

THE CASE STUDY OF HISTORICAL CONTEXTS IN THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPING MODERN DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS ON THE EXAMPLE OF UKRAINE AND POLAND

^aNATALIA BUHLAI, ^bTETIANA BUKINA, ^cMYKHAYLO NAGORNYAK, ^dKATERYNA PLEVAKO, ^eOLEKSANDR KUCHYK

^a*Faculty of Pefagogy and Psychology, Mykolaiv V.O.*

Sukhomlynskyi National University, Mykolai, Ukraine

^b*Department of Social and General Technical Disciplines,*

Admiral Makarov National University, Mykolayiv, Ukraine

^c*Department of international relations, Vasyl Stefanyk*

Precarpathian National University, Ivano-Frankivsk, Ukraine

^d*Department of philosophy, bioethics and history of medicine,*

Bogomolets national medical University, Kyiv, Ukraine

^e*Department of International Relations and Diplomacy, Ivan*

Franko National University of Lviv, Lviv, Ukraine

email: ^abuglay66@ukr.net, ^btanyshabukina@gmail.com,

^cnagornyakXXmm@gmail.com,

^dKaterina.plevako2509@gmail.com, ^eol_kuchyk@ukr.net

Abstract: Public discussions of historical events continue to influence relations between countries, political decisions and initiatives. **The purpose** of the academic paper lies in identifying the influence of historical discourse on foreign policy practice on the example of diplomatic relations between Poland and Ukraine. **Methodology.** The method of content analysis based on discourse theory has been used in the present academic paper, which makes it possible to determine the impact of the historical context on diplomatic relations and foreign policy of Ukraine and Poland. The critical approach to the description of diplomatic relations between countries has been applied in the research using the information from the official websites of European Commission (2021) and the Institute of National Remembrance. **Results.** The academic paper has highlighted the impact of populist politics and its ramifications in historical discourse on foreign policy. The use of historical memory in a clear-cut and concrete foreign policy program of populism determines the diplomatic relations of countries, fostering the tendency to over-determine the priorities of internal policy. The historical context of Poland and Ukraine proves that historical narratives animated by the articulatory practice of populism influence external policy practice, pointing to the relationship between populism and foreign policy. A clear coincidence has been revealed between the political logic of articulating populism and the historical discourse of the PiS government. Along with this, the links between populism and victimization have been revealed in the research; they are similar to the change of collective memories in the direction of victimization in order to create cultural structures contributing to the spread and approval of populism.

Keywords: historical discourse, historical narrative, practice of populism, foreign (external) policy practice, diplomatic relations.

1 Introduction

Historical conflicts between Poland and Ukraine, in particular, the Polish-Ukrainian war of 1918-1919, the events of 1943-1945, have significantly affected the diplomatic relations of the countries (Nowicka, Sagan & Studzińska, 2019). Public discussions of historical events continue to influence relations between countries, as well as political decisions and initiatives.

After taking an office, the President Andrzej Duda has explicitly stated that the Populist Party "Law and Justice" (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, PiS) came to power with the intention of both "making the necessary adjustments" in Poland's foreign policy (Duda, 2015a) and with the aim of "fighting for historical truth in relations with neighbours" because of "active historical policy" (Duda, 2015b). These initiatives have influenced each other and have been implemented in parallel. Due to the fact that the party won an overwhelming majority in the 2015 parliamentary elections and took the helm of the executive branch, the historical policy of the PiS government did have direct and indirect implications for the country's foreign policy and diplomatic relations. This is most noticeable in relation to the international implications of the amendment to the IPN Act (also known abroad as the "Holocaust Act"), as well as Poland's policy towards its two immediate neighbours, namely Germany and Ukraine. The leadership of PiS frequently resorted to anti-German rhetoric in political and historical debates, while the Polish - Ukrainian bilateral relations had been deteriorating due to historical memory. This contrasts not only with the policies and discourse of the previous government (Civic Platform, Platforma Obywatelska, PO), but also deepens with what has constituted Poland's foreign policy tradition since 1989. The geopolitical and ontological project "Return to Europe", which

has long been considered the one passing through Germany, and the strategic project of Ukraine's integration into Euro-Atlantic structures since 1989 have been the decisive vectors of Poland's foreign policy tradition.

The purpose of the academic paper lies in identifying the influence of historical discourse on foreign policy practice on the example of diplomatic relations between Poland and Ukraine.

2 Literature review

Historical contexts are often used in politics as a tool to attract voters in order to support the party through an appeal to the national past and collective memory (Caramani & Manucci, 2019). Populism as an articulatory practice can influence or be reflected in historical discourse, which in turn will affect the results of foreign policy. The influence of the "political consequences" of using collective memory on the constellation of power and politics is rarely brought into question in the scientific literature (Müller, 2002). The contextual, random, and politically significant nature of historical memory in external policy has been documented in the literature on the study of historical memory (Lebow, 2006); however, little information is available about the mechanisms by which it influences. In some scientific works based on cognitive psychology, the following causal relationships have been theorized to some extent (Houghton, 1996). For instance, in the foreign policy of Central European countries, the institutionalization of the "Return to Europe" narrative has long meant that any policy options that make the country look "eastern" rather than "western" were considered illegitimate (Cadier & Szulecki, 2020). However, conceptions of identity and the state itself are not consolidated, but are subject to continuous discussion, reproduction and challenge. By promoting their political superiority or justifying their policy choices, politicians create and temporarily change national identity through the articulation of cultural, historical memory shaping the imaginary security of the state. As a result, a concrete representation of international politics and the place of the state in the international arena are formed (Wedes, 1999). By promoting specific articulations of cultural and historical materials representing the idea of state security, populist-inspired historical discourse can promote specific images of "I" and "Others", that is, countries and other states. This affects the representation of relations between states and interactions between them. Historical discourse contributes to a particular political strategy and foreign policy. Thus, when analysing external policy, historical discourse should be considered as "a formulation of meaning and a lens of interpretation, and not objective historical truths" (Hansen, 2013).

The discussions are taking place in the scientific literature about the impact of historical events on modern diplomatic relations between Ukraine and Poland. Nowicka, Sagan & Studzińska (2019) discuss sister-city arrangement and cultural cooperation between Ukrainian Lviv and six Polish cities as a tool of small diplomacy. Gajauskaite (2013) conducts an analysis of the evolution and intensity of the Polish - Ukrainian strategic partnership in order to expand theoretical ideas, identify common benefits. The author claims that there are no effects of partnership between countries because of radical political, economic and social transformations after the collapse of the USSR. Ukrainian - Polish diplomatic relations are considered in the context of the European Neighbourhood Policy and the historical significance of Ukraine as the heart of Rus (Howorth, 2017), as a potential partner of the EU's liberal democratic policy. Marczuk (2019) examines the agreements on friendly cooperation and good neighbourliness signed by Poland and Ukraine in the 1990s, their impact on Polish public diplomacy in Ukraine in 2007-2014.

Burlyuk (2017) examines Polish policy on the principle of preferences and interests, institutions and procedures, strategies

and actions. The results show a steady continuity, despite significant changes in the relevant context conditions. The endpoint – Poland’s goal of supporting Ukraine’s European future – has remained unchanged for decades, with only minor changes. However, the understanding of the most effective means, that is, strategies and institutional structures towards achieving this goal, has modified, indicating a change in worldview. A number of nuances regarding the impact of Poland’s EU membership on Poland’s eastern neighbourhood with the EU and, in particular, Ukraine’s policy, as well as the role of events related to Ukraine, contribute to various directions in the literature on the relationship between EU policy towards the post-Soviet space and the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

Cadier & Szulecki (2020) analyse populist political orientation of the ruling party of Poland (“Law and Justice” – PiS, a conservative, nationalist and populist party), which due to historical discourse has influenced foreign policy and diplomatic relations with Ukraine. The right-wing opposition PiS has won full parliamentary majority in Poland’s 2015 elections (Szczepiński, 2017). The popularity of this party is explained in particular by the historical context on which the ideology and strategy are being built (Stanley & Cześnik, 2019). Populism of PiS has sought to achieve a total redefinition of the categories of a hero, a victim and a perpetrator, as well as the role of Poland in order to influence relations with Ukraine. On the one hand, the authors reveal the content and fundamentals of the historical discourse and policy of the PiS government for determining the role of the historical context in the populist orientation of the party. On the other hand, the influence of historical discourse, as a reflection of the ideological, strategic or random practice of governments on foreign policy is examined in the academic paper. Thus, history and foreign policy are interrelated: internal historical policies may have an immediate impact on diplomatic relations; populist historical discursive practices can be reflected and affected by external policy (Szczepiński 2017; Stanley and Cześnik 2019; Rooduijn et al., 2019).

During the period of PiS ruling, Polish - Ukrainian bilateral relations had been deteriorating due to historical memory as opposed to Poland’s previous policies and Poland’s foreign policy tradition since 1989. The geopolitical and ontological project “Return to Europe”, which has long been considered as the one passing through Germany, and the strategic project of Ukraine’s integration into Euro-Atlantic structures since 1989 have been the decisive vectors of Poland’s foreign policy tradition (Kuzniar, 2016; Wiśniewski, 2017). Criticizing the political and cultural hegemony of Germany in Europe, emphasizing in this context the “easternness” of Poland, threatening Ukraine to block or postpone its (hypothetical) future accession to the EU, the PiS government was ready to abandon both vectors.

3 Materials and methods.

In the present academic paper, the method of content analysis based on the theory of discourse has been used, which makes it possible to determine the influence of the historical context on diplomatic relations and foreign policy of Ukraine and Poland. Along with this, the critical approach to describing diplomatic relations between countries has been applied in the research using the information from the official websites of European Commission (2021) and the Institute of National Remembrance. Based on the analysis, the determination of the interrelationship between populism and historical memory has been conducted in the academic paper, as a consequence, interconnection between historical memory and foreign policies. This has contributed to the sequence of the research and consistency in the general analytical structure. The theory of discourse is used to explain external policy, emphasizing the “constitutive significance of representations of identity in order to formulate and discuss foreign policy” (Hansen, 2013). The theory of discourse makes it possible to explain the choice of foreign policy course taking into account the ideas about the state, national identity, consequences and results (Waever, 2002).

4 Results

Poland and Ukraine have a centuries-old common history. Almost the entire first half of XX century is the most controversial period in the country’s relations. Two nationalities were not ready to reach compromise and consent concerning historical events in which the conflict was the territory of Eastern Galicia, Volyn and Podlaska.

Ukraine was the main priority of Polish diplomacy from the moment of gaining independence in 1991. An independent Ukraine, focused on Western, is considered by Polish foreign policy elites as a necessary geopolitical buffer against Russian power in Eastern Europe and as vital for Poland’s own safety (Zwolski, Zwolski & Roughley, 2018). Such a vision of Ukraine, in particular, has led to the fact that Warsaw has become one of the most stable supporters of Ukraine’s accession to NATO and the EU. Moreover, the emergence of a democratic and friendly Ukraine is central to particular ideas and self-understanding that have shaped Poland’s foreign policy in recent decades, such as a draft of Great Strategy ULB (Acronym of Ukraine, Lithuania and Belarus), created by intellectuals – emigrants Yuliush Myroshevsky and Jerzy Gedroich (Szulecki, 2016), as well as the idea of “Prometheis” (Kowal 2019). In general, in their foreign policy decisions or in multilateral forums, such as the EU or NATO, the PiS government has redefined the traditional Polish geopolitical vision of Ukraine. However, the internal policy of the PiS party, according to the historical memory and the past of Ukrainian - Polish relations, has influenced the diplomatic relations of both countries, which were marked by tensions in relation to historical memory and led to the fact that the idea of “Prometheis” was increasingly rejected. This idea was rejected due to tensions in the rational perception of ULB, the purpose of which was to perpetuate historical animosities between countries as an unnecessary past. At the same time, the historical discourse of the PiS party considered Ukrainians within the framework of the categories of “German Nazis”, in which the figure of Poland was viewed as a victim. The most important symbol of Polish sacrifice within the framework of the historical context of PiS is the mass murder of 1943-1944 in Volyn at the hands of Ukrainian nationalists, as a result of which about 60–100 000 Polish civilians were killed. Although the scale and cruelty of these events are historically indisputable, the combination of nationalist perception and populist articulation of a historical outsider suffering from foreign “others”, levels out a wider context of Polish-Ukrainian relations, in which murders took place.

At the same time, the Polish Party did not consider the legitimacy of Polish oppression against Ukraine. As a result of the contradiction of nationalist historical discourse and populist denial of any historical events between Ukraine and Poland, in addition to its own sacrifice, PiS enhances the confrontation that affects bilateral relations.

The exacerbation of the conflict of historical memory between the two governments, which has been analysed in the present academic paper from the Polish side, contrasts sharply with the rather positive social relations between these two countries. This is evidenced by the fact that the mass influxes of Ukrainian labour migrants are integrated into Poland. Due to the military conflict of Ukraine and Russia in 2014-2016, the number of Ukrainian migrant workers in the EU increased by 42%. Almost 1 million of Ukrainians worked in the agricultural sector of Poland in 2019 (Chukhnova, 2020). According to the latest data from the Office for Foreigners as of 2021, more than 250 000 Ukrainian citizens have residence permits in Poland, of which 80% have a temporary residence permit for three years) (European Commission, 2021).

The use of historical context by Poland’s Populist Party creates an environment in which nationalist perceptions dominate on both sides of the border. As a result, the dynamics of radicalization is intensified, negatively affecting the political dialogue. In July 2016, the Polish parliament voted for the act of commemoration of the memory of “all citizens of the Republic

of Poland brutally killed by Ukrainian nationalists"; the government called the massacres in Volyn "genocide" and established a national day of remembrance (Sejm, 2016). The monument to the UPA in South-East Poland was dismantled. Due to this fact, Polish exhumations and commemorations in Volyn were prohibited in Kyiv, as well as the work of the Institute of National Remembrance of Poland on the territory of Ukraine until the monument is reconstructed. The Minister of Culture of Poland and Deputy Prime Minister of Poland Piotr Gliński during a visit to Kyiv in October 2016 was unable to resolve these political issues. The Deputy Director of the Institute of National Remembrance has stressed that there will be "no consent" towards attempts to build "triumphal arches" for the UPA in Poland.

The Polish government has emphasized the martyrdom and the figure of the victim as the only legitimate one, reflecting the Polish experience of military relations with Ukraine. At the same time, "Volyn tragedy" actually does not exist in the social-political discourse of Ukraine. A public opinion poll on this issue, conducted in Ukraine in 2003 by the Razumkov Center, shows that only 8% of Ukrainians stated that they were well informed about those events, about 28% - "heard something about them". Almost 50% of respondents admitted that they did not hear anything about this tragedy (Ukrainian Institute of National Memory, 2022).

This research also contained a clarifying question for those who felt they had been well informed about the events. 37,6% of those nearly very "well-informed" percent said both sides were to blame; 25% considered that none of the parties was guilty, but the war was "guilty"; 15,1% believed that Polish people were guilty; 4,8% argued that Ukrainians were guilty. That is, if we turn it to 100 percent, then only 0,4% of Ukrainians speak of Ukrainian misconduct in this conflict. Actually, such figures of sociology explain not only asymmetry of memory of the Polish - Ukrainian conflict, but also a different attitude of politicians to this issue in Poland and Ukraine.

In Poland, memory of this conflict is actualized in public discourse. In Ukraine, the total lack of memory about the events outlined explains why the principles of electoral democracy entail absolute indifference to this topic of the majority of Ukrainian politicians - it is outside the public discourse.

Consequently, it is not surprising that when the deputy director of the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory drew parallels between the UPA and the Armia Krajowa, abbreviated AK, putting the "guilty" times of war to one level with "heroes", Vashkovsky announced his persona non grata. Poland imposed several bans on entry, calling into question the planned visit of the President Duda to Kyiv. Essentialized historical self-identification (as victims) and essentialization of neighbouring "others" as (heirs) of criminals has led to a vicious circle in which every action of the other side is interpreted through a historical-nationalist prism, thus, confirming expectations and intensifying mistrust.

The use of the historical context does not ensure the rational achievement of the strategic goals of the organic interaction of two countries, characterizing the usual discursive practice. The Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), repeating a historic letter sent by Polish Catholic bishops to their German counterparts in 1965 (Wigura 2013), asked to resolve historical grievances in a Christian way, "forgiving and asking for forgiveness" (Ukrainian Institute of National Memory, 2022), that instantly met resistance. Despite such statements, there are more and more discussions concerning relations between the countries.

As a party seeking to attract some extreme right-wing constituencies, PiS has long united a milieu that cherishes memories of eastern border Poland (Kressy), ranging from nostalgic "friends of Galicia" to more revisionist radicals. This interrelation exacerbates the issue of the eastern border of Poland and its inclusion in the list of foreign policy priorities. The Minister for Foreign Affairs Vaschkovsky used his visit to Lviv,

the Polish city prior to the war, in order to accuse Ukraine in antipolonism and the absence of goodwill in bilateral relations on the example of handling with the military cemetery "Defenders of Lviv". Among them, the Right-wing groups, in particular, the historical image of "wild" Ukrainian nationalists, the disbursed UPA and the ideological leader of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) Stepan Bandera, are powerful and easily negate good-neighbourly political cooperation. The rise of nationalism in Ukraine after 2014 was a grain that fell on the fertile soil of the imaginary security of Poland and fed the comparisons of Ukrainians with "Bandera" people. Despite the explicit nationalist and conservative convictions, these groups and, as a result, most of the PiS mainstream, adhere to discursive practices common to communist propaganda, which exploited the figure of the Ukrainian nationalist rebel in its goals. Amendments to the IPN Law in 2018, apart from the "Holocaust clause" in Article 51, also included an amendment to Article 2, which added crimes against Polish citizens committed by "Ukrainian nationalists". Although in 2019 the law was recognized as unconstitutional and invalidated by the Constitutional Tribunal of Poland, which was blocked by the President, the normative act has led to constant controversies in the Ukrainian media and among Ukrainian historians and politicians. However, despite its radical rhetoric, the PiS government has not fundamentally changed Poland's foreign policy towards Ukraine. Warsaw continued to advocate for Ukraine's accession to the EU and NATO (especially in multilateral forums). Poland provides Ukraine with economic support and actively participates in initiatives that condemn the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and Russia's actions in eastern Ukraine. Symbolically, the PiS government has also continued and concretized the project on creating a joint Polish - Lithuanian-Ukrainian cooperation. However, diplomacy from time to time is determined by internal political considerations on historical memory. In a direct and unpredictable style, inherent in populist leadership, PiS representatives without hesitation have made statements that are contrary to implemented foreign policy. For instance, during a meeting with the right-wing discussion club, Deputy Foreign Ministry Jan Paris has stated that "it is not so that the existence of Ukraine is a condition for a free Poland... Ukraine needs Poland; Poland may well do without Ukraine". Similarly, referring to the example of Greece policy on Northern Macedonia, the Foreign Minister has threatened to veto the hypothetical future accession of Ukraine to the EU if Kyiv does not change the course in its own historical memory policy. Therefore, in general, although the economic and security relations of Poland with Ukraine remain relatively limited, as the analytical centre expert has noted, disputes around historical issues have undermined a wider political dialogue since 2016, "having disorganized Polish - Ukrainian relations".

5 Discussion

The historical discourse of the PiS Government forms certain resonant rhetorical customs, interpretations and narratives legitimizing particular foreign policy options more operational and "legitimate", while actually excluding alternatives (Krebs & Jackson, 2007). Thus, the historical context of Poland and Ukraine proves that historical narratives, animated by articulatory practice of populism, influence foreign policy practices, indicating the relationship between populism and external policies (Chryssogelos, 2017; Verbeek & Zaslove, 2017; Plagemann & Destradi, 2019; Wojczewski, 2019; Cadier 2019). Due to the analysis of Poland under ruling of the PiS government, the academic paper reflects the interrelationship between populism, historical discourse and foreign policy. An evident coincidence between the political logic of the articulation of populism and the historical discourse of the PiS government has been revealed. On the one hand, the structure of the latter reflects the structure of the former in its Manichean, dichotomous and moralizing components. An example of this is the redefinition and totalization of the categories of victims, heroes and criminals in the historical discourse of PiS. The image of the victim has especially become central in the internal populist policy of PiS. In the Polish context, this has become possible thanks to a wide resonance and uncertainty of national

martyrdom. The academic paper has also revealed the links between populism and victimization: similar to changing collective memories towards victimization in order to create cultural structures contributing to the spread and approval of populism (Caramani and Manucci 2019). Therefore, it can be assumed that populist governments have a greater tendency to emphasize victimization in their historical politics.

On the other hand, the PiS government has often mobilized historical representations, symbols and narratives in its populist articulation practice of creating an internal border, alienation of other elites and interpellation of a popular subject as an outsider. Punishment of liberal elites undermining the national force by promoting "pedagogy of shame" regarding the past, assimilating these elites to historical enemies or criminals, such as Nazi Germany and communist regime, calling for mythology about the heroic martyrdom of Polish people and political slogans of Poland "rises from the knees" on the European arena are bright examples in this sense. This indicates to the fact that populism becomes a specific approach to memory policy in the Polish - Ukrainian national contexts. Similar to foreign policy (Wojczewski, 2019), historical policy may be the basis of populist articulation practices and (reproduction) of the collective identity of the people.

The change in historical and foreign policy discourses during rulling of the PiS government has been especially noticeable when it comes to Polish - Ukrainian diplomatic relations. However, the consequences of populist articulation of historical representations of PiS, which had permeated foreign policy discourses, were characterized by a limited influence on foreign policy relations of countries. The policy of reproducing the historical memory of the PiS government and relevant internal political considerations, along with Kyiv's own confrontational position in the policy of memory, indirectly influenced bilateral relations, complicating diplomatic and political dialogue. However, this did not lead to a redefinition of Poland's national interests or Poland's foreign policy identity, or to a review of Poland's policy towards Ukraine and its support. Poland continued to support the independent Ukraine, focused on the West.

In addition to relations with Ukraine and Poland's policy regarding Ukraine, another important and concrete policy result was the international disputes around the amendment to the IPN law as of 2018. The law tried to institutionalize the Polish victim, erase the memory of complicity in the murder of Jews, and pave the way for a heroic great tale within the country and abroad. Poorly drafted legislation and widespread rhetoric around the Law has led to international conflict, which damaged Poland's image abroad and made it vulnerable to attacks from other actors seeking to promote their own revisionist historical policies, such as Vladimir Putin. The former Director of the Warsaw Museum of Polish Jews, Polin, who has been forced to resign after annual counteraction with the Minister of Culture PiS, who tried to control another critical and unmanaged historical institution, suggested that the damage caused by the international reputation of Poland in connection with Holocaust and memory of the Second World War, "makes it unprepared to the types of attacks", launched by Moscow (Stachowiak, 2020).

6 Conclusion

The impact of populist politics and its ramifications in historical discourse on foreign policy has been highlighted in the research. The use of historical memory in a clear-cut and specific foreign policy program of populism determines the diplomatic relations of countries; it fosters the tendency to over-determine the priorities of domestic policy. This tendency was especially noticeable in the politics of the populist PiS party, which applied a critical approach to the recent history of Poland, in which the IPN Act was the most important example of an attempt to legitimize Poland's "sacrifice". In its historical discourse and policy towards Ukraine, the PiS government has also clearly tried to defeat its own political opponents. This example confirms previous investigations on how different governments

use historical strategic narratives in foreign policy. Populist parties are more likely to use such strategies and narratives against their internal political opponents. The influence of the PiS government's historical policy on Polish foreign policy is to a great extent reflected in direct and sharp, even probably often uncontrolled and sometimes unplanned statements. The populists' disregard of the norms of "relevant" political behaviour as a means of representing the "people" is likely to find a special resonance in the implementation of memory policy towards other countries and diplomatic relations, in general.

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Primary Paper Section: A

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