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Historical Narratives in Different Language Versions of Wikipedia

Abstract

The article compares selected entries on Wikipedia concerning significant historical events in three language versions: Belarusian, Lithuanian, and Polish. The idea behind Wikipedia is that anyone can contribute to it, thus expanding the pool of shared knowledge. This model of an online encyclopaedia, however, can be accused of subjectivity. According to communication theorists, the Web allows people to live as if in a single *global village*; however, the field of historical discourse proves that virtual reality is rife with multiple *villages*, each presenting a different point of view. Wikipedia, which is a flagship example of the implementation of Marshal McLuhan's concept, is no exception in this matter. In this study, I apply the method of ideological critique to investigate whether national values influence the objectivity of Wikipedia articles written in local languages. A comparison of multilingual Wikipedia entries reveals the prevalence of "local" points of view on controversial historical events.

Keywords: language, historiography, narrative, nationalism, rhetorical criticism, Wikipedia

Wikipedia as a source of knowledge

Wikipedia has become a common way for people to obtain information (Wray 2009). Currently, it is the largest open-source encyclopaedia on the Internet and one of the largest websites globally (Alexa 2021). The idea of open-source software is closely linked with the idea of crowdsourcing (Howe 2006) – all the Internet users can be the potential editors of Wikipedia. The underlying premise of this approach is the collection of knowledge by Internet users and its continual improvement by the digital *crowd*.

In contrast with traditional sources, the creation of content on Wikipedia occurs in a fast and flexible way, without official editors or formal review processes. As part of its open editing policy, Wikipedia allows editing, proofreading and even removing content from articles by everyone. Although the content and quality of Wikipedia articles have been criticized in some studies (Denning *et al.* 2005; Kopeć 2016), it is undoubtedly an interesting example of the culture of participation (Jenkins 2006). In fact, a *Nature* investigation found a comparable average number of inaccuracies in Wikipedia and Encyclopaedia

Britannica (Giles 2005). It should be noted that the principle "anyone can edit" is not equal with "anyone can write what they want with no repercussions" – some pages are protected from editing, as they may be targeted by vandals[1]. Also, simple acts of vandalism are usually instantly detected by bots and reverted[2] while the permission to edit some articles can be restricted to users with a specific level of authorisation (Wikipedia: Protection). However, while bots can undo malicious edits or flag potential hate speech, volunteer editors remain able to use sources presenting subjective points of view.

Neutral point(s) of view?

The encyclopaedic nature of Wikipedia is tantamount to fact that it is not a platform to present discoveries. The scientific process entails investigating issues and posing questions for which answers are not settled yet (Latour 1987). On the other hand, Wikipedia's mission is to make all the known information widely available (Wikipedia: About). Wikipedia also adopts the "neutral point of view" (NPOV) principle. "This principle states that the entry authors should not present their own opinions but only base the content on reliable sources. Moreover, if there are contradictions in the sources themselves, the content creators should accurately and neutrally describe all sides of the dispute (Wikipedia: Neutral point of view).

In practice, however, a certain bias in the idea of NPOV is noticeable. Some issues have a more structural character – according to a 2018 survey, 90% of the content creators on Wikipedia are male (Wikipedia: Community Insights/2018 Report). A study led by the University of Oxford found that most geotagged articles are focused on the Western world, and that there are more Antarctica-related entries than for any single state in South America or Africa (Graham *et al.* 2014). Although the entries on Wikipedia become, with time, less biased within a single language version (Greenstein and Zhu 2012), significant differences can be traced between different language versions of the same article (Bridgewater 2017, Callahan and Herring 2011). This is because different language versions of Wikipedia articles can be treated as a reflection of discursive practices in each society (Raburski 2016) because the sources in local languages may present different perspectives on the same topic (Körner *et al.* 2016). The differences in the virtual world, caused by a given social, linguistic, cultural, or bibliographic bias, represent the differences in the real world. The question of Wikipedia's veracity is important as it is a popular source of information on a broad range of issues, including historical topics (Florczak and Pietras 2015).

Methodology – ideological criticism

In this paper I carry out a rhetorical analysis of Wikipedia articles describing the same subject matter across different language versions. I adopted the ideological method of rhetorical criticism as it enables discovering how beliefs, values and cultural ideologies are manifested in a text – rhetorical artifact – by

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1   For example, editing the article about the main character of the 2001 American computer-animated comedy movie "Shrek" is restricted to registered and verified editors due to the previous attempts to vandalise webpage (Winter 2021).

2   In addition to monitoring and preventing vandalism, bots are also used to create the so-called "stubs", which means articles deemed too short to provide encyclopedic coverage of a subject, but useful to editors to develop. As the side note, it is worth to mention, that studies discovered, that Wikipedia bots engage in the prolonged "bot fights", taking place when group of bots revert actions by other bots (Tsvetkova *et al.* 2017).

looking beyond its surface structure. The results of an ideological analysis may help a critic to reveal the underlying role of artifacts in creating and sustaining an ideology and to discover whose interests it represents (Foss 2018). Since the content analysed in this article was generated by many users, it should be noted that probably not all rhetors (editors) followed the national ideology. It should also be noted that applying the method of rhetorical criticism to selected case studies enables a critic to restrict the range of available insights and to provide a general understanding despite scrutinizing only a limited number of texts (Hart and Daughton 2005). In this article I focused on national narratives present in selected Wikipedia articles in three languages: Belarusian, Lithuanian, and Polish[3]. As proven with this preliminary study, sampling even a modest number of cross-cultured articles on Wikipedia may offer interesting insights and basis for subsequent, more in-depth research.

History as a narrative

The 17th century Italian philosopher Giambattista Vico concluded in his *New Science* that subjectivity is unavoidable in the narrations composed by humans ([1725] 2001). The truth has never been the main goal of national narratives, for which constructing stories from certain facts is as important as forgetting others (Carretero *et al.* 2012). The aim of a historian working on the national history is to create "imagined communities" (Anderson 2006). In many countries, the history is openly nation-centred and offers only one model for interpretation, serving as an instrument of propaganda (Foster 2012). Additionally, the standards of what is considered to be closer to the *truth* are strongly culturally conditioned (Jemielniak and Wilamowski 2017). Thus, Wikipedia is sometimes criticised for emphasising "local heroes" and distorting reality (Kolbitsch and Maurer 2006).

The historiography of one country usually interprets as triumphs these events which a neighbour state depicts as loses, and *vice versa* (Eidintas *et al.* 2013). It is worth looking at these relations from the perspective of *histoire croisée* ("crossing history", "history on the border") (Werner and Zimmermann 2003), as the comparison of historiography between nations is an indispensable method for contemporary critical research (Lorenz 2010).

It is worth mentioning that interlingual qualitative research focused on Wikipedia is scarce (Bridgewater 2017). Most of the research on Wikipedia's language diversity investigates the organisational and sociological aspects rather than actual article content differences between languages (Konieczny 2010; Fuster 2011). Some studies concentrate on cultural differences among Wikipedia entries (Pfeil *et al.* 2006), while others cover quantitative differences (Jemielniak and Wilamowski 2017). Some studies refuted neutrality of multilingual versions Wikipedia on war-related topics (Zhou *et al.* 2015), while others have proven that even the most traumatic events for several countries, like the Srebrenica massacre, are described in a similar manner across different language versions (Rogers and Sendijarevic 2013).

To my knowledge, this is the first study concerning Wikipedia entries in local languages covering topics of historical events which significantly affected Lithuania, Poland, and Belarus. However, a similar (*offline*) comparative study was conducted by Rūstis Kamuntavičius, who analysed differences between

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3   Regarding the explanation of the content analysis process – Polish is my mother tongue and I am sufficiently fluent in Lithuanian and Belarusian to understand the content of relevant Wikipedia entries.

historical atlases of these three neighbouring states (2014). According to his research, the maps referring to the same historical periods contain significant differences, in line with national narratives.

The aim of this study was to investigate whether it is possible to draw similar conclusions to R. Kamuntavičius' research. Based on previous Wikipedia research, my thesis is that it is possible to detect national sentiments that violate the NPOV principle, thus distorting the historiographic reality, in the local language versions of the online encyclopaedia. I compared narratives on selected issues shared by three countries: the Polish ruler of Lithuanian origin, Jogaila (14th–15th century), the Union of Lublin (1569) and the Polish-Lithuanian war of 1919–1920. These sensitive events were chosen because they created considerable tensions in the past and therefore constitute a challenge to comply with the neutrality requirement of a Wikipedia article. This paper is not intended to evaluate which of narratives present in entries is more *true* or accurate[4]. Also, due to its importance as a "global language", I compared analysed articles to the English language version covering these topics.

Polish King of Lithuanian origin – Jogaila

King Jogaila (Władysław II Jagiełło) is a respectable figure in Polish historiography, mainly due to his victory in the Battle of Grunwald (1410). Conversely, in the traditional 20th century Lithuanian historiography, Jogaila was treated as the main national traitor (Łossowski 2002)[5]. In Belarusian historiography, the approach towards Jogaila is strongly tied to that towards the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (GDL), a contentious topic among Belarusian historians (Bekus 2010).

The Polish version of the Wikipedia article on Jogaila is relatively extensive (37,827 characters with spaces). The entry also includes various images (e.g.: historical and artistic representations of the Jogaila, maps). The order of the article is organised according to the chronology of the ruler's life. Jogaila's attitude to Vytautas' attempts to be crowned king is presented as positive but the authors admit that the coronation of the Grand Duke of Lithuania was thwarted by the resistance of the Polish nobility. In a separate subsection devoted to the assessment of Jogaila's reign he is presented in an overall positive light. The territorial development of the Polish-Lithuanian state, the strengthening of ties between the two countries and the Christianisation of Lithuania were emphasized.

The Lithuanian version of the article is considerably shorter (7,209 characters with spaces) and the number of illustrations is smaller. Significantly, the article does not contain any footnotes. The article is mostly limited to the basic information about the ruler, although a longer, separate section of the entry is devoted to the relations between Jogaila and Vytautas, the Grand Duke of Lithuania. This part is accompanied by the painting by Jan Matejko entitled "Vytautas invites Jogaila to the Battle of Grunwald," in which the Polish ruler is depicted as praying on his knees and delaying the start of the fight, while an impatient Vytautas stands over him, pointing to the battlefield. The article emphasises the role of Jogaila in initiating the process of Westernisation and Polonisation of Lithuania. The entry also mentions the betrayal and the possibility of Jogaila arranging for poisoning of his uncle Kęstutis while the latter was imprisoned. In comparison, the Polish version of the article states only that "The uncle [Kęstutis] was

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4   As Marc Bloch stated: "the mania for making judgements" is "satanic enemy of true history" ([1949] 1992: 26).

5   An interesting example is the "social court" held over Jogaila on December 29, 1929 in the Lithuanian town Kaišiadorys. The ruler was found guilty of treason and sentenced to be deleted from Lithuanian history (Buchowski 2006).

imprisoned in the tower of the Krewo castle, where he died shortly afterwards." (Wikipedia: Władysław II Jagiełło) Also, in the Lithuanian version the national origin of Jogaila's last wife (who bore heirs to the throne) was emphasised – "[Sophia of Halshany] came from the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, not from Poland." (Wikipedia: Jogaila) Finally, Jogaila's attitude towards Vytautas' aspiration for the crown is described as "unclear", in contrast to the Polish version.

The Belarusian version of the article is, interestingly, the most extensive one (58,969 characters with spaces)[6]. The article also contains the highest number of images. The article is composed of many sections and subsections devoted to the ruler's biography, the origin of his name and "curiosities". Significantly, the biographical part opens with a statement underlining that the GDL at the end of the 15th century was a heterogenic state, consisting of: "first of all and mainly the areas of former Kievan Rus inhabited by the Slavs and ethnic Baltic countries in the northwest." (Wikipedia: Ягайла) Such a remark is intended to emphasise the Ruthenian (and indirectly Belarusian) character of the GDL, as the Lithuanians "appropriated" the GDL for themselves after World War I, according to the contemporary Belarusian historiography (Kamuntavičius 2008). In reference to the imprisonment of Kęstutis by Jogaila, the article mentions that the Polish ruler supposedly ordered also to drown Birutė, Kęstutis' wife and mother of Vytautas. Some additional facts are given about Vytuatas (e.g.: his escape from Krewo castle disguised as a woman or that he was baptised by the Teutonic Knights before Jogaila). The editors of the entry state that the Union of Krewo, constituting Polish-Lithuanian relations, in the known form and terms was forged by the Poles. Regarding the death of Jogaila, the Belarusian editors claim that the ruler died listening to the song of the nightingale, whereas in the Polish entry it is written, that the King caught a cold while listening to the singing of the nightingales, and died as a result, which is in line with the chronicle (Długosz [1455–1480] 2009: 131). In the summary of the entry, it is stated that 19th-century Russian historians perceived Jogaila as a "man of small mind and weak character who could not have played a significant role in history," (Wikipedia: Ягайла) while adding that in Polish historiography he is usually credited with great abilities.

In summary, all three entries offer a rather objective description of the Polish ruler, while certain facts are omitted or included depending on the interest of editors. Some traces of a wider, national narrative are noticeable in the Belarusian article which implies that the GDL was *de facto* a mostly Belarusian state, contrary to the Lithuanian historiography. In comparison, the English version of the article is also extensive (41,200 characters with spaces), providing neutral and balanced information while citing different sources – mainly English, Polish, and Lithuanian [Wikipedia: Władysław II Jagiełło].

Union of Lublin and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth

The Union of Lublin (1569) was a legal act constituting the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. This event is perceived very differently in Belarusian, Lithuanian, and Polish historiography (Petrauskas 2013), which is reflected in the respective language versions of Wikipedia.

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6   It should be noted that there are two independent versions of Belarusian Wikipedia: the "official" one ("наркамаўка") and "classic" or "oppositionist" one ("тарашкевіца", based on the language rules codified by Branislaw Tarashkyevich in 1918 and used in Belarus until the Soviet reform of 1933). The "official" version is almost three times the size of the "classic" one. In this article, I focus on the "official" version of the Belarusian Wikipedia.

The Polish version of the article is extensive (12,465 characters with spaces) and includes nine images. In one of the initial paragraphs, the editors make a statement that the Union in Krewo from 1385 assumed "the incorporation" of the GDL into Poland, which touches a highly debatable matter among historians about the meaning of the word *applicare* (Łukowski and Zawadzki 2019). The style of the Wikipedia article indicates that the resistance of the Lithuanian nobility to the union may be perceived negatively, e.g.: "Both parties agreed to a joint election and coronation (...). However, it soon turned out that these provisions only remained on paper when the Lithuanians boycotted in 1564 the Crown Sejm." (Wikipedia: Unia lubelska) Poland's enforcement of the union is perceived as positive, as "the Lithuanian resistance was basically broken." (Wikipedia: Unia lubelska) However, the general population of Lithuania is presented as those who strove for the union while only the Lithuanian magnates resisted, because of economic reasons: "Unexpectedly, those who opposed the conclusion of a new union, [were] only Lithuanian magnates who could lose the most as a result of the new union." (Wikipedia: Unia lubelska) In the case of Poland's incorporation of lands of Volhynia, Kiev, and Bracław Voivodeships, the broad freedoms and privileges granted to the Ruthenian nobility are emphasised. However, this emphasis on granted freedoms and privileges is accompanied by a remark pointing out the ingratitude of the Ruthenians: "Despite the broad freedoms granted to the Ruthenians, there was social discontent which had a certain influence on the later Cossack uprisings against the Commonwealth." (Wikipedia: Unia lubelska) Interestingly, the annexation of the Ruthenian lands as a means to force the Lithuanian nobles to negotiate the union is called the "fait accompli method"[7].

In comparison, the Lithuanian version of the article is much shorter (6,021 characters with spaces) and contains less images. It is worth emphasizing that two maps are attached in the entry. The maps depict the borders before and after the union, thus highlighting territorial losses of the GDL. As for the reasons for concluding the union, the article mentions the difficult situation of the GDL, which had to wage a war on two fronts, and the reluctance of Poland to provide aid before the signing of the union. It is stressed that due to the annexation of territories by Poland, the GDL lost more than a third of its territory and population, and the Lithuanian army was weakened. The Lithuanian version of the article states that in March 1569 King Sigismund Augustus annexed the Voivodeship of Podlachie, bordering between the two countries, to Poland without Lithuanian participation. On the contrary, the Polish version of the article states that the Podlachie Voivodeship was incorporated with the consent of the local Lithuanian nobility. In contrast to the Polish narrative, the attitude of the Lithuanian nobility, which delayed and postponed the establishment of the union, is perceived as a triumph. The role of the Lithuanian nobleman Jan Chodkiewicz, who managed to negotiate more favourable conditions by "appealing to the feelings of Sigismund Augustus in speeches," (Wikipedia: Liublino unija) is highlighted.

In comparison with the previous two versions, the Belarusian article unequivocally presents negative assessment of this historical event. The entry is relatively short (8,570 characters with spaces) and contains two images. The first paragraphs describe the historical background of the union, showing that the only reason for concluding the union by the GDL was a difficult military situation of the country. It is also stated that "Poland was in no hurry to help, trying to fully incorporate the GDL." (Wikipedia: Люблінская унія) The editors of the entry claim that the exchange of the copies of the union acts

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7   The so-called "Żeligowski's Mutiny", as a result of which the Poles took Vilnius in 1920, is similarly called by the Polish side the "fait accompli politics", and by the Lithuanian side – annexation, occupation.

between the Polish and the GDL sides after signing the document was undertaken "to hide the violent, aggressive and unequal nature of the union, to give it the appearance of a voluntary consent of the parties." (Wikipedia: Люблінская унія) This narration is developed in the next paragraph:

> Violence, deception, blackmail and dishonesty of Polish feudal lords, Catholic clergy and Sigismund Augustus himself against the representatives of the Grand Duchy are clearly evidenced by the diary entries of the Lublin Sejm, so there is no reason to agree with those historians who claimed that the small and medium gentry desired and sought union with Poland." (Wikipedia: Люблінская унія)

The editors further state that the union was an unlawful undertaking, and the illegal status of the union act was acknowledged by the Poles, who "tried to force the representatives of the principality to agree to the union and thus hide the illegal annexation of foreign territories by the appearance of 'consent' and 'brotherly love' of both parties." (Wikipedia: Люблінская унія) The style of the article sometimes takes an emotional tone:

> The appropriation of these territories intensified the growth of great-power chauvinist illusions in Poland which completely supplanted sober reasoning. It seemed to the ruling elite of Poland that nothing could stop their selfish plans now, as their main opponents in the principality were broken and oppressed, and the principality itself was doomed to liquidation." (Wikipedia: Люблінская унія)

The Union of Lublin is finally called a "shameful act" on terms dictated by the Poles. The Catholic clergy introduced in a greater number in the GDL after 1569 is represented as alien agents acting on behalf of Vatican and Gniezno, the ecclesiastical capital of Poland. The forced Polonisation and Catholicisation are evaluated negatively, as causing cultural and scientific stagnation. The article concludes with a remark that the Union of Lublin eventually led to the destruction of the entire feudal Commonwealth.

The comparison of these articles makes the national sentiment rather apparent. Both the Polish and the Lithuanian versions adopt slightly different evaluations, emphasizing local heroes and claiming that the Union of Lublin should be considered a victory or a loss, respectively. A definitely negative assessment of this historical event is noticeable in the Belarusian version of the article, clearly violating the NPOV principle. It is also worth noting that English version of the article is the most extensive one (17,505 characters with spaces) and describes the historical event in a multifaceted and objective way. The assessment of the consequences of the Union of Lublin, however, agrees with the harsh criticism contained in the Belarusian version of the article - the development of noble privileges led to political anarchy and ultimately disintegration of the state [Wikipedia: Union of Lublin].

Polish-Lithuanian war of 1919–1920

The last analysed articles cover the topic of the Polish-Lithuanian war of 1919-1920. The Vilnius region, legally a part of Lithuania, became the subject of a dispute of various narratives after World War I. This conflict, as a result of which Poles occupied Vilnius until World War II, greatly influenced the Polish-Lithuanian relations in the 20th century.

The Polish version of the article is relatively short (7,177 characters with spaces). It contains three images, including one map. The entry is titled "Polish-Lithuanian conflict", instead of "Polish-Lithuanian war". Regarding Vilnius before the Polish occupation, the editors state that "the majority of its population

spoke Polish at that time and felt connected with the reborn Polish state." The annexation of the Southern Suwałki Region to Poland is named "liberation". Lithuania is described as:

> [S]eparatist state created on the territory of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth from inspirations of Germany hostile to the resurgent Poland, which [Lithuania] was, by its own choice, *de facto* at war with Poland and cooperated militarily with the Bolsheviks against Poland." (Wikipedia: Konflikt polsko-litewski)

The invasion on the rest of Lithuania, according to the editors, "would not be a problem from a military point of view", which is also accompanied by a note stating that the political costs would have been completely acceptable. The lack of such action is explained by "federation plans, and above all by the sentiment of Józef Piłsudski", followed by a statement that the Polish politician nevertheless has a "bad opinion among Lithuanian historians." It is worth to highlight that Piłsudski is perceived negatively in the Lithuanian historiography (Kamuntavičius 2018). The entry then states that the Lithuanian politicians were not reasonable. The Lithuanisation of Poles living in the Kaunas region is indicated as a result of the war.

The Lithuanian version of the article is shorter (4,592 characters with spaces) and includes only two images. The emphasis is put on helplessness of the Lithuanian army and large differences in military power between Lithuania and Poland, in favour of the latter. Piłsudski is described as the dictator of Poland and his Lithuanian origin is highlighted. Regarding the course of the conflict, it is stressed that the Lithuanian troops won the last two battles but their further advance was stopped under the pressure of the League of Nations Commission. The Lithuanian version states that the result of war was severance of all diplomatic relations between Poland and Lithuania by 1938, indicating the loss for both sides (Wikipedia: Lenkijos–Lietuvos karas).

The Belarusian version is the shortest (3,963 characters with spaces) and includes one image (Wikipedia: Польска-літоўская вайна). It is worth mentioning that it is the only version mentioning a plan of Paul Hymans, a Belgian representative to the League of Nations, who proposed to conduct a plebiscite in the Vilnius region, although neither side of the conflict wanted to pursue it (Jankauskas 2005). Notably, all three versions of the article contain a similar table, containing number of armed forces on both sides. Although analysed versions give the same number of soldiers on the Lithuanian side (about 7-8 thousand), at the same time differ significantly in terms of the numbers on the Polish side. The Polish version states that the Polish forces were "unknown, initially much smaller", the Belarusian version does not provide any number, while the Lithuanian version estimates the number of Polish soldiers at 20-30 thousand, thus exceeding Lithuanian forces three or four times. As numbers are usually considered to be more objective, just because they are numbers (Porter 1995), the aforementioned difference in data has a bearing on the narrative of the conflict.

In conclusion, the Polish version of the article seems to assess the war with certain nationalistic pride. Some minor, though significant differences are noticeable in the nomenclature used in these three articles, e.g.: describing Piłsudski as a "dictator" in the Lithuanian version which would probably be regarded as unfavourable by Polish editors. Conversely, the English language article should be appreciated for both the detailed study of the topic (50,213 characters with spaces) and the broad outline of the causes, course and results of the war. As before, the English version is characterised by a balanced assessment and presentation of various sides of this multi-threaded conflict, citing sources in different (mainly English, Polish, and Lithuanian) languages.

Conclusions

The dissimilarity of the narrative is visible in the sphere of assessing the same historical events from a perspective of different nations. In the compared Wikipedia entries, similar facts were often given but conformed to a different narrative that ultimately creates the core of a nation's history. In fact, sometimes the differences were so substantial that a reader of these language versions of the same article might get an impression that the texts dealt with a completely different event. The findings reported here are consistent with claims from earlier studies and reinforce the thesis that people reading about the same thing in different language versions of Wikipedia may be confronted with very different versions of the truth (Reynolds 2016). As shown in the article, the principle of objectivity in multilingual Wikipedia articles can be bent in favour of a narrative presenting a subjective, more nationalist rhetoric. This finding is especially important as in general an average Wikipedia user lacks knowledge or experience to recognise rhetoric at a first glance (Foss 2018), even more so if it appears in a source that emphasizes its objectivity. The content presented in the analysed articles not only differs from each other but also fits into polarised historiographic narratives, limiting the potential for reaching a consensus in assessing common events in the history of neighboring countries. Even based on a limited number of analysed articles, the English language version of Wikipedia appears to be characterised by greater objectivity, outlining a wider context of events and fulfilling NPOV principle. It is worth adding that many of the editors of the analysed articles in the English version of Wikipedia are from the countries affected by the described events[8]. Since English has become an international language, people from numerous countries prefer to read about history in English as it often provides more information and tends to be more objective or reliable. Unfortunately, the same cannot always can be said about Wikipedia articles written in local languages.

Different voices rarely cross the barrier of one language, while technology already allows the interpenetration of perspectives. However, this could disrupt the established national narrative, and at the same time – without substantive support – turn into ideological conflicts. It seems, however, that such discussions are needed if countries bound by a common geopolitical and civilization interest want to develop a common dialogue. Lithuania and Poland belong to the same international military and political alliances (e.g.: NATO, EU), thus creating a need for the common ground to go beyond the narrow nationalist narrative. At the same time, as shown by this study, some content on Wikipedia clearly defies the principle of neutrality, instead creating space for the "Linguistic Point of View" (Massa and Scrinzi 2012) and in extreme cases even becoming a disinformation tool (Shubber 2014). Further research should be carried out on the potential of using Wikipedia as a tool for manipulating information and, at the same time, ways of counteracting such action.

Although it is impossible to create an encyclopaedia that includes all points of view, the Internet provides a tool that enables the perception, if not acceptance, of pluralism and diversity. Getting to know different points of view encourages broadening own's mental horizons. If this potential is not used on the

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8   Some editors provide information about their nationality on their Wikipedia website. Sometimes it can be deduced based on information about languages they know, including the native language. An analysis of discussion forums and history of changes in entries allowed identifying editors from different countries, like Poland (e.g.: "Piotr Konieczny aka Prokonsul Piotrus", "Halibutt", "Volunteer Marek", "Szopen", "Lysy", "Merangs"), Lithuania (e.g.: "Cukrakalnis", "Pofka", "M.K", "Lokyz", "Renata3"), Ukraine (e.g.: "Irpen") or England (e.g.: "Qp10qp"), who were involved in editing two or three English language articles about the historical events analysed in this paper.

state's scale, referring to the philosopher Zygmunt Bauman (2016), humanity may once again fall into the trap of narcissistic nationalism. Ideological messages in an artifact such as an online encyclopaedia pose a special challenge because the audience does not expect to see them there. One explanation for the presence of nationalist narratives in supposedly objective sources may be due to the fact, that "only the best of the past can make the present seem less tragic" (Hart and Daughton 2005; 19), leading to a conclusion that even though rhetoric is present in Wikipedia, most of us would have it no other way.

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