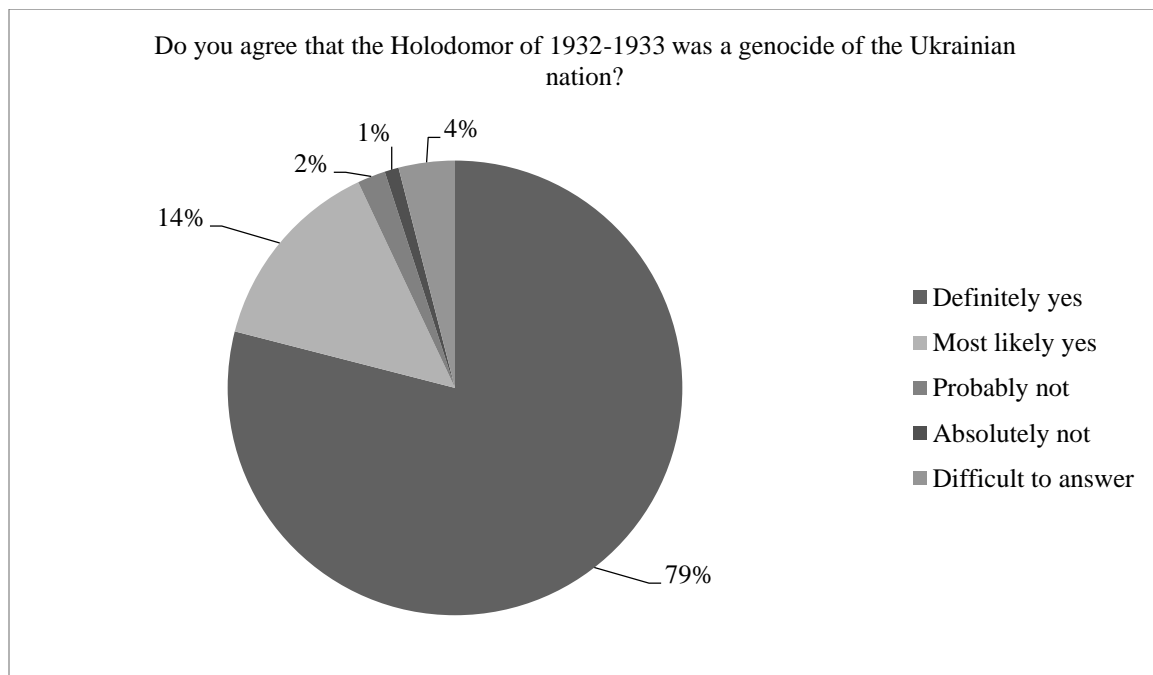


Figure 2: Public opinion on honoring the memory of those who died as a result of the Soviet regime's crimes on the Ukrainian territory

Source: compiled by the authors based on (Yakovlieva, 2023)

When this article was written, many streets, squares, and other places were renamed in many Ukrainian settlements. The monuments, memorials, and plaques associated with the Russian imperial and Soviet communist past have been dismantled. According to the Law of Ukraine, “On Condemnation and Prohibition of Propaganda of Russian Imperial Policy in Ukraine and Decolonization of Toponymy” (VRU, 2023_b), the process of clearing public space from Russian imperial and Soviet communist symbols should be completed by July 2024.

DISCUSSION

The full-scale war of the Russian Federation against Ukraine has shown the entire civilized world the criminal nature of Putin's government and Russia's expansionist intentions not only towards Ukraine but also towards other countries. Numerous statements by Russia's top officials, narratives constantly repeated by Kremlin ideologues, and their practical implementation in Ukraine have provoked a response from the international community.

The increasing role of information confrontation in the current war has identified information activities as one of the main directions of public policy of national memory in Ukraine. As noted by Danilyan and Dzoban (2022), information warfare is a targeted influence on the public consciousness of the enemy to achieve information superiority and political or military goals. According to their observations, Russian information agencies are constantly changing their narratives. Moreover, in today's realities, Russian propaganda seeks to undermine the situation from within and divide Ukrainian society (Danilyan & Dzoban, 2022).

Since 2014, Ukraine has been constantly countering the Russian information onslaught. However, Buchyn and Kurus (2018) noted that in the information war, Russia was outgunning Ukraine, and the Ukrainian media space was highly vulnerable to information attacks and actions by Russia. The scholars identified the most essential instruments for the Ukrainian party in conducting information confrontation, which include:

- the formation of an effective system of information warfare;
- the development of a strategy with the participation of scientists, political scientists, and analysts (specialists in the information sphere);
- the support for the image of the state;
- an improvement in the adequate coverage of reliable information in the media, etc.

In our opinion, in the very first year of Russia's full-scale armed aggression against Ukraine, the situation has gradually changed. The information war has become one of the most critical areas in the state's domestic and foreign policy and has had positive results.

In the context of a full-scale war, the issue of national identity has become extremely relevant and especially important. Borysenko made a fair point in this regard. According to the author, the war has highlighted new national and regional identity facets. Being convinced that national identity is based on the tangible and intangible heritage of the people and the continuity of traditions, Borysenko concludes that it is necessary to resist Russian narratives, first of all, with a rich national cultural heritage (Borysenko, 2022). According to Assman (2008), the culture, myths, and history allow a community, including a national one, to form, reproduce, and transmit its own identity.

There is no doubt that historical memory plays a vital role in this process. According to Piskun (2011), shared historical memory is an influential factor in social unity and mobilization. Therefore, it is no coincidence that significant attention is paid to the past during a full-scale war. The refutation of historical myths and narratives generated by the Russian ideological and propaganda system to divide Ukrainian society has become particularly relevant. According to Lozovyi, the main attack is aimed at the Ukrainian national identity. Russian propaganda spreads the claim that the Ukrainian identity is "artificial" and denies the legitimacy of the Ukrainian state (Lozovyi, 2022). The same

opinion was expressed by Rublev, who believes that it is typical for Russians to assert that Ukrainians are a historical offshoot of the Great Russian ethnic group/people and that the existence of the Ukrainian state is a historical accident or deviation. According to the Kremlin leadership, it is vital to eliminate the Ukrainian state and bring it to the all-Russian common denominator (Rublev, 2022).

With the outbreak of a full-scale war, Ukrainians declared the need to get rid of any reminders of the aggressor country, which for centuries had been seeking to conquer the territory and assimilate or even destroy the Ukrainian people. From the very beginning of the restoration of state independence in 1991, Ukraine pursued a policy of decolonization. However, this policy was more concerned with communist and Soviet symbols. In their turn, Gnatiuk et al. (2022) consider the term “decolonization” mainly as a policy aimed at breaking symbolic ties with the USSR and the Russian Empire. In this regard, in Ukraine, decolonization is actually in line with de-Russification, which involves getting rid of symbolic Russian and Soviet markers. The same opinion is expressed by Poshedin and Kashchuk (2023), who note that the most common results of decommunization are related to the renaming of places and street names.

The processes of decommunization in Ukraine occurred wave-like and depended on the political situation in the country. In particular, Cherviatsova (2020) has been writing for a long time about the random, contradictory, unsystematic nature of decommunization. In turn, Hyrych (2017) defines the most active phase of decommunization, in particular, the renaming of toponyms, as the first half of 2016. David R. Marples also expressed an opinion on decommunization in Ukraine after the beginning of Russian aggression in 2014. The author called getting rid of the symbols of Soviet power and communism quite logical and characterized decommunization as a form of patriotic activity that is inevitably politicized (Marples, 2018).

Indeed, after the Revolution of Dignity (2013–2014) and the outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian war in February 2014, Ukraine underwent socio-political changes that significantly affected the public policy of national memory, including the intensification of decommunization processes. In particular, a series of laws known as the “decommunization package” was adopted. It consists of four laws, among which a special place is occupied by the Law of Ukraine “On the Condemnation of the Communist and National Socialist (Nazi) Totalitarian Regimes in Ukraine and the Prohibition of Propaganda of Their Symbols” (VRU, 2015). In addition, the status of the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory as a central executive body was restored.

Furthermore, it is necessary to take into account the regional peculiarities of implementing the decolonization policy. In particular, Gnatiuk and Melnychuk note that in western Ukraine, especially in Halychyna, almost all Soviet place names and symbols were eliminated in the early 1990s. In the central regions of Ukraine, this process concerned only large cities, where the most odious Soviet personalities were removed. However, in the eastern and southern areas, the Soviet heritage remained in public space (Gnatiuk & Melnychuk, 2020).

The full-scale armed aggression of the Russian Federation has actualized decolonization processes throughout Ukraine. Ukrainian society seeks to get rid of the past related to Russian colonial policy in order to counter Russian armed and informational aggression. Ukrainian legislation defines this strategy as a set of measures implemented through the activities of government agencies, military formations, political parties, public and private organizations, institutions, enterprises, and individuals acting as state factors of Russian formations. This strategy is aimed at confronting, using, and assimilating the Ukrainian people throughout their history.

CONCLUSION

The research findings have determined that the public policy of national memory in Ukraine during the full-scale Russian war prioritizes countering the information aggression of the Russian Federation against the Ukrainian people. The public policy of national memory is a driving force in countering the ideological component of Russian aggression. In the first year of the full-scale Russian-Ukrainian war, the main directions of the public policy of national memory included:

- to inform the Ukrainian society and the international community about the crimes committed by the Russian Federation against the Ukrainian people on the territory of Ukraine during the full-scale war and to form an evidence base for these crimes;
- to refute historical myths and narratives created and disseminated by the Russian ideological and propaganda system as part of the information war against Ukraine;
- to remove from the public space of Ukraine the symbols of the colonization past associated with Russian imperial and Soviet communist policies (processes of decolonization, de-Russification, and decommunization).

An important place is given to the foreign policy vector. Its implementation is entrusted to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine and the diplomatic corps. It also involves the Ukrainian diaspora around the world and Ukrainian citizens who were forced to temporarily leave the country due to the war.

In the future, the main task of all actors in the public policy of national memory is to develop regulations and effective mechanisms that will ensure the implementation of the areas that have been actualized by the full-scale war. They include commemoration and memorialization of the war, which is already in great demand by the public. In addition, the issues of establishing national and civic identity in Ukrainian society, establishing a system of national values, and defining national symbols from the past and present remain relevant. These issues should form the basis of a holistic, comprehensive, and consistent public policy of national memory. Addressing those issues will undoubtedly contribute to the consolidation of the Ukrainian political nation and the strengthening of Ukraine's statehood. In turn, it will become a powerful counterweight to Russian aggression today and prevent it from happening in the future.

Author Contributions

S. V.: Conceptualization, Methodology, Resources, Formal analysis, Project administration, Writing – Original draft, Writing – Review & Editing.

L. H.: Conceptualization, Methodology, Resources, Data Curation, Writing – Original draft, Writing – Review & Editing.

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