Memory Crash
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In this part, we will examine the main actors in the field of historical politics. We will start with state institutions, then turn our attention to NGOs and the media, and conclude by observing the role of professional historians in the development and implementation of historical politics. I have included a brief description of the functions of the actors below, but a more detailed description and analysis of their activities will follow in the following chapters.

Discussing the “politics of memory,” Michael Bernhard and Jan Kubik proposed a typology of so-called mnemonic actors. Considering their modus operandi, they suggest discerning the following types: (1) Mnemonic warriors are actors who try to establish a single, incontrovertible vision of the past, “the only true” interpretation that stands in opposition to all others. They believe in the existence of historical truth and regard it as the foundation of identity. (2) Pluralists recognize the existence and validity of other versions of the past. Unlike mnemonic warriors, they are ready to engage in a dialogue and search for different versions of the past that can be combined in the single space of memory. (3) Abnegators are those who deliberately avoid active participation in discussions and debates about different representa-
tions of the past, refusing to consider history as a reservoir of knowledge that has practical implications for the present. (4) Prospectives see the past in only one practical aspect, as a list of mistakes that should be taken into account in order to build a better future. When out of power, they are generally very critical of the government’s actions in the field of historical politics. When in power, they become intolerant of any other views on the past and present and impose their point of view on the whole of society, which turns them into de facto warriors.¹

Of course, this typology of actors does not represent all types of memory actors; further, as admitted by the authors themselves, this typology concerns only societies with political pluralism and democracy. It is not difficult to see that in the case of Ukraine, similar to most postcommunist “memory regimes,” the field of historical politics is dominated either by warriors or prospectives.

The total number of types of governmental bodies involved in the production and implementation of historical politics exceeds two dozen. Despite its far-flung infrastructure and the large number of diverse organs that participate, directly or indirectly, in the development and implementation of historical politics, the role of central state agencies in bringing consistency to this field, in many cases, remains uncertain, limited, and contested.

The President

The president proves to be the most self-sufficient figure in the field of historical politics, mainly in terms of mobility. The bureaucratic structures at his disposal are relatively mobile and allow him to make decisions and implement them promptly (or initiate implementation). Local units of the presidential administration (city, regional/oblast, district/rayon administrations) generally do not play any independent role and merely represent the executive authority of the center, but their role in assuring the adequate implementation of the president’s directives on a local level may vary. In theory, all the executive authorities are obliged to carry out presidential orders and decrees, but in practice, this is not always the case.

The presidential administration has subdivisions directly or indirectly involved in the elaboration and implementation of historical politics.¹ They include the Main Department of Humanitarian Politics, the Main

¹ Since 1992, this body changed its names several times: from 1992–2004, it was the Administration of the President; from 2005–10, it was the Secretariat of the President; from 2010–19, it was the Administration of the President; and since 2019 its name is the Office of the President of Ukraine.
Department of Information Politics, and the Department of State Awards. They mostly perform technical functions oriented toward the logistics required to implement the president’s decisions. Analytics belongs to the sphere of the National Institute for Strategic Studies (NISS), which is occasionally involved in the development of historical politics. The first time the NISS developed a new strategy in the field was in 2005, when a memorandum on the conceptual framework of a state politics of memory was prepared. As the relevant strategy did not emerge in the end, and because historical politics developed as a result of the interaction of the spontaneous concerns of various interest groups, it can be inferred that the NISS shared the destiny of all such analytical centers: the suggestions and proposals of its experts were almost never used by those who implemented historical politics.

The president may directly influence these politics through decrees, directives (according to the constitution, these are binding on all parties), reports, or draft laws. Presidential decrees and directives are mostly of an administrative character: they define the list of commemorative events and assign responsibility for these events to different power bases within the government. To take the Holodomor—one of the central objects of historical politics since 1991—as an example, presidents addressed this topic between 1993 and 2015 in the following ways: Leonid Kravchuk issued one decree dedicated to the sixtieth anniversary of the tragedy; Leonid Kuchma followed with two decrees and one directive; Viktor Yushchenko issued fifteen decrees, two directives, one speech, and three draft laws; Viktor Yanukovych promulgated one decree for the eightieth anniversary of the tragedy; and Petro Poroshenko issued six decrees. The development of the office of the presidency led to the creation of a certain mechanism for producing routine commemorative decrees that accompany all upcoming anniversaries, for example, Ukraine’s declaration of independence, or days associated with important historical events like the Holodomor, victory in the Second World War.

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3 The official website of NISS: http://www.niss.gov.ua/.
5 Calculated using: http://zakon2.rada.gov.ua/laws/main/1451050681323140/page. The source indicated here is not always topical, so one should follow the link http://zakon.rada.gov.ua and use the web search engine. In this case, the search word was “Holodomor.”
War, Independence Day, etc. The president can also influence historical politics by signing or vetoing laws passed by the parliament; exerting influence through the factions of the Verkhovna Rada he controls or through local state administrations (which hold and/or represent executive power at the local level); or, finally, through direct instructions to the executive organs, ministries, and agencies under his control.6

The president’s position and his personal attitude toward the problems of the past largely define the direction and intensity of his historical politics. The first president of Ukraine Leonid Kravchuk came to the office directly from the ideology department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine (CPU). He did not create the political environment; he adapted himself to existing realities. Kravchuk can be considered to be a typical representative of ideocracy, a politician who reached the heights of power with the help of the very structures engaged in the ideological maintenance of communist power. These left an imprint on his entire political career. Kravchuk took power using the slogans of his recent opponents from the “national democratic” camp. Accordingly, his activity in the sphere of historical politics was largely inertial (he continued to “restore historical justice”) but, at the same time, its content and orientation were defined by the need to legitimize his own power, which required establishing an appropriate political myth.

Kravchuk did not burden himself with reinventing the wheel. As the foundation of his historical politics he selected the standard ethnonational myth of “national revival,” created by the Ukrainian intelligentsia at the turn of the twentieth century, or rather, it was the myth that chose him. It was under Kravchuk, first as head of the ideology department of the Central Committee of the CPU at the end of the 1980s and then as president, that the engineering of the collective/historical memory of the Holodomor began. In his former role he firmly opposed the nationalist mythology about the famine, but as president, he facilitated the state commemoration of the sixtieth anniversary of the tragedy, which was now presented as a genocide against Ukrainians.

6 According to the constitution, the president nominates the chairman of the Security Service of Ukraine (to be approved by the parliament), appoints half of the National Council for Television and Radio, appoints ambassadors, and appoints the heads of local administrations. In Yushchenko’s time, the Security Service and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs actively promoted the president’s historical politics.
In September 1993, he took part in the international scientific conference “Holodomor in Ukraine in 1932–1933: Causes and Consequences.” His presence was of great symbolic importance, attesting to the fact that the highest authorities were interested in “restoring the historical truth” about the famine. In his opening speech, Kravchuk declared: “I completely agree that it was a well-planned action, it was a genocide conducted against one’s own people. However, I would not stop here. Yes, it was a genocide against one’s own people, but they were following the directives from another center.”

Ten years before, on the fiftieth anniversary of the famine, the very same Kravchuk, in his incarnation as the head of the Department of Propaganda and Agitation of the Central Committee of the CPU, had taken active part in counter-propaganda actions directed against “an anti-Soviet campaign unleashed in the West on the occasion of the so-called ‘50th anniversary of the man-made famine in Ukraine.’” However, no one wished to remember this: neither ex-dissidents who supported Kravchuk nor the diaspora whose “nationalist insinuations” about the famine he had recently fought with such zeal. Politically, what he had said and done in the past did not matter; what he was saying and doing now mattered more.

By the same twist of fate, as the first president of independent Ukraine, Leonid Kravchuk participated in the ritual of the passing of the state symbols of the Ukrainian People’s Republic (1918–1920) to the Ukrainian head of state. This ritual was supposed to symbolize the legal continuity of the UPR and modern Ukraine, and it was one of the first public events in the field of historical politics in modern Ukraine. To add another layer to this ceremony, the symbols of the UPR were handed to the president by Mykola Plaviuk, the head of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (Melnyk faction): this group had all but embraced the positions of “democratic nationalism” by that time.

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During Kravchuk’s presidency, there was an attempt to initiate the production of a multivolume *History of the Ukrainian People,* but this project was unsuccessful because of a lack of funds since Ukraine was suffering a deep social-economic crisis during his years in office. Additionally, Kravchuk was the first president to commemorate the deportation of the Crimean Tatars. He decreed May 18, 1994, to be the first official Day of Sorrow and Memory of Crimean Tatars, Armenians, Greeks, and “persons of other nationalities.” Finally, the major project “Rehabilitated by History,” which involved the collection of data on victims of political repression in Soviet Ukraine, also began during his presidency.

Kravchuk’s rival in the 1994 elections and his successor as president, the technocrat Leonid Kuchma, considered questions of the interpretation and representation of the past in political life purely pragmatically. He used historical politics to boost his own legitimacy but, at the same time, tried to strike a balance between competing memory narratives while also avoiding excesses that would lead to social conflicts. It was under him that the basic set of rituals related to the commemoration of the Holodomor was formed and consecrated by the state (including the Memorial Day of Victims of Holodomor). Furthermore, it was during his presidency that work on the historical rehabilitation of the OUN (Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists) and UPA (Ukrainian Insurgent Army) commenced, although Kuchma avoided speaking on this topic publicly. The new national currency introduced under Kuchma represented a portrait gallery of symbolic historical characters, and Kuchma also established a state holiday important for Ukrainian national self-consciousness, the Day of Ukrainian Cossackdom.

In total, seven of his decrees were dedicated to the popularization of history and the development of the Cossacks in modern Ukraine.

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12 “Holovna redaktsiina kol`hia naukovo-dokumental’ noi serii knyh ‘Reabilitovani istoriicju,’ see http://www.reabit.org.ua/.
At the same time, Kuchma respected the nostalgic Soviet version of historical memory, and supported a number of relevant ritual and/or symbolic practices. For instance, he promulgated nine decrees, eight directives, and one law dedicated to the “Great Patriotic War of 1941–1945.” It was during his time in office and with his unofficial support that the jubilees of the communist leader Volodymyr Shcherbytsky and Lenin’s Young Communist League of Ukraine, relics from the Soviet period, were celebrated. His decrees and directives provided funding for the celebration of the sixtieth anniversary of the reunification of Ukrainian lands, officialized Defender of the Fatherland Day (February 23, a Soviet holiday), introduced the Day of the Partisan Glory (September 22), and provided for the celebration of the sixtieth anniversary of the Young Guard (Molodaya Gvardiya) resistance organization.

Viktoriya Sereda, a sociologist who dedicated a special study to the discourse practices of Ukrainian presidents, asserts that Leonid Kuchma followed a “double strategy.” On the one hand, he followed the canon of the classic national narrative; on the other hand, he used the effect of national amnesia and “constructed exactly a model of historical past that would favor the ‘consolidation of the nation’ due to the marginalization of any ideological extremes, both the extreme left (communism) and extreme right (ethnic nationalism) and the suppression of conflict-provoking and controversial events.” It can be said with confidence that in his historical politics, Kuchma accurately followed the canon of the standard national narrative, while at the same time incorporating elements of the Soviet narrative either intentionally or because of circumstances. During his presidency, an ambivalent pattern of collective/historical memory dominated the commemorative landscape of the country.

In a similar vein, his historical politics allowed him to successfully avoid conflicts with external ramifications. He was active in the politics of reconciliation with Poland (on the issue of the Ukrainian-Polish conflict in Volhynia...
State Institutions

and Galicia in 1943–44) and was an advocate of cooperation with Russia in the field of the “mutual past.” It was also during his presidency that the state celebration of the 350th anniversary of the controversial Treaty of Pereiaslav (1654) was held, although it was presented as the anniversary of the “Cossack Council” and not as the “reunification of Ukraine with Russia.”¹⁸ Ukrainian and Russian historians worked together on joint projects during Kuchma’s time in office, and Ukrainian-Polish and Ukrainian-Russian historical commissions were established.

The ambivalence that characterized Kuchma’s historical politics could sometimes produce oddities. For example, in 2001, a military unit known as the “24th mechanized Samara-Ulyanovsk Berdichev Iron Division, Holder of the Order of the October Revolution, Thrice Holder of the Order of the Red Banner, Holder of the Orders of Suvorov and Bohdan Khmelnytsky” (the whole set of Soviet awards) was additionally named after Prince Danylo of Galicia,¹⁹ a figure from the national(ist) historical pantheon. However, for all this ambiguity, at the end of his presidential career, Kuchma published a book literally entitled Ukraine is Not Russia, which clearly showed his attitudes toward representations of the past.

Kuchma’s successor, Viktor Yushchenko, similar to Leonid Kravchuk, fits the image of an ideocrat: he postulated the necessity of a “spiritual renaissance” for Ukrainians as a precondition of the country’s advancement in all other spheres of national life. True history, he believed, was at the core of the reawakening. Yushchenko went down in contemporary history as Ukraine’s “historical President,” meaning that it was during his term that historical politics reached an intensity and proportion that was hitherto unprecedented, and the mobilization of state institutes for its implementation reached its zenith. The shaping and implementation of historical politics under Yushchenko was performed not only by local state administrations—instruments of presidential power, but also by many other organs that usually perform purely technical functions in this field: the Ministry of Foreign

Affairs, the Security Service of Ukraine, the Ministry of Justice, and the State Committee on Radio and Television. Additionally, a special executive organ was established in 2006, the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory. That same year, the first memorial law was adopted; it outlined the right of the state to regulate and direct public opinion in the field of collective/historical memory. There were attempts to introduce administrative and criminal responsibility for the denial of the Holodomor (for more detail, see chapter 7). The total number of Yushchenko’s decrees, instructions, and assignments (including one memorial law) dedicated to the Holodomor exceeds forty, making him first in this field among the presidents of Ukraine.

In Viktor Yushchenko’s historical politics, ideological, moral, and ethical motives coexisted with utilitarian ones. The instrumentalization of collective/historical memory fit into the general pattern of his face-offs with political opponents and was often used to discredit them morally and politically or to put pressure on them (for instance, on the question of whether the Holodomor was a genocide of Ukrainians). His efforts in the field of historical politics were intricately linked with the most urgent needs of political struggle. In 2009, speaking at a meeting dedicated to the eighteenth anniversary of Ukrainian independence, Yushchenko proposed a three-point plan for dealing with the latest (in other words, permanent) domestic political crisis. The first point was as follows: “To pursue the course toward the revival, the recovery of our historical memory.” All of Yushchenko’s proposals for dealing with the political crisis of 2006–2007 contained points pertinent to historical politics.

It was under Yushchenko that the canonical version of the collective/historical memory of the Great Famine of 1932–33 was definitively established. Henceforth, it was presented as the Holodomor, a man-made famine intentionally organized by Moscow with the aim of exterminating the Ukrainian peasants, who were the main bearers of national identity and the primary supporters of Ukrainian independence/statehood.

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21 This does not include documents dedicated to personalities and “regular” dates (such as the anniversary of independence).
Yushchenko’s time in office was also marked by intense efforts aimed at filling the pot of collective/historical memory with memorial dates and events that would fit his vision of the past and, according to him, would make this past more complete. These fall into the pattern of inventing traditions within a national/nationalist exclusive memory narrative: the victory of “Ukrainians over Muscovites” in the Battle of Konotop (1659), “the genocide of Ukrainians” at Baturin (1708), the Battle of Kruty (1918), the Ukrainian revolution of 1917–21, the Holodomor of 1932–33, the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA). Yushchenko took great pains to create new sites of memory and elevate their status, like the national museum’s “Memorial of Holodomor Victims in Ukraine,” the opening of the capital of the Hetmanate in Baturin, and the historical and cultural area “Bykivnia Graves.”

Viktor Yushchenko was the first president who attempted to initiate a system-level decommunization of Ukraine’s symbolic space. Two of his decrees contain instructions to dismantle monuments and remove place names related to the communist regime.

It was under Yushchenko that the external vector of historical politics took a quantum leap due to his efforts to achieve international recognition of the famine of 1932–33 as a genocide against the Ukrainian people from the UN, the European Parliament, and other institutions. He sought to enrich the national pantheon with such controversial historical figures as Roman Shukhevych and Stepan Bandera; this effort was not met with enthusiasm in Israel, Poland, and the European Parliament. The Russian factor also played an enormous role in the acceleration of historical politics: Russia’s political leaders opened a new era of memorial wars with all European members (with the exception of Belarus). Summarizing his presidency, which ended with his failure to win re-election (he received only 5.45 percent of the vote), Yushchenko declared: “I am glad that the nation finally learned about the real aim of the war under the leadership of Bohdan Khmelnytsky, about Vykovsky’s victory at Konotop, about Hetman Ivan Mazepa, about Pylyp Orlyk, about the Ukrainian and West Ukrainian People’s Republics, about the state of Hetman Skoropadsky, about the

24 Called the “Memorial Museum of the Holodomor Victims” since July 2015.
Holodomor, about Stalin’s repression, and about the heroic deeds of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army.”

While the nation had “learned” about all the aforementioned persons and events well before Yushchenko’s presidency since they were already included in history textbooks, it cannot be denied that Yushchenko significantly expanded the topic range of historical politics and greatly radicalized those components of the national/nationalist memory narrative that previously did not have a clearly articulated ideological message. Practically all the components of the national myth were created or recreated before Yushchenko, but he played an outstanding role in the political instrumentalization of the myth and the radicalization of Ukrainian ethno-symbolism.

Despite the obvious tendency toward the central national/nationalist narrative of memory, in Yushchenko’s historical politics there were also puzzling deviations toward both the inclusive and mixed models. Yushchenko did not dare encroach on the central historical myth of the nostalgic Soviet memory narrative, “The Great Patriotic War.” Moreover, he attempted, albeit without great success, to find a way to reconcile veterans of the UPA with those of the Red Army. At the same time, it was under Yushchenko that historical politics became more conflict prone, and not just within the framework of competition between the nostalgic Soviet and the national/nationalist memory narratives. The version of the national/nationalist memory narrative promoted by Yushchenko also provoked criticism and discontent from among his liberal allies.

The somewhat antiquarian national identity formulae embraced by the president and a part of his entourage reaches back to the ethnic/cultural nationalism of the second half of the nineteenth and early decades of the twentieth century. Its congruence with the reality of the twenty-first century was problematic. This vision was manipulatively used by Yushchenko’s political opponents both in Ukraine and in neighboring Russia and provoked annoyance and aversion among his allies in the liberal, nationally minded intelligentsia. The excessive influence of factions of the diaspora directly or indirectly connected to the ideology of the OUN-B, coupled with domes-

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tic nationalists allied with Yushchenko, reinforced the vintage character of the ideology and its lopsidedness toward the nineteenth century narrative.26

Viktor Yanukovych, president of Ukraine from 2010 to 2014, decided to return to the time-tested pattern of Kuchma’s presidency, which boiled down to the avoidance of ideologically sensitive issues and the assertion of ambivalence if necessary. On May 14, 2010, when speaking at the conference of the Civic Council on the Humanities, Yanukovych declared the need for reaching a more sophisticated understanding of historical figures that provoke controversy. He also advocated for “graduality and delicacy” in resolving such conflicts.27 It should be noted that for Yanukovych, as for Kuchma before him, questions of historical politics were of secondary importance, and his approach toward these issues was conditioned either by the need to legitimize his rule or to challenge political rivals.28

To uphold his legitimacy as president of the whole of Ukraine, Yanukovych exploited the standard national memory narrative quite successfully. For instance, he did not encroach on the main sacral symbol of collective/historical memory, the Holodomor. His most significant movement in this field was his public refusal to endorse the thesis of the Holodomor as a genocide of Ukrainians. On April 27, 2010, speaking at a session of the Parliament Assembly of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, Yanukovych declared that “to recognize the Holodomor as a fact of genocide against one or another ethnic group would be erroneous and unjust.”29

The rejection of the version of the Holodomor as genocide was a necessary symbolic gesture for Yanukovych: it alleviated tension in one aspect of Ukraine’s relations with Russia. All other components of the corresponding historical myth and related ideological practices were left intact. The man-

26 Organization of Ukrainian Nationalist (handerivtsi) was a right-wing underground paramilitary organization founded in 1929 to fight for Ukrainian independence against Poland.
28 Viktor Yanukovych did not like “humanities” and quite often got into comic situations because of his need to speak on such issues. His most famous slips were made when addressing these topics. He mentioned the poetess “Anna Akhmetova” (instead of Akhmatova) and “the Russian poet” A. Chekhov. A case of direct communication with historical memory led to one of the most comic episodes in his presidential biography: in May 2010, during a ceremony at the Glory Memorial in Kyiv, a massive wreath, blown off by the wind, fell on his head.
Chapter 3

datory visit to the Holodomor Victims Memorial, instituted personally by Viktor Yushchenko, remained an essential part of the itinerary for foreign leaders’ visits to Ukraine, as did the laying of a wreath at the Eternal Flame and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier on the Alley of Glory, a memorial site established during the Soviet era. The visit of Russian president Dmitry Medvedev on May 17, 2010, was symbolically significant: he visited the Holodomor Victims Memorial although he had defiantly refused to come to its opening when invited by Yushchenko in 2008.

On November 26, 2010, Holodomor Remembrance Day, an address was published on the presidential website in which Yanukovych called the 1932–33 famine “Armageddon,” criticized speculations around the number of victims, and urged telling the “truth and only the truth” about the event. The next day, together with Prime Minister Mykola Azarov, he took part in remembrance events at the Memorial of Holodomor Victims in Ukraine (now the National Museum of the Holodomor-Genocide).

Like Kuchma, Yanukovych avoided speaking about the OUN and UPA, preferring to leave these topics to the talking heads of the Party of Regions. They readily used the bogeyman of nationalism to discredit their political opponents. Yanukovych officially played the role of a politician who rejects the conflictual pattern of historical politics. Like his predecessors, he supported the central historical myth of the Soviet era, the Great Patriotic War. He signed seven decrees on various anniversaries related to the war. During his presidency, the commemoration of the Soviet-style war myth became more pronounced, and varied. Yet for all his reticence in the field of historical politics, Yanukovych dutifully met his commitments in the field of inventing and shaping historical tradition and used decrees to celebrate the anniversaries of Ukrainian independence and the adoption of the constitution. Yanukovych signed his last commemorative decree on February 13, 2014, one week before his panicked escape from Ukraine; it was dedicated to the sixtieth anniversary of the accession of Crimea into Ukraine.

It is easy to see that all the Ukrainian presidents, when designing and implementing their historical politics, recognized the absolute preeminence of the national/nationalist narrative of collective/historical memory that legitimized the political base of their own presidency. It was the choice of patterns that posed difficulties. Speaking of tendencies, both Leonid Kravchuk and Leonid Kuchma, for different reasons, were inclined toward an ambivalent pattern, while Viktor Yushchenko preferred an exclusive one with a special emphasis on a vintage nineteenth-century style national/nationalist narrative of memory. Despite the inertial reproduction of practices and rituals of the nostalgic Soviet memory pattern, his historical politics was based on an ethnonational narrative. Viktor Yanukovych leaned toward the ambivalent pattern when publicly addressing the topic of historical memory. But at the same time, his ideological watchdogs promoted an exclusive pattern of memory based on the nostalgic Soviet memory narrative.

These general conclusions can be illustrated with data from Oleksandr Grytsenko, who calculated the total number of decrees of three Ukrainian presidents related to the type of memory narrative they promoted.33

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<td>Decrees supporting Soviet version of Ukrainian history</td>
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<td>Decrees undermining Soviet version and supporting national version</td>
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<td>Total number of decrees and directives in area of historical politics</td>
<td>79</td>
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Petro Poroshenko, who came to power during the dramatic events that took place between November 2013 and February 2014, followed the pattern of historical politics that emerged during Yushchenko’s presidency. However, unlike Yushchenko, rather than shaping the narrative himself, he did his best to comply with the demands and requests of different segments of society and the political elite—i.e., those who saw the exclusive national/nationalist pattern of historical memory not only as a source of ideological and moral support but also an important means of political mobilization in internal struggle and defense against external aggression. This does not rule out the possibility that Poroshenko held personal positions related to the problems of the past and their actualization in the present. However, it should be remembered that the fifth president of Ukraine, judging from his political and professional biography, was a hard pragmatist who extensively used memory and history issues solely to achieve his political and business goals.

The political situation (the annexation of Crimea by Russia, the war in the eastern part of the country, and the constant threats to territorial integrity and sovereignty) pushed him toward the version of historical politics that had the highest mobilization potential at the time of his ascent to the presidency. This is probably why Poroshenko in many respects became the worthy successor of Yushchenko. He hurriedly signed memorial laws despite serious criticism even from his political allies. One of these laws (about the legal status of the participants of the struggle for the independence of Ukraine in the twentieth century) was the practical realization of a program created by Yushchenko’s decree and was developed with the active participation of the nationalist All-Ukrainian Union “Svoboda” party.

Petro Poroshenko was unequivocal in his support for the decommunization of Ukraine’s symbolic space and directly participated in it: he decreed the removal of all Soviet attributes from the names of Ukrainian military units (in most cases, the measure concerned the names of awards received by these units during the Soviet era). He changed the name of one of the most important commemorative dates: “the victory in the Great Patriotic War,” present in the decrees of all his predecessors, simply disappeared and was replaced with “the victory over Nazism in the Second World War.”

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35 “Ukaz Presydentu Ukrayiny, ‘Pro vstanovlennia vidznaky Prezydenta Ukrainy yuvileinoi medali...”
formula of the Soviet era vanished from the official symbolic space of Ukraine. The decree about Defender of Ukraine Day followed: since 2014, it has been celebrated on October 14. As a result, Soviet Defender of the Fatherland Day, celebrated on February 23, re-established by Leonid Kuchma in 1999, was taken off the national calendar. A new date, October 14, was added; it simultaneously referred to three different things: the Day of Intercession of the Mother of God, the Day of the Ukrainian Cossacks, and the symbolic date of the establishment of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (1942).

The president was most active in the promotion of the commemorative practices related to the contemporary history of Ukraine: his decrees celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of the student “Revolution on Granite” (October 1990), the twenty-fifth anniversary of the People’s Movement of Ukraine, and the fortieth anniversary of the Ukrainian Helsinki Group. He established the Order of the Heavenly Hundred Heroes (commemorating the victims of Euromaidan 2014) and the Memorial Day of the Heavenly Hundred Heroes (February 20), and he laid the base of the museum dedicated to the Revolution of Dignity. But he did not forget about more distant history. In fact, he issued decrees ordering the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the first public performance of the national hymn of Ukraine and the 200th anniversary of the birth of its author,16 the centennial of the “Victory of the Ukrainian Sich Riflemen on Makivka Mountain,”37 and the 1,000th anniversary of Saint Prince Vladimir’s death.38 The latter two dates were a vital part of Ukraine’s ideological counterattack in its infor-

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mation war with Russia. In the case of the former, the commemoration of the military victory of “Ukrainians over Russians” followed the political line initiated by Yushchenko’s decrees (the “Victory of Konotop” of 1659, the “Tragedy of Baturin” of 1708). In the case of the latter, the decree was a reaction against official celebrations in Moscow, where Vladimir the Great was presented as a Russian historical figure.

Poroshenko returned to the idea of gaining recognition of the Holodomor as a genocide against Ukrainians at the international level. In 2016, he required the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine “to proceed with efforts aimed at foreign states’ and international organizations’ recognition of the Holodomor of 1932–33 in Ukraine as a genocide of the Ukrainian people.” In 2017, he spoke about this idea to the US Congress, the German Bundestag, the King of Belgium, the UN Assembly, and the president of Israel. Poroshenko personally supported the idea of criminalizing so-called Holodomor denial.

He happily supported the expansion of the nationalist narrative of memory at the national level. At the end of his presidential career, the OUN “March of Ukrainian Nationalists” was officially introduced as a March of the Ukrainian Army; moreover, he used this music piece during his unsuccessful 2019 presidential campaign.

**Parliament**

The parliament of Ukraine traditionally serves as an arena where different political forces publicly demonstrate their social and political programs (sometimes it devolves into political exhibitionism, outright hooliganism, and flamboyant performances). The sphere of historical politics is no exception in this regard. The rostrum of the parliament and the dedicated committees of the Verkhovna Rada are used to shape the legal frameworks of historical politics and (mostly) to advertise various political groups or coordinate political

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pressure against opponents. For nearly the entire period of independence, the parliament’s activities in the sphere of historical politics can be described as the confrontation between two exclusivist models of collective/historical memory: the national/nationalist and the Soviet-nostalgic.

The two most ideologically consistent groups in the Verkhovna Rada were the communists, present between 1990 and 2014; and the radical nationalists, who only once managed to get into the Verkhovna Rada on their own party lists (the All-Ukrainian Union “Svoboda”) in 2012. In the extraordinary parliamentary elections of 2014, neither communists nor radical nationalists were elected to the parliament through party lists, and in 2015, the Communist Party of Ukraine was banned outright.

Between 1992 and 2018, lawmakers proposed and discussed more than two hundred resolutions, addresses, and draft laws aimed at regulating the sphere of collective/historical memory.41 Of these, twelve were debated in 1992–2000, twenty-three in 2001–2004, eighty-five in 2005–10, forty-eight in 2011–13, and thirty-nine in 2014–18. As we can see, more than two-thirds of the original proposals emerged in the last decade. Draft laws account for about one-quarter of all these efforts. At final count, the parliament adopted more than fifty resolutions and addresses and ten memorial laws defining the framework and content of state historical politics.

The following calculations help us understand which problems of the past interested parliamentarians in the present. Before 2016, forty-four documents concerned the assessment of the activities of the OUN and the UPA, forty-six dealt with the Holodomor, and forty-nine concerned the anniversaries and jubilees of World War II (before 2015, referred to as the “Great Patriotic War” in the documents) and problems related to the social status of veterans.42 The veterans issue is also included in the sphere of historical politics because the principal contest was the equalization of rights between veterans of the Soviet Army and the “Great Patriotic War” and veterans of the UPA, which was tantamount to the political recognition of the OUN and UPA.

Normative documents and laws are the most common way for a certain political group to influence historical politics or to self-advertise. Usually, such projects are proposed by groups of deputies representing one

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Chapter 3

or another parliamentary faction or a group of allied political forces, as was the case of the project to criminalize the denial of the Holodomor/Holocaust. Sometimes, they are proposed by a single MP, although generally they have received the endorsement of that person’s parliamentary faction. In any case, there are no personal initiatives in the sphere of historical politics, as they should always be endorsed formally or informally by a certain interest group.

Parliamentary hearings and the resulting adoption of recommendations and reports are one of the forms of communication between parliamentarians and the general public. However, deputies rarely use this method, perhaps because of its lack of efficiency: recommendations or reports adopted as a result of the hearings never had any real force. Between 2000 and 2015, only once have the parliamentary hearings been directly dedicated to issues of historical politics, when parliament debated “About honoring the memory of the victims of the Holodomor of 1932–1933.”

As a rule, the resolutions and decisions of the Verkhovna Rada on historical issues have been explicitly formulated as political statements. The aforementioned resolution that followed the parliamentary hearings about the Holodomor clearly emphasized the necessity of recognizing the famine in the Ukrainian SSR as “a genocide of the Ukrainian people” (the same document also spoke about “a genocide of the Ukrainian nation”). At times, such statements and decisions could look like political antics. In 2009, it was clear that an alliance of Communists, the Party of Regions, the Lytvyn Bloc, and the Yulia Tymoshenko Bloc adopted a resolution to celebrate the ninetieth anniversary of the Young Communist League of Ukraine (Komsomol) just to spite Viktor Yushchenko and his parliamentary supporters. According to the official version of events, this act was the response of MPs to an “ini-

43 These problems were addressed during other hearings dedicated to the issues of humanities, but mostly in a contextual way: Taras Shevchenko yak postar’ svitovoho znachennya (do 200-ricchy z dnya narodzhennya), March 15, 2014, Stratehiya humanitarnej polityky suchasnoyi Ukrayiny, October 6, 2010, Nationalna identychnist v Ukrayini v umovakh hlobalizatsiynikh vyklykiv: problem ta shlyakh y zber-zehennya, December 9, 2009.
tiative by Komsomol veterans."46 In reality, it was intended as a slap in the face of President Yushchenko and his historical politics, which included the decommunization of Ukraine's symbolic space. In a strange twist, the resolution was adopted on April 1, an unofficial day of laughter, jokes, and pranks—April Fools' Day.

Another body worth mentioning is the temporary special commission of the Verkhovna Rada, which are usually created to examine an especially controversial issue. The most famous example of such a commission in the field of historical politics was a temporary special commission established in 199647 called the Temporary Special Commission of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine for Assistance for the Study of Issues Related to the Investigation into the Activity of the OUN-UPA, the confusing name of which indicates the awareness of parliamentary deputies that a compromise between the two polar-opposite assessments of the nationalist movement is impossible. As could be expected, the work of the commission, half of whose members (national democrats48) supported the political legitimation of the OUN and UPA and the other half (communists) who opposed it, came to naught. Later, a government-sponsored commission of historians was created with the same goal.

Parliamentarians may also influence historical politics and (self-)advertise at the same time by appealing to the Constitutional Court. The most famous cases in Ukraine were precisely appeals to the Constitutional Court questioning the constitutionality of documents adopted by the Verkhovna Rada or the president in the sphere of historical politics. Ten appeals were made between 2010 and 2019. Almost all of them were, in fact, instances of political self-promotion. Their initiators already knew the answer: none of these appeals fell under the purview of the Constitutional Court. These appeals concerned the most controversial events and symbols in the sphere of historical politics: in the “Victory Banner” case (2011) as well as the decommunization laws case (2019), the Constitutional Court effectively issued a

48 National democrats: can mostly be described as right- and center-conservatives, those who proclaimed independence, the supremacy of the Ukrainian language, and an ethnocentric version of the history of Ukraine.
ruling, but the court rejected a hearing on the posthumous awarding of the title of “Hero of Ukraine” to Roman Shukhevych and Stepan Bandera and the memorial laws case.

The Verkhovna Rada’s efforts regarding the so-called memorial laws, which were intended to regulate the sphere of historical memory (see Part III), deserve special attention. In total, ten memorial laws have been adopted. The most emblematic ones are the law concerning the recognition of the Holodomor as genocide (2006) and the so-called “decommunization laws” adopted in April 2015. Between November 2015 and July 2016, the Verkhovna Rada adopted thirteen resolutions related to the renaming of 987 villages, cities, and small towns and twenty-five administrative districts.49 In May 2017, the Verkhovna Rada swiftly adopted a law regarding the display of the “Ribbon of Saint George,” which was extremely popular in Russia and among Donbass rebels; the legislation banned its display in Ukraine.

In 2015–19, a kind of ideological monotony in parliament set in, partly as a result of the political situation, and partly due to certain efforts made by the state. Discussions and events that promoted the nostalgic Soviet version of collective/historical memory essentially stopped. Those that sporadically occurred were rarely covered by the media. The agents of this narrative (the communists, the Party of Regions) were removed from the political arena either by law (communists) or by the “nature of things” (the Party of Regions). The representatives of the national/nationalist narrative established a monopoly. This tendency expressed itself most significantly in the adoption of the aforementioned memorial laws of 2015 and in the decommunization process resulting from these laws, which took place from the second half of 2015 to 2019.

**Government**

Usually, the government as an institution is not supposed to play an independent role in the development of historical politics. Its main function is purely technical: it implements the laws, orders, decrees, and resolutions

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produced by the parliament or the office of president. Every commemorative decree of the president includes instructions to the government and the relevant ministries and agencies. Afterward, the Cabinet of Ministers issues resolutions and orders regarding implementation and budgetary provisions.

This technical role does not mean that the government is passive on questions of historical politics. The success of many parliamentary and presidential initiatives depends on the leaders of the Cabinet of Ministers (prime minister, vice-premiers, ministers, and deputy ministers) and even on middle-ranking officials (heads of ministry departments), who are generally invisible. For instance, during the political crisis of 2006–2007 when the government was led by Yanukovych, Yushchenko’s proposals and orders in the sphere of historical politics clearly did not excite the Cabinet, and consequently they faced a number of bureaucratic obstacles.

Usually, the Deputy Prime Minister for Humanitarian Issues is the main figure in the government responsible for questions on historical politics. Under Yanukovych (2010–14), this ministerial position was abolished, but in 2014 it was brought back. Currently, the Deputy Prime Minister on Humanitarian Issues of Ukraine supervises the activities of all ministries and agencies directly involved in the development and implementation of historical politics: the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory, the Ministry of Culture, the State Committee on Radio and Television, and the Ministry of Education and Science.

Before the establishment of the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory, the Ministry of Education and Science played one of the key roles in shaping state historical politics. Under its auspices, state education standards (including on the history of Ukraine) are developed and submitted to the Cabinet of Ministers for approval. The Ministry of Education and Science defines and approves the content of programs and historical curricula. It supervises the selection of textbooks and finances their publication through state budgeting.

A permanent body within the ministry known as the Scientific-Methodological Commission on History is primarily tasked with the analysis of textbooks and other teaching materials to ensure their conformity to state standards and programs. The Institute of Innovative Technology and Content for Education, which was also part of the ministry, was obliged to observe and approve history teaching programs and textbooks and to organize a contest to select state-sponsored textbooks. In general, the Ministry
of Education and Science has followed a rigorous policy of nationalization in history education since 1992, and this has resulted in the establishment of an ethnocentric canon. The exclusivist model of a national/nationalist historical narrative with prevailing ideas of political/state history and national victimology is at the core of this canon (for a more detailed discussion, see chapter 6).

In 2010, the Ministry of Education and Science slightly shifted its ideological orientation. The new minister, Dmytro Tabachnyk, was well known for his negative attitude toward nationalized history and for his loyalty to the Soviet nostalgic version. He gleefully shocked the public with his statements and appraisals of the past in which he denounced and ridiculed Ukrainian nationalism. In an April 2010 interview with the BBC, he declared that the textbooks of Ukrainian history are written from an ethnocentric position and must, therefore, be revised and rewritten from an anthropocentric position.50 He indirectly alluded to the results obtained by a task force of historians organized under auspices of the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory that had proposed looking beyond the ethnocentric version of Ukrainian history for courses taught in schools.

In June 2010, Tabachnyk published a policy paper on the official website of the Party of Regions. He repeated his assertion about an “anthropocentric approach” to history curricula and declared that “the interpretation of national and global history cannot change every time when there is a new President or Minister of Education, and it cannot and should not depend on private tastes, fixations, and phobias of any official.”51 After these words, he immediately gave his own politically motivated interpretation of the history of World War II and his assessment of such persons as Stalin, Shukhevych, and Bandera, putting the second and third, evidently, in the category of “impure ones.”

Further actions on the “revision of the school history course” had nothing to do with the implementation of anthropocentric history: they went no further than kicking out several undesirable stories and figures from text-

books and reconsidereing the interpretations of several events. According to
journalists, some textbook authors were given confidential instructions to
revise their texts. The picture of the orange Maidan disappeared from the
cover of one of the textbooks. The formula “man-made Holodomor” disapp-
ppeared from the text (the term “Holodomor” remained). The description
of the activities of the UPA became shorter. Shukhevych’s photo disappeared,
and the narrative of Ukrainian events stopped at the year 2004. In another
textbook, the description of the UPA also became shorter, and the UPA
fought Germans and Bolsheviks with not a word about Poles. The authors
said they received instructions to correct their textbooks from the ministry
via phone call: the essence of these instructions was to tone down anti-Russian
sentiments and reduce the coverage of the UPA.52

It should be noted that all these changes were mostly symbolic; besides,
it was technically nearly impossible to modify millions of already printed
textbooks. However, in the wake of the changes made to the structure of the
eleven-year secondary school program (2011), an ambitious plan to reprint
all school textbooks (not only history) was set in motion, but this was based
on material rather than ideological interests.53 A frenetic discussion around
the changes made to the history textbooks that flared up in 2010–11 seemed
to be a massive provocation, and the targets of these changes, i.e., represen-
tatives of the opposition, eagerly responded. In Lviv, an “alternative” school
textbook for fifth graders was published which included all the stories and
personalities that had been “edited” out of the standard textbooks.54

The Ministry of Education and Science was also responsible for develop-
ing strategies for the patriotic education of young people, and it continuously
focused its attention on historical issues. Between 1996 and 2020, the min-
istry prepared six strategic documents dedicated to “national” or “national-
patriotic” education with the word “conception” in the title.55 None of them

52 Katerina Kaplyuk, “Perepisana istoriya Ukrayiny: Versiya epokhi Dmytra Tabachnyka,” Pravda, August
53 In 2018, Ukraine returned to a twelve-year secondary school cycle.
54 H. Terechuk, “U Lvovi vydaly ‘antytabachnykivsky’ posibnik z istoriyi Ukrayiny,” August 8, 2012,
http://www.radiosvoboda.org/content/article/24670895.html.
55 Kontseptsyiya vykhovannya ditey i molodi v nationalniy systemy osvity (1996); Kontseptsyiya national-
noho vykhovannya studentskoiy molodi (2009); Kontseptsyiya nationalno-patriotychnoho vykhovannya
molodi (2009); and Kontseptsyiya Zahalnoderzhavnoyi tsiliovoiy programy patriotychnoho vykhovannya
were ever implemented, as it is clear from the repeated complains in this regard in these documents. The basic rhetoric of all the aforementioned formulations was quite similar: it combined the tropes of ethnic/cultural nationalism with references to universal values, the recognition of the rights and liberties of other ethnic groups, to the equality of cultures, etc.

Another central governmental body, the Ministry of Culture, is routinely involved in the development and implementation of historical politics. It manages all the principal museums responsible for transmitting all the fluctuations in the sphere of historical politics of Ukraine to the public; this includes the museums created as a result of historical politics. The director of the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory is formally accountable to the Minister of Culture.

Some other ministries and governmental structures are directly involved in the development and implementation of historical politics. This list can easily be found in the operative section of any presidential decree or government resolution on the topic of “memorials.”

Table 4. Ministries and Agencies Participating in the Implementation of Historical Politics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Functions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State Committee on Radio and Television</td>
<td>Promoting anniversaries, emblematic events, outstanding historical figures, institutes and organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Justice</td>
<td>Analyzing legislative acts related to historical politics, involvement in developing the programs of implementation of historical politics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Economy</td>
<td>Calculating the cost of remembrance events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Finance</td>
<td>Funding remembrance events, goal-oriented programs, activities of other ministries in the field of historical politics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>Promoting Ukrainian history abroad, lobbying for representation of state history politics in international organizations</td>
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<tr>
<th>State Institutions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ministry of Internal Affairs</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ministry of Information Politics (created in December 2014)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Prosecutor’s Office (not a part of the government)</strong></td>
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National Bank of Ukraine

The National Bank of Ukraine has perhaps the most direct technical connection to the representation of memorable events, historical dates, and historical figures. The very name of the national currency, the hryvnia, is a reference to the idea of the millennial history of Ukraine. The portraits on the banknotes show a sort of national pantheon: princes Volodymyr the Great and Yaroslav the Wise, hetmans Bohdan Khmelnytsky and Ivan Mazepa, writers and public figures Ivan Franko and Lesya Ukrainka, “the father of Ukrainian history” Mykhailo Hrushevsky, and the philosopher Hryhorii Skovoroda. In 2019, the National Bank issued a one thousand hryvnia banknote with the portrait of Volovymyr Vernadsky, a famous Ukrainian scholar. The banknotes also depict, on the reverse side, historical buildings and symbolic characters that embody the history of Ukraine: from the historical model of the City of the Prince Volodymyr on the one hryvnia banknote to the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy building on the five hundred hryvnia banknote and the historical head office of the National Academy of Sciences on the one thousand hryvnia bill.

The National Bank also mints commemorative coins. The decision to mint a commemorative coin is made by the Board of the National Bank of Ukraine. Between 1995 and 2016 for instance, 723 coins were minted, 218 of them dedicated to the anniversaries of historical events—from the foundation of cities, universities, and government organs to the founding of the constitution, the national currency, and the establishment of zoological gardens, arboreta, and nature reserves. Fifty-two of these were dedicated to Soviet-era anniversaries, while only thirty-five can be attributed to the national/nationalist narrative. However, if we consider historical figures, national ones prevail on eighty-five coinages, while just twenty-four are dedicated to important Soviet-era figures recognized as part of the Ukrainian national narrative. Forty-eight coinages have been dedicated to historical events occurring since the proclamation of independence.61

State Institutions

Ukrposhta

Like the National Bank, the state postal service Ukrposhta is a body responsible for issuing postal stamps, pre-stamped envelopes, and postcards dedicated to historical figures, emblematic events, and commemorative dates. As electronic means of communication become increasingly used, commemorative stamps, like commemorative coins, have become interesting primarily for collectors. Such collections make it possible to follow the evolution of historical politics in Ukraine. While in the 1990s, most events and figures depicted on stamps were related to bygone events or to the Cossack period, new heroes began to circulate in the 2000s: examples include an envelope and a special cancellation stamp issued for the centennial of the birth of Roman Shukhevych and a stamp celebrating the centennial of the birth of Stepan Bandera.

Courts

The involvement of the judiciary in historical politics was hardly occasioned by the purely legal aspects of the latter. It can be asserted with confidence that historical politics itself in many of its manifestations contradicts the principles of the rule of law. However, its promoters occasionally appeal to the law, initiating the legislative regulation in the field of collective/historical memory and a reliance on courts in the pursuit of purely political goals. The use of judicial power as a political tool became common in independent Ukraine precisely during the period when historical politics escalated, and the courts were used to persecute political opponents. A clear correlation can be observed: the intensification of political struggle entails the radicalization of historical politics, with the latter becoming a part of this struggle. The courts entered the arena of Ukrainian historical politics primarily as a tool of symbolic legalization or, on the side, the delegitimation of the actions of one or another interest group in the field of collective/historical memory. Of course, the courts were also used to apply moral and political pressure on opponents and as a site of political propaganda. Below are some famous examples of the courts’ role in historical politics.

61 The most graphic examples are the legal prosecution of Yuri Lutsenko, the former minister of Internal Affairs, and Yulia Tymoshenko, the former prime minister.
On January 12, 2010, the Kyiv Court of Appeals started hearing a criminal case initiated by the Security Service of Ukraine “over the perpetration of genocide” by representatives of the supreme authorities of the Ukrainian SSR and the USSR against “a part of the Ukrainian national group.” The Security Service had conducted preliminary investigations for almost two years. On January 13, 2010, the judge ruled that J. Stalin (Dzhugashvili), V. Molotov (Skryabin), L. Kaganovich, P. Postyshev, S. Kosior, V. Chubar, and M. Khatayevych were guilty of the crime of genocide as set out in article 442 § 1 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine (Genocide); the judge also terminated the criminal proceedings on the same day on the basis of article 6 § 8.1 of the Criminal Procedure Code based on the fact that the defendants were no longer alive. It is easy to admit that this two-day trial had a purely symbolic meaning from the legal perspective. The political context, however, was a different story. This trial fits into Yushchenko’s historical politics aimed at promoting the idea that the famine of 1932–33 in the Ukrainian SSR was indeed a genocide. The ruling of the court together with the law “About the Holodomor of 1932–1933 in Ukraine” provided a legal basis for this version of the historical narrative.

There was also a hidden agenda, namely the political defamation of Yushchenko’s opponents—the Party of Regions and the Communist Party of Ukraine, who were branded deniers of the genocidal character of the Holodomor. For instance, Deputy Yuri Karmazin referenced the ruling of the Kyiv Court of Appeals in June 2010 when submitting a draft law to change the first article of the Ukrainian law “About the Holodomor of 1932–1933 in Ukraine.” The deputy proposed the following formula: “The Holodomor of 1932–1933 in Ukraine is a genocide of the Ukrainian people—a crime of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) and its subsidiary, the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of Ukraine against the Ukrainian people.” The draft law was not even considered because by the time it was

registered, there was already a new majority in the parliament that supported the new president Viktor Yanukovych.

In Kyiv the same month (June 2010), Volodymyr Volosyuk, a sixty-eight-year-old citizen of Ukraine and a former lawyer and former member of the People's Movement of Ukraine, sued President Yanukovych for “insulting his honor and dignity.” In his claim, he specified that Yanukovych, when speaking in Strasbourg on April 27, 2010, denied that the Holodomor was a genocide and in so doing insulted the honor and the dignity of the claimant, whose relatives had died during the famine. Additionally, according to the claimant, Yanukovych violated the Ukrainian law “About the Holodomor of 1932–1933 in Ukraine,” in which the famine of 1932–33 was referred to as genocide and the public denial of the Holodomor was declared illegal.65 The claimant demanded a public apology from the president directed to both him personally and to the Ukrainian people. Volosyuk claimed to be without party affiliation and to be mainly concerned for the Ukrainian people. However, the nationalist Svoboda took great interest in this case. The interests of the claimant were voiced by a representative of Svoboda, and other members of the party actively promoted the suit in the press. After six months of litigation, during which the case traveled between the Pechersky District Court and Kyiv Court of Appeals, the suit ended as expected: neither the claim nor the claimant’s appeal was upheld.66

These trials did not spark any notable public interest. The former coincided with the presidential campaign of the winter of 2010, and the latter was not sufficiently attractive to the mass media and had no chance of bringing about a court ruling that would be interesting to the wider public. The legal proceedings related to such well-known historical figures as Roman Shukhevych and Stepan Bandera attracted far more attention.

In October 2007, Viktor Yushchenko awarded the title of “Hero of Ukraine” to Roman Shukhevych “for his outstanding personal contribution to the liberation struggle for the freedom and independence of Ukraine.” In September 2008, the Donetsk lawyer Volodymyr Olentsevich filed a lawsuit in the Donetsk District Administrative Court seeking to invalidate the

decree. The case was dismissed, but Olentsevich, being very insistent, contacted one judicial body after another trying to get his lawsuit considered. In 2009, he reached the Supreme Administrative Court of Kyiv, which agreed to hear his appeal.

While Olentsevich’s lawsuits drifted from one judicial body to another, Yushchenko awarded the title of “Hero of Ukraine” to Stepan Bandera in January 2010, again triggering a strong reaction from Ukrainians both at home and abroad. In February 2010, he lost the presidency, and this change of leadership brought with it a change in the attitude of the courts toward historical politics. On April 2, 2010, the Donetsk District Administrative Court, at the request of the same indefatigable Olentsevich, overturned Yushchenko’s decree awarding the title of “Hero of Ukraine” to Bandera on the simple grounds that Bandera had never been a citizen of Ukraine and this distinction can only be awarded to citizens of the country. On April 21 of the same year, the same court found Yushchenko’s decree awarding the honorary title to Roman Shukhevych to be illegal. In August 2010, the Supreme Administrative Court of Kyiv, responding to an appeal made by Yushchenko, upheld the decisions of the Donetsk court.67

The Constitutional Court of Ukraine also joined in the game. On April 6, 2010, it declined an identical request by the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea (March 2010) to recognize Yushchenko’s decree concerning Bandera as unconstitutional.68 In October 2010, the same decision was taken concerning the request related to Shukhevych.69 Both requests were denied on the grounds that they were outside the competence of the Constitutional Court. In 2011, the Constitutional Court had a new opportunity to demonstrate its impartiality and political neutrality when the opposition deputy Yuri Kostenko made a request to verify the const-

stitutionality of changes in the Ukrainian Law “On the Perpetuation of the Victory in the Great Patriotic War of 1941–1945” (about “the Banner of Victory”). The court recognized these changes as unconstitutional (see chapter 6 for more details).

The years 2015–19 have been marked by an escalation of historical politics in Ukraine, and the judicial authorities have not remained on the sidelines. Local courts busied themselves with requests from citizens and organizations concerning the renaming of streets, cities, towns, and topographical sites.70 Between 2016 and 2017, no fewer than eight cases related to historical politics were taken up by the Supreme Court and Supreme Administrative Court of Ukraine.71 Several dozen cases at local courts proceeded. The Constitutional Court took part in all this once again: from July to September 2015, it followed an already established pattern and refused to rule on a case concerning the unconstitutionality of memorial laws adopted on April 9, 2015. Applications for appeal were submitted for every law by the opposition deputies (now represented by the remains of the Party of Regions and the communists). However, in July 2019, the Constitutional Court declared that the law condemning the communist and National Socialist regimes in Ukraine and banning the promotion of their symbols was constitutional.72 In 2018–19, the long-lasting debate on the renaming of two busy avenues in Kyiv, which were renamed after the leaders of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army—Stepan Bandera and Roman Shukhevych, respectively, turned into a duel between the Administrative Court and the Appellate Court of Kyiv.73 In the end, the name change was confirmed by the Appellate Court.


Given the confrontational nature of historical politics in Ukraine, it is clear that judicial authorities will not stay away from getting involved in debates about interpretations of the past.

**Security Service of Ukraine (SBU)**

According to the Ukrainian Law “About the Security Service of Ukraine” adopted in 1992, the task of the agency is to protect the state sovereignty of Ukraine; its territorial integrity; its economic, scientific, technological, and defense potential; as well as the interests of the state and the rights of its citizens. It also has an obligation to defend Ukraine from the intelligence and subversive activity of foreign special services and from encroachments by organizations, groups, and individuals.\(^74\) Protection of state secrets is also entrusted to the SBU. Since the adoption of this law, the SBU has been involved in the implementation of historical politics in three different ways: 1) as an agency that has a large archive (at the beginning of the 1990s, this archive was used to rehabilitate victims of political repression); 2) as a research institution that publishes collections of documents on the history of repression and of repressive institutions;\(^75\) and 3) as an instrument of historical politics during Yushchenko’s presidential term and after the adoption of decommunization laws in April 2015.

On May 22, 2009, the SBU initiated a pretrial criminal investigation on the basis of Article 442 of the Penal Code of Ukraine (“Genocide”). Formally, the case was opened as a result of “appeals by the public.” The public was represented by Igor Yukhnovski of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences and acting director of the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory; Roman Krutsik, chairman of the Vasyl Stus Memorial Society (one of the founders of the Congress of Ukrainian Nationalists); Levko Lukyanenko, chairman of the Association of Holodomor Researchers in Ukraine; and other public figures and deputies of parliament. Special groups of SBU staff (150 persons in total) working in seventeen regions of

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75 The SBU is one of the founders of the journal Z.arkhiviv VUChK-GPU-NKVD-KGB. See: http://www.realbit.org.ua/magazine/.
Ukraine and having interviewed 533 witnesses for half a year “discovered” something that one could read in school textbooks for at least fifteen years: the “Holodomor genocide of 1932–1933 in Ukraine” was organized by Joseph Stalin, Vyacheslav Molotov, Lazar Kaganovich, and the top leaders of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of Ukraine as well as the leadership of the repressive organs of the Stalinist regime.

The publication of these findings caused a mini scandal. The SBU issued a list of perpetrators of the 1932–33 famine in Ukraine, defiantly accompanying their party pseudonyms with their birth names and surnames. The resulting list included many Jewish surnames. The Ukrainian Jewish Committee (UJC) immediately reacted to the publication with a statement that the SBU “places responsibility for the Holodomor tragedy on Jews and Latvians.” The UJC emphasized that in this particular case, the SBU did not mention several high-ranking Ukrainian party members who were obviously responsible for the disaster.

In 2009, the SBU opened another criminal investigation on the deportation of the Crimean Tatars of 1944. Under Yanukovych, the SBU closed the case (2011) and re-opened it in 2015 after the annexation of Crimea by Russia.

During Yushchenko’s term as president, the SBU began to manage the National Memorial Museum of the Victims of Occupational Regimes “Prison on Lontskoho Street,” created in 2008–2009 in Lviv; the museum belonged to the agency and the SBU was the formal employer of the museum staff. The involvement of the SBU in historical politics might have had some positive indirect consequences. Volodymyr Viatrovych, the director of the Archive of the SBU between 2008–10 claims that he attempted to make the archive more accessible for both researchers and the wider public.

These efforts immediately stopped when Viktor Yanukovych came to power and the leadership of the SBU changed. An attempt to limit access to the SBU Archive again led to a public scandal. On September 8, 2010, at the Kyiv railway station, SBU operatives arrested SBU employee Ruslan Zabily.

losya-za-formulyuvannya-obvinuvachen.html.
page_show_ru.php?id=2566.
director of the Lviv Museum “Prison on Lontskoho Street,” under the pretext that he intended to hand secret data to some third persons (it seems that Zabily had a large collection of document copies from the SBU Archive, which he kept in private data storage). His hard drives and his personal computer were confiscated; according to Zabily, he was interrogated for fourteen hours and then released. On September 24, 2010, opposition members of parliament, including the Yulia Tymoshenko Bloc and the remnants of Our Ukraine party, demanded an explanation from Valery Horoshkovsky, the incumbent head of the SBU. Their demand was ignored. On September 27, 2010, the SBU opened a criminal case on the basis of Article 328 of the Penal Code of Ukraine (“Divulgence of State Secrets”). Over the next week, Zabily became probably the most popular figure in news feeds and on political talk shows, and the opposition immediately began a campaign against the “witch hunt,” the return to “KGB times,” and the persecution of dissidents and “independent historians.”

Viatrovykh, the ex-director of the archive, said that “the Zabily case” was the “Kremlin’s action” directed against the UPA. A number of public actions in Lviv and Kyiv were organized in support of Zabily, and both the Ukrainian and foreign public protested, including professional historians. According to one of the central Ukrainian TV channels referring to a “source in the SBU,” the arrest of the historian and the seizure of his hard drives was justified by the fact that he had found documents containing information about KGB agents. The source said that the SBU “would intimidate Zabily a little but would not jail him,” and, in fact, the case was soon closed. The official response of the Chief Investigation Department of the SBU to an inquiry about the Zabily case (May 12, 2016) says that the criminal case was closed on January 27, 2012, for lack of corpus delicti.

After that, the SBU temporarily disengaged from any public activity in the sphere of historical politics and returned to it only after the “Revolution

78 Ruslan Zabily could hardly be portrayed as an independent historian. His works on the history of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army and Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists are fairly complimentary.


82 This answer is kept in my personal archive, received in response to my official request.
of Dignity” as an important archive and as the overseer and watchdog of the “decommunization” process and a security agency charged with protecting the state from “ideological subversion.” For instance, in April 2017 the Odessa regional SBU branch demanded that local authorities reverse their decision to restore the old names of the streets that were “decommunized” in 2016.

One of the memorial laws adopted in April 2015 obliged the SBU to transfer its archival collections to the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory. Of all the agencies, the SBU in 2015–19 was the most willing to share its archival treasures with the state institute whose main sphere of activity was historical politics—the UINP.

Ukrainian Institute of National Memory (UINP)

The UINP was established by Viktor Yushchenko, who chose to follow the example of other countries in Central and Eastern Europe, especially Poland. The institute was created within the framework of the program aimed at “preservation of the memory of victims of political repression and holodomors in Ukraine” (therefore, dedicated to the communist past), and its name was borrowed from its Polish counterpart. Even the founders of the institute were not quite sure about its functions, status, and powers, and the twists and turns of its establishment indicate the hidden resistance of bureaucrats and open resistance of politicians. Practically all fifteen years of the UINP’s existence have been marked by a quest for institutional identity. It was twice liquidated and reorganized. Only after 2015 did the institute achieve its role, which some observers ironically describe as a “ministry of truth.”

In July 2005, Yushchenko asked the government to establish a working group tasked with drawing up a proposal for the structure and areas of responsibility of the Institute of National Memory.83 In May 2006, the government decreed the creation of the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory.84 It was established as a central body in the executive branch.

In July 2006, the government approved the Statute of the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory. The institute was charged with the following tasks:

- Participating in the development and implementation of state policy in the restoration and preservation of Ukrainian national memory, including assistance to the state as stipulated by article 11 of the Constitution of Ukraine, in the consolidation and development of the Ukrainian nation, its historical consciousness, and culture.
- Providing a comprehensive study of centuries of Ukrainian state-building and the struggle for restoration of statehood in the twentieth century.
- Ensuring the study of the history of other native peoples and national minorities living in Ukrainian territory and their integration into Ukrainian society.
- Implementing a range of measures commemorating the memory of participants in the national liberation struggle and the First and Second World Wars and victims of holodomors and political repression.
- Strengthening Ukrainians’ interest in their own history and disseminating objective information about the country in Ukraine and around the world.86

The institute was expected to work on proposals for:

- restoring an objective and truthful history of the Ukrainian people;
- propagating the origin of the Ukrainian nation and its language;
- organizing efforts to shape patriotism among the citizens of Ukraine (especially among public employees); and
- selecting the areas of work and methods of restoration for historical truth and justice in the study of Ukrainian history.87

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86 Ibid.
87 Ibid.
The institute’s range of functions was expected to be quite broad: the development of proposals to promote the idea of the Holodomor as a genocide in the international arena; the elaboration of legal drafts and regulations (including international ones); the establishment of monuments and places of memory and their management structure; the creation of museum exhibitions; the development of proposals on social protection for participants in the national liberation struggle; and the elaboration of procedures to award state awards and honorary titles. In total, twenty-nine functions of the institute were listed.

The establishment of the UINP (2006–2007) coincided with a period of acute political crisis and the struggle between the president and his political opponents (Party of Regions, Communists) over the redistribution of power and who controlled the government. Whether in stature, in real power, or in funding, the UINP was far behind its Polish counterpart. Moreover, contrary to the Polish case, at the time of the establishment of the UINP, Ukrainian elites lacked consensus on questions of historical politics or the role and place of the UINP in the interpretation of the past. The institute was created as an executive (governmental) body, and its functionality was totally contingent on the political situation. Its very existence was questionable on both political and societal levels.

Even in terms of bureaucratic efficiency, the institute was trapped from the very beginning. Between the fall of 2006 and the fall of 2007, the government, of which the UINP was part, was headed by Viktor Yanukovych, the last person who could be suspected of sympathy to any of Viktor Yushchenko’s ideas. Another challenge—which might appear as a bureaucratic mockery—was that before 2008, funding for the UINP was controlled by the State Committee of the Archives of Ukraine headed by a representative of the Communist Party of Ukraine.88 The 2006 state budget assigned 912,400 hryvnias (€152,800) to the institute and a year later, this amount grew to 3,478,000 hryvnias in 2007 (€476,000).89 According to Volodymyr Verstyuk, the deputy director of the UINP, the institute did not play any

independent role between 2006 and 2009. In practice, it was all but an executor of decisions made by the secretariat of the president and the vice premier on humanitarian issues (this assessment dates from the era when the UINP reached the peak of its activities).90

The UINP became active after the snap elections of 2007 and the creation of a coalition government headed by Yulia Tymoshenko, nominally considered a Yushchenko supporter. Memorial events dedicated to the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Holodomor in Ukraine became the main task of the institute. The funding of the UINP peaked in 2008: it grew to 15,921,000 hryvnias (£2,242,394) because of major memorial events dedicated to the Holodomor. In 2009, the sum allocated was 14,501,000 hryvnias (£1,381,047); and in 2010 it was 19,236,000 hryvnias (£1,672,695).91

Between 2008–2009, the UNIP implemented two large projects. One of them was the creation of the National Book of Memory of the Holodomor Victims in Ukraine. The Institute coordinated the preparation of eighteen regional volumes92 and published a summary volume.93 This activity took place within the framework of the “National-Cultural Program of the 1932–1933 Holodomor Research and of the Perpetuation of the Memory of Its Victims for the Period up to 2012.” The second large project was the elaboration of the concept of history education in Ukraine.94 It was the first major attempt to transcend the limits of the national/nationalist exclusive narrative,

to stop building it on the basis of the idea of the “nation as victim,” and to balance the redundancy of political and socio-economic history by introducing elements of historical anthropology. In this case, the UINP acted rather as a coordinator of the effort, as all the major groundwork had been done by professional historians outside the institute. The UINP suffered from a perpetual lack of skilled employees: according to the 2007 staff list, the institute had 105 vacancies, but by 2010 only forty-three people worked there.95

The UINP also took part in legislative activity by contributing to the preparation of the first memorial law in Ukraine (“About the 1932–1933 Holodomor in Ukraine”), and to the elaboration of the law on the commemoration of the Ukrainian national liberation movement of the 1920s to 1950s.

In 2010, half a year after the rise of Viktor Yanukovych and the Party of Regions, the UINP was dismantled as part of “the optimization of the central bodies of the state authority.”96 The upsurge of indignation of the “patriotically-minded” had hardly begun to crystallize before the institute was reconstituted in January 2011.97 Its rank was “lowered,” and it became a research facility managed by the Cabinet of Ministers.

For Viktor Yanukovych and his political supporters, the UINP was like a suitcase without a handle: it was not possible to throw it out since that could damage the political image of the ruling party too much. At the same time, an explicit ideological repurposing would not fit into the general philosophy of cynical pragmatism in the domain of historical politics. In fact, because the UINP was reorganized along the lines of academic institutions, its political functions were minimized. Moreover, according to Valery Soldatenko, the institute was given the liberty to select its research priorities and topics. It seems that the main condition of this autonomy was staying out of politics. The budget of the institute was also reduced to the level of a research organization: 4,968,000 hryvnias (€473,143) in 2012, 5,658,000 hryvnias (€523,889) in 2013, and 5,531,000 hryvnias (€507,431) in 2014.98

Chapter 3

The reorganization and repurposing of the UINP provoked resentment among those segments of society whose representatives saw it as a regulatory and controlling body that ensured the domination of the exclusivist version of collective/historical memory. Moreover, the fact that Valery Soldatenko, a member of the Communist Party of Ukraine, was appointed its director was incredibly frustrating for these same groups.\textsuperscript{99} Volodymyr Viatrovych, the ex-director of the SBU Archive, even suggested that the UINP would turn into “an instrument of the rehabilitation of totalitarianism.”\textsuperscript{100}

In general, the institute continued to work within the standard national narrative; however, it did attempt to move away from the purely nationalist components of this interpretation and the exclusivist model of historical memory by adding in nostalgic Soviet elements, for example, those related to the promotion of the myth of the Great Patriotic War.\textsuperscript{101} Additionally, between 2011 and 2014, the UINP focused its attention on the elaboration of the theoretical and conceptual problems of collective/historical memory.

In 2014, the UINP had to adapt to a new political turn. The fall of Yanukovych and the change of power in Kyiv as a consequence of the Revolution of Dignity; the rise of civic patriotism and, thus, the revival of public interest in historical issues; and, especially, the return to power of the carriers and promoters of the exclusive national/nationalist pattern of collective/historical memory determined the direction of the UINP’s activities. In July 2014, the UINP was simultaneously liquidated and re-established by a government resolution. The reincarnated institute was then “the central executive body responsible for the implementation of state policy in the sphere of the restoration and preservation of the national memory,

\textsuperscript{99} Valery Soldatenko is a historian who authored many works on the history of the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917–1921. After becoming the director of the UINP, he suspended his membership in the Communist Party of Ukraine.


whose activities are directed and coordinated by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine through the Minister of Culture.”

In November 2014, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine approved the new statute of the institute elaborating its responsibilities. Once more, the institute was assigned a broader field of activity, and it was entrusted with more than twenty areas of purview. They included, for instance, keeping track of and preserving the burial places of victims of starvation, state violence, and repression (this function is for some reason mentioned twice), participating in the preparation of legislative acts and international treaties, and offering assistance in the restoration of “the rights of victims of political repression.” One of the most urgent tasks was the creation of the Archive of the Institute (apparently, this meant assigning a number of official archives to the UINP). The institute was also obliged to “produce printed materials, films and videos, stage versions and other artistic embodiments of the images of the historical past, including people who resisted the totalitarian regimes.” In practice, the institute was given back its enormous range of tasks.

The UINP was now headed by Volodymyr Viatrovych, one of the founders of the Center for Studies of the Liberation Movement (TsDVR), a non-government organization specialized in promotion of the party-style history of the OUN and the UPA. The new chairman of the UINP considered the Polish Institute of National Memory to be the ideal model for his institute, although this ideal was permanently unattainable: the whole previous history of the UINP demonstrates the lack of intellectual, managerial, and financial resources necessary to carry out its mission.

Speaking only about the pecuniary dimension of the issue, the budget of the Polish Institute of National Memory in 2013 amounted to 2.45 mil-

104 Ibid.
105 After the “Revolution of Dignity,” staff members and managers of the TsDVR took the following positions: Volodymyr Viatrovych became the director of the UINP, Alina Shpak (previously the director of the center) became the first deputy director of the UINP, Ihor Kulyk headed the SBU Archive (in January 2016, his place was taken by Andriy Kohut, the head of the archive project of the TsDVR). The TsDVR programs are coordinated by Viatrovych’s wife, the journalist Yaryna Yasynevych.
lion złoty (€57 million) and 405 million złoty (€90 million) in 2020.\footnote{Najwyższa Izba Kontroli, Informacja o wynikach kontroli wykonania budżetu państwa w 2013 r. w części 13 Instytut Pamięci Narodowej – Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni Przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu (Warsaw: 2014), accessed on January 22, 2020, http://bip.ipn.gov.pl/bip/kontrole/17/Kontrole.html; Instytut pamięci narodowej – Komisja ścigania zbrodni przeciwno narodowi polskiemu, Informacja o działalności i styczniu 2020 r. – 31 grudnia 2020 (Warsaw: Instytut pamięci narodowej, 2020) 345.} It employs more than two thousand people. The budget of the UINP in 2015 amounted to 8.7 million hryvnias (approximately €364,000), of which three million hryvnias were assigned to “events related to the implementation of state policy in the field of restoration and preservation of national memory” and 5.7 million hryvnias allocated to the management of this process.\footnote{”Zakon Ukrainy, ’Pro derzhavnyy byudzhet Ukrainy na 2015 rik,” December 28, 2014, http://zakon3.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/80-19/page.} The state budget for 2016 contemplated an allocation of eleven million hryvnias (€440,000) to the UINP. The maximum number of UINP staff could not surpass seventy people (of which sixty-seven are state employees). In 2018, the budget of the institute increased dramatically, to 57.4 million hryvnias (€1,993,055)—the institute took responsibility for creation of the Maidan Museum and the memorial of the “Revolution of Dignity.” In 2019, the budget was 116 million hryvnias (€3,659,305).\footnote{”Ukrains’kyi instytut national’noi pamiati, Zvit za 2019 rik,” accessed July 12, 2020, https://uinp.gov.ua/pro-institut/zvit/ztv-za-2019-rik.}

Since 2015, the institute has quickly turned itself into a dynamic, proactive, and buzz-generating state agency. It joined the European Platform of Memory and established contacts with the Polish Institute of National Memory (as it turned out, not for long). The director of the UINP made a statement indicating certain political ambitions, including the creation of a “historical lobby” in parliament and a promise that the institute would run “at full capacity” in 2015.\footnote{”Volodymyr Viatrovych Rossiya vede v Ukraini bilshovysku vijn,” accessed May 12, 2019, http://www.memory.gov.ua/news/volodimir-v-yatrovich-rosiya-vede-v-ukraini-bilshovysku-vijn.}

By all accounts, for a while the plan worked: in record-breaking time, the staff of the institute managed to promote four memorial laws, pass them through the committees of the Verkhovna Rada, and achieve their recognition by parliament,\footnote{It took less than one calendar week to register the laws, place them on the agenda, and adopt them.} despite the fact that all four laws were strongly criticized by the Research-Expert Branch of the Verkhovna Rada due to their juridical flimsiness and inappropriate rhetoric (see chapter 6 for more details).\footnote{”Vysnovok na Proekt Zakonu Ukrayiny, ’Pro pravovy status ta vshanuvannya pam’яти hontiv za ne-
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fact that all these laws were approved in violation of parliamentary procedures and via “expedited procedure”113 clearly demonstrated the new style of UINP leadership and the “historical faction” of the parliament, which momentarily coincided with the political coalition in power.114

Legal culture and procedures fell victim to political expediency, which in the case of the Verkhovna Rada was a rule rather than an exception. The director of the UINP himself did not deny that political expediency was the main reason for the ultra-fast adoption of these laws. According to him, there was not much time because by the autumn of 2015, the “window of possibilities” for the adoption of such laws closed due to conflicts inside the ruling coalition.115

This mode of action somewhat disagreed with the loud-mouthed declarations of the UINP management. In December 2014, right as the aforementioned laws were being prepared, one of the UINP’s chief staff members, during an interview with the newspaper Dzerkalo tyzhnya (Mirror Weekly) said this:

The UINP is a tool of public dialogue. The existence of the institute is not a goal in itself. It should hold a dialogue around the heritage of the totalitarian past. The task of the institute is to overcome stereotypes and myths established by Soviet propaganda, to open up the secret archives of the repressive organs and party organs of the USSR, to preserve the memory about the tragic and the heroic pages of struggle for human liberty and dignity, to overcome the conflicts of memory, and to provide critical reflection on the past.116

113 Only a week elapsed between their registration and their submission to the plenary session, a rapidity most incredible; furthermore, it took the MPs just forty-two minutes to discuss and adopt the laws.
116 Ibid.
It is not hard to notice that dialogue did not work even at the earliest stage of the institute’s activities. As for “legitimate tools,” their real nature was well demonstrated by the processes surrounding the adoption of the memorial laws. The speed and the lack of transparency in their development and the manner of their adoption excluded any possibility of public debate. Criticism by lawyers was simply ignored. Even within the discussion that took place after their adoption, the UINP chose to ignore the perspective expressed by those who could not be classified as opposition but whose views did not coincide with ideological attitudes and ambitions of the UINP leadership. An open letter by specialists in Ukrainian history (both foreign and Ukrainian) addressed to Petro Poroshenko, president of Ukraine, and to Volodymyr Groysman, chairman of the parliament, urging them to reject two of the four memorial laws had no effect. Poroshenko signed all the laws, promising to make changes later, and the director of the UINP composed a reply letter that, far from indicating his readiness for dialogue, accused some of the signatories of the open letter of playing into the hands of Ukraine’s enemies.

The adoption of the memorial laws was not supported by any analysis of public opinion, especially when taking into account regional differences. Between December 2014 and January 2015 (that is, four or five months before the hasty decisions of the parliament), regional differences in the assessment of a number of historical events and personalities, especially those directly or indirectly addressed by the memorial laws, reached critical levels according to a survey of the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation and the Ukrainian Sociology Service. For instance, while these laws had a mission to fight the ideological heritage of the USSR, the disintegration of the Soviet Union was viewed negatively by 70 percent of respondents in Donbass.


118 The laws “On condemnation of the Communist and National-Socialist (Nazi) totalitarian regimes and prohibition of propaganda of their symbols” and “On legal status and celebration of memory of participants of the struggle for the independence of Ukraine” were the most controversial. The laws “On perpetuation of memory of victory over Nazism in the Second World War of 1939–1945” and “On access to the archives of the repressive organs of the Communist totalitarian regime of 1917–1991” were the least controversial.

percent in the Lower Dnieper region, and 52 percent in Sloboda Ukraine. The Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), glorified as independence fighters in one of the memorial laws, was negatively seen by 68.4 percent of respondents in Donbass, 49.2 percent in the Lower Dnieper Region and 38.6 percent in Sloboda Ukraine. Similar proportions were observed in attitudes toward the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA), which was also legitimized by the new laws.120

The representatives of the UINP cannot be said to have been unaware of the public mood. One of its policy documents contains a note that in Ukraine, there is a “confrontation of several memory patterns contested across generations and regions. These patterns are based on different perceptions of communist ideology, the Soviet historical experience, and of the Ukrainian liberation movement.”121 To solve this conflict, the leadership of UINP suggested forced decommunization: the elimination of nostalgic Soviet (imperial nostalgic) symbols and their replacement with symbols of the national/nationalist narrative in the public space. The manner in which these laws were implemented between the autumn of 2015 and the beginning of 2016 also showed the propensity of the UINP for conflict in the sphere of historical politics. Decommunization in general did not evoke much resistance, especially as the mass revolutionary enthusiasm of the winter of 2014 that resulted in a wave of anticommunist iconoclasm had already removed some of the most troublesome monuments from the communist era.

At the very beginning, the majority of Ukrainians, however, perceived state-led decommunization as ill-timed and unnecessary as compared to more urgent tasks, such as overcoming the socio-economic crisis. According to a poll in August 2015, 35 percent of respondents had a strongly negative view of decommunization, 55 percent had a moderately negative view, and 10 percent were “relatively loyal.”122 According to another poll (May 2015, online),

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52 percent of respondents believed that the country had more urgent and important problems than decommunization, while 46 percent supported the adoption of such laws now or in the future.123

In fact, the UINP made its main field of activity the eviction of the Soviet nostalgic (and the remnants of the imperial) memory narrative, together with the promotion and imposition of the national/nationalist narrative within the exclusivist model of collective memory and the corresponding type of historical politics. To respect political etiquette, the institute demonstrated elements of inclusivity in several of its projects (for instance, elements of Soviet history are included in the World War II narrative). But they clearly pale in comparison to the dominating conceptualization of Ukrainian cultural (ethnic) nationalism that completely excludes any symbolism related to the heritage of the “totalitarian regime,” which is regarded as an exclusively Russian heritage. The war is known as World War II, and the term “Great Patriotic War” is completely rejected; for example, World War II is commemorated on May 8 with a poppy instead of the Soviet anniversary on May 9, which is symbolized by the Soviet carnation. World War II is represented primarily by ethnic Ukrainians who participated in the war. The occasional inclusion of Holocaust stories in the general representation of the war can also be considered a departure from the Soviet canon and, at the same time, an attempt to show Ukraine’s proximity to “European standards.”

After its reconstitution in 2014, the UINP became the initiator of the type of historical politics that, even when aimed at dialogue and reconciliation, promote these values only because external actors (especially the “West”) require it. On the whole, the activity of the institute had strong conflict potential, notably in the context of aggravating differences among the regional versions of collective memory. The conflict potential was mainly engendered by the tactic of administrative and political obstruction of one version of collective/historical memory (the Soviet nostalgic) to benefit another (the national/nationalist). In several respects, such activity is aimed at the physical elimination of the former. This is especially noticeable in its decommunization tactics, which boiled down to the forced ousting of the nostalgic Soviet narrative of collective/historical memory from Ukrainian

public space and its partial replacement—sometimes voluntary, sometimes forced—by the national/nationalist narrative, with a heavy emphasis on the nationalist component.

The very first reactions to the implementation of the memorial laws proved that such tactics provoked conflicts with “problem” regions in the eastern and southeastern part of the country. The leadership of the institute explained such actions by the need for “dialogue” and “consolidation” and the necessity to unite society in the face of external threat. However, such a position automatically transformed the bearers of alternative versions of collective/historical memory into “enemy agents” with whom no dialogue was/is possible.124

In reality the planned ideological homogenization was expected to happen not as a result of consensus and dialogue but as a result of the forced replacement of one narrative with another. On the one hand, this stance can be considered a response to the actions of Russia (hybrid war, including information warfare), whose leadership uses the nostalgic Soviet narrative as an important component of the ideological substantiation of its own power. On the other hand, it can be explained by the inherent traits of the national/nationalist narrative of historical memory, based on the principle of ethnocentrism which does not leave room for pluralism. A conflict was inevitable with a similar narrative in Poland, which was similarly promoted by top political leaders.

Formal attempts at communication and explanatory work with the carriers of other versions of collective/historical memory have so far seemed unconvincing and have provoked intermittent misunderstandings and conflicts. For instance, there is the policy of changing names: in Kirovograd, during an informal referendum the majority of inhabitants voted to change the name of the city back to its historical, imperial name, Yelisavetgrad; this was unacceptable for the UINP despite fitting the decommunization program. Likewise, in Dnepropetrovsk, 90 percent of inhabitants voted to keep the name of the city.125 These examples speak for themselves.

So far, the most ambitious plans of the institute included the creation of the Archive of National Memory. In 2015–16, a review of the collections of the SBU archive was begun in order to transfer them to the UINP archive. Considering the physical and financial resources of the institute, the task was technically arduous: the collections in question included 910,000 volumes of archival files preserved in the SBU Sectoral State Archive and its regional departments. The staff of the institute was unable to handle this task (as of February 2016, the UINP employed forty-four people and had ninety-seven vacancies), so the transfer was implemented by means of a simple administrative reassignment of the SBU archival departments to the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory. The SBU archives would be followed by the archives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Justice, Foreign Intelligence Service, Prosecutor General’s Office, State Judicial Administration, State Penitentiary Service, State Border Service Administration, and so on. However, by 2020 only the SBU archive was open to the broader public, while the archives of the other institutions listed above remained untouched.

According to statements that the leadership of the institute made in 2015, a separate law on the UINP was under preparation, which would raise the institute to a new administrative and bureaucratic level and provide for the development of the infrastructure of memorials and other places of memory. In December 2016, the government passed a resolution to create the specialized state UINP archive and planned to find a place for such an archive in three months. Premises for the archive were found and assigned to the institute only at the end of 2019 and then the project was halted.

The year 2016 saw the establishment of the National Memorial Complex to the Heavenly Hundred Heroes and Revolution of Dignity Museum within the institute: almost five million hryvnias were spent on this museum in the first year of its establishment. In 2018, the Maidan Museum began its activities in several rooms of the newly renovated House of Trade Unions (burned down during the revolt in the winter of 2014). That same year, a German architecture agency won an international competition for the memorial

complex project. However, construction would not begin until 2021 because the territory designated for construction cannot be used until the official investigation of the Maidan massacre is completed (the memorial is to be built exactly at the site where the majority of the killings occurred).

The institute’s 2016 report repeatedly mentions the need to create “regional units of the UINP” despite the fact that the institute in Kyiv has only a little more than 50 percent of its staff positions filled.128 By 2019, the institute managed to establish four regional offices with eight employees in total.129

After the dramatic “electoral revolution” in the spring–summer of 2019 (presidential and parliamentary elections) there were “great expectations” that the UINP would shift to a more balanced approach. The former head of the institute began his political career as an MP in Poroshenko’s European Solidarity party, but the new government announced an open competition for the position of the UINP head. However, in spite of these moves, the establishment already possessed a certain institutional memory. Moreover, other top staff members were the major promoters of Soviet-style decommunization, and they retained their positions. The newly appointed director, Anton Drobovych, who had previously worked in the field of Holocaust education, confirmed his commitment to several major initiatives from the previous period: decommunization, the recognition of the Holodomor as an act of genocide at the international level, the construction of the Memorial of the Revolution of Dignity, and the development of the institute’s archive. At the same time, he promised to ensure a more balanced politics of memory and proposed the organization of a dialogue with the broader society about various historical controversies.130

Local authorities and self-government bodies

The activities of local authorities and self-government bodies in the field of historical politics serve as a perfect illustration of the regional dimension of

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various narratives and patterns of historical memory. In the regions, different state bodies (district, city, local administrations) appointed by and representing the central state authority interact with local elected self-government bodies (regional, district, city councils, municipalities). Such a separation of powers often leads to clashes and open conflicts over various issues, from budget policy to running the state, and from the development of infrastructure to social welfare issues. On the one hand, these institutions act as autonomous subjects in this sphere, reflecting the collective interests of regional elites and the moods of local communities; on the other hand, they serve as proxies for national actors, usually political parties or large interest groups.

In 1990, when three oblasts and a number of municipal councils in Western Ukraine came under the control of the People’s Movement of Ukraine (Rukh) and its allies, the first traces of possible institutional conflict between the central government in Kyiv and regional self-government bodies became visible. During the Orange Revolution of 2004 and its aftermath, regional and local councils found themselves participating in the face-off between those who supported different claimants to the presidential authority. A number of regional and municipal councils in the west endorsed Viktor Yushchenko, while the supporters of Viktor Yanukovych conducted the famous congress of councils of Eastern and Southeastern Ukraine in Severodonetsk on November 28, 2004, which led to accusations of separatism. This pattern was repeated in 2014.

In the intervening years between the revolutions, local self-government bodies did not remain idle. Historical politics at this level represented general Ukrainian tendencies, probably in their most perfect form.

The powers and competencies of local councils (rural, village, district, city, regional) in the sphere of historical politics are defined by legislation, regulations, and by-laws. For instance, the authority to rename streets and topographic objects is regulated by Article 37 of the Law of Ukraine “On local self-government.” This function is ranked with “questions of administrative-territorial structure,” which is not much relevant to the issue.\footnote{Zakon Ukrainy, ‘Pro mistseve samovriaduvannia v Ukraini,’” May 21, 1997, http://zakon1.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/280/97-vp.} Another important field of activity, namely the erection of new monuments, is regulated by the decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine: “Some questions
on the construction (creation) of monuments and places of memory” (2004). According to this document, the construction of monuments of national (state) significance is part of the competency of the Cabinet of Ministers, while monuments on the local level can be erected by the decision of local executive or self-government organizations.132 In matters related to the preservation of monuments and places of memory, local self-government bodies, unlike the executive authorities, do not have any tangible power. However, they can have a formal ownership over monuments and places of memory.

Let us observe several of the most typical examples of the participation of local self-government organizations in historical politics on the regional level. In three western regions of Ukraine, regional and city councils started decommunization early, in 1990, despite being formally Soviet: they dismantled Lenin monuments even though such actions did not comply with existing legislation.133 By the middle of the 1990s, such topographic markers as streets and squares in cities and towns were renamed in this region en masse. Lenin streets and other locations named after Soviet or Communist Party leaders were first to disappear, followed by those named for Russian political and cultural figures; the names of Ukrainian historical figures, both local and national, took their place.

Between 1996 and 1998, regional and city councils in the same region officially recognized UPA soldiers as fighters for Ukrainian freedom and granted them social guarantees and preferences at the expense of local budgets. Considering the state of these budgets, it is obvious that the significance of such decisions was rather political and symbolic, but in the 2000s, the policy persisted. For instance, in 2013 the city councils of Lviv, Ternopil, and Ivano-Frankivsk decided to make additional monthly payments not only to UPA veterans but also to those who served in the 14th Waffen Grenadier Division of the SS (1st Galician).134 These social decisions were undoubtedly a response to the historical politics of the central government during the Yanukovich presidency, which were favorable to the reincarnation of the nostalgic Soviet memory narrative. All these actions took place only in the Western regions, where the local population was hostile to and alienated

133 The Lviv, Ternopil, and Ivano-Frankivsk oblasts.
134 See the tag of the Tyzhden newspaper: http://tyzhden.ua/Tag/ветерани УПА.
from the Soviet and Russian imperial heritage. In general, Ukrainians were not too preoccupied with historical politics in the 1990s: an overwhelming majority of the population was far more concerned with survival given the severe social and economic crises.

The situation changed radically starting in the middle of the first decade of the 2000s, when there was an escalation of historical politics. During the Orange Revolution, local councils began to take part in national politics, including the political contextualization of the past. The confrontation of the national/nationalist and nostalgic Soviet narratives became the central plot of this politics. This situation reached its peak between 2014 and 2019, when the politics of decommunization became an all-Ukraine enterprise.

Let us look at several examples.

In November 2008, by a decision of the Kharkiv City Council (on the initiative of a deputy of the Communist Party of Ukraine), a memorial stone to UPA soldiers that had been installed in 1992 was declared illegal. It was also in Kharkiv that a decision was taken within the framework of the national campaign dedicated to the seventy-fifth anniversary of the 1932–33 famine, to erect a Holodomor monument. Kharkiv was the capital of Soviet Ukraine until 1934. Discussions over the location of the monument that took place in summer 2007 triggered an open political conflict between the mayor’s office and the city council on the one hand, and the regional state administration on the other. Mayor Mykhailo Dobkin and the majority of members of the city council were members or allies of the Party of Regions. The regional administration was headed by Arsen Avakov, who was appointed by Viktor Yushchenko. Avakov and his supporters insisted that the monument should stand in the city center. Their opponents, using various pretexts, worked to move the monument farther from downtown Kharkiv. Moreover, under the pressure of communist deputies, the Kharkiv Oblast Council refused to recognize the Holodomor as genocide. The city council and the mayor’s office won the struggle: the monument found its home on the outskirts of Kharkiv in November 2008.135

In Odessa, the city council decided to restore the tsarist-era monument to the founders of Odessa (with the central figure of Catherine the Great fea-

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tured prominently) as early as 1995, but the implementation of this decision began only in 2007, when the city council decided to reconstruct the historical look of Katerynynska Square. This decision, seemingly quite innocent, had strong conflict potential: the restoration of a monument whose central symbol was the Empress of Russia (and the “oppressor of Cossack freedoms”) was a sharp repudiation of Yushchenko’s historical politics. In spite of several loud public scandals that led to a physical face-off between the police and opponents of the restoration, and in spite of protests from President Yushchenko, the refurbished landmark was unveiled in autumn 2007.

That same year, the Lviv Regional Council decided to erect a monument to Stepan Bandera. In this case, the monument had majority support so the discussions focused on the installation area (the proposal was to erect it near the Opera House, where a granite Lenin had stood during the Soviet era), its design (too obviously reminiscent of the Soviet monumental style), and its size (the mayor’s office was unhappy about the total area occupied by the statue).

It goes without saying that the mass colonization of the symbolic space of three western regions by images of Bandera during the first decade of the 2000s was also initiated by local self-government bodies. In 2010, their zeal for promoting the memory of the OUN leaders was buoyed by developments in the east of the country. When the Donetsk court ruled that awarding the title of “Hero of Ukraine” to Roman Shukhevych and Stepan Bandera was illegitimate (2010), the city councils of Ivano-Frankivsk, Lviv, Ternopil, and Lutsk responded by making them their honorary citizens. Simultaneously, the Lviv Regional Council appealed to citizens to stop celebrating May 9 as the day of victory in World War II and instead to commemorate it as the Memory Day of Victims of the Second World War. Furthermore, in 2011, Lviv deputies asked the Constitutional Court for an official explanation about the name of the day of remembrance, but their request was rejected. The Lviv City Council’s decision on May 8, 2013, to celebrate the Day of Sorrow and Celebration of the Memory of the Victims of Totalitarian Regimes and the Victims of the Second World War and to prohibit any use of Soviet, communist, and Nazi symbols in the territory of Lviv, fits the same pattern: it was adopted the day before the “Soviet” Victory Day of May 9.

In Poltava, the role that the local authorities played in erecting a monument to Ivan Mazepa is particularly interesting. The city council made this decision, but the funds that were collected were insufficient to complete the project. In 2007, President Viktor Yushchenko became personally involved. According to his decree “About the celebration of the 300th anniversary of events related to the Hetman Ivan Mazepa’s military and political actions and the conclusion of a Ukrainian-Swedish Alliance,” 1.5 million hryvnias were allocated from the state budget for the monument, and the regional level state administration took on the role of commissioner. The installation of the monument was scheduled for 2009 on the three hundredth anniversary of the Battle of Poltava, but at the end of 2008, the regional council, controlled by a coalition of the Party of Regions, the Lytvyn Bloc, the communists, and the Yulia Tymoshenko Bloc, decided to return the funds to the state budget. As a result, fundraising for the monument was conducted by the Poltava branch of the Prosvita society, and the monument—the artistic features of which became the object of heated debates and mockery—was installed with allocations from the city council only in 2016.137

Of course, the participation of elected self-government bodies in historical politics is not limited to issues regarding the reorganization of symbolic space. Besides the aforementioned decision of the Kharkiv Regional Council that denied the Holodomor = genocide formula, the Donetsk City Council deserves a mention. The members of this body addressed the Party of Regions members of parliament in 2009, demanding they create a commission to revise history textbooks to ensure that lessons on “historical truth” could be conducted in schools.138 Likewise, in summer 2012, the mayor’s office of Lviv funded a school textbook on Ukrainian history for the fifth grade that was advertised either as a supplement to the official textbook or a replacement. The regular national textbook approved by the Ministry of Education was, according to the inhabitants of Lviv, incorrectly modified by the central authorities, and thus distorted historical truth.139

Local government and self-government organizations have long preserved a certain level of autonomy in the field of historical politics. The situation changed in 2015. The law “On the condemnation of the Communist and National-Socialist (Nazi) totalitarian regimes and the prohibition on the propagation of their symbols” made it incumbent upon local authorities and self-government bodies to take part in the decommunization of the public space. In cases where these institutions fail to undertake the measures prescribed by the law within the statutory deadline, the right to change names reverts to the Verkhovna Rada and the Cabinet of Ministers. Moreover, the central government declared that resistance to decommunization by representatives of the local authorities was a criminal offense. Thus, the autonomy of local authorities and self-government bodies in the field of politics of history was reduced, mostly as a means to do away with the nostalgic Soviet narrative. However, “problem” regions (mostly eastern and southern) have sought to recover their autonomy in the sphere of historical politics. In May 2017, the Odessa City Council annulled a decision made by Mikhail Saakashvili, the ex-governor of the region, and brought back some of the communist-era names of streets. Similarly, the Soviet-era wall of fame devoted to Odessa citizens—Heroes of the Soviet Union and Heroes of Socialist Labor—remains untouchable.

In June 2019, the Kharkiv city council restored the name of the Soviet icon, Marshal Georgiy Zhukov to an avenue that had been renamed after 2015. In December 2019, the mayor of Kakhovka revolted against the UINP, rejecting the demand to remove the Soviet monument “Tatchanka” (the name for a machine-gun carrier). After fierce public debates, the new leadership of the UINP proposed the creation of an open-air museum of monumental propaganda organized around this monument.

Chapter 3

Archives and Museums

As already mentioned, open access to the archives, especially to the archives of repressive organs, is one of the central questions of “democratic transition” and “transitional justice” in postcommunist countries. Since the second half of the 1980s, the archives have been a distinct object of public interest in Ukraine. In 1990, the publication of documents about the 1932–33 famine, which had hitherto been inaccessible even for party personnel, became a major dimension of political struggle against the ruling party.

From the end of the 1980s to the beginning of the 1990s, the archives were involved in the rehabilitation of victims of political repression. The SBU Archive got involved in the process, handing over the personal files of victims of political repression to the Public Prosecutor’s Office to have their sentences reviewed. The following figures give an idea of the scope of this work: 180,000 persons were rehabilitated between 1989 and 1991, and almost 249,000 between 1992 and 2001.144

Public activists and politicians, as well as historians who professed affirmative history, believed that the opening of archives and access to data (previously concealed by the communist regime) would pave the way to historical truth. These expectations were only partially met: the “archival revolution” did not happen even where the greatest revelations were expected. For instance, the “smoking gun” demonstrating Stalin’s intention to destroy or subdue the Ukrainians with the help of the 1932–33 famine was never found. The vulgar positivism of some historians who hoped to discover something in the archive storerooms that would radically change perceptions and interpretations of the period of totalitarianism proved futile.

In the 1990s–2000s, the mainstream Ukrainian historiography of the “great terror” followed the patterns and representations of the “totalitarian school” which had been developed without broad access to the archives. The opening of the archives of the repressive organs (in fact, only one of them) after 2015 played a positive role in the general democratization of Ukrainian society and in the broadening of knowledge about the Soviet period, but it has not yet influenced the state of the art.

The archives are regularly included in various events related to representations of the past in the public space: exhibitions, commemorations, public debates. In most cases, they are there to help carry out the orders of the central authorities and do not have any autonomous role.

Certainly, the archival sphere also played a part in the games of various politicians. For example, during the political crisis of 2006–2007, the parties united in their opposition to President Yushchenko (the Party of Regions, communists, and socialists), which controlled the parliament and the government, appointed the communist Olha Hinzburh to the position of the Head of the State Committee of the Archives of Ukraine. It was an act of defiance: a system that included 789 archives was now headed by a person who had no professional training (Hinzburh was an expert in the construction of reinforcement structures) and was quite militant about limiting access to the archives. This archival neophyte was a convinced opponent of promoting the Holodomor = genocide formula in the public space.

A new escalation of historical politics after 2014 made the archives, once again, the focus of attention for “mnemonic warriors.” The introductory clause of the Law of Ukraine, “On access to the archives of the repressive organs of the communist totalitarian regime of 1917–1991” (2015) expressly states that the closure of the archives was a precondition of the annexation of Crimea and the military conflict in eastern Ukraine. According to the authors of the law, access to the aforementioned archives could contribute to a better understanding of contemporary history and the prevention of conflicts and animosity. As previously mentioned (see the section on the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory), a grandiose project was declared in 2015, which stipulated the transfer of the archives of the “organs of the totalitarian repressive regime” to the management of the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory: it involved ten archives of various agencies, including those with a very specific institutional memory.

Museums are also directly involved in historical politics by virtue of their function. According to the State Statistics Service, the number of museums in Ukraine more than doubled between 1990 and 2017, from 214 to 574 (this figure includes state-owned and community museums, and there are different estimates available for the general number of museums). Meanwhile, the number of museum visits decreased by half, from 31.8 million per year to 16.4 million per year.\(^\text{147}\) Almost all commentators blame these figures on the weakness of the coordinated state policy on “increasing the role of museums in shaping the collective ideas about the history of Ukraine.”\(^\text{148}\) In the 2000s, there were attempts to implement standard representations of historical memory in museum exhibitions (on the Holodomor, for example), but these did not gain any traction.

In general, according to recent studies, during the 1990s and the 2000s, museums witnessed the coexistence of Soviet and national/nationalist memory narratives (with a growing share for the latter).\(^\text{149}\) At the same time, this was a period of gradual expansion for the national/nationalist narrative, mostly through the creation of new museums and memorial complexes and partly through the banishment and replacement of the nostalgic Soviet narrative from existing museums or through the “nationalization” of Soviet-era exhibitions. This trend has become notably stronger with the development of the decommunization policy after 2015, which involved editing museum exhibitions related to the Soviet period. It is remarkable that this nationalization often faced little resistance because the myth advanced fit very well with both the Soviet nostalgic and the national/nationalist standards of representation, e.g., the Cossack myth. An example is the Chyhyryn Historic and Cultural Reserve, which was created in the Soviet era in 1989 and given the status of “national” in 1995, during the independence years.\(^\text{150}\)

An analysis of the operations of history-related museums (there were 128 such museums) carried out by the National Institute for Strategic Studies in 2007 demonstrated strong regional differences in representations of the national/nationalist and nostalgic Soviet narratives. Unsurprisingly,
the former dominated in the western and central regions of Ukraine, and the latter ruled in the eastern regions and in Crimea. From the 1990s to the beginning of the 2000s, twenty-five local museums dedicated to the nationalist movement and its leaders were founded in the western regions. Museums dedicated to the plight of Ukrainians under the heel of occupation forces complemented them; in general, they narrated the horrors of the “Communist terror.” Meanwhile, in eastern regions like Donbass and Crimea, not only have exhibitions and representations of the Soviet period remained virtually unaltered, but new ones, often quite exotic, have been created in institutions such as the Museum of Victims of the Orange Revolution in Luhansk (2007).

The regionalization of museological interpretations of historical memory in Ukraine is aggravated both by the weakness of Kyiv’s regional policy and by the fact that local history museums are funded by local authorities (councils). Consequently, their message can vary considerably, depending on prevailing political forces in the area.

152 Kharkhun, “Radyanska spadshchina,” 86.