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EUROPEAN UNION: INTEGRATION PROCESS IMPLEMENTATION THROUGH THE MEMORY POLICY

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Abstract

Today, to be sure, the memory policy concept is one of the key elements of modern European political discourse. This policy in many respects can be viewed as a continuation of a more comprehensive soft power policy. With all the variety of memory policy possible meanings, its main function is still the integration of European society in order to create a common European view of the past. It is assumed that the implementation of certain policies to attract the Europeans attention to specific historical events will affect their picture of the world and will contribute to the growth of their European identity, which level currently is extremely low. Being a policy direction, the activity on the “renewed historical reality” formation acquired an institutionalization in the European Union in the specialized programs form and was conceptualized. Nevertheless, the specific events designation within the framework of the memory policy has generated a large number of debates related to their selection and to their categorical assessment level. European memory policy was heavily affected by the inclusion in the EU of Eastern European countries, which, after becoming European Union members, declared the need to change the official memory policy in order to include the post-war history events of countries that were east of the Iron Curtain. Under such a split, it can be stated that the study of the memory policy formation technologies and content of this activity for the European Union and its neighboring states becomes more relevant than ever.

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1. Introduction

The European Union is the world's largest integration project, which brings together more than half a billion people in a single political and economic space. At the same time, as statistics shows, only a few percent of Europeans believe that their European identity prevails, and only about half consider European identity as the second after national.

In such conditions, the need to form a universal European mentality and overcome historical barriers is actualized.

At the early 1990s, the integration process has moved into the active phase, and demand for the Europeans common historical memory formation through politics has arisen.

The memory policy can be defined as the collective memory modeling by political agents using political technologies, which allow focusing public attention on some historical events and silence others, forming stereotypical thinking among recipients (Collins & Loftus, 1975).

In particular, in the EU for educational policy in the historical memory formation aspect is given a special place, since it is assumed that through the correct emphasis in the educational process young Europeans can create a new historical knowledge base.

The memory policy is aimed at forming, in a certain sense, a synthetic history, in which attention is focused only on the "necessary" moments, in order to form a new outlook on the recipients, within the which framework they will appear as a single community.

However, the EU example is quite specific, since the Union includes a large number of states that historically belonged to different regions, which were implemented contradictory historical genesis practices.

Uniting gradually, the European Union was actually forced to constantly transform its "official view" of historical memory, which was originally associated with the EU founding countries, then expanded to Germany, Spain, Portugal and Greece, characterized by an authoritarian and totalitarian historical past. The next stage of expansion turned out to be completely connected with the annexation of the former socialist republics, which were characterized by a clear denial of their historical past and a desire to equate the communist regime with Nazism, i.e. in fact, to drastically transform the old European historical memory idea in its expansion favor.

2. Problem Statement

The modeling a single historical memory concept issue is extremely relevant for the European Union. Commonality in thinking and perception of the same values and historical events complex could unite Europeans and contribute to the creation of a new European nation.

Nevertheless, European nations continue to be divided, as within the EU there are different points of view on the memory policy implementation, and the approach promoted by Brussels remains only one of several approaches. To a large extent, the memory policy is gradually turning into one of the tools within European struggle and competition for ideological resources, allowing justifying certain political decisions.

3. Research Questions

In this regard, the following research questions are updated. First of all, it is important to find out whether there is a complex European policy in the field of historical memory formation, to determine its strengths and weaknesses. The second question is related to the antithesis of this political vector by counterparties within the EU. This includes Eastern European countries.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is connected with the need to form a comprehensive vision of the processes at the EU level that affect the Europeans historical memory formation nowadays. The period after 2013 is considered as a starting point because of the fact that by this time the European Union has already formed in its current version and the last wave of integration has passed, but disintegration trends, including Brexit, are the reaction of Poland and Hungary to the migration crisis, the principle of “Europe of two speeds” statement and others have not yet developed.

It is also characteristic that in 2013 the issue of implementing a directed memory policy begins to be widely discussed by European parliamentarians.

5. Research Methods

The study was based on regulatory analysis, as well as involving statistical methods and tools for comparative analysis.

Regulatory analysis is considered as the basic, since the implementation of the memory policy in the EU required regulatory support, which was expressed in the number of acts adoption, for example, the “Europe for Citizens” Program for 2006-2013, for the first time in the EU focused on the memory policy formation principles, or the “Europe for Citizens” program for 2014-2020, which already contains a clear program of historical memory formation in the EU (EU Council, 2014).

During the regulatory analysis, we took into account the meanings of key concepts, the ratio of the legal entities rights, the legal entities individual rights content and the possibility of their use in carrying out activities to implement memory policies in the EU and in individual member countries.

6. Findings

Historical memory adjustment and universalization cannot and should not be rent from people real-life images, so this is not about the “false memories” formation. European analysts are more likely to work with baseline data, based on national historical memory, which in principle is not a national history idea, but a set of symbolic events, focusing on which simplifies the general perception of the historical process in a particular region and actually creates a specific product, which can be sold, advertised, popularized, and at the same time we correlate with other similar products produced in other European Union regions (Anderson, 1983).

This requirement is reflected in the current program “Europe for Citizens” for 2014-2020 (EU Council, 2014) in which there is a clear events list.

All events from the list can be clearly divided into two groups - “positive” and “negative”, with both groups being evenly distributed over the time period, which is intended to ensure a systematic impact on the target audience. Describing the positive events, it should be noted that all of them are associated with the European integration process. It is positioned as the highest good, which has been created for decades and has been adversely affected by many historical crises.

Describing the negative historical events complex, it should be noted its selectivity. On closer examination, it becomes obvious that in many cases the sources of negative events are rooted outside the modern European Union territory.

Along with the history popularization, the historical memory manipulation creates the mythologizing historical events effect, which significance finds expression in the cohesion of society and the growth of trust (faith) in certain values associated with the myth. Thus, the national interpretation of the past tends to deny historically confirmed, but negative facts, and to push forward events with a positive meaning, which had a “national” significance and defined specific winners and losers.

The mythologization effect is clearly visible in the programs we are considering, especially when it comes to negative historical practices. “The totalitarianism of the twentieth century deprived citizens of their fundamental rights, excluding them from public life: Jews under the Nazi regime; political “deviants” under communist regimes ... ” (EU Council, 2014). It is characteristic that in this program, neither in the description, nor in the number of historical dates, nothing is said about the regimes of Franco, Mussolini, Salazar or the regime of the Black Colonels in Greece, since, probably, an appeal to the events associated with these modes could negatively affect the integration process through “unpleasant” and “controversial” memories.

Germany stands apart on this list. The modern EU memory policy is actually based on the censure of Nazism in all its manifestations, and Nazism, in turn, is directly associated with Nazi Germany and the events of the Second World War. However, Germany in this value system has not been considered as a responsible party for a long time, but is presented as a country liberated from Nazism and having won it in itself (Herf, 1999). This can be interpreted as a kind of historical myth, which significance, however, is not absolute, because, for example, in recent years, Polish politicians have been actively speculating on the topic of liability and unpaid reparations.

The number of historical memory key events formed in the EU is not static and varies in different sources. Among them there are invariably the Second World War (EU Parliament, 2005) and achievements of European integration. From the end of the twentieth century, the list was also complemented by the Holocaust memory and the “memory of the XX’s century totalitarianism”, which means, first of all, socialism and Stalinism (Prutsch, 2013).

Some analysts view a broader list of events and mention “European Heritage”, which includes Renaissance and Enlightenment, as well as note the role of the First World War, and focus on the sources of EU legitimation, including the main acts, flag, anthem and memorable date – Europe Day.

The reviewed by us programs do not only contain a list of events, but also orient to clear goals (EU Council, 2014). In particular, the Council Regulation (EC) No. 390/2014 of April 14, 2014, establishing the second stage of the “Europe for Citizens” program, stated that the objectives of the program are:

- Contributing to the EU citizens understanding of its history and diversity

- Strengthening European citizenship and improving conditions for civil and democratic participation at EU level
- Raising awareness of memories, shared history and values
- Promoting citizen participation at the EU level.

Describing the objectives of the program, it should be noted that, firstly, they appeal to specific historical events, and secondly, they imply these events interpretation in line with a clear set of liberal values, including the denial of anti-Semitism, antigipsism (hatred of Roma), xenophobia, homophobia and other forms of intolerance, as well as the protection of freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and other human rights.

Describing the general trends in the all-European memory policy development, it can be stated that the officially conducted memory policy in the period under study has become more clear and unambiguous. Historical events receive a positive or negative interpretation, which begins to be popularized through the education system, the media and civil society institutions. One of the goals of the “Europe for Citizens” program for 2014-2020, is dedicated to Active European Remembrance, is indicative here. It is referred to the funding of museums and places of memory, including former concentration camps, as well as facilities and archives associated with mass deportations and mass extermination. This historical focus is based on the assumption that in order to fully appreciate the significance of fundamental European (union) principles, such as freedom, democracy and respect for human rights, it is vital that examples of these principles violations in the 20th century are obvious, which in turn, requires such information inclusion in the EU states education system.

In turn, the experts point out that the announced need to popularize this type of knowledge requires proper funding.

It is indicative that during the period when the first program “Europe for Citizens” was launched, only 4% or 215 million euros of total funding was allocated for the Europeans historical memory development. Beginning from 2010, the amount of funding is being gradually increased, and in addition, the program blocks coordination was improved. In particular, the issue of historical memory formation has received additional disclosure in such headings as “Active citizens for Europe”, “Active civil society in Europe”, and “Together for Europe”. The second phase of the program of 2014-2020 provided for more funding: 18% of the initial 229 million euros, plus additional subsidies (Prutsch, 2013).

7. Conclusion

Despite the active historical memory policy implementation in the EU in recent years, the approach being implemented is largely fraught with the creation of a black and white world picture (Prutsch, 2013). From the standpoint of the official approach critics, the European Union memory policy of cannot be limited to clichés about the “Holocaust uniqueness” (EU Parliament, 2001) and the “Nazism and Stalinism absolute evil”, as well as the undeniable benefit of the integration process in Europe, because it primitives a multifaceted reality.

Also, this model does not take into account, for example, the phenomenon of colonialism, which hinders the perception of real EU integration practices. Accordingly, from the skeptics point of view, the

historical memory formed in the EU should be based on a critical perception by European societies, first of all, of their national history.

According to experts, it is possible to achieve a similar critical level, guided by universal humanistic values, and participating in an open discussion that will ensure mutual understanding and reconciliation. Participation in the discussion, in turn, will require the abandonment of the “historical truth” concept and its normative consolidation, which ultimately will lead to the history and new thinking integration.

However, currently, such a complex memory policy in the European Union has not developed, and moreover, in the context of the migration and recent years’ financial crises, many historical contradictions have become aggravated and historical injustice memories that impede reconciliation have been revived. Largely, this has been encouraged by recent political events, which many analysts associate with the general world order system revision. So, Ukrainian crisis and the intensification of the Visegrad countries activities in defending their rights in the European political arena should be considered as the key events.

All this is needed to be cynical about the forming a single historical memory practices discussed above and state that as such there is no single historical memory in the EU, and moreover, in the near future it cannot be formed, since European politicians are guided solely by “soft practices” planting “right” views that actually stop working in a crisis (economic, financial, migration) and in the context of the right-wing populism and nationalism growth, aimed at disintegration.

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