Mnemonic Security Dilemma. Memory as Casus Belli

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Abstract

The article presents arguments allowing the notion of security dilemma to be extended to historical memory and competing narratives of the past. In the international arena, securitization of historical narratives can lead to a mnemonic security dilemma. Systematic challenging of the most important historical narratives of state A by key mnemonic actors of state B puts the political elites of state A before a choice: ignore this action or develop a set of measures aimed at countering attempts to undermine "their own" narrative and discredit historical narratives significant for

the consolidation of society in state B. Under these conditions, the incompatibility of narratives becomes an important and even constitutive factor in the formation of macropolitical identity. The article considers different options for the emergence of a mnemonic security dilemma during conflicts between Serbia and Croatia, and between Russia and Ukraine. It shows that a mnemonic security dilemma significantly complicates the resolution of interstate conflicts.

Keywords: mnemonic security dilemma, securitization, historical memory, narratives about the past, Serbia, Croatia, Russia, Ukraine.

The memory of the past is an integral part of the identity of communities whose level of consolidation, self-awareness, and connection with the state allows them to be considered nations. This is also true for those socio-cultural communities that have not completed the process of nation-building yet, but are clearly moving in this direction. Historical memory is a necessary prerequisite and a tool for national consolidation. But the impact on the macropolitical identity and resilience of the relevant community through historical memory can be multidirectional, leading sometimes to disunity rather than consolidation. What makes recent conflicts over historical memory so severe is that different actors have been trying to use interpretations of the past as an offensive or defensive weapon to justify the legitimacy of the political regime, sovereignty over a particular territory, or advantages of one of the political forces in domestic political confrontation, or one country or a group of states in geopolitical competition. The memory of the past is increasingly considered in security contexts—from the subjective sense of security for an individual or a group to various dimensions of international security. This article proposes a hypothesis that extends the notion of security dilemma to historical memory and competing narratives of the past.

HISTORICAL MEMORY AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

Assuming that the state perceives the dominant identity of a macropolitical community as an important condition for its own

stability, we can view historical memory, supporting narratives, and symbolic practices as objects of securitization.

The concept of securitization, developed by leading experts of the Copenhagen School of International Relations, Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde, provides a theoretical framework allowing a much wider range of phenomena, which were previously overlooked by experts, to be considered from a security perspective (Buzan, Wæver, de Wilde, 1998). The general securitization model developed by representatives of the Copenhagen School serves as the basis for empirical analysis of specific processes, which should determine initial prerequisites for securitization (actor, reference object, audience) and a certain sequence of actions in order to convince the audience that there is a threat to the reference object and that it requires a response.

It should be noted, however, that the Copenhagen School's innovative approach has started a wide discussion, which is far from over yet. For example, the securitization of certain aspects of identity is still a debatable point (McSweeney, 1996). Without seeking to dig too deep into this matter, this paper, following M. Mälksoo, looks at the securitization of narratives and symbolic practices as the process of recognizing them as significant for maintaining community identity (Mälksoo, 2015). In this case, security (and therefore securitization) is understood not procedurally (as ensuring the survival of an individual or community in a culturally constructed social context), but ontologically (as a critical prerequisite for the preservation/development of collective identity). Thus, some important ideational components become the object of action for state institutions in order to "protect" them from possible encroachments. State institutions thus get involved in "the designation of an existential threat requiring emergency action or special measures and the acceptance of that designation by a significant audience" (Buzan, Wæver, de Wilde, 1998, p. 27).

Securitization in this case is the process of selecting narratives and practices, some of which are not recognized as useful for maintaining identity as the basis of a political actor's legal capacity. Securitization involves serious risks associated with the dominance of key memory

policy actors who seek to consolidate a certain interpretation of the past in public consciousness by resorting to regulatory justifications and using various tools for protecting physical and social security.

The securitization of historical memory also has an international dimension. For example, new opportunities arise for explaining factors that cause security dilemmas and affect the dynamics of international conflicts (Browning and Joenniemi, 2016). In general, a security dilemma occurs when the strengthening of the security of one state is perceived by another state or a group of states as a threat to their own security (Jervis, 1978). It should be borne in mind that such a perception is based not only on the calculation of objective security factors, but also on intuitive feelings and negative expectations about the opponent's intentions. Subjective and psychological aspects of such assessments play a particularly significant role amid general strategic uncertainty, and a lack of trust and communication between the leaders and political elites of competing states. A classic security dilemma essentially means that in response to the actions of state A, the leaders of state B should either accept the fact that the threshold of their own security may be lowered or take active retaliatory steps, which, in turn, may be perceived by the leadership of state A as threatening. In a situation where the leadership and political elites of states A and B consider bilateral relations through zero-sum-game modality, the likelihood of conflict escalation increases significantly.

Competitive interstate relations with regard to historical memory apparently can reproduce a security dilemma, and "mutual fear of what initially may never have existed may subsequently bring about exactly that which is feared most" (Herz, 1961, p. 241). A *mnemonic security dilemma* arises when, for example, a historical narrative, serving as a "foundation myth" for state A or playing a major role in rallying the macropolitical community behind that state, is systematically challenged by influential players acting on behalf of the macropolitical community behind state B. If the institutions of state B provide steadfast support to these efforts, then the political elites of state A will be faced with a choice: ignore this action or develop a set of measures to counter attempts to undermine "their own" narrative and discredit historical

narratives significant for the consolidation of society in state B. This dilemma can become especially manifest when mnemonic actors in modern states, locked in fierce competition, try to "privatize" a part of the once common "legacy of memories" (Renan, 2018). At the same time, mnemonic actors in state B, seeking to destroy the "foundation myth" of state A, try to use its remnants in order to construct their own "foundation myth," thus aggravating the conflict and taking it to the level of antagonistic identities.

Needless to say, a mnemonic security dilemma, as a rule, is a derivative of a classic security dilemma. In other words, the historical and symbolic groundwork is laid specifically for already existing contradictions associated with military-strategic and economic security, and orientation towards certain alliances and interstate associations. As a result, the conflict with state A begins to be viewed by political elites and part of the mass groups in state B as an important and even constitutive element of its own national-state identity. At the same time, it is confrontation over historical memory that in some cases turns out to be a decisive argument that brings differences in economic interests and relations on military-strategic security issues to the point of acute conflict.

When there is a mnemonic security dilemma, the wiggle room for statesmen representing their macropolitical community shrinks dramatically, and the political decision-making process can deviate significantly from the logic of rational choice. In this case, political leaders largely seek to "live up to the expectations" of their community. As R. Jervis has noted, as far as the opposing state is concerned, these leaders almost lose the ability to understand, "that one's own actions could be seen as menacing," and the opponent's actions "can only be explained by its aggressiveness" (Jervis, 1976, p. 75).

CENTENARY OF SERBO-CROATIAN CONFRONTATION

In order to understand the nature of any conflict, one has to study its historical roots. But in some cases, interpretations of history, popular myths and narratives of the past become a standalone and important factor that can change the intensity and qualitative characteristics of

a conflict. From this point of view, it would be sensible to analyze two conflicts, the dynamics of which have changed significantly due to a mnemonic security dilemma. We are talking about conflicts, including irreconcilable interpretations of the historical past, between Serbia and Croatia, on the one hand, and between Russia and Ukraine, on the other hand. Neither is over and both are at different stages of development. In both cases, there are many similarities, including linguistic affinity and the experience of being part of multinational states and participating in experiments involving radical social transformations based on communist ideology. At the same time, there are significant differences in the circumstances of mnemonic security dilemmas and their impact on the conflict dynamics.

Let us begin with a closer look at the Serbo-Croatian case. The rivalry between Serbs and Croats, which twice developed into bloody confrontation, does not go back centuries. Like in many other ethnic groups in Central and Eastern Europe, the national identity of Serbs and Croats formed mainly in the 19th century in two different empires. The struggle for national self-determination was not between Serbs and Croats, but each of these peoples fought for it with its own imperial center. In the 19th century, programs were approved for the ethnic consolidation of Serbs and Croats, as well as other southern Slavs on the basis of linguistic and ethnic affinity; almost simultaneously, there appeared plans to secure the dominant position of one of these ethnic groups in the Western Balkans. These were steps towards substantiating future rivalry, but until the end of World War I, the Serbs were not a "significant Other" for the Croats, and vice versa.

The creation in 1918 of a single state—the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (since 1929 called the Kingdom of Yugoslavia)—changed the disposition dramatically. Almost from the very first days of the new state, the Serbian and Croatian political elites got locked in a fierce fight with each other. Croats put up the strongest resistance to political and legal unification and the consolidation of Serbian dominance. The confrontation between the elites deteriorated quite quickly, drawing in broader sections of the population. Mass Croatian identity formed through rejection of statehood, in which the Serbs played a leading

role. Escalation increased every year and even led to political killings that influenced the fate of the first Yugoslav state (the assassination of Croatian People's Peasant Party leader Stjepan Radić in 1928 and of King Alexander I in 1934).

A far-reaching compromise—the Cvetković-Maček Agreement (Sporazum) of August 26, 1939, which granted autonomy to Croatia and part of the territory of present-day Bosnia and Herzegovina, predominantly populated by Croats—had the potential to stabilize the political situation in the kingdom. However, this agreement did not suit either the Ustashe, who insisted on full independence for Croatia, or the Serbian radical nationalists and monarchists, who sought to restore the unitary model of Serbian-dominated Yugoslav statehood. At the initial stage of the Axis invasion of Yugoslavia, these forces were the main fighters in the severest and bloodiest struggle that claimed more than one million lives. But it was the Ustashe, who created, under the auspices of the Third Reich, the "Independent State of Croatia" (NDH) led by Ante Pavelić. He would later fully utilize Nazi practices, including concentration camps, deportations and mass extermination of civilians, against the Serbs (as well as Jews and Romani people).

Then a third force—anti-fascist partisans led by Josip Broz Tito—entered the armed confrontation, which dramatically changed not only the course of hostilities, but also the prospects for the revival of Yugoslavia on the basis of ideology that, ideally, could have helped end ethnic strife. The internationalist slogan of the partisans "Brotherhood and Unity" meant recognition of the specific features of different ethnic groups, but at the same time emphasized their consolidation in fighting fascism, and later in building socialism and strengthening the Yugoslav federation.

The victory of Tito and his associates was supposed to put an end to the Serbo-Croatian confrontation. Indeed, much was done for that, especially in the first two decades after the establishment of the communist regime that sought to build a supranational socialist identity. According to Michael Mann, the strong containment of destructive ethnic nationalism was "probably the greatest achievement

of communism, unmatched by later democratizing countries" (Mann, 2005, p. 354).

However, the interethnic equilibrium remained extremely fragile. By the end of Tito's life, Yugoslavia had turned into a kind of condominium of republican party elites. But immediately after his death, dissatisfaction with the political regime and the model of federal relations deepened in all republics, thus generating demand for democratization, which immediately acquired an ethno-national dimension. The latter became crucial for ensuring the political triumph of the leaders who seemed ready to defend the interests of the relevant ethnic groups most decisively.

The very possibility of preserving the second Yugoslav state depended on relations between Serbia and Croatia, although the unity of the federation was also shaken by growing disagreements provoked by Albanian unrest in Kosovo and the deepening economic disparities between the republics. By the end of the 1980s, Serbo-Croatian tensions had reached a very high level; media and opinion leaders in both republics stirred up the "us vs. them" polarization process daily, thus continuously increasing mutual alienation.

The political and historical metanarrative and the symbolic heritage of socialist Yugoslavia were deconstructed differently in different Yugoslav republics. In Serbia and Croatia, they were replaced by narratives, in which the rivalry between Croats and Serbs was at the core of national interpretations of events in common history. Political leaders in Serbia and Croatia actively used the traumatic experience of Serbo-Croatian relations in order to exacerbate the victim complex in their ethnic groups, and to transform the image of the Other into the image of a historical enemy. Any new action by one side, which increased the confrontation, was seen by the other side as justifying its own confrontational steps.

Croatian memory policy after the removal of former communists from power as a result of multi-party elections "was characterized by an abrupt recasting of history, a nearly total turn of main narratives and a redefining of good and bad" (Sindbæk, 2012, p. 192). The level of radicalism in this reversal was determined by the fact that the Franjo

Tudjman regime, following the logic of nationalizing states, actively used the institutional resources at its disposal to ethnically mobilize Croats and ensure the linguistic, cultural, demographic, and political hegemony of the titular nation (Brubaker, 1996).

In Croatia, several thousand monuments associated with socialist Yugoslavia were dismantled or vandalized. The revision of the socialist-period state symbols and the restoration of the šahovnica flag as the national flag were important decisions. Although šahovnica is deeply rooted in the history of Croatian heraldry, it was perceived primarily as the flag of the Ustashe state. Despite certain differences (the letter U was displayed on the NDH's flag), the Serbian population viewed this step in the new regime's symbolic policy as a clear indicator of a return to the Ustashe's ideology and practice, and as a sign of the degrading status of the Serbs in independence-seeking Croatia.

The movement for the actual rehabilitation of the NDH and for the denial or (in most cases) minimization of the crimes committed by the Ustashe regime began to dominate Croatian historical policy, causing a diametrically opposite reaction in Serbia. Estimates of the number of Serbs killed by the Ustashe in the Jasenovac concentration camp are a vivid example. In the 1980s, the prevalent estimate in Croatia was 60,000 Serbs. In Serbia, on the contrary, the number of the victims was estimated at 700,000 (Oberschall, 2000).

Disagreements in assessing World War II in Serbia and Croatia had reached a peak in the late 1980s and early 1990s, when the narrative of Ustashe atrocities fueled strong feelings of uncertainty and fear among the Serbian minority in Croatia. Following the Croatian Democratic Union's rise to power in Zagreb, the Serbs feared the new regime could unleash ethnic cleansing and even resume practices symbolized by the Jasenovac concentration camp. At the same time, Croatian mass media did almost nothing to allay these fears and avoid direct historical analogies. On the contrary, the dominant World War II narrative, including a change in the attitude towards the NDH, became increasingly anti-Serbian, as it highlighted the terror of Serbian Chetniks against Croats, as well as violent acts by multinational communist partisan groups (Ramet, 2011). The signal was clear:

there was no place for Serbian historical narratives in the mnemonic landscape of independence-seeking Croatia, and the debunking of the Tito partisans' cult meant that even the coexistence of different ethnic groups under the slogan of "Brotherhood and Unity" would soon come to an end.

Zagreb's official memory policy was dominated by the need to shift the emphasis from the NDH's crimes to the crimes committed during the Second World War against Croats, primarily to the Bleiburg massacre, the discussion of which was tabooed under the communist regime. Tito's partisans, who slayed a large number of Ustashe and Slovenian collaborators after their capitulation near Bleiburg on May 15, 1945 (as well as some of the civilians who had fled with them), were thereby likened to the Ante Pavelić regime castigators.

Starting from the mid-1980s, the memory of World War II in Serbia quickly began to drift away from Tito's canons. To a large extent, these changes were precipitated by rapidly deepening contradictions between Croatia and Slovenia. After the separation of these republics from Yugoslavia and the outbreak of hostilities, the direct identification of the Ustashe as the initiators and perpetrators of the Serbian genocide during World War II and of the Tudjman regime as the heir and successor of the NDH crimes became the leitmotif of Serbian media reports and statements by the official authorities, a considerable part of the party and political establishment, as well as the Serbian Orthodox Church (Perica, 2002). The exhumation and reburial of the remains of the Ustashe terror victims, broadcast live on Belgrade television, produced the strongest emotional impact. In fact, each such report gave the public one more visual confirmation of the Serbian victimhood. This shaped a framework for perceiving the current conflict as a war to prevent another Serbian genocide.

In both Serbia and Croatia, analogies were often drawn between the bloody events of World War II and the hostilities of 1991-1995. In Croatia, the term 'genocide' was most often used with regard to the Chetniks and Yugoslav People's Army units and armed groups of Serbian separatists in 1991-1995. The use of this term with regard to the Ustashe was very selective and muffled, and even descriptions of

crimes committed in Jasenovac referred to them as genocide against Jews and Romani people, but not Serbs, and this term was not used at all with respect to Croatian actions during the war of 1991-1995.

So Serbia and Croatia (as well as some other Western Balkan countries) contributed to the search for "lost genocides," meaning a politically motivated narrative of genocide victims (Finkel, 2010). This narrative thus becomes a resource that is used to strengthen the political influence of the forces promoting it in the relevant polity, as well as an important tool for representing this polity in the international arena. At the same time, there is no doubt that a considerable number of tragic events in the history of the former Yugoslavia and the post-Yugoslav space provide sufficient grounds for studying them in order to find out whether they fall under the international legal definitions of genocide.

In Croatia, the prevalent narrative, including many history books, insisted that the wars the Croats had to fight were exceptionally defensive in nature. Serbia insisted on its own victimhood, but at the same time it claimed that it was its own tragic experience that had prompted the Serbs in some cases to fight in a preventive manner (Subotic, 2013).

The abolition of the Republika Srpska Krajina, unrecognized by the international community, and the exodus of tens of thousands of Serbs from its territory occupy a central place in the Serbian historical memory of the hostilities of the first half of the 1990s, and these events are often seen as the finalization by the modern Croatian state of the Ustashe regime's anti-Serbian program.

In Croatia, as the military events of 1991-1995 passed from the sphere of actual politics into the realm of historical memory, the mnemonic connection between these events and WWII tragedies underwent a certain transformation. Radical Croatian nationalists viewed the successful end of the "Patriotic War" as the completion of the Ustashe's historical mission. But the ruling circles of the Croatian Democratic Union placed emphases differently: the restoration of control over the entire territory of Croatia was interpreted as the successful realization of the centuries-old dream of independent statehood; the opposite was

emphasized with regard to the NDH: the Ustashe state collapsed due to the use of unacceptable methods and the patronage of untenable external partners. In contrast, Tudjman and his regime succeeded by choosing the right methods and gaining the support of Western democracies. If abuses and war crimes committed by Croats against Serbian Krajina and during the Bosnian War were admitted, they were seen as limited excesses; Zagreb also stressed its readiness to cooperate with the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia.

Commemoration of the events of 1991-1995 occupies an important place in the symbolic practices of both the official authorities and political and social groups in Croatia. The glorification of heroes and the celebration of the historical victory was the dominant narrative for a long time, while the historical reconciliation with the defeated (primarily the Serbs who decided to stay in Croatia after the abolition of Serbian Krajina) became a marginal motive. The emphasis on the Croatian victimhood and condemnation of the enemy's brutality is clearly evident in annual events organized to remember the siege and fall of Vukovar (November 18, 1991). On the contrary, August 5—an anniversary of the seizure of Knin and the successful conclusion of the "Patriotic War" in 1995—is a manifestation of the military and political triumph of the Croatian nation. As a place of memory, Knin is almost ideal for the Croatian nationalist narrative as it combines the memory of the state tradition going back centuries, a modern attempt by a hostile force (Serbs) to challenge Croatia's territorial integrity, as well as the decisive suppression of separatism (Pavlaković, 2009). The August 5 celebration as Victory Day initially was designed to spur ethnic mobilization of the Croats and antagonize the Serbian minority.

Serbia's reaction to commemorative events in Vukovar and Knin shows how difficult it is to overcome a mnemonic security dilemma even after its political causes have largely been eliminated. Serbian leaders participating in annual memorial events for the victims of Operation Storm describe Croatia's actions as an organized crime and premeditated murder.

It is historical memory, current versions of the memory and symbolic policies in Serbia and Croatia that are the main obstacle to

full normalization of relations between the two countries. Lingering disagreements over the ownership of the two Danube islands simply resonate with the tensions that are regularly provoked by belligerent rhetoric about commemorations. The problem is not only the continued dominance of ethnonationalism in the political landscape, but also special groups and mnemonic actors with electoral weight. These include refugees and their descendants (especially in Serbia), veterans of the 1990s wars, and residents of war-torn regions who suffered significant material damage. Questions of historical memory and responsibility are closely intertwined with mutual complaints over compensation for material and moral damage. In such circumstances, members of political elites, although taking efforts towards conflict resolution, have to demonstrate loyalty to certain narratives, particularly during commemorative ceremonies. Naturally, over time, room for political maneuver gradually expands, but in general, a mnemonic security dilemma, having arisen once, can persist and reproduce itself for a fairly long time, even with a reconciliation policy in place.

UKRAINE AS A MNEMONIC BATTLEFIELD

The relatively detailed analysis of the Serbo-Croatian mnemonic confrontation in the previous section makes it possible to highlight several key elements in the negative dynamics of Ukrainian-Russian relations, connected with narratives of the past and memory policy. Attempts to draw an analogy in Serbs/Croats and Russians/Ukrainians relations are quite widespread and can be considered fruitful until the search for similarities turns into an end in itself. The actual dominance of Serbia in socialist Yugoslavia and of the RSFSR in the Soviet Union is the first clear reason for such an exercise. However, the scale is incomparable. Croatia as part of the SFRY (especially in tandem with Slovenia) quite successfully challenged the Serbian advantage over the rest of the republics, which was not overwhelming in terms of key economic and demographic parameters, unlike that of the RSFSR in the Soviet Union.

What is even more important is that Serbs and Croats formed as nations separately from each other, and their late inclusion in one

state in 1918 almost immediately sparked confrontation. The national identity of Russians and most Ukrainians formed in one state, and for a long time the idea that these were two different processes, and not parts of one, was not very popular. This idea, formulated in the documents of the secret Brotherhood of Saints Cyril and Methodius (1847-1848), was perceived by the imperial authorities as destabilizing, but was picked up by a relatively few enthusiasts of the Ukrainian idea, mainly representatives of various classes, but with almost complete apathy in the most massive social group—the peasantry—even after the release of several editions of "Kobzar" by Taras Shevchenko and the publication of historical works by Nikolai Kostomarov. The situation began to change at the end of the 19th century largely due to external influence, when the Austro-Hungarian authorities, guided by the logic of growing confrontation between the alliances of great European powers, began to unambiguously support the development of a Ukrainian (and at the same time anti-Russian) nationalist narrative in Galicia. As this narrative penetrated the Russian Empire, Ukrainian nationalism turned from a marginal trend into a rather influential political force during the revolutionary crisis of 1905-1907, and its representatives in the 1st and 2nd State Dumas formed a non-affiliated group called Ukrainian hromada (community). At the same time, Russian nationalism, with Little Russians (Malorossy) being one of its most active cohorts, remained a powerful force in the territories of Ukraine that were controlled by the Russian Empire (Miller, 2018).

World War I and the revolutionary upheavals of 1917 led to the temporary loss by the central Russian government of control over Ukrainian territory and to a series of experiments with several versions of Ukrainian statehood, conducted mainly under external patronage. These shocks, however, made it clear that ethnicity was not crucial for effective control of Ukrainian territories. Nevertheless, the Bolsheviks, who had achieved control over most of Ukraine by the end of 1920, chose not to limit themselves to appealing to the values of proletarian internationalism. Acting by trial and error, the Bolsheviks managed to create a working model of control over territories, thus succeeding in neutralizing threats associated with ethnonational mobilization.

The model was based on a compromise that implied the formation of statehood and forced nation-building under the leadership of the Communist Party within one of the national-territorial entities united, on December 30, 1922, into the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. This policy of "indigenization" involved large-scale recruitment of representatives of "titular" ethnic groups into the ruling corporation. It was based on distinguishing between two types of nationalism—the nationalism of oppressive nations ("Great Russian chauvinism" fell into this category) and the nationalism of oppressed peoples. Indigenization implied the principle of positive discrimination against ethnic minorities. By creating an "affirmative action empire" (Martin, 2001), the communist regime ensured the institutionalization of many forms of new national identities under the auspices of the USSR (Slezkine, 1994). However, the nations that were forming within the USSR had no other choice but to accept the super-centralized nature of the state structure, the core of which was made up of Soviet party and establishment figures.

Nevertheless, the situation of Ukraine and the local political establishment was quite favorable as Ukrainians held undisputed second place in the status hierarchy of Soviet peoples, and the Ukrainian SSR was one of the four republics that had co-founded the Soviet Union. This status undermined the rhetoric, emanating mainly from the emigrants, that Ukrainians were oppressed in the Soviet Union on ethnic grounds. Even the intra-Ukrainian schism, caused by the actions of nationalists led by Stepan Bandera during World War II and several years after it, affected mainly western regions incorporated into the USSR in September 1939. Besides, Ukrainians justifiably shared with other Soviet peoples the glory of the victors over German Nazism, as a result of which the Bandera movement was stigmatized as collaborationist and treacherous.

In the post-war period, the Ukrainian elite took advantage of the fact that its cronies held the highest party and government positions for more than a third of the Soviet Union's existence. During Gorbachev's *perestroika*, the Ukrainian establishment showed masterful disingenuity by using the rise of nationalist sentiments (relatively moderate

compared to the Baltic republics and Transcaucasia) in bargaining with the central authorities for bigger powers. In a sense, the road towards independence traveled by Ukraine (and most other Soviet republics) was quite paradoxical: while the party-Soviet elite suffered a catastrophic defeat at the federal level, republican elites—independently or together with national democratic movements—did not miss their chance. At first they sought to expand the independence of their republics as part of attempts to revamp the USSR, and then—after the failure of the attempted coup on August 19-21, 1991—to achieve state independence. Such opportunistic tactics, employed by republican leaders at a time when the Soviet Union was virtually collapsing, meant that they were trying—in addition to their own survival—to minimize the damage to their republics and reap maximum benefits from the geopolitical catastrophe, giving priority to state independence and international recognition.

The irony of Ukraine's suddenly gained independence was that it was not acquired through hard and uncompromising struggle with Moscow, but was a side effect of the power struggle in Moscow, where one of the opposing parties led by Boris Yeltsin chose to use the Ukrainian independence referendum, held on December 1, 1991, as an opportunity to achieve its own goals by *eliminating* its opponents in the Soviet power structures.

In the new historical situation, Russia without a doubt became a significant Other for independent Ukraine, but there was no narrative of eternal confrontation with it. At the same time, Poland could have become a historical antagonist of Ukraine as well, maybe even more so than Russia.

As for the ethnic dimension, it turned out that the Russians and Ukrainians did not distribute the roles of the executioner and the victim among themselves at all, but were accomplices in building, and then in dismantling, both the Russian Empire and the USSR. Recognizing this fact and using it to build mutually beneficial and non-confrontational relations with Russia presented an extremely valuable chance for the Ukrainian elites. This was clearly realized by the second president of Ukraine, Leonid Kuchma, who at the end of his presidency

published the book "Ukraine Is Not Russia" that came out in Russian in Moscow (Kuchma, 2003).

Kuchma's move was an attempt to sort out relations with the Russian audience in a civilized manner as its attitude towards post-Soviet Ukraine was growing increasingly negative. The extremely painful decision on the status of the Russian Black Sea Fleet, disputes over the sovereignty of Crimea within Ukraine, unresolved territorial problems (in the year Kuchma's book came out, the two countries nearly clashed over the Tuzla Spit in the Kerch Strait), as well as the rhetoric of a number of State Duma deputies and some Russian regional leaders helped build the image of Ukraine as a state that sought to create as many problems for Russia as possible, even contrary to its own interests. At the same time, Kuchma's book could also be considered a nation-building act addressed to the Russian-speaking population of Ukraine. It was essentially an apology of independence addressed to those who, more than ten years after gaining it, did not take a division between Russia and Ukraine for granted.

Kuchma's farsighted move was foiled by the Orange Revolution, which gave power in Kiev to the part of the political elite that sought to build Ukrainian identity on the basis of an anti-Russian narrative. Without particularizing Victor Yushchenko's memory policy (for more details see: Voronovich and Yefremenko, 2017), we will note its main "achievements": victimization of ethnic Ukrainians by giving official status to the interpretation of the Holodomor as genocide directed specifically against Ukrainians; successful attempts to get this interpretation recognized at the international level (primarily by some Western parliaments; at the level of international organizations, these efforts were blocked by Russia); persistent steps to glorify Bandera and his associates; creation of official memory policy infrastructure that purposefully advanced the idea of centuries-old confrontation between Russia and Ukraine.

In contrast to the arduous public discussion of the historical past in Ukraine and Russia in the 1990s and early 2000s, these efforts were now part of the changes in Kiev's foreign policy, which officially proclaimed the goal of joining the European Union and NATO and emphasized

geostrategic and socio-cultural distancing from Russia. The mnemonic security dilemma was triggered by the fact that Kiev's historical policy began to be seen by the Kremlin as a direct justification of steps designed to cause unacceptable damage to Russia's geopolitical and economic interests, and undermine its credibility as the Soviet Union's successor. In his speech at the NATO summit in Bucharest in April 2008, Vladimir Putin spoke of a direct link between a certain interpretation of the history of Russian-Ukrainian relations and the geopolitical competition in the post-Soviet space between Russia and the West:

"Generally speaking, Ukraine is a very complicated state. Ukraine, in the form it currently exists, was created in Soviet times, it received its territories from Poland—after the Second World War, from Czechoslovakia and Romania—and at present not all the problems have been solved as yet in the border region with Romania in the Black Sea. Then, it received huge territories from Russia in the east and south of the country. It is a complicated state formation. If we introduce into it NATO problems, other problems, it may put the state on the verge of its existence" (Putin, 2008).

It is obvious that the Russian political leadership's attention to historical issues was prompted, among other things, by the awareness of the threat posed by the export of the ideology and practice of color revolutions to internal stability and regime sustainability in Russia.

Regime change in Ukraine after the 2010 presidential election allayed tensions in the Russian-Ukrainian mnemonic confrontation just slightly. Under Victor Yanukovich, emphasis was placed on the Soviet historical and symbolic heritage, primarily on the memory of the common (with Russia) victory in the Great Patriotic War. Yanukovich dismissed the interpretation of the Holodomor as the genocide of Ukrainians; during his presidency, the decisions awarding the title of heroes of Ukraine to Stepan Bandera and Roman Shukhevich were canceled in court. At the same time, opposition forces stepped up anti-Russian rhetoric on issues of historical memory and accused Yanukovich and his Party of Regions of betraying national interests. The room for compromise between Russia and the pro-Western opposition was shrinking like shagreen skin.

Already at the beginning of the second *Maidan* campaign, Russia was viewed by protesters as the main supporter of the Yanukovich regime and an implacable historical opponent of Ukraine's "European choice." The level of alienation was so high that, unlike in the initial period of Victor Yushchenko's rule, no serious attempts were made to establish communication channels between the leaders of the "revolution of dignity" and Moscow. The Russian leadership's actions in relation to Crimea and then Donbass clearly indicated that it did not believe that constructive interaction with this part of the Ukrainian political elite was possible. At the same time, the Russian President's speeches delivered in 2014-2022 clearly showed that the security threats to Russia posed by the second wave of the *Maidan* protest movement were perceived not only as an unacceptable change in the strategic balance of power in the region, but also as a decisive attempt to destroy the picture of the world based on the common history of Russians and Ukrainians.

The revolutionary government in Kiev made every effort to resume the memory war with Russia. Following the massive demolition of Soviet-era monuments and symbols, and a nationwide campaign to change Soviet place names, a series of laws on language and historical memory was adopted, which dramatically narrowed the space for the use of the Russian language and minimized the possibility of promoting alternative ("pro-Russian") interpretations of the historical past. Strong information, psychological, and eventually administrative pressure was exerted on ethnic Russians and Russian-speaking residents of Eastern and Southern Ukraine, the identity of most of whom was the closest to the dominant identity of Russians and other Eastern Slavs in Russia itself.

Perhaps it was the intensified efforts of the Ukrainian authorities to recode the identity of this segment of the Ukrainian population in 2014-2022 that can be considered one of the most important factors that prompted the Russian leadership to start a special military operation. Every day, ethnic Russians and Russian-speaking citizens of Ukraine see that the Russian language and culture are declared "instruments of aggression" aimed at undermining the Ukrainian

national project. At the same time, over these years, a special macro-political identity has been established in Donbass territories that are not controlled by Kiev. It revives the main precepts of internationalism and opposes the Ukrainian master narrative (Voronovici, 2020). As Ukrainian historian G. Kasyanov presciently noted in 2019, "Russian-Ukrainian disputes about history, transferred into the political realm, once again demonstrate the conflict potential of the politics of memory: a war over the past can provide ideological justification for a real war" (Kasyanov, 2019, p.244).

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The analysis of the two reviewed cases allows us to draw conclusions regarding the risks of securitization of historical memory and, in particular, mnemonic security dilemmas.

Firstly, the desire to securitize a certain set of historical narratives when these narratives have not yet passed the necessary selection through a wide and long public discussion (and this is exactly the case in many post-communist states) creates a situation where this selection is carried out by mnemonic actors that have an obvious advantage in resources. Using this advantage, they seek recognition of certain interpretations of the historical past as fundamentally important for maintaining the biographical narrative of the state and requiring protection from any attempt to challenge them. The opinion and interests of other mnemonic actors may be ignored, which lays the groundwork for acute historical memory conflicts in the future.

Secondly, it is highly likely that the "inviolability" of securitized narratives will be ensured, among other things, by state coercion, legislative acts providing for repression against critics of relevant narratives, and censorship.

Thirdly, firmly entrenched in the raison d'état domain, a set of securitized historical narratives can become a subject of interstate disagreements and a reason for various kinds of hybrid information wars.

Escalation of interstate mnemonic conflicts is rarely limited to tougher polemics and reduced ability to hear the arguments of

the opposing side. Securitization of memory often develops into a series of restrictive and prohibitive measures against the use of "undesirable" symbols, and actual and even legal censorship in printed and electronic media that provide access to a "hostile" narrative. The creation in Poland and Ukraine of national memory institutes, which act as "mnemonic warriors" (Kubik, Bernhard, 2014) and have the status of state bodies that allows them to attract significant resources, can be considered in the same context. In Russia, the formally non-governmental Russian Historical Society and Russian Military Historical Society play a similar role.

Given this dynamics, a mnemonic security dilemma can be presented as follows: if one side uses historical memory problems in interstate relations as a tool or even a political weapon, then it is highly likely that the other side will try to do the same. This feature became fully manifest in the aforementioned cases, since the growing likelihood of conflict in bilateral relations prompted each side not only to securitize certain historical narratives, but do it in such a way that the other side began to feel a threat to the narratives that seemed fundamentally important for its own existence. At a new round of Serbo-Croatian confrontation in the early 1990s, this threat resonated with threats to the physical security of Serbs and Croats; in the case of Russia and Ukraine, a mnemonic security dilemma expedited decisions that jeopardized the physical security of hundreds of thousands of Russians and Ukrainians.

The greatest danger of "memory wars" is that they are easy to unleash, but very difficult to end. The antagonistic nature of discussions about the past often becomes self-sustaining. Conflicts that have already ended on the battlefields go on in the historical memory and identity of several generations. Ultimately, these conflicts are resolved too, but much later and at a higher cost. Franco-German historical reconciliation is a positive example of how to end a conflict using a strategy approved by both sides for overcoming a mnemonic security dilemma. Unfortunately, in the two cases we examined, there is still a very long way to go before this result is achieved.

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