Emergence of modern historical policy in the Russian-Ukrainian war context: Assessing transformations in global order paradigms and present challenges

Surgimiento de la política histórica moderna en el contexto de la Guerra Ruso-Ucraniana: Evaluación de las transformaciones en los paradigmas del orden mundial y retos actuales

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Abstract

The purpose of the article is to study contemporary historical policy in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war and against the background of paradigm shifts in the world order and other contemporary challenges. To achieve this goal, the article uses the methods of critical analysis of literature (content analysis), historical-comparative, and historical-typological methods. The results show that historical politics is becoming an important component of modern life in Ukrainian society, especially in the context of the Russian invasion. The use of history as an instrument of expansion has become an essential feature of Russian politics. This model can be seen as an attempt to restore Soviet identity, with a strong emphasis on "common history and brotherhood." The modern version of this idea, promoted by the Kremlin, is based on the concept of reviving Russian influence after the collapse of the Soviet Union

Resumen

El propósito del artículo es estudiar la política histórica contemporánea en el contexto de la guerra ruso-ucraniana y con el trasfondo de los cambios de paradigma en el orden mundial y otros retos contemporáneos. Para lograr este objetivo, el artículo utiliza los métodos de análisis crítico de la literatura (análisis de contenido), histórico-comparativo e histórico-tipológico. Los resultados muestran que la política histórica se está convirtiendo en un componente importante de la vida moderna de la sociedad ucraniana, especialmente en el contexto de la invasión rusa. El uso de la historia como instrumento de expansión se ha convertido en una característica esencial de la política rusa. Este modelo puede verse como un intento de restaurar la identidad soviética, con un fuerte énfasis en "la historia común y la hermandad." La versión moderna de esta idea, promovida por el Kremlin, se basa en el concepto de revivir la influencia rusa tras el

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(which, in the Kremlin's view, was a geopolitical catastrophe) on the territories of independent states. The conclusions emphasise that such manifestations of chauvinistic historical policy have become a tool in the hybrid war against Ukraine and the democratic world as a whole.

Keywords: Russian-Ukrainian war, historical politics, aggression, politics of memory.

colapso de la Unión Soviética (que, en opinión del Kremlin, fue una catástrofe geopolítica) en los territorios de Estados independientes. Las conclusiones subrayan que tales manifestaciones de política histórica chovinista se han convertido en una herramienta de la guerra híbrida contra Ucrania y el mundo democrático en su conjunto.

Palabras clave: Guerra ruso-ucraniana, política histórica, agresión, política de la memoria.

Introduction

Russia's aggression against Ukraine in 2014 opened up a new perspective on the historical past of the country for Ukrainian society, which in many aspects began to differ from Russian or post-Soviet paradigms. The Revolution of Dignity and the armed aggression and occupation of the Crimean peninsula by Russia demonstrated the vulnerability of Ukrainian public opinion to externally imposed stereotypes about the past. Thanks to the interest in the events of Ukrainian history, when the Kremlin authorities launched a new large-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, society was better prepared to counter hybrid challenges and threats. First of all, it was the active spread of ideological theses about "brotherly peoples," "common history", joint profitable projects in economic and social life - common, as it turned out, Russian propaganda sifas that were put at the service of the imperial ambitions of the Kremlin authorities and Russians who actively supported this policy.

Research problem

Although Ukrainian politics after the Russian invasion did not develop into a clear separate branch of the humanitarian policy conducted by state institutions, the spread of real historical research, the popularity of relevant videos and programmes on television and the Internet, etc. have gained considerable weight against the backdrop of confrontation with Russian propaganda. As a result, the fashion for historical knowledge has become an important component of public life in Ukraine, and although it cannot be called total, its manifestations will continue to require unification into a certain unified whole - a common and popularised vision of the Ukrainian past, formalised in political decisions. On the other hand, the analysis of the Russian experience demonstrates how a monopoly on power and historical policy can lead to the formation of a biased, authoritarian picture of the world and cause tectonic shifts in public sentiment towards post-Soviet revanchism and Russian imperial thought. Even the very

combination of the monarchical imperial past and the Soviet government (which, as you know, exterminated all manifestations of belonging to the monarchical environment) demonstrates the deliberate formation of a political line aimed at external expansion.

Research focus

Against the backdrop of the unfolding Russian aggression and counteraction to its manifestations in the humanitarian sphere, the creation and conduct of Ukrainian historical policy demonstrates the importance of this area for modern society. The lack of skills in conducting historical policy and discussions about its feasibility indicate a further need to discuss this issue against the background of considering the opinions of reputable scholars, building new concepts and hypotheses aimed at improving knowledge and the role of history in society. At the same time, such a process will require an analysis of the challenges of our time related to the rapid development of digital technologies, hybrid threats, etc., since historical policies are also being formed in other countries, and their experience can be useful even in the difficult times of war with the Russian regime.

Research aim and research questions

Therefore, the purpose of the article is to analyse the formation of the latest historical policy in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war and against the background of changes in the paradigm of the world order and other challenges of our time. The realisation of this goal involves consideration of the following tasks: 1. to highlight the peculiarities of Ukrainian historical policy against the background of global transformations. 2. Consideration of the modern Russian historical policy as an instrument of political pressure and formation of the challenge of instability in international relations.

Theoretical Framework or Literature Review

The term "historical politics," which originated in the 1980s in Germany and was reintroduced in the early 2000s by a group of Polish historians, quickly spread to other countries of Central and Eastern Europe. It has come to denote the sharp intensification of the use of history for political purposes that took place in the early twenty-first century in Eastern Europe (Stryjek, 2007). Liebsch (1995) actually identifies these processes and advocates the use of the term "memory politics" instead of "historical politics", defining the former as "any deliberate and formally legitimate actions of politicians and officials aimed at strengthening, deleting or overcoming certain fragments of public memory". According to some contemporary historians, the phenomenon of politicisation of history is an eternal and inevitable phenomenon (Schmidtke, 2023; Verovšek, 2016). At the same time, the politics of memory defines a set of social practices and norms that contribute to the regulation of collective memory (Nora, 1989; McH & White, 1987). It is also inevitable and has existed since ancient times. At the same time, the phenomenon of historical politics seems to be a new, specific phenomenon, the existence of which is possible in various democratic and civil societies that allow for a plurality of opinions and interpretations (Wertsch et al., 2022). It is defined as a set of practices through which certain political forces seek to establish certain interpretations of historical events as important. In modern Ukrainian history, the concept of "historical politics" began to be introduced into scientific and journalistic circulation at the turn of the 2010s and 2020s. Initially, this was due to the reaction of a part of the Ukrainian academic community to the government's attempts to interfere in the struggle of public groups for the right to approve their interpretation of significant historical events. On the other hand, this issue has become more relevant in view of the outbreak and development of the Russian-Ukrainian war.

American researchers who pay attention to the evolution of Ukrainian historiography after Ukraine's independence point to its "exploratory and experimental" nature, which opens up new opportunities for scientific development in the context of modern innovative approaches (von Hagen, 1995). At the same time, contemporary researchers express concern about the tendency to return to outdated ideas about history and historical knowledge under the influence of certain socio-political factors. Indeed, a careful analysis of the development of Ukrainian historiography over the past 25 years reveals two main trends that have influenced its content and methodology (Zaszkilniak, 2019). These trends are already well known to Ukrainian historians and are actively discussed in the academic community (See Figure 1).
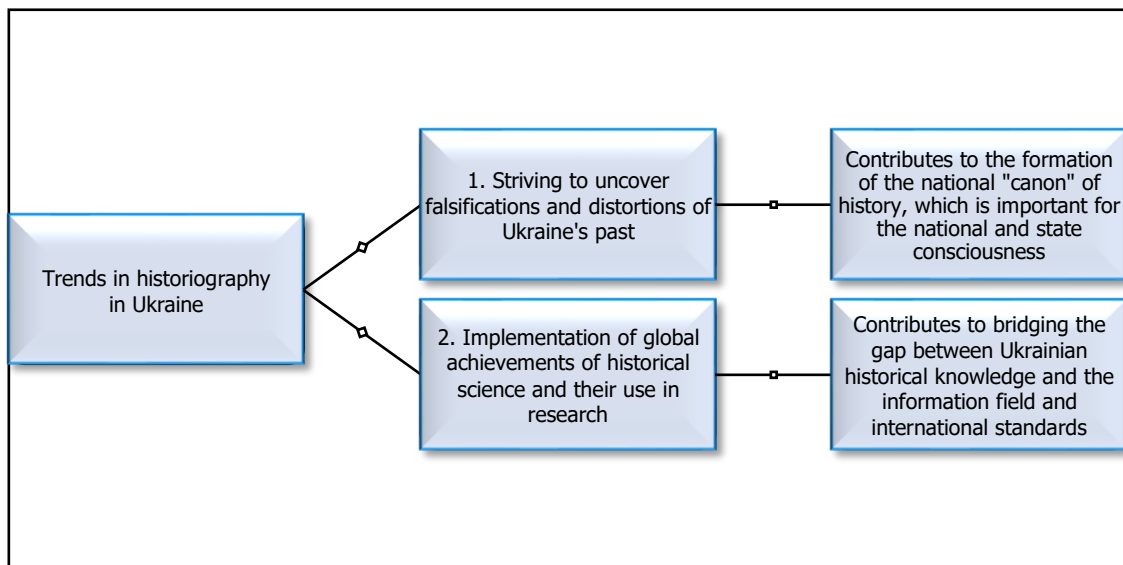

Figure 1. Trends in historiography in Ukraine
Source: Zaszkilniak (2019)

Therefore, contemporary Ukrainian historians are trying to uncover and correct numerous falsifications or distortions of Ukraine's past that were formed during the colonial period and the stay in different empires, especially in Soviet times (Zaszkilniak, 2016). This, in turn, contributes to the formation of a national "canon" of history, which is important for national

consciousness and social memory. The second trend is the introduction of global achievements of historical science and their use in research to overcome the process of lagging behind Ukrainian historical and academic knowledge and the information field from international standards (Zaszkilniak, 2019). At the same time, interpretations of historical memory are important, as an important part of the historical past and present. Ukrainian researcher Kyrydon (2013) noted that the dynamism of changes, catalyzed by the events of the late 1980s and early 1990s, the compression of historical time lead to rapid transformations of social systems, the emergence of multi-vector crises of various levels in the development of society and the individual. Therefore, there is the destruction of social structures established in the past, fundamental changes in the understanding of the processes of being and moral and value imperatives in the conditions of modification of the entire socio-cultural system. Algorithms of human social action are being transformed. Interest in the problems of the past, history, and memory is growing, and there is a need to rethink the relationship between the present and the past (Kyrydon, 2013). Therefore, the problems of the connection between the politics of memory and democratic transformations, memory and political culture, the role of memory in civil reconciliation, the achievement of tolerance and the restoration of trust are actualized. In the conditions of breaking the traditional foundations of life, there is a rethinking of one's own past path and an idea of the historical path of a group, nation, society. There is an intensification of the processes of unification and separation of interests, goals of individuals, groups, and states of various kinds of associations. The definition and redefinition of positions and their correlation with the positions of others is observed (Kyrydon, 2013). Mnemology (the field of memory study) is increasingly coming into the field of view of representatives of the social sciences. Therefore, the research of "memory" has an interdisciplinary character.

Hyrych (2013) noted that Ukraine was the first CIS country that managed to make its own set of history textbooks and thereby manifested its desire to win back its historical and informational space from Russia. The reaction of the Russians to this was sharply negative. Our textbooks were accused of Russophobia and intolerance, historical tendency and falsehood. Meanwhile, the new concept of Russian historical education during the presidency of Putin once again interpreted the Ukrainian space as a part of the imperial all-Russian history. Agents of Russia's influence in Ukraine were activated, and they began to harass the Ukrainian view of their history. The reasons for this should be sought in the political sphere. Tkachenko (2020) explained the peculiarities of Russian historical politics in a certain way. Today, Russia is much smaller than the USSR among world powers, but it is categorically unwilling to lose the leverage it inherited from the postwar settlement. Hence the Russian proposal to hold a summit of the leaders of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, which Putin insists on in his speeches. Of course, this is not the same "concert of states" as in the 19th century, but at least something Tkachenko (2020). Meanwhile, the Russian government seeks to protect itself from its deceived and robbed citizens, to offer them the "pride of winners" instead of a free and dignified life. As for current politics, the myth of war fuels imperial ambitions.

Contemporary historiography discusses the importance of academic historians in the implementation and execution of state historical policy. It is obvious that history, in the form of historical knowledge and social memory, is shaped by representatives of a particular community, not by abstract individuals or communities. Historians and intellectuals change history on the basis of materials and their own ideas about the past, which affects the current socio-cultural context (Assmann & Czaplicka, 1995; Foscarini, 2018). The processes of "cultural amputation" and the "model of historical thinking and research" identified by historians play an important role in this. This approach evokes a dialectical dynamic between the desire to improve the future and a constant response to the past. Regardless of the replacement of old historical narratives with new ones, this dynamic remains. This inescapable tension is analogous to the cognitive contradiction between the known and the knowable. Thus, history is a tool for shaping individual and social consciousness, and its misuse can affect the perception of the present and the future (Kubal, 2008). Araújo & Santos (2009) raised the issue of recovering from traumatic situations, such as the Vietnam War, the bombing of Hiroshima, the Holocaust, etc. Although a number of classical works identify important aspects related to history and memory, there are several methods of dealing with the past, which primarily involve state interests and power (Confino, 1997; Dessí, 2008). At the same time, just memory policies for certain crimes committed in the past "depend on selection processes as well as on elements that go beyond human reason: a balance must be found between

an obsession with the past and attempts to impose forgetting". Klymenko's (2022) study proves that the authorities use historical narratives to support their foreign policy programmes. This work openly argues that in order to justify its pro-European foreign policy strategy, Ukraine has promoted the idea that Ukrainians have an important historical experience similar to that of Europe, emphasising the difference in historical experience from Russians. According to the authors of the article, this fact justifies the desire of Ukrainians to distance themselves from the Russians and become full member of the EU.

Historical knowledge is used not only for political and ideological purposes but also for the "legitimation" of statehood, national identity, and group interests (Halas, 2002). Thus, according to Kean (2021), historians have the freedom to reinterpret the past, but their possibilities are limited by subjective circumstances such as socio-cultural

environment and individual experience. This can be seen quite aptly in the study of the key aspects of the restoration of statehood in the historical policy of the Second Polish Republic (Matviichuk, 2020).

At the same time, it is public history that is important in the modern system. As Halas (2002) argues, the flourishing of public history is linked to the development of the nation, and thus it is important to study the aspects through which abstract concepts such as the nation can be communicated. This should help to address how different, public identities and new memories are formed (Kubal, 2008). Current trends in world culture emphasise that history is not only what historians write, but also the way language is used in public discourse (Zaszkilniak, 2019). Nevertheless, the future can be seen as a number of possible alternatives, and it is also shaped by ideological perspectives (See Figure 2).
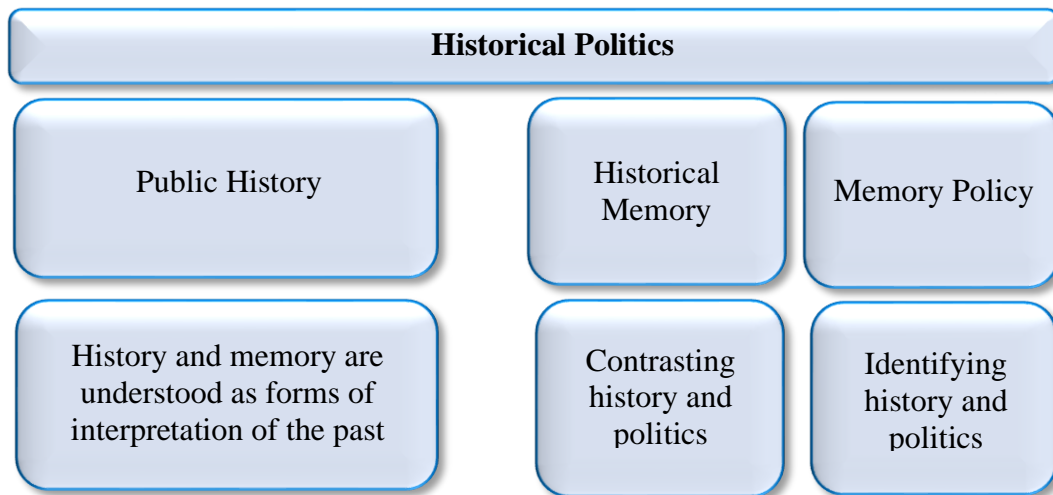

Figure 2. Historical politicals
Source: author's own development

Thus, historical narratives reflect dependence on modernity, but also allow for the historian's "freedom of non-freedom". The specialist should be aware that the object of knowledge can also be a subject and an actor, depending on the researcher's point of view.

Methodology

The methodological basis of the study is made up of special historical and general scientific (theoretical) research methods. In particular, a critical analysis of the literature (content analysis) was used: a retrospective analysis of academic and literature helped to find out what

views were expressed earlier on the formation of historical policy, what concepts and theories were considered. This allowed us to identify changes in approaches and challenges faced by contemporary researchers. Among the historical research methods, the following have become important: historical-comparative and historical-typological. In particular, as a result of using the method of comparative analogy, the established interpretations of historical events in Russian and Ukrainian scholarship have been revised. The use of historical-typological and historical-systemic research methods allowed us to consider historical phenomena in a broader context, analyse connections, analogies, and

interrelationships, which contributed to a deep and comprehensive understanding of the process of historical policy formation and the challenges this process may face.

Results and Discussion

Historical Policy in Ukraine: Current Status and Prospects

Conducting historical politics is a much broader concept than political interference in the understanding or teaching of historical science (Zaretsky, 2013). At the heart of historical policy is the transmission of various kinds of memories and experiences, as well as the disclosure of unknown or forgotten facts, i.e. it is a kind of policy towards history and memory (Connerton, 2012). The main goal of the Ukrainian memory policy, according to researchers, is to construct cultural memory and create a separate model of political vision of the Ukrainian national past. In addition, historical policy is aimed at creating socially important historical images, and identity paradigms used in rituals or social and scientific discourse (Bertelsen, 2017). The Ukrainian democratic society does not limit historical policy to the political sphere, but also involves scholars, teachers, specialists in archives, public communication, etc.

The implementation of the memory policy in Ukraine also has certain peculiarities. In particular, there is an additional emphasis on the colonial Soviet past of the Ukrainian people, which will require further development in the context of global transformations caused by Russian aggression against Ukraine (Lysenko, 2022). Thus, among the distinctive features of Ukrainian memory policy are the following:

1. The struggle for the recognition of the Holodomor of 1932-1933 as genocide of the Ukrainian people under the totalitarian rule of the "Red Russians". Although the Holodomor and its consequences have long been discussed in academic and journalistic circles, the emphasis on these tragic events began only in the twenty-first century. The opening of relevant museum complexes (including the National Museum "Holodomor Victims Memorial in Ukraine"), the adoption and annual commemoration of the tragedy of the Ukrainian people were important steps towards establishing knowledge about the horrific events of Stalin's time in Ukrainian society (Lysenko, 2022). At the same time, the processes of understanding the real

significance of the Holodomor intensified after February 2022, when the real crimes of Russians in the occupied Ukrainian lands demonstrated the extreme cruelty of ordinary Russian soldiers. The Russian scheme of history, designed to emphasise "fraternal relations" with Ukrainians and deny Russian crimes in the past, has been confronted with an irrefutable reality. In addition, while earlier international recognition of the Holodomor of 1932-1933 as an act of genocide was modest, against the backdrop of the crimes of Russian troops, the international community is more actively recognising the fact of genocide at the international level.

2. Revise current school textbooks on Ukrainian history, law, geography, and ethics, as they may contain elements of the Soviet concept of Ukraine's development (Yakovenko, 2009). The emphasis should be on the development of new educational programmes, and textbooks should be created in accordance with the traditions of the Ukrainian historical school and the Eurocentric perspective of Ukraine's future. The promotion of Ukraine's Ukraine-centric humanitarian policy is also important. To do this, it is necessary to introduce special courses, hold open lectures, create programmes on television channels and special social media platforms that will tell the population about the true history of Ukraine at a popular scientific level (Lysenko, 2022). It is also important to support documentary and historical films, create historical online content, etc. to promote Ukraine's historical heritage. Given the Ukrainian segment of the popular YouTube service, some successes in this regard are tangible. Russian aggression has led to Ukrainian viewers deliberately refusing to watch Russian content and turning their attention to Ukrainian platforms.

3. Decommunisation and rehabilitation of fighters against the Soviet regime. To date, the process of renaming streets is in its final stages. However, once it is completed, the main focus should be on reviewing and transforming Soviet institutional norms and other operating principles. This will allow for the official eradication of Soviet working methods from many state institutions. Preference should be given to European standards, taking into account the Ukrainian national heritage. A separate stage will be the official implementation of decolonisation (Kuzio, 2022). This means

defining the key principles for removing certain names and monuments associated with the Ukrainian territories being under the rule of empires from public space. On the other hand, it is important to complement this process by creating new monuments and street names in honour of Ukraine's contemporary heroes. This will help strengthen the national idea and remind all Ukrainians of the dignity and honour of Ukraine's defenders. Given the conditions of the Russian-Ukrainian war, the formation of a Ukrainian pantheon of heroes could become an important part of the ideological influence on the Ukrainian people.

4. Supporting research in the humanities (in particular, in the historical field). Establishing new research centres and supporting existing ones will make it possible to rethink certain elements of Ukrainian history and build new research based on modern paradigms of scientific knowledge. For example, the Russian aggression against Ukraine in 2014 is incompletely represented in such a specific field as oral history. At the same time, the events of February 2022 are full of materials that can be used in future research.

The Ukrainian version of historical policy manifests a complex interaction of identity issues, collective memory, and the reconstruction of post-Soviet remnants in the interpretation of the past. Historical policy is intended to form the foundations of the state: it promotes its internal and external recognition and activates the mobilisation of society.

Russia's Challenge to Historical Politics: A Model for the Unification of History, State Power and Violence

History is important for legitimising the existence of the state and shaping national consciousness, but it can also be used as a tool to exert influence on society and impose a politically motivated vision of the past (Kuo & Marwick, 2021). Under such circumstances, in its efforts to implement an aggressive policy, the official Kremlin has developed and partially implemented a conquering historical strategy, which at the present stage is aimed at destroying Ukrainian political independence, destroying human and economic potential, and seizing territories (Claessen, 2021). Current events in the course of Russian aggression indicate that history can be used as a powerful tool in hybrid warfare. At the same time, other researchers also emphasise that historical policy is also quite

effective in non-military use (Foscarini, 2018). In modern scholarship, the term "historical politics" reflects a set of practices through which states try to consolidate specific interpretations of historical events, phenomena, and facts as acceptable and dominant (Bînă & Dragomir, 2020). Some experts view historical policy as a means of transmitting specific socio-political values by the state.

Today, it is clear that the official Kremlin's historical policy towards Ukraine is implemented through the prism of imposing foreign values on Ukrainian society. Attempts by the Russian authorities to position themselves as a kind of superpower seem to be based on the "historical" existence of a powerful and separate Russian nation. The basis of this scheme is the common origin and unity of the Eastern Slavs: Ukrainians, Belarusians, and Russians (Parshyn, 2018). In addition, the latter are recognised as "big brothers" on whose will the life of the "smaller" Ukrainian and Belarusian nations should depend. This model can be perceived as an attempt to restore the Soviet identity, which emphasised "common history and brotherhood" (Kuzio, 2022). The post-Soviet version of this model, disseminated by the Kremlin, placed the revival of Russian power after the collapse of the Soviet Union (which was allegedly a geopolitical disaster for the local elite) on the territory of sovereign countries at the heart of the concept of historical policy. This idea is based on several principles: the Western democratic world's attempts to divide the "great nation" by rewriting history, the lack of acceptance of new borders, and the disrespect and recognition of the national cultures of Ukraine and Belarus as marginal (Gorinov & Mereniuk, 2022).

The restoration of the lost superpower status led the Russian leadership to form and implement broad supranational projects, such as the Eurasian Economic Union or the military Collective Security Treaty Organisation. The vulnerability of these structures was that Ukraine did not join any of these supranational organisations. As researchers rightly point out, without Ukraine, Russia's re-emergence as a European "superpower" is impossible.

When formulating the concept of historical policy, the Ukrainian side should take into account that the Kremlin regime constantly refers to historical manipulations that try to argue its right to resources and territories. The Russian leadership actively uses the idea of the "Russian world", which, in theory, justifies the annexation of Ukrainian territories (Lysenko, 2022).

According to this concept, the occupation of Crimea was of particular importance, as the Russian authorities claimed that the peninsula was a symbolic place where Prince Volodymyr of Kyiv was baptised. However, these and many other interpretations are subject to historical debate and are erroneous from a historical and legal perspective. It is worth noting that Prince Volodymyr Sviatoslavovych ruled Kyiv in the late 10th and early 11th centuries. In addition, the international community does not believe that there is any basis in international law for justifying current political actions by using events that happened to historical figures more than a thousand years ago.

The new Russian aggression in 2022 demonstrated attempts to implement aggressive historical policy in practice (Bînă & Dragomir, 2020). Ukrainian school textbooks, historical and fiction books were destroyed in the occupied Ukrainian territories. At the same time, the Russian leadership, which was unable to clearly define the goals and purpose of its aggression, rejoiced at the restoration of "historically just" territorial gains, including the transformation of the Azov Sea into Russian inland waters (as allegedly bequeathed by the Russian imperial authorities). The use of "historical rights" became an important part of first the policy of historical memory, and then the armed invasion.

Obviously, these developments in the strategy of historical policy in Ukraine will be aimed at overcoming these Russian projects, but it should be acknowledged that these actions are threatening to the system of international security and stability. The model of historical policy development proposed by the Kremlin regime demonstrates the willingness of authoritarian political groups to find motives and justifications for aggressive actions, demonstrating in the international arena the supposed historical justice of such steps (restoration of the USSR and destruction of Ukrainian independence, belonging of these territories to the empire, etc. It can be argued that historical policy has become an element of the hybrid war declared by the Russian authorities against Ukrainians and other democratic countries, so countering this challenge can be overcome by truthful coverage of historical events, promotion of historical knowledge, etc.

Conclusions

Thus, historical politics is an important part of contemporary Ukrainian society, actively developing against the backdrop of the Russian invasion. The Kremlin regime, which apparently aimed to destroy Ukraine, has achieved the opposite result at the present stage - the consolidation of Ukrainians has also been based on the idea of a common historical unity. For this reason, the further development of Ukrainian historical policy is quite natural. As demonstrated, it covers the problems of decommunisation, the formation of a new pantheon of heroes, overcoming the Soviet past in training and education programmes, the development of culture, humanities, including history. The further development of historical policy may also be caused by its special position in Russian reality. The use of history as an instrument of expansion has become an important feature of Russian politics. This model can be seen as an attempt to restore the Soviet identity, where great emphasis was placed on "common history and brotherhood".

The modern version of this idea, promoted by the Kremlin, is based on the concept of reviving Russian influence after the collapse of the Soviet Union (which was predicted to be a geopolitical disaster for the local elite) on the territories of sovereign states. This idea is based on several principles: the Western democratic world's attempts to "divide a great nation" by rewriting its history, its refusal to recognise new borders, and its disregard for the national cultures of Ukraine and Belarus. To sum up, historical policy has become a component of the hybrid war that the Russian authorities have launched against Ukraine and other democratic countries. Therefore, to counter this challenge, it is necessary to use truthful coverage of historical events, dissemination of historical knowledge, and other relevant methods. At the same time, the development of specific methods of countering hybrid challenges in the historical sphere will require further updating.

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