

Slyusar Vadym

doctor of philosophical sciences, docent
Zhytomyr Polytechnic State University
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5593-0622>

Kutashev Ihor

doctor of political science, associate professor
Interregional Academy of Personnel Management (Kyiv)
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9554-4681>

Slyusar Kateryna

postgraduate student
Zhytomyr Polytechnic State University
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1480-1111>

Historical memory as a component of media policy in the context of irredentist conflicts

Abstract. The article examines the role of historical memory as a key element of media policy in the context of irredentist conflicts. The author analyses the peculiarities of shaping historical narratives by the media and their impact on national identity and public consciousness. It is indicated that media policy takes into account the following sequence of stages of capturing events in historical memory: initial selection of events, initial memorialisation, assessment and selection of significant events, symbolisation of events, and symbolisation. At the first stage, the media select key events from the flow of information, which are transformed into news through the professional activities of journalists. At the next stage, the media carry out ‘primary memorialisation’, when news is recorded as collective memories of specific events. Next, the memorialised news is transformed into components of historical memory through an evaluation procedure involving not only a sufficient number of experts and opinion leaders, but also citizens in public discussion on media platforms. The final stage is symbolisation, when the media regularly return to events, giving them the status of value symbols. It is emphasised that in the context of the information society, social media enhance the dialogical potential of historical memory through comments, reposts and memes. It is proved that an effective media policy should counteract the manipulation of historical facts in the era of post-truth and hybrid threats.

Keywords: historical memory; media policy; media regulation; social media; collective unconscious, media culture, social world, ethnicity, nation.

Introduction. Today, the problem of forming media policy in the context of shaping historical memory is one of the most pressing social issues in many countries where the active phase of nation-building is underway, especially in the post-Soviet space. History is a kind of memory of society that is realised in specific discursive practices. Historical memory is the basis for the formation of national identity, as it contains not only knowledge about relevant historical processes, but also a system of values that transform knowledge into a set of guidelines that help a nation to understand its own past and create projects for a common future. Commemorative events and their subsequent media coverage are aimed not only at updating the public consciousness of knowledge about certain past events, but also at consolidating it in the form of symbols that can evoke strong emotions and memories and become an integral feature of a community.

At the same time, in recent decades, society has been facing the issue of countering the threats posed by hybrid wars, when the need to preserve historical memory becomes a matter of national security. External forces are turning history, both as a science and as a social phenomenon, into a weapon to erode national identity in order to implement a ‘failed state’ strategy in relation to a particular state, followed by the spread of narratives about a common historical destiny or a common meta-ethnicity. And modern media technologies are now not only conveying certain historical facts in the context of media discourse, but are also an important tool for influencing the perception of the past and, consequently, the formation of national identity. At the same time, there are no mechanisms in media reality to prevent the production of historical facts and the establishment of destructive and manipulative narratives. At present, it is the formed and implemented media policy that can contribute to the preservation of truthful historical data (especially in the era of post-truth and information overload) or, conversely, prevent their deformation. Therefore, in modern humanities and political science, the

problem of studying the specifics of the systematic production of narratives by the media that shape public understanding of history as a holistic state policy aimed at simultaneously shaping historical memory and implementing the principles of freedom of speech is becoming more relevant.

The purpose of the article is to reveal the role and place of the phenomenon of historical memory in media policy determined by irredentist processes.

The degree of research of the problem. The issue of historical politics in its various aspects has been analysed in the field of international relations, political and philosophical sciences. A systematic analysis of historical memory was carried out by the Ukrainian researcher L.Nahorna, who in her monograph «Historical Memory: Theories, Discourses, Reflections» identified the peculiarities of the evolution of theories and the formation of memory space based on the analysis of scientific approaches to the interpretation and understanding of collective memory, description of the world experience of memory policy implementation, and disclosure of the role and place of historical memory in the process of self-identification [10]. In the political science sphere, in the context of current security (domestic political and geopolitical) problems, an analytical report was prepared by experts of the National Institute for Strategic Studies under the general editorship of V.M. Yablonsky. The report focuses on Russian irredentism as a significant conflict trigger (the report was published in 2019) and the role of education, science and culture in the process of shaping the historical memory of Ukrainian society, which is becoming a socially significant tool for overcoming the destructive influence of the aggressor [14]. The categorical and conceptual characteristics of «historical memory» were defined by O.Stasevska, who considered this phenomenon as a source of self-awareness of a person and a tool for his or her identification in the cultural space. The scientist revealed the structural and functional features of historical memory, as well as explications of its axiological characteristics [13]. Ukrainian scholars V.Slyusar, O.Mosienko and M.Slyusar analysed mediation as a tool for reconciliation, emphasising that historical memory mediated by the media can both exacerbate irredentist conflicts and contribute to their resolution, depending on the strategies of its use [11].

A significant contribution is the dissertation research by V.Volyansky «Media Policy in a Democratic Society: Current Trends and Prospects for Development», which proves that the media is a specific mediator that is not elected through democratic procedures. The researcher emphasises that under these conditions, the contradiction between freedom of choice (exercised through the activities of investors, media owners, pressure groups) and its absence among citizens who receive information through biased media is exacerbated [6]. Des Friedman's work «The Politics of Media Policy» focuses on the political nature of media policy and its impact on public consciousness [2]. German scholar Manfred Mai proposes an approach to media policy as a set of various measures to shape social communication processes [8], and British scholar Nicholas Garnham in his work «Media Policy» emphasises the economic and social aspects of media policy, noting that media as public instruments shape public opinion [3]. And Lee Edwards in his book «Mediapolitik: How the Mass Media Have Transformed World Politics» considers the media as a tool for transforming global politics, where historical memory is a tool for constructing narratives in international conflicts, using events such as the Vietnam War or the fall of the Berlin Wall as examples [1].

Main material. Historical memory performs specific legitimating functions in terms of establishing statehood, nationhood, and the status of groups and communities. On the one hand, it is a component of the culture of a particular ethnic group, captured in the form of traditions and values, and on the other hand, it is an instrument of national self-identification. This is accompanied by the formation of a sense of belonging to the nation (regardless of its ethnic origin), as well as value orientations, which are expressed in a selective attitude to a variety of material and spiritual goods. In the context of inter-ethnic conflicts, historical memory appears as a socio-cultural phenomenon that, in its concentrated form, contains a set of «fuses» that prevent conflicts from escalating into acute forms. Historical memory can be interpreted as an emotional colouring of information about the tragic pages of the nation's history as a reminder of unacceptable alternatives to conflict processes, a project of the future that should not happen [11, p. 59]. At the same time, as the events that preceded the Second World War, the events of many local wars during the Cold War, and military conflicts in the post-Soviet space, including the Russian-Ukrainian war, show, historical memory can be an instrument of aggressive policy. Irredentist conflicts appeal primarily to the need to «restore historical justice», «the right to land», and «blood reunification».

During the war, our country faced the fact that the aggressor country complements the armed confrontation with a «war of memory». Therefore, the experience and strategies of our neighbour's historical policy deserve the attention of researchers. Historical memory, according to O.Stasevska, is a generally accepted idea of the past of a country and people, their development, which is discussed and broadcast in the public space, contributing to the formation of socio-cultural identities. These ideas help to understand common problems and goals, unite and mobilise representatives of different generations to achieve them [13, p. 125].

Domestic experts interpret the essence of memory policy as one of the types of state activity in the public sphere aimed at forming a meaningful view of society on the relationship between the past, present and future, a balanced ratio of traditions and innovations, as well as understanding the importance of preserving cultural

heritage [10, p. 117]. Therefore, historical memory, within the framework of the state memory policy, is a function of the government that determines how the past should be perceived by society. Memory policy is always aimed at creating the desired synthesis between the present and the past. From this point of view, it is appropriate to speak of the state memory policy as a system of goals and measures implemented by the subject of this policy to create conditions under which citizens could see their identity in connection with the nation state and/or the relevant supranational entity. The above confirms that the state plays an active role in the formation of national identity, which demonstrates the continuation of national state traditions and socio-cultural identity, which in turn finally legitimises the existence of the nation-state [14, p. 20-21].

The policy of memory is an important tool of soft power for any state, especially relevant in the age of information society. By shaping citizens' perceptions of the past and actively engaging them in social processes, political forces gain additional opportunities to mobilise voters. Today, this strategy is used by almost all Eastern European countries. The experience of these countries is unique due to the peculiarities of their historical development after the crisis of the socialist system, as well as their successful integration into the European Union and NATO, which is confirmed by the region's high economic and social indicators. Historical policy is a factor in consolidating society and shaping its response to internal and external political challenges. The state's policy in the field of history is based on the concept of «historical memory».

Ukrainian scholars understand historical politics as a set of practices through which political forces or states seek to establish certain interpretations of historical events as dominant. Historical politics has three functions: 1) symbolic (giving significance to certain events); 2) interpretive (interpreting events within the framework of current policy); 3) identification (forming national identity) [14, p. 26]. Thus, historical policy is the choice and dissemination of a system of socio-political values by the state.

The central role of the state is crucial to understanding policy formulation and implementation, as state intervention in the communications landscape is widespread and ranges from promoting industrial development through subsidies and tax breaks to direct ownership of certain industries or companies.

The question of developing a necessary media policy strategy that would ensure the formation of an understanding of the role and place of national history, preservation of historical memory, and promote the implementation of the state's historical policy requires defining the content of the concept of «media policy». Media policy, according to Des Freedman, can be interpreted as a systematic attempt to shape specific media structures and practices in order to achieve social, cultural, political and / or economic goals [2, p. 22]. At the same time, it is not a fixed one-time act of establishing these structures, but a holistic process that involves interaction between different actors, as well as between the institutional structures in which they operate, in order to achieve the goals set by them and the authorities. Accordingly, each actor seeks to develop and implement instruments of influence on the functioning media systems that are adequate to the challenges facing the political system, thus influencing the activities of the state bodies that are supposed to implement this policy.

However, media policy cannot be reduced to defining the role of the state alone, since, especially in the era of the information society, the problem of meeting the information needs of citizens is becoming more and more urgent. The formation/non-formation of citizens' information culture is an important factor influencing media policy, especially in the context of media policy transformation in the post-truth era. The latter is characterised by the prevalence of narrative and emotional characteristics of the information message over the rational one and the need for a multitude of media systems that coexist on the principle of multiverse. That is, the interpretation of media policy proclaimed by N. Garnham's interpretation of media policy as the ways in which government agencies shape or attempt to shape media structures and practices [3, p. 210] is not exhaustive. That is why this approach needs to be supplemented in the context of the growing role of electronic media and social networks, which show a significant influence of influencers on media discourse in general and media policy in particular.

That is why the idea of distinguishing between the concepts of «media policy» and «mediapolitics» has emerged, in particular, Lee Edwards uses the second term to describe the transformation of world politics under the influence of modern mass media, which is marked by the merger of mass media and political power to shape global events and public perceptions [1]. The media, in fact, is an important tool for shaping the agenda not only within national politics, but also global politics. This approach suggests that the media not only reflects the current demands of the day, but also influences the way key historical events are reflected in the mass consciousness in terms of symbols and images. This happens at the diachronic and synchronous levels: at the first level, references to historical topics allow for regular updating of the necessary fragments of historical memory, and at the second level, for recording history. Synchronicity involves separating from the flow of information those events that, thanks to the professional activities of journalists, turn into news. This is the first stage of the selection of historical events that have the potential to be captured in historical memory. The next stage is the loss of relevance, which is expressed in the implementation of the editorial policy of selecting the main news for a certain period (usually a day (evening news) and five days (results of the working week)). In this way, the media perform primary memorialisation: turning news into fixed collective memories of specific events. At this stage, the functional activities of media institutions and politics merge to form public opinion about these events. After all, the media itself not only provides the public with access to important political

events, but also helps to form public opinion on specific issues of various directions [9, p. 38]. This happens in the process of discussing them on media platforms with the involvement of politicians, opinion leaders, experts, and media personalities. It is important that in democratic regimes, this process involves the presence of many alternative platforms with different positions: pro-government – opposition(-s) – interest groups, opinion leaders, etc. In authoritarian regimes, as a rule, this set of platforms is fictitious and illusory due to the control of the authorities, and therefore two positions are formed: official vs. counter-position (which can be broadcast as opposition). The difference is reflected in the adaptability of media policy in democratic regimes to change factors, i.e. public opinion can change depending on new events that turn into news, which goes beyond the dichotomy of the government's position and the opposition's position, as both may contain a false assessment. In such situations, the position of third parties becomes relevant.

The next stage is the transformation of memorialised news into components of historical memory. Although some events can be immediately stigmatised in the public consciousness as «historic» or «most important for the country» (e.g., the declaration of independence, the adoption of the Constitution), the vast majority undergo an assessment procedure. The task of the media is to involve not only a sufficient number of experts and opinion leaders, but also citizens in this process. The latter's awareness of the historical significance of certain events, on the one hand, is based on critical reflection, which prevents the monopolisation of historical memory by one ideology or position of power, and on the other hand, allows for the formation of a long-term historical memory that is understood as a common social product.

The final stage is the symbolisation of events, turning them into a «historical memory». It consists in the media's regular reference to news that is stigmatised as historical, as a «reminder». Specific images (photographs, parts of videos, even memes) become a concentrated expression of the news of the past, acquiring the status of value symbols. For example, despite the large number of photos and videos of Maidan protests, the most frequently broadcasted images are those associated with the ideas of freedom or the struggle for democracy (dispersal of Euromaidan on 30 November 2013, Maidan on 1 December 2013 the confrontation on Hrushevsky Street on 19 January 2014) – including photos of beaten students, burning barricades and tyres, wide shots of thousands of people with Ukrainian and EU flags on the Maidan, the demolition of the Lenin monument in the centre of Kyiv on 8 December 2013, and Vitalii Klychko being used as a fire extinguisher. However, the events of 18-20 February 2014 are associated with the idea of the price of freedom. Despite the number of events during this period, on the anniversary of these events, the media primarily broadcast footage of protesters being killed and the wounded and dead being taken

The current processes of media space transformation, which in scientific discourse are called the «digital age» and «post-truth era», are also changing media policy, including in relation to the preservation of historical memory. This is primarily due to the totalisation of social media as a media channel. For example, the identification data of social media users in the world now stands at 5.24 billion (63.9 per cent of the world's population), with the global total number increasing by 4.1 per cent in 2024 due to an additional 206 million new user identifications [4]. This trend reveals the dialogue potential of this channel through tools such as comments, reposts and meme-making.

A significant challenge for media policy in modern Ukraine is the ongoing irredentist conflict, which is classified as a type of inter-ethnic conflict based on the following condition (or situation) of conflict: a conflict that occurs between one sovereign state and at least one ethnic community, and is defined as one that is associated with the transitional nature of systemic relations, i.e., the conflict transcends state borders. A special feature of irredentist conflicts is the direct link between irredentism and nationalism, since the latter, which proclaims the unity of the population, which, according to certain characteristics, should constitute a nation, is the basic idea for ethno-political movements in general. In this context, the irredentist conflict is an expression of the implementation of two models of the nation: ethnic and political, which are established sequentially. First, the ethnic one is formed, where ethnic community, language, history, folklore are integrated, and then the political one, where a common political identity is the basis. In the context of such a transformation, the need to implement the principle of equal rights for all citizens regardless of ethnicity is becoming more urgent, which marks the formation of a multi-ethnic state, which precedes the process of nation-building. But ethno-unification political movements can develop in two directions: irredentism and pan-nationalism. The latter is essentially defined as a variant of «nationalism without a nation», its specificity is expressed in the focus on integration of several states into a single cultural and political community. In this case, the basic platform for unification is common cultural features, «cultural affinities». On this basis, we can define irredentism as a tool for implementing the policy of pan-nationalism. Ukrainian political scientist N. Horlo identifies the following features that distinguish them: different scales (the pan-nationalist idea refers to several ethnic groups, while irredentism refers to one that is territorially divided between several states); dominance of linguistic, ethnic and religious (pan-Slavism, pan-Islamism) or territorial (pan-Europeanism, pan-Americanism) features in the pan-nationalist idea and ethnic kinship of groups in irredentism; factors of influence (in the first case - external threats, and in the second - internal incentives, i.e. the establishment of a political course guided by ideas with a distinct cultural and historical content, among which the idea of a «Great Power» or a special cultural world

(«Russian world») may be dominant [7, p. 60]. In view of these threats, media policy should be developed as a strategic tool that not only opposes irredentist narratives but also actively shapes an inclusive information space where historical narratives are used to strengthen national identity. The above-mentioned scheme of memorialisation through the media allows for the development and implementation of a media policy programme that will offset the influence of narratives from the «mother» states to a particular irredentist, and neutralise the impact of such conflict factors as territorial claims or cultural hegemony.

Conclusions. Media policy plays a key role in shaping historical narratives that can both contribute to conflict resolution through dialogue and exacerbate it through manipulative strategies. Media policy takes into account the following sequence of events in historical memory: initial selection of events (recording of news), primary memorialisation (transformation of news into collective memories), evaluation and selection of significant events, symbolisation of events (transformation into historical memory). In the context of irredentist conflicts, such as the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, historical memory becomes an instrument of the «war of memory», which requires a strategic approach to media policy. The state needs to implement an adaptive media policy that takes into account both rational and emotional aspects of memory to counteract irredentist threats. Media policy in Ukraine is aimed at creating an inclusive information space that supports political identity and neutralises attempts at cultural hegemony in the context of a protracted conflict.

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Слюсар В, Куташев І., Слюсар К.

Історична пам'ять як складова медіаполітики в умовах іредентичних конфліктів

Анотація. У статті досліджується роль історичної пам'яті як ключового елемента медіаполітики в контексті іредентичних конфліктів. Аналізуються особливості формування історичних наративів засобами медіа та їх вплив на національну ідентичність і суспільну свідомість. Вказано, що медіаполітика враховує наступну послідовність етапів закарбування подій в історичній пам'яті: первинний відбір подій, первинна меморизація, оцінювання та відбір значущих подій, символізація подій, символізація. На першому етапі медіа виокремлюють із потоку інформації ключові події, які завдяки професійній діяльності журналістів трансформуються в новини. На наступному медіа здійснюють «первинну меморизацію», коли новини фіксуються як колективні спогади про конкретні події. Далі відбувається перетворення меморизованих новин в компоненти історичної пам'яті через процедуру оцінювання із залученням до публічного обговорення на медіаплатформах не тільки достатньої кількості експертів та лідерів думок, але й громадян. Завершальний етап – це символізація, коли медіа регулярно повертаються до подій, наділяючи їх статусом ціннісних символів. Підкреслено, що в умовах інформаційного суспільства соціальні мережі посилюють діалогічний потенціал історичної пам'яті через коментарі, репости та меми. Доведено, що ефективна медіаполітика має протидіяти маніпуляціям історичними фактами в епоху постправди та гібридних загроз.

Ключові слова: історична пам'ять; медіаполітика; регулювання медіа; соціальні мережі; колективне несвідоме; медіакультура; соціальний світ; етнос; нація.

Стаття надійшла до редакції 05.02.2025.