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Many Narratives or a Single Voice? The Role of Historical Policy in EU–Russia Relations

Wiele narracji czy jeden głos? Rola polityki historycznej w relacjach Unii Europejskiej i Rosji

• **Abstract** •

The purpose of the article is to analyse the process of change in Russian historical policy from a foreign policy perspective. The article hypothesizes that the historical policy can be considered as an indicator of changes in Russia's foreign policy, allowing to infer the direction of its future development, playing both an 'integrative' and 'disintegrative' role. Using the example of the EU, the impact of Russia's historical policy on the EU's historical narrative is examined. While in the analysed context the new Russian historical narrative signalled a growing distrust and a more confrontational stance towards the EU (a disintegrative role), its unintended side effect was the construction of a common European historical narrative (an integrative role) pushed by the Central and Eastern European states in response to Russia's aggressive rhetoric on historical issues, the interpretation of which few years earlier had divided the 'old' and 'new' member states.

Keywords: Russian Federation; EU; historical policy; historical narrative; discourse-historical approach

• **Abstrakt** •

Celem artykułu jest analiza procesu zmian polityki historycznej Rosji z perspektywy polityki zagranicznej. W artykule sformułowano hipotezę, że polityka historyczna może być traktowana jako wskaźnik zmian w polityce zagranicznej Rosji, który pozwala wnioskować o kierunku jej przyszłego rozwoju, pełniąc zarówno rolę „integrującą", jak i „dezintegrującą". Na przykładzie UE badany jest wpływ polityki historycznej Rosji na narrację historyczną UE. Podczas gdy w analizowanym kontekście nowa narracja historyczna Rosji sygnalizowała rosnącą nieufność i bardziej konfrontacyjne stanowisko wobec UE (rola dezintegrująca), jej niezamierzonym efektem ubocznym była budowa wspólnej europejskiej narracji historycznej (rola integrująca), forsowanej przez państwa Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej w odpowiedzi na agresywną retorykę Rosji w kwestiach historycznych, których interpretacja kilka lat wcześniej dzieliła „stare" i „nowe" państwa członkowskie.

Słowa kluczowe: Federacja Rosyjska; Unia Europejska; polityka historyczna; narracja historyczna; historyczna analiza dyskursu

Introduction

The Russian Federation's aggression on Ukraine on February 24, 2022, was unquestionably a "game changer" in the EU–Russia mutual relations. In many European capitals as well as in the headquarters of the EU institutions in Brussels, many started to figure out how this happened. The question everyone asked generally was the same: how could we have been so wrong about Russia?

The following paper, the idea for which came up before the Russian aggression on Ukraine, aimed to analyze the role of historical policy in EU–Russia relations, and answer the question: whether attempts by the Russian Federation to reinterpret recent history lead to the creation of a single EU voice in historical issues or whether there are many narratives represented by individual member states. Today, in the context of ongoing conflict just behind the EU's doors, this question seems to be answered. The current relations between the European Union and Russia have been dominated by the war. Despite the many problems associated with the need for a common response to the crisis caused by the war, which in fact started in 2014, the European Union has tried to speak with one voice on historical issues, as exemplified by its response to Russia's insinuations undermining the statehood of Ukraine. In this different context additional questions must be asked: have there been any symptoms of an impending war? And if so, were they ignored or simply unnoticed?

How do those questions relate to the research problem formulated in the title? The paper hypothesis is that the historical policy can be regarded as an indicator of the change of Russia foreign policy, making possible to infer the direction of its development in the future, by playing both 'integrative' and 'disintegrative' role. While in the analyzed cases the new Russian historical narrative signaled growing distrust and more confrontational stand in relation with the EU (disintegrative role), its unintentional side effect was construction of a common European narrative (integrative role) around issues the interpretation of which had divided member states only a few years ago (Siddi, 2012).

The study aims to investigate the process of changing Russian historical policy and how it affected the historical discourse in the EU. In the analyzed context, historical policy will be understood as a politically motivated interpretation of the past as part of the political action, aiming to gain influence on social memory (Chwedoruk, 2015).

The timeframe of the analysis is the period between Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and its open aggression against Ukraine in 2022, during which the new model of political rule was formed in Russia, based on historical policy (Baluk & Doroshko, 2022). Three research question were formulated for the purpose of

the study: What main discourses can be identified in Russia's historical policy? How did Russia's historical policy evolve between 2014 and 2022? Whether and how did Russia's historical policy affect EU approach to selected historical events, and what channels of influence can be identified in that extent?

The research method adopted for this study is discourse-historical approach (DHA) (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009), which helps to explain why certain interpretations of discursive events seem more valid than others in the power relation context. It also enables the examination of how language (words, terms, phrases) has changed in speaking and communicating about selected events, in relation to ongoing discourse in historical narrative in the EU and Russia. Analysis is based on primary (speeches, documents) and secondary sources (analyses, expert reports). Two speeches delivered by Russian President Vladimir Putin were of special interest: speech at the informal Commonwealth of Independent States summit on December 20, 2019, and address delivered on February 21, 2022, three days before the attack on Ukraine. The choice of these two speeches is motivated by the DHA's methodology, according to which, "powerful people use laguage as a means to gain and maintain power" (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009, p. 88). What is more, "Power is discursively exerted […] by a person's control of the social occasion by means of the genre of a text, or by the regulation of access to certain public spheres" (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009, p. 89). The two selected speeches can be perceived as critical for heralding more confrontational approach to foreign policy by breaking the post-Cold War historical consensus on World War II, and the discourses that constitute it, as well as the Soviet Union and the consequences of its dissolution.

The paper consist of four parts. The first briefly explains the concepts of historical policy, historical narratives, as well as memory policy and how they interrelate from the discourse analysis perspective and discourse formation. The second discusses the Russia's historical policy and identifies its main discourses. The third explains the EU memory policy and ways of shaping it. In the fourth, strategies offered by discourse-historical approach are used for analysis of selected speeches of President Putin to demonstrate how Russia uses historical discourses to communicate its foreign policy goals.

1. Historical policy, historical narrative and memory policy from the perspective of discourse analysis

In the subject literature (Karlsson, 2007; Chwedoruk, 2018), various public uses of history are identified: scientific-scholarly – which relates to scientific research

and professional teaching of history; existential – focused on the process of identity-building; moral – aimed at discovering the truth about history; ideological – used to legitimise political power; and political – used to support decision-making processes, especially in foreign policy. Each of these uses serves different social purposes and is based on a specific historical 'content' resulting from the conscious choice. Thus, history becomes a material which, depending on the creator, is processed and reproduced in different ways, including manipulations.

The manipulation of history is particularly evident in breakthrough situations, often traumatic, when there is a need to build social cohesion around a unifying narrative, even if it has little to do with historical facts, i.e., it highlights some and omits other content (Siddi, 2012, p. 80). Breakthrough situations, including those associated with a change of political power, are based on historical narratives of a positive or even triumphant nature, used to build a particular type of national identity (Eder, 2005; Domańska & Rogoża, 2021). Such a phenomenon occurred, for example, in Poland after the 2005 elections, when the new right-wing ruling coalition shifted from an expiatory to a heroic historical narrative. Therefore, history and its interpretation can be considered as a 'battlefield', where it is not the historical truth that matters, but the strength of the narrative to promote one's own interests.

In the subject literature, there are different terms linking politics and history: historical policy, historical narrative, and memory policy. Although they are closely related, they cannot be treated as synonyms. Historical policy is the concept most strongly embedded in power relations and at the same time contextualised and ambiguous (Chwedoruk, 2015; Wójcik, 2016). There is no single, complete definition of that concept, which covers all its aspects. It is most often defined as a purposeful activity aimed at creating historical awareness in society, including especially awareness of territorial belonging and strengthening the discourse about the past in order to nurture permanent national ties regardless of the changing, current state policy (Wójcik, 2016). Its popularity stems from the fact that history, defined as a set of events that make up the past (rather than as a science), plays an important role in legitimising and strengthening the actions of the authorities (Banaszkiewicz, 2008). Most authors agree that there are two dimensions to historical policy: internal and external (Kącka, 2015), both are shaped by historical narrative constructed at the national level, which can be used to achieve internal political goals – e.g., winning elections, or external – strengthening/improving state image or building understanding for decisions taken.

The memory policy is often treated as synonymous with the historical policy, yet has different meaning and purpose (Chewdoruk, 2015), stemming from the relationship between history and memory. Memory is treated as a subjective phenomenon,

while history as objective one (Pomian, 2009). The memory policy is also narrower and can be part of the history policy. While the memory policy refers to emotions or feelings (shame, forgiveness, regret), history policy refers to facts and political contexts, through which it is a subject to constant reconstruction.

Historical narrative, on the other hand, is a way of telling story and therefore cannot be equated with the historical or memory policy. The most important in the historical narrative is the way history is presented and told. It can be a product of spin-doctors in the service of power, but also of independent actors: historians, journalists, or even artists, as an expression of identity, perception of the world, beliefs and mentality

The historical narrative is thus a discursive phenomenon, being shaped by relevant concepts, meanings, metaphors, or contexts. Their analysis makes it possible to assess whether it continues or undergoes change. In this respect, discourse analysis is particularly useful.

The historical narrative is shaped by language and how it is used to describe historical events. The choice of linguistic means of rhetoric, persuasion or manipulation, gives historical narrative a specific character, influencing the discourses present in it. By referring to facts, historical narrative, through language, sets discourses in specific contexts that change their meaning. For this reason, historical narrative fulfils a servant function to the historical and memory policy.

There are many methods of discourse analysis in international relations (Aydìn-Düzgit & Rumelili, 2019). For the purposes of the following analysis, the discourse-historical approach (Weiss & Wodak, 2003; Reisigl & Wodak, 2009), which is a type of Critical Discourse Analysis (Wæver, 2009), will apply. It is used to recognize the main characteristics of the discursive structures in texts, and to analyse how they vary over time in terms of their association with the selected focal issues and in relation to various cultural and political factors (Aydın-Düzgit & Rumelili, 2019, p. 296). It consists of four steps: 1/ presenting the historical background and the context of the analysed texts, 2/ outlining the main content of the themes and discourses – discourse topics in the narrative on a given subject, 3/ exploring discursive strategies deployed in the narrative to answer the selected empirical questions directed at the texts, 4/ analysis of the linguistic means that are used to realize discursive strategies. It distinguishes successive actions (Resigl & Wodak, 2009, p. 94; Aydın-Düzgit & Rumelili, 2019, pp. 297–299) which include:

1. analysis of the historical context of selected text;
2. analysis of the contents and topics of the discourse;
3. analysis of the discursive strategies:
   a. Nomination – Q: How are the actors named and referred to linguistically?

b. Predication – Q: What are the characteristics, qualities and features attributed to them?

c. Argumentation – Q: What arguments and argumentation schemes does the author use to justify/legitimize their position on the analyzed problem?

The 'methodology' presented will be used in part four to analyze the selected speeches of Vladimir Putin.

2. Historical policy of Russian Federation and its main discourses

The use of history to justify political decisions has a long history in Russia and dates back to the tsarist period, when monumental work *History of the Russian State* (1816–1826) was written by Nikolai Karamzin. The book shaped the way Russians used to think about their country and contributed to the dissemination of a particular version of history. Karamzin's work became the basis of countless textbooks and history curricula in schools in both pre-revolutionary and Soviet times. In his work, the author presented the view that the collapse of Commonwealth of Poland was a historical justice, ending the centuries-long conflict between two opposing political organisms – the eastern part of Russia was liberated from Mongol rule in 1480, the western part in 1795 with the third partition of Poland. According to the historian, the Russian raison d'état consisted of total control over territories considered Russian with particular emphasis on the western and south-western territories of the former Kievan Rus (Piczugin, 2006, pp. 372–376). According to Karamzin, acquiring new territories through war and conquer was justified, because it is what empires do. Since then, thinking of Russia in terms of an empire became an essence of the historical policy of the Russian state, where geographical determinism went hand in hand with historical determinism (Baluk & Doroshko, 2022, p. 133).

As Maria Domańska, an analyst in the Centre for Eastern Studies in Warsaw, former diplomat and expert on Russia, states: "Russian historical policy consists of ideas and activities designed to shape collective memory and historical discourse in a way that suits the political interests of those in power. These activities are carried out by state bodies, the state media, part of the academic community and a network of social organisations, funded by the state or circular Kremlin business" (Domańska, 2019). She identifies three groups of addressees of Russia historical narrative: 1/ citizens of the Russian Federation – the main purpose of the narrative is to legitimize the authoritarian regime in their eyes through its successes in international politics; 2/ elites and societies of the post-Soviet states – the purpose of the 'message'

is to coerce them into economic, political and military integration, by using the myth of the brotherhood of arms and the 'Russian world'; 3/ the West – political circles and societies in Europe and the United States – the narrative aims to combat history falsification and to present Russian view (Domańska, 2019).

According to Domańska, the current shape of Russian historical policy is a 'product' of Putin's third term (2012–2018), however, it is hard to discuss it without mentioning the 'the biggest trauma' – as the collapse of the USSR is interpreted (Ostrowska, 2010). For other authors years between 2014 and 2022 mark the crucial period for the consolidation of Russia's historical policy (Baluk & Doroshko, 2022, p. 141), based on the myth of the 'Great Patriotic War' and the golden period of the 'Great Empire' (Snyder, 2022). This coincided with the construction of a fascist (Snyder, 2022) political regime called 'Putinism', the essence of which is – as some experts points – a great-power Russian chauvinism based on the ideology of the 'Russkiy mir' (Baluk & Doroshko, 2022, pp. 154, 156–157).

There is no doubt that Russia's historical policy has been shaped in stages, running parallel to the construction of an authoritarian system of government. Five phases in the formation of Russia's historical policy can be distinguished. The first is the 1990s, when the Russian Federation authorities avoided actively formulating a historical policy too much associated with the top-down imposition of the Soviet-era state ideology. The second is marked by Vladimir Putin's first presidential term, which brought intensification of top-down activities in the sphere of historical policy as a reaction to the chaos of the Yeltsin rule and the reception of the Western historical narrative (Ostrowska, 2010). The next stage are years 2006–2007, when the process of securitization of historical policy and its recognition as an element of national security began (Domańska & Rogoża, 2021). Its essence was institutionalization of the fight against the falsification of history, restriction of Western influence on history textbooks, and recognition in the Russian National Security Strategy of attempts to revise history as a threat to state security. Topics recognized by Russian regime as a particularly 'vulnerable' to 'falsification' and therefore subject to 'defend' included the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact, and the role of the USSR in the victory over fascism (Nazism) in the WW2 (Domańska & Rogoża, 2021, p. 24). The fourth phase is marked by 2011, when responsibility for promoting desired vision of history was granted to public servants. The fifth is the present phase, which began in 2012, when the 'current version' of Russia's historical policy was formed. Its main features are cyclical concept of history, including the myth of the eternal return of moments of glory and existential threats, and an emotionally marked language describing the history of the Russian Federation.

Contrary to the vision of historical policy as an element of state's public diplomacy and its soft power (Melissen, 2005), historical policy in Russia is treated as a 'weapon', used not only to legitimise the image and international roles to which the country aspires but also its aggressive foreign policy. On the frontline of the fight against other, often contradictory narratives, Russia does not hesitate to reach for disinformation, manipulation, or even lies. What is more, in its rivalry with the West, Russia uses historical politics as an element of geopolitical confrontation, which is particularly evident in the competition for spheres of influence (Baluk & Doroshko, 2022, p. 151). The good example of that is a discourse on WW2, in which Russia accuses the West of falsifying the truth by deliberately downplaying the role and significance of the Soviet victory, pointing to the enslavement of the peoples of Central and Eastern Europe as a result of its end, or equating Nazi crimes with Soviet ones.

In addition to the discourse on the WW2, it is possible to identify others that have emerged in the process of shaping historical policy of Russia, and are of great importance to justify its domestic and foreign policy actions. They provide a framework for thinking and arguing about selected historical facts or events, which is defined by a common object of expression and its regularity and relation to other discourses.

With no doubt, the discourse on WW2 is of key importance. It is dominated by the myth of the Great Patriotic War, which raised the Soviet period in order to strengthen the belief in society that Russia 'got up from its knees' and restored its superpower status (Domańska & Rogoża, 2021, p. 9). In this discourse, the notion of 'World War II' was replaced by the notion of 'Great Patriotic War' which began in 1941. The aggression against Poland on September 17, 1939, and Finland on November 30, 1939, is completely removed from it. What is more, the victory over fascism is presented in messianic categories, combining the narrative of the 'savior nation' and the 'innocent victim'. The mission of salvation is justified by the contemporary postulate of the actual return to the Yalta order in the 21st century – the apogee of the Russian power – in the name of 'stabilization' of the international situation (Domańska & Rogoża, 2021).

Equally important for justifying domestic and foreign policy is the discourse of 'imperial power'. It consists of a narrative of a 'good empire' waging only defensive wars and seeking peaceful expansion, and of an enemy that is the West. At its core is the narrative of an inseparable community of Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine, in which the very existence of the Ukrainian state is often presented as a form of aggression against Russia. Part of the discourse about the good empire is a dialectical narrative about the evil West. The anti-Western narrative has many of the characteristics of a persistent enemy myth, in which Western conspiracies have become a catch-all

category in Putin's Russia. The main purpose of the narrative of a good, peaceful empire is to justify Russia's aspirations for exclusive influence in the post-Soviet area (Domańska & Rogoża, 2021).

Complementing the previous two discourses is the discourse of Russia's historical borders, the axis of which is an assessment of the USSR's nationality policy, reinforced by the narrative of the 'division of Russian lands'. Its aim is to justify supposedly historical claims to Crimea, Donbas and other territories that are part of the former republics of the Soviet Union (Baluk & Doroshko, 2022, p. 144).

3. The EU historical policy

While for the Russian Federation historical policy has become an important external policy instrument, in the EU its importance was seen mainly in internal terms – as part of the construction of a European identity. The EU's historical policy was shaped for completely different purposes and its content focused rather on themes closed to the EU values (Prutsch, 2013). It should be emphasized, however, that as in the case of Russia, the WW2 is at the center of European historical policy, considered as a trigger for European integration.

The process of shaping the European narrative about WW2 can be described as a search for the 'common denominator' of individual national narratives. J. Östling writes about European 'universalistic' narrative, based on grievous, traumatic experiences with the extermination of the European Jews in its center. In his opinion, this new narrative was an effect of contestations of patriotic narratives that took place in Western Europe in 1980s and 1990s. Breaking the taboos existing in the national historical discourses, especially those concerning collaboration with Germans during WW2, has opened up again the discussion about political and moral dimensions of the past. As a result, the Jewish victims and their individual suffering were placed in the center of the discourse, what was accompanied by "the emergence of an official culture of grief and commemoration" (Östling, 2008).

In 2013, a special report on European historical memory was prepared for the European Parliament. Its author – Marcus Prutsch – distinguished two competing discourses framing the EU historical policy: the 'uniqueness of Holocaust' and 'National Socialism and Stalinism as equally evil'. The first was developed by Western European post-war culture, the second – by the Central-Eastern European countries, which experienced the communist rule (Prutsch, 2013, p. 4).

From the point of view of EU–Russia relations, the narrative of the 'uniqueness of the Holocaust' raised no objections, unlike the equating of Nazism and Stalinism (or

communism in general). For the Russian Federation, this type of 'equalization' had a much broader dimension, as it opened a discussion on Russia's role in the outbreak of the Second World War (the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact) and undermined the myth of the 'liberator nation' so strongly exposed in Russian historical politics. The lack of shared interpretation of the WW2 in Europe mitigated Russia's concerns, while at the same time serving Russia's policy of 'divide and rule' using its own historical narrative. With widely differing perceptions of Russia in EU member states, the narrative of Russia glorifying the myth of victory over fascism was accepted, or adopted without much controversy by Western European states, while being opposed by Central and Eastern European states. Due to these historical and geographical divisions, it was not possible to create an integrated and harmonized European collective memory (Siddi, 2012, p. 97).

In 2019, however, the European Parliament adopted a Resolution on the importance of European memory for the future of Europe, which included views promoted by Central and Eastern European countries, while contested by the Russian Federation and some Western European states. The document made the USSR co-responsible for the outbreak of WW2 and accused the Russian government of whitewashing communist crimes and glorifying Soviet totalitarianism (EP Resolution, 2019). From the EU's point of view, this was a significant change, marking a process of building a single narrative about the past, which at the same time had enormous political resonance. It was not, however, a coincidence. The ground for the resolution was prepared by the documents which have been adopted by the EU institutions and EU member states from 2005 (Barile, 2021). Beginning with very cautious statements about the need for reconciliation which cannot exist without truth and remembrance (EP Resolution, 2005), through proclaiming the need to condemn communist crimes while emphasising the constructive role of communist parties in certain countries (Council of Europe, 2006), to equation of Nazism and Communism as a totalitarian legacy of Europe (Senate of the Parliament of the Czech Republic, 2008). The process was marked, however, by doubts, including those questioning the competence of the European Parliament to pronounce on the history, emphasising in particular that "a parliament cannot legislate on the past" because "official political interpretations of historical facts should not be imposed by means of majority decisions of parliaments" (EP Resolution, 2009).

Why, then, did the European Parliament adopt a document so unambiguous in its content, which was not confined only to the symbolic sphere but had serious repercussions to the EU–Russia relations? Some authors claim this was partly due to the unwillingness of Western European elites to confront the historical politics of the new member states, partly due to the lack of faith of the 'old' Europe in the success

of the integration project. "As a result, the collective memory and identity-building mechanisms characteristic to Eastern Europe have prevailed in Western European understandings of the growing tensions between Russia and its neighbors" (Miller, 2020, p. 7). Others see an explanation in the dynamics of the political debate in the European Parliament, where arguments of the MPs from CEE countries about Russia's attempts to rewrite history and increasing disinformation activities gained understanding after the annexation of Crimea (Barile, 2021). According to yet another interpretation, the voice of the Central and Eastern European states was heard because their representatives used the categories and standards of argumentation characteristic of the European institutions to formulate their historical position in a similar way as the narrative of the uniqueness of the Holocaust was shaped (Neumayer, 2018). In contrast, according to Davide Barile, the historical discourse in the EU is inherently rooted in the concept of the EU as "an alternative to the horrors of Europe's past, but in a present-day approach" (Barile, 2021, p. 1001). And since the current Russian revisionist approach to history is a major concern of the new EU member states from Central and Eastern Europe, it is reflected in the debate on Europe's historical memory (Barile, 2021, p. 1001). From the perspective of the Russian aggression against Ukraine, the signals sent by Russia through the modification of its historical narrative and policy were aptly recognised by the CEE member states, which began the process of 'integrating multiple narratives into one voice'.

4. Case studies: How Russia uses historical policy to influence relations with the EU and its member states?

A discourse-historical approach (DHA) analysis of two selected speeches by Vladimir Putin will be carried out to verify the formulated hypothesis that Russian historical policy can be taken as an indicator of the change in EU–Russia relations. The first is a speech delivered at an informal meeting of Commonwealth of Independent States on December 20, 2019. The second is a speech delivered on February 21, 2022, three days before the attack on Ukraine.

While some authors argue that Russia's recent historical policy has been primarily reactive (Miller, 2020, p. 14), the author of this study argues that it has also been pre-emptive – using deliberately chosen narratives to communicate its foreign policy goals.

• Vladimir Putin's speech delivered during informal meeting of CIS countries –
December 20, 2019 (http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/62376).
1. Historical context of selected text

    The meeting was held in St. Petersburg on December 20, 2019. It brought
together the heads of state of the Commonwealth of Independent States. The meet-
ing took place three months after the European Parliament adopted a resolution
of September 19, 2019 on the importance of European memory for the future of
Europe. During the meeting, President Putin briefed the CIS heads of state on the
'obtained' documents on World War II and invited them to see the prepared exhi-
bition. The main purpose of the informal meeting (as Putin stated) was to prepare
for the celebration of the 75th anniversary of the victory in the Great Patriotic War.

2. Contents and topics of the discourse

    In his speech, Putin discusses the international context that led to the outbreak
of World War II. He cites documents found in Russian archives to show that the
USSR was not responsible for the outbreak of World War II (as the EP resolution
suggests), and that in fact the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact was one of the agreements
signed by other countries with Hitler that led to the war. Putin refers to the main
myths of Russia's historical policy:

    – The USSR tried to save Europe from war, but was prevented from doing so
      by the deceitful policies of Western countries;
    – Polish authorities were responsible for World War II;
    – The USSR was a victim of World War II;
    – The USSR won a great victory;
    – Questioning the role of the USSR in the victory in World War II is insulting
      to all CIS countries.

The speech is on a discourse on World War II, including interpretation of the
USSR's role in the conflict.

3. Discursive strategies:
    a. Nomination – Q: How are the actors named and referred to linguistically?

    In his speech, Putin refers to names of pre-war European and US ambassadors,
foreign ministers and leaders: Churchill, Wilson, Chamberlain, Piłsudski, Benes,
Litvinov, Bonnet, Daladier, Ribbentrop, Hitler, Goering, Poncet, Beck, Łukasiewicz,
Szembek, Kennedy. Foreign ministers from Latvia and Lithuania are not mentioned
by name. The names are used in the context of citied documents. There is a clear
binary divide between 'us' and 'them'. 'Us' – means the Soviet Union, 'them' –
European and US politicians.

b. Predication – Q: What are the characteristics, qualities and features attributed to them?

Special attention is given to Poland and Polish leaders. They are portrayed as provocateurs, aggressive and irresponsible. Poland's perception of the West and East is emphasized. The West, exemplified by a German, is seen as "a European and a man of order", while the East, exemplified by a Russian, is seen as "a barbarian, an Asian, a destructive and corrupt element with whom any contact is dangerous, any compromise is fatal". Putin describes the West through the prism of its leaders of the time: cynical, twisted, selfish, manipulative and avoiding sacrifice. He contrasts them with Russians, described as "our ordinary Red Army soldiers", "the simplest people", "peasants", "workers", many of whom "suffered from the same Stalinist regime: someone was dispossessed, someone's relatives were sent to camps", "people who died liberating the countries of Europe from Nazism".

c. Argumentation – Q: What arguments and argumentation schemes does the author use to justify/legitimize his position on the analyzed problem?

The main line of argument is based on the West's deliberate falsification of history. Putin is employing a strategy based on historical evidence – documents that confirm the USSR's positive or at least not inferior role in World War II. The tone of the statement suggests that the Russian historical narrative is based on sound analysis of sources, not speculation. The second strategy is based on the *topos* of a 'good empire' that will educate others about historical truth.

• Vladimir Putin's address delivered on February 21, 2022, three days before invading Ukraine (http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67828).

1. Historical context of selected text

The speech addressed the security dilemma and the growing threat to Russia from NATO enlargement. The address was delivered three days before Russia's attack on Ukraine. Additional context is provided by the issue of recognizing the independence of the separatist republics of Lugansk and Donetsk. The victory of the pro-Western option in Ukraine's foreign policy creates a broader context for the speech.

2. Contents and topics of the discourse

The speech is built around three main thematic discourses present in Russia's historical politics: 'good empire', 'evil West', and 'Russian borders'. The first discourse emphasizes the role of the USSR, especially Lenin and Stalin, in shaping Ukrainian statehood. Ukraine is presented as an artificially constructed entity in the name of Lenin's idealistic assumptions, which is considered a historical mistake. Despite

Ukraine's membership in the one great Russian nation, the Russian Federation recognized Ukraine's independence after the collapse of the USSR and supported it politically and economically, but the Ukrainian elites proved ungrateful. The second discourse refers to the evil West, which has broken all its promises, betrayed Russia and undermined its security. The West wants to seize territories that historically belong to Russia. The third discourse relates to the first. Putin repeats the thesis of the irresponsible nationality policy of the Bolsheviks, who recklessly gave away lands traditionally belonging to Russia. The entire narrative is built around a dichotomous division between 'we' and 'them', where 'we' is associated with goodness, honesty, and naiveté, and 'them' with betrayal, lies, manipulation, deception.

3. Discursive strategies:
    a. Nomination – Q: How are the actors named and referred to linguistically?

There are different categories of actors identified in the speech, mainly states: the Russian Federation, Ukraine, the USA, Western countries. In his speech, Putin refers only to names of two communist leaders: Lenin and Stalin, and the US president Bill Clinton. The other actors are NATO, 'governments of certain Eastern European countries', 'some European capitals', 'Western colleagues', 'foreign advisors', 'network of NGOs', 'Ukrainian people', 'nationalists', 'Ukrainian colleagues'. In the speech, Putin differentiates between 'good' and 'bad' Ukrainians, 'good' and 'bad' Western countries – using the phrase 'colleagues'.

    b. Predication – Q: What are the characteristics, qualities and features attributed to them?

In his speech, Putin makes a distinction between the aforementioned actors. He distinguishes between the Ukrainian political elite and the Ukrainian people. The former are portrayed as not entirely evil, but deceived by the West, while the latter are portrayed as victims of the unwise policies of the political elite. A separate category is the Ukrainian nationalists, portrayed as evil, terrorists, violent radicals. Phrases used include: "Neanderthal and aggressive nationalism and neo-Nazism". Foreign advisors, NGO networks, Western countries are portrayed as exploiting Ukraine and pushing it into a socio-economic and political crisis. NATO is portrayed as a fraudulent organization that has broken all its promises and poses a threat to Russia's independence – he uses phrases such: "There can be only one answer", "It's not about our political regime or anything like that. They simply don't need a large and independent country like Russia". The governments of "some Eastern European countries" are portrayed as "speculating on Russophobia, bringing their complexes and stereotypes about the Russian threat to the Alliance, and insisting on building collective defense capabilities and deploying them primarily against Russia".

c. Argumentation – Q: What arguments and argumentation schemes does the author use to justify/legitimize his position on the analyzed problem?

Given the historical context of the speech, Putin was trying to legitimize the decision to go to war. There is no direct reference to it – he does not use the word 'war', but he does use phrases that imply it indirectly: "We do not accept such behaviour and will never accept it"; "Russia has the right to respond to ensure its security. This is exactly what we will do". Putin also shows that Russia is a peace-loving country and used all diplomatic means to solve the problem, but there was no willingness to cooperate from both Ukraine and the West. Russia wanted to avoid confrontation, but was forced into it by the irresponsible behaviour of Ukraine and the US.

Discourse-historical approach used to analyse the two speeches by the President of the Russian Federation shows that historical politics is a useful tool used by Russia to justify and rationalize its political decisions. In the first case, history was used to express Russia's dissatisfaction with the EU resolution that contradicted the Russian historical narrative. The second speech was of a 'pre-emptive' nature. Its close analysis left no illusions about Russia's real intentions toward Ukraine. However, it should be noted that similar 'speeches' preceded the start of wars by other countries as well: Germany against Poland in 1939, or the US against Iraq in 2003.

Conclusions

The purpose of the study was to examine the process of change in Russian historical policy and its impact on historical discourse in the EU. The analysis of European historical policy showed only an indirect influence of Russian historical policy on its evolution. The key factors in its change were the need to strengthen the integration project and the consequences of promoting a common historical narrative by the new EU member states from Central and Eastern Europe. The impact of Russian historical policy on relations with the EU, on the other hand, can be seen in Russia's growing distrust and adoption of a more confrontational position after 2014.

For the purpose of the analysis, a hypothesis was formulated stating that Russian historical policy can be treated as an indicator of change in mutual relations, allowing to infer the direction of its development in the future, playing both an 'integrative' and 'disintegrative' role. The analysis showed that reaching for the historical narrative in official diplomatic relations was something that Russia avoided in its relations with the EU, directing it rather directly to internal audiences, which, however, had serious international repercussions and foreshadowed deeper changes in the

foreign policy of the Russian Federation. In this context, it can be considered that the hypothesis has been positively verified.

Referring to the research questions formulated in the introduction, it can be concluded that, first, the discourse on World War II plays a dominant role in Russian historical policy; second, the evolution of Russian historical policy took place in parallel with the evolution of the political system towards authoritarianism, by which historical policy was consolidated, and its content was excluded from any public discussion; third, Russian historical policy resonated strongly in the EU, and its influence on the EU's historical narrative was indirect – through its impact on the collective narrative of the new EU member states from Central and Eastern Europe, against which Russia used historical arguments in direct diplomatic relations.

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