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REMEMBRANCE CONFLICTS AND MEMORY POLICY AS RUSSIAN POLITICAL DISCOURSE ELEMENT

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Abstract

The memory policy is one of the aspects of the governmental so-called soft power implementation. It exists in almost any state and is associated with the desire of the state to control the citizens' behavior and unite them around certain values and principles. The memory policy is based on the principles outlined by the president in 2012 – 2013. The spirituality idea dominates among these principles. This principle correlates and develops memory policy and, in particular, finds its expression in the installation of monuments, implemented with state support. In this article, installation of monuments to the first Russian Tsar Ivan the Terrible in Orel and the christianiser of Russia Knyazh Vladimir in Moscow is reviewed. We regard both events as signs of the state's implementation of a historical policy certain vector, and the installation of these monuments becomes its peculiar indicator. New monuments symbolize not only specific historical figures and historical eras, but also the modern state attitude to the those events. It also concerns the overcoming a certain historical provocation. When we consider the case with Ivan the Terrible, we state the religiosity and peacefulness of this monarch. The second case is even more symbolic and connected with the religious state's basis, despite the fact that decades have passed since the Christianization of Rus' until the actual Christianity establishment. Thus, the article states the instrumental nature of the memory policy, and its transformation in accordance with the changing social, political, cultural and other challenges of our time.

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1. Introduction

Considering a person's memory not only as a psychological phenomenon, but as a phenomenon determined by the individual social activity, it is possible to state that in different social conditions and with different social determinants collective memory receives different relief, which, for example, may be influenced by the level of its conflict or on the contrary, passivity.

The memory relief is fraught with a pronounced element of environmental exposure that transforms the relatively smooth surface of everyday social cooperation through the impact of war, revolution, genocide, repression and other social disasters that escalate many conflicts into metaphorical cliffs and oppositional pools of ethnic groups, nations, cultures and individual social groups and clusters (Pomian, 2011).

It is significant that all elements of social relations are susceptible to transformation, however, in different situations, the impact occurs according to a unique principle.

Moreover, the dynamics is important, i.e. it is necessary to assess the social state or its elements from the starting point of a phenomenon transforming a society, till the moment when a pronounced transformational effect arises, which, in turn, is due to a variety of social connections and processes. It is important to link generations and the information preservation principle. Violation of this principle at some point resulted in situation of an information vacuum and the need to fill gaps using the current information agenda. The further events are from the observer, the greater is the level of primary information picture distortion, and the more the memories conflict potential is actualized.

2. Problem Statement

The research problem of the study can be presented as follows. The transformation of the memory policy principles and structure occurs in all countries and World's regions under the influence of internal and external political factors. Russia, which, in the period of its recent history, has sharply moved from communist ideology, first to a liberal and then to a conservative ideological and political model, is an extremely active participant in this process. Nevertheless, the new image of the official Russian historical memory model is rather abstract, has many interpretations and requires a deep and diverse study.

3. Research Questions

Russian historical memory in its official terms the object of this study. Undoubtedly, we can say that in Russia there are several views on historical memory. They are related to the degree of officialdom and the state inclusion in the regulation and certain issues and processes financing. Along with the state position the individual political forces position opposing the ruling party, such as the communist party, is of great importance. Conspicuous is civil society and the general public opinion. In general, as the survey showed, social and political forces largely act together in the development of a conservative view on the state's historical past. Nevertheless, there are a large number of cases that demonstrate the separate contradictions of the official and unofficial perception of the past.

4. Purpose of the Study

In this regard, the purpose of the study is to analyze the practice of the Russian memory policy development through the studying a number of iconic recent years cases prism. As such cases, we have chosen some important recent years' events of the Russian memory policy, represented by the installation of monuments to several historical figures, among which, first of all, the first Russian tsar, Ivan the Terrible and the christianiser of Russia Knyazh Vladimir the Saint.

5. Research Methods

The study is based on the specific cases examination. We proceed from the fact that the state is consciously pursuing a centralized memory policy. Its symbols, in particular, are monuments erected with state support, symbolizing the historical past. The creation and installation of these monuments forms a social response - both positive, positive feedback and support, and negative - legal processes, criticism, actions, etc. The events involving the installation of the monument becomes a case, i.e. subject of our study.

The case study methodology in our case is a technique of fragmented phenomenon knowledge (memory policy), which cannot be covered entirely due to the scale and incompleteness of an era.

The cases we have chosen are based on real factual material and combine several approaches, including political, sociological, cultural, historical and psychological. These approaches complement each other.

6. Findings

In recent years, an intensive memory policy has been pursued at the state level, with the aim of creating a certain vision of the past for society. Some researchers call this policy "sovereign" (Ilyasova, 2011), by analogy with the Russian monarchs policy of the late nineteenth century. In this study we revealed whether this is the case or not and the essence of "power", on the basis of cases analysis.

The first case – the installation of the monument to Ivan the Terrible, the first Russian tsar, who is mostly presented by many historians as a tyrant. This case has become the very symbol that the recipient must turn to new thinking.

Nowadays, the Russian history meanings were turned towards positive understanding of the monarchy role in principle. Nevertheless, the image creation, forms a type of thinking, does not mean a denial of discussions and a complete lack of criticism.

In the situation with the monument to Ivan the Terrible there was a wide discussion, and moreover, attempts were made to demolish the monument.

It is important that not only the formal side of the issue was discussed, but also historical meanings. In particular, what it involves is the initiative of V. Gulyaev, who created an installation in Kansk, Krasnoyarsk Territory - "erected a monument" to Ivan the Terrible in the form of a stake for execution, stating that "You should not erect monuments to people who used targeted terror against their own people", comparing the repression of the king with the repression of the Stalinist period.

Moreover, the installation of the monument in Orel prompted the public to a discussion, which study indicated that 72% of the Orel citizens supported the creation of the monument, 71% of Russians positively

assess the role of Ivan the Terrible in history, and 65% of Russians would approve the installation of the monument to Ivan the Terrible in their city... Nevertheless, the “status” struggle continued in other cities, including in the city of Alexandrov.

When it comes to the historical ideas revision, not only the precedent itself is important, for example, the monument installation, but also this phenomenon essence, since historical policy involves a systemic impact on society in the context of citizens’ education and socialization. The element of historical memory objects complexity is also important. Let us consider these two factors in more detail.

The system phenomenon introduces a person as part of the system, no matter how good or bad this system is. Moreover, many states, which do not possess this system, strive to attain it, since it will allow consolidating society and more effectively achieving national goals. In this regard, history and its individual facts become the basis for the people integration through the principle of common thinking and perception of specific historic facts.

The factor of historical memory objects complexity is no less important. The point is that each individual, torn from the context, element of the appeal may not affect public opinion. But the combination of factors, such as the inclusion of the statue in the historical ensemble, its external characteristics, the presence of religious symbols and symbols that carry an aggressive meaning – all this creates a complex effect in the perception of the object.

Describing the Ivan the Terrible statue, it should be noted that, although unique in artistic terms, it represents a certain trend in visualizing Russian history in a religious manner with elements of object dominance and viewer suppression. This tactic is historical and was used in the construction of temples, including in the Western medieval tradition, when the temple was simultaneously presented as a house for parishioners and the cyclopean abode of God, through whose will, the nature of monarchical power was also interpreted (Lokonova, 2017).

A similar approach can be observed in modern Russia, if you look at the situation on a broad scale. President Putin, as well as other Russian politicians and public figures, makes extensive use of spirituality and historical memory topic, linking them together in messages to the federal assembly or in communication with a wide audience (Medushevsky, 2017).

Let us pay attention to the term “spirituality” essence. This term is very multifaceted and politically correct. It somewhat summarize the commandments and spiritual values that are found among various Russian Federation peoples, including Orthodox, Muslims, Jews, and even Buddhists. At the same time, this term is conservative and cuts off new, mostly neoliberal values, which are associated with the West and presented by the president as “sexless and disembodied tolerance”, opposing the Russian conservative tradition.

This policy appears to be balanced, as it opposes different “old”, for example religion, to different “new”, for example, same-sex families or euthanasia. In addition, this policy is material, and the level of its materialization is constantly increasing as society perceives more deeply the “civil” and “modern” view of history. We do not use the term “correct”, as the system is not totalitarian and criticism and discussion is possible, however, nevertheless, at the state level there is an awareness of the development path, which corresponds to a specific, relevant “spiritual” view.

In the context of this approach, modern Russian historical politics and the process of memorialization are developing. For example, the installation of the statue of the Grand duke of Kiev of VIII - IX centuries St. Vladimir was a landmark event for Muscovites. The installation of this monument has become the second case we have analyzed. The monument was installed on November 4, 2016 on the day of national unity and was timed to the 1000th anniversary of the duke's death date. It is significant that the duke is represented exactly as a canonical saint. Moreover, the statue illustrates the grand scale of the duke's religiosity. This monument is chime with the Orel's monument to Ivan the Terrible, discussed above, and marks the unity of the new "spiritual" tradition. First of all, a cross with a height of 14 meters attracts attention, which actually dominates the context. It is also indicative that this is not an Orthodox cross, but a general Christian cross, which symbolizes certain ambitions for general Christian significance. Moreover, it is significant that the shaft of the cross is painted with patterns that resemble both Slavic and Celtic, which creates a dialogue with the European and Scandinavian missionary traditions.

Another equally important element of the sculpture is the sword, which is presented in the sheath with the tip downward, but the duke holds it in his hand, demonstrating a hidden readiness for its use.

Also the duke's clothing, which is intended to symbolize the continuity of paganism traditions to Christianity, attracts attention.

It is obvious that the customers and creators of such a statue pursued several goals at once, including the demonstration of the Russian Orthodox and historical tradition dominance over the Ukrainian, the connection between generations and nations, the relationship of spirituality and coercion (violence) and art object symbolism in general.

Summarizing all these meanings, it is worth saying that Russian historical policy underwent a rebirth after 2014, after the Euro-Maidan coup. Of course, there were grounds for the new policy earlier, as indicated by the president messages of previous years, but it can be said that the cards were shown at that very moment, which was facilitated by the gap with the west, conflict with the ethnically close people, and other cultural and political factors. In such conditions, there was less room for political compromises, and the desire of Russian society for unequivocal pro-Russian changes, such as the annexation of the Crimea, sounded more and more.

The historical context also experienced this appeal. The mechanisms for discrediting false Ukrainian history have intensified, but, as it has been already noted, it was necessary to symbolically reinforce the actions, which, for example, were the discovery of a cyclopean monument to the "Ancient Russia" founder and the christianiser (Earlier, textbooks wrote "Kievskaya Rus" appealing to the ancient capital of state) Grand duke Vladimir the Saint.

In a way, this statue characterizes the entire epoch and is aimed at the future of Russia, since its creation and appearance obviously resonate in the official history course for secondary school students of the Russian Federation – and this is the main topic for discussion on the Russian historical memory transformation, regardless of the period when a particular study focuses.

7. Conclusion

The question about the evaluation of the inevitable information distortion is extremely relevant, since it is obvious that information is distorted both in systems that are traditionally interpreted as

totalitarian and authoritarian, and in systems that have a liberal democratic essence. This, for example, is about the phenomenon of the traditional enemy image, the controversial events or personalities interpretation. Moreover, even the official state interpretation and the corresponding “historical view” do not necessarily lead to the affirmation of a politically correct position in society.

However, in recent years, the historical knowledge in Russia issue has become very acute. This is due both to the internal processes of social consolidation through patriotism and the external revising history processes in the post-Soviet space and in the world as a whole. The Ukrainian revolution in history is a topic for a separate study, but it is significant that the official position of Russia lies in confronting the “fake story” in all its manifestations through a demonstration of facts, whether it is chronicles, archival documents, archaeological finds memoirs. This position has been repeatedly designated at the highest political level (Bogaturov, 2007). Of course, this is a strong position that only a state can afford, which has all the necessary evidence and resources to popularize it.

Nevertheless, modern society is very volatile, and the publication of some archival document cannot change its worldview, because there is a parallel process this abstract document distortion, addition and even alter the meaning.

Under such conditions, the state or other forces administering the process of forming and reforming historical memory are forced to search for means of confirming and popularizing their own statements and the facts they have brought.

In such conditions, the struggle on the field of evidence-based history requires symbolization, which in turn leads to the fact that more and more cultural objects, places of memory and monuments are being created.

This course is strong and stable. This is about Russian history memorialization with an appeal to the longtermness. In the positive thinking context the image and symbol of unity becomes the dominant factor. It is obvious that in recent years, following the Soviet tradition, such a symbol has been the Great Patriotic War victory, but history is more diverse and cannot be localized in one event. This inevitably leads to the formation of a new positive outlook on other events, and what is important, on past state leaders, even if their historical role was multidimensional and ambiguous.

And in this regard, in our opinion, attention should be paid to the role of this article, which, in its own way, for the first time represents the monument installation as an memorial policy element, having a symbolic significance on a national scale, not only from the point of view of state structures that organized the installation, but also view of a society that reacts to this event, evaluates it and transforms its own diverse perception of the past.

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