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THE IMPACT OF MYTH CONSCIOUSNESS ON THE FORMATION OF THE NATIONAL POLITICAL AND CULTURAL SPACE: “UKRAINE IS NOT RUSSIA”

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Abstract

The article researches the concept of political culture as a system of inherited political notions expressed in symbolic forms and generalizes the differences between the political culture of Ukrainians and Russians. It stresses that the cultural identity of Ukraine is established on one of its basic tendencies – penchant for archaization of all symbolic forms; it researches the place of the heroic political myth in this process; it analyzes sacral projections of the political in the myth through which the subject-and-object order of the Ukrainian politics world is explained. Thus, the pattern of the heroic monomyth (a structured ontological range of symbols) serves as a program of political reality (as a structured order of political objects). The symbols of the heroic monomyth have sacral significance because they present an idea of political order, stability, forecastability of politics (the latter is lacking in the crisis context of development) when there is unwillingness of a part of citizens to bear responsibility for prospects of future development of events in the country in the conditions of long-term uncertainty. The article researches peculiarities of the how the structure-image of the hero builds the constitution of political reality in Ukraine and Russia.

Key words

heroic myth, political consciousness, archetype, political culture, political myth, Ukraine, Russia.

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1. Tropology of the heroic myth

The heroic-and-centric vision of the world (to form the world of meaning in politics) is quite persistent in those post-Soviet republics that preserved an authoritarian or half-authoritarian political regime. Thus, the problem concerning the representation of political power is solved through heroic symbolic representation. Heroic-and-centric meaning of the political reality constitution is fixed with

special “visible” placement of image of the “ruler” with regard to other symbolic elements of political communication.

Today, the myths have transformed into an important element in designing political leaders’ images (Bradford, 2021). The figurative language of the heroic myth serves as a symbolic form of political reality comprehension (Bellquist, 1987), i.e. a semiotic model of political communication. The heroic figurative language of political communication designs

a sacral political reality by modelling awareness of it construed as important factors-constructs, a relevant to the Ukrainian political culture "mythotext" being read by the collective individual. Political power in authoritarian states is perceived as legitimate only in the symbolic context of the worldview, when the events of the present and the past are symbolically connected with a manipulative purpose. Provided the use of the heroic political myth, political leadership is carried out through manipulation with symbols.

An idea that the only factor that can save the European culture from perishing is active mythmaking and the recognition of the advantages the myth has in comparison with morality, science and intellect has prevailed in a scientific tradition for a long time (Kostiukevych et al., 2020). Researcher G.M. Nikson (2010) stresses that the formal structure of a human language is always a key to understanding the unique nature of human consciousness. In the researcher's opinion, at a certain time, the society experiences an existential crisis i.e. awareness of own mortality. That can be transmitted only owing to a wider area of symbolic awareness (Nixon, 2015). Thus, our symbolically activated (culturally constructed) self-awareness – the fortress of cultural identity that provides possibilities of cognition but also creates particular frameworks to the processes of realization – is a human quality.

In general, the heroic symbolic representation of political power is a model of one-way political communication. The symbolic authoritarian word of a hero-ruler can either be accepted completely or denied completely. It has merged with authority – political power. The heroic myth is a postmodern political strategy in the context of an actualized problem of virtual political reality construction in the information society (Šerbinina, 1998).

2. The unitary state positive myth of Russia

A good definition of a heroic political myth can be as follows: this is a phenomenal reality and a closed world of meaning as a construct of constructs. The main metaphors of this myth are "canonic": for those who use them, they embody the world and set a priority to the components of its description. Certainly, virtual mythoreality is not notable for durability of a special totalitarian heroic political myth, but it is included into the structure of a political being as a legitimizer of phenomena of senses when other legitimations of power are ineffective.

To estimate Russia's experience on operating the unitary state positive myth and to see the threats

resulting from this experience for Ukraine, an attempt will be made to analyze individual problematic aspects of the Russian myths. For the Russian social consciousness, a mediated figure of the Russian "soldier" representing the Russian state, will, power and honor is a particular form of the union between the authority and the population. In the Russian mythology, a short connection between the State and the People is postulated: without the system of complicated representative and legal mechanisms typical of western democracies; therefore, the united "people" can only be possible on condition of availability of the state structure providing them an identity mandate for a right to be called "a people", and the power grounds its legitimacy referring to symbolic representativeness on behalf of the whole "people".

Analyzing the current propagandistic policy of Russia, N. Šerbinina (1998) emphasizes that designing virtual politics as a world of artificial and imaginary propagandistic images was typical as early as the modernist society of Russia. Certainly, the world of propaganda became extremely formalistic, ready-made, conventional. That was, as they would say today, a virtual world of official myths, rituals, solidarity, organized collective hatred, fight and expulsion of demons. M. McLuhan admits this typical of Russia practice of designing iconic propagandistic images technologically successful and relevant to further information phantom explosion:

For the Russians to be aggressively efficient in the current world of information it is enough to adapt their traditions of the eastern icon and image building to new electronic means of communication. The Russians did not show any creativity or work of imagination in their propaganda. They simply did what their religious and cultural traditions had taught them, particularly – built images (McLuhan, 2003, p. 43).

Certainly, in this context the main image was a figure of a political hero.

The political propaganda in Russia, in our opinion, cannot do without a heroic political myth, which plays a prominent technological and content role in it. This proved that the technology of power legitimation should be considered as an efficient method of manipulating through modelling the world image. The influence of the political power is carried out as open direct "engineering" propaganda, totalitarian by its matter. An obvious constructivist potential of propaganda is also used in the post-modern communication context. For example, E. Aronson & A.R. Pratkanis (2003) believe that the information age characterized by dominance of different images still remains an age of "propaganda". Moreover,

the main designers of the world image are political leaders and means of mass communication that discursively form a political reality. The phenomenon of propaganda also characterizes a postindustrial society, and the interpretation of propagandistic influence cannot be reduced to politics of lie, which is attributed to totalitarian regimes only.

Despite the fact that people have created the virtual worlds since long ago, it is accepted to think that it is postmodernity that is distinguished by virtual information technologies and virtualized mass media. That means that the way of transmission or reception of information becomes virtual, and phantom hyperreality is encoded and modelled using the means of mass communication. According to J. Baudrillard (2007), postmodern one-way communication is not, in fact, an "exchange" since it simulates "a response" and imposes the models of significance. J. Baudrillard thinks that the symbolic way of communication is intrinsic to the phenomenon of mass: "Mass is those who are comprehended with the play of symbols and enslaved with stereotypes, they are the ones who will perceive whatever as long as it is a spectacle" (Baudrillard, 2007, p. 192).

According to J. Baudrillard (2007), the area of the political is subordinate to the increasing symbolism; this is the area of simulation where the people appeared to be audience. In the field of post-modern political spectacle, a symbol has a special magic meaning: it unconsciously states a sacral political reality. Thus, the "virtual reality" will mean hereinafter an artificially created world of simulacra that find virtual existence and that adds a special ontological status to this reality. In other words, we believe that political being does not only include an objective reality but also a virtual reality where the political component of the space dissolves. With this regard, one can agree with one of the main theses of post-modern philosophy – the loss of authenticity of the political, caused, in our opinion, by artificial design of reality. As a result, specific hyperreality is constituted where the symbols themselves create their own existence. In this self-absorbed virtual reality, the signs-simulacra having their own phenomenal being are the examples and review their own world.

Virtualization of political reality is some kind a virtual analogue of political interactions, for example, relationship between the power and the people or a leader and his/her followers. Moreover, the roles of a political leader and a citizen are simulated. Hence, the objective reality is substituted, and simulacra (political images) enter the relations with each other. A symbolic exchange in the current virtualized political space is based on a symbolic reference and

encoding of social and political integrity. Thus, a person deals with a figurative expression of the world.

The mass media, especially television, build the virtual reality through "telepresence", increasing the "optical density of its copies" of information. This is where the danger for practices of modern democracy lies, because democracy, as a behavior reflex in the virtual world, does not require public discussion when imposed thoughts win the pre-election campaign and the "demonstration" of a party program gives space to "predictability" of the political behavior model offered to the voters. Hence, a political leader does not review a social (normative) group but serves as a symbolic isolated model of lifestyle which is to be chosen by an individual from the stars' "menu" designed by the mass media.

3. The elements of Ukrainians' political consciousness mythologization

The problem of heroization or demonization of concrete people becomes actual, first of all, because the creation of heroes/enemies (political, in particular) is one of the main mythmaking assignments now. The images of the Enemy and the Hero, going through archetypical peculiarities of national consciousness, universal binary oppositions of the good and the evil obtain specific coloration. For Ukraine, this coloration resulted in a fight of the Truth and the Falsehood.

The myth about the Hero (archetype of Ukrainian Kotyhoroshko) remains important in election campaigns. The image of the hero is built on understanding basic people's problems. The Hero has to beat the enemy fast, cardinaly change the situation, quickly solve all the problems. That is why, the image of the hero is "eternal" in a society's consciousness. As J. Blondel (1992) stated, regardless of the fact if our vision of the "golden age" of leaders-heroes was right or wrong, for the contemporaries it is hard to overcome a feeling that they are being managed by people who do not meet the requirements of the "real" leadership. Therefore, along with some general disappointment with the state elite's activity, ideal images of the power and leaders that are passed down through generations remain almost unchanged. That specifies the fact that the images of real and ideal politicians significantly contradict each other more and more often. However, nowadays, the archetype of the hero can be taken as a particular collective positive image of a messiah, a rescuer, a creator or a reformer. For increased and stable efficiency of the artificial myth, the archetype actualization requires for the candidate to have such

personal features which would allow identifying him/her with a certain archetype. L. Kočubej & K. Merkotan (2004) assure that in 99 cases out of 100, the leader's life journey and positive features formed will be transmitted at the current state through the archetype of the hero.

The parliamentary election of 1998 in Ukraine was the first during which an indirect negative advertisement started to be used – through presenting negative information, i.e. very favorable from the point of view of political psychology. According to Ū. Šajgorods'kij (2009), the voters themselves can "add" the required volume of the negative data from their own experience, which sensibly enforces the influence of this advertising. The specifics of the presidential campaign in 1999 is a clear-cut artificial exaggeration of the confrontation between the communist myth (P. Symonenko) and a democratic myth, a strong voice of the "Russian theme" along with the veiled European one.

A myth about the man of the people, the politician of the people was a novation among the mythologemes of the presidential campaign in 2004 in Ukraine. A politician's identification with a grass-root voter occurred. For example, a mythoimage of V. Yanukovych was based on the archetype of a "mythologized criminal" with an accent on a complicated life route of the politician "of the commons".

Parliamentary election campaigns in 2006 and 2007, as well as the presidential one in 2010 were built on the myths about the hero and Europe. Taking into account that the Ukrainians have always belonged to the central-eastern wing of the European civilization, the European way is not a choice of politicians. The Ukrainians have always been and remain Europeans. However, with the use of myths, the European future dreamt about as "golden century" for Ukraine slowed down from time to time, taking into account the tendencies in the situation of personal intentions among oligarchic elites that held state power at a specific stage.

In O. Kolinič's opinion (2012), while designing the politicians' images, myth-producers have to appeal to the collective subconsciousness, universal archaic ideas to activate the mythological thinking of people. K.G. Jung (2004) distinguished such main archetypes: the archetype of a mother, a divine child, the self, a spirit, animus (anima), a mask (person), a shadow. The archetype of the self (archetype of a hero), according to K.G. Jung, is implemented in the political culture in the image of a hero, knight, winner. In O. Kolinič's opinion (2012), the archetype of the hero could clearly be traced in the image of V. Yushchenko during the events of the Orange Revolution. V. Yushchenko's image as a messiah (according to the

self-archetype) appeared not to have worked due to the non-compliance of the mythologized image-building features and his natural weak character.

An apt example of especially negative use of political symbols was an election myth of the Opposition Bloc party: "Kyiv does not hear industrial regions". This is a disconnective myth to the confrontational content of which the citizens react alarmingly. This myth can leave traumatic effects in the citizens' consciousness.

The main problem of the pre-election programs of the parties was the weak constructive rational component – the content of the programs appeared to be unspecific, and the solution of the issue concerning long-term development of Ukraine was not offered.

In Ukraine, a tendency to archaization of myths is notable. The model of a strong modern state is quite viable and can be easily opposed to the models of "hetman" (who was embodied by V. Yushchenko in 2004 and by P. Poroshenko in 2014) and the "mother" (in 2010 – Yu. Tymoshenko) that bring after themselves the arrival of the messiah. Although their model is closer to the Ukrainian traditions, it is not less dangerous, taking into account that Ukraine is an area of confrontation between Russia and the West. That is why, the Ukrainian society needs univocal consistent idea-backbone of the resilient modern state.

A political myth of a "strong state" is in the memory of generations of the post-totalitarian society, which in terms of the mythologized social consciousness tends to perceive all the economic problems as the consequences of democracy.

Residual evidence of the "Soviet thinking" in the mentality of the society under transformation (the majority of theoreticians agree that the residual phenomena of the Soviet consciousness were cancelled in the Ukrainian society after the protest events in 2013–2014). The results of early parliamentary elections in 2014 proved that, when representatives of the communist ideology did not pass to the Parliament for the first time.

In 2014, the President of Ukraine P. Poroshenko offered to become united around the strategic vision of the national idea through the slogans of Sustainable Development Strategy 2020 – dignity, freedom, the future. Two needs correspond to this strategic vision of the President of Ukraine, which, in our opinion, have to be taken into account by the subjects of mythmaking:

1. Uniting the political elite carrying out strategic reforms.
2. Uniting the elite and the nation in the fight against the aggressor.

The discussion within the framework of these coordinates is important to specify the vectors the process of determining the unitary state positive myth will be running.

The Ukrainian society requires a clear understanding of its position in the military conflict in the east of Ukraine. That can be successfully incorporated into the unitary state myth. At the time of quick changes, the social request is formed significantly faster than the ability of political forces to meet it. That is why, the unitary state myth would perform a stabilizing role in similar situations, preventing crisis phenomena.

4. Resistance to a ruining effect of myths

At the end of 2013, Ukraine made a civilization choice – high citizen activism, the uniting of the Ukrainian political nation which puts the statehood and success of a national project before all else, resulted in a wider and more modern understanding by the Ukrainian society of the national identity (not only through embroidery, language or other ethnic elements).

In our opinion, one of the priorities in the state politics must be the designing of a system for complex resistance to the ruining myths and the active formation of state-building political myths aimed at consolidation of the nation around democratic values, rights and freedoms of the person.

Analyzing the nature of historical myths, it can be stated that these structures lead both to improvement and deterioration of the human life. Negative myths justifying racism, xenophobia, religious and other types of intolerance are well known. However, there have been myths used for lofty aims – to widen the freedom, equality, national liberation, state-building based on democratic principles, etc.

In Ukraine, it can be stated that the keystone of the culture of memory is the absent boundary between scientific (research) and scientific-popular history, although myth-makers intensively use history for national mythology. Nationologists stress that the nation is an everlasting and the most valuable parameter; therefore, the rightness of history must be determined by the rate of devotion to this absolute value.

The myth about the split of the nation is an element of the crisis mythology in Ukraine. In 2004, after a conflict of personalities (V. Yushchenko and V. Yanukovich) transformed into a conflict of identities (the western pro-European region against the eastern pro-Russian one), it was given a timeless form due to the convenience of civilization rhetoric. The

myth about a split of the Ukrainian nation was created by Moscow political strategists after the presidential election in Ukraine in 2004 (Ševčenko, 2006) and successfully implemented into the social (everyday and even theoretical) consciousness.

In a technological way, in the conditions of absent counterstand and countermyths from the Ukrainian society and inability of the Ukrainian mythmaking subjects to decode negative symbols, stereotypical structures about the split of Ukraine obtained a character of norm and began to be perceived as obvious. Political and public leaders began using “split” mythologeme in public discussions easily, not understanding the negative results it can cause. For example, are the differences between Bavaria and Saxonia (which are quite significant) or a fact of differences between Germany and its former People’s Democratic Republic, in our opinion, a real basis for a German public official to start speaking about the “split of the German nation”? Certainly, not. However, as it appeared to be, not for Ukraine which borders with a half-authoritarian state which, moreover, wants to position itself as a strong “stem” country of an individual civilization space.

Another artificial myth analyzed by O. Ševčenko (2006) within the framework of the crisis mythology in Ukraine is also exported from Russia (and, by the way, is very wide-spread in Russia) – about the crisis of management. Within the framework of such myth perception, the main ideologist of “United Russia” V. Surkov specified that the Ukrainians are not a “state-building nation”, do not have “skills of state existence”, they demonstrate principal inability to build a state and autonomous geopolitical choice that foredooms them for a status of eternal province.

In fact, some features of the political process in Ukraine – indecisiveness, manipulativeness of power elites, their complete dependence on the elites non-voted for by the citizens (i.e. oligarchic groups) favors “exporters of myths from Russia to Ukraine” in presentation of new arguments promoting the myth of management crisis in Ukraine. For some time, the myth about the management crisis (more mythologized than real) continued psychological pumping of apathy and negativism in society’s consciousness due to another spreading of the propagandistic formula of “national rescue”, although, sometimes in fact, the nation must be rescued, first of all, from the makers and distributors of this myth.

One more component of the crisis mythology is a myth about inevitable disintegration of Ukraine, used not only by Russian politicians. For example, O. Ševčenko (2006) provides a statement of a Slovak journalist S. Khelemendyk about “civilization incompatibility” of numerous “Ukraines” (which include

Kyiv, pro-Russian north-east, Crimea, agrarian areas of central and southern Ukraine, Halychyna and former Austria-Hungary). This situation bears a forecast about "Yugoslavia's scenario", probable separation of a part of Ukraine, which O. Ševčenko (2006), rendering S. Khelemendyk's words, calls "Russian" (Crimea, south-east). Perhaps, they are biased materials of the journalist, but another fact troubles – the distribution of this analytics out of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

The most dangerous is a situation of a large-scale manipulation by the "crisis mythology" which leads to perceiving by the society's consciousness of a myth about Ukraine's disintegration as fatal inevitability. This is an ideal hidden rationale for political strategies popularizing a "crisis" image of the state.

Positive myth-making allows reaching relevant balance in the society for some time. The myth makes penetration of both rational and irrational politics possible; it penetrates into constitutions and laws in active and passive forms.

Patriotic protests in Ukraine reformed themselves with memorial markers of identity and retrospective understanding of the national in 2013–2014. The following ones worked well:

- Cossack myth (Cossack sotnias ("hundreds"));
- honoring the heroes of the past;
- ruining monuments to V. Lenin;
- cultivation of the Ukrainian language, songs, embroidered shirts, other cultural product.

According to O. Mykhailova, this certifies that the national is tightly connected with memorial markers (Malahov, 1999). The protests in Ukraine started from the events of Euromaidan, i.e. borrowed identity markers appeared to be not less important than memorial – the protesters considered themselves natural Europeans. It was a demonstration of tolerance in the respected meaning and perception of "Other". The other part of Ukraine's people did not borrow the European but Russian identification markers – paternalism and hostility concerning other identities (thugs for hire, so-called "titushky"). In general, a successful end of the protests was determined in many aspects by the fact whether the leaders were able to specify new markers (Koval et al., 2021) that depicted a new identity of the Ukrainian society.

To identify the nature of the current myth in transitional societies, one can use the concepts of "threshold", "society's structure" and "ideal community" offered by the rituals researchers. According to B. Gal' (2008), the society includes two inseparable models of human relationship:

- social structure as a structured system of political-and-legal and economic statuses of people;

- ideal communion as a non-structured and relatively non-differentiated community of individuals, arising where there is a lack of social structure.

5. Conclusions

The society cannot develop in a balanced way without consideration of national indicators. In post-Soviet states, the opposition between the ideal communion and a social structure is permanent. It is important how much the groups in these societies aspiring for a status of nation-building ones were integrated into the existing state.

The existence of Russia's aggressive information propagandistic policy against Ukraine and relevant dangers resulting from it are put into the basis of heroic mythology of Russia. In the Russian mythology, they postulate a short connection between the State and the People, which denies the system of complicated representative and legal mechanisms. That is why, in Russia one "people" is only possible if the state structure giving them an identity's mandate for a right to be called "people" is available, and the power justifies its legitimacy referring to symbolic representativeness on behalf of the whole "people".

Political and social discourse of Ukraine and almost all post-Soviet area is the imposition of individual symbols from the previous epochs taken out from political "naphthalene" onto the common Soviet symbolic basis: for Russia these symbols are dynasty's, for Ukraine – Cossacks'.

By contrast, in Ukraine, like in other western democracies, the principles of democracy are interwoven into the heroic myth. However, the state structure components are not an immanent component of heroic mythology. Heroic-and-sacral symbolism in the consciousness of the Ukrainian society can become actualized in a plural way: with embodiment in an individual person (President in the image of the "father of nation"), group (young ambitious politicians in the image of Cossack's otamans), community (army, volunteers as forces of the good that beats the absolute evil) or ideas (Eurointegration, victory in the conflict with Russia, which will lead to "the golden age").

The Ukrainians have always been and remain Europeans. However, due to myths, dreamed European future for Ukraine in the image of the "golden age" sometimes slows down, taking into account the tendency in the situation of personal intentions of particular circles of the elite. The positions of the myth about the hero remain dominant in Ukrainians' political consciousness but not so strong as in other

countries of the post-Soviet space, for example, in Russia.

Topical dangers for national security which started with the annexation of Crimea by Russia require counterstand beyond the borders of humanitarian aspects. The aggressive information policy hostile to the Ukrainian interests certifies not only about the lack of tolerance, culture of political dialogue among particular layers of the Russian political elite but is a demonstration of infringement upon the national narratives of Ukrainians, leads to a permanent increase in mutual non-understanding. In the conditions of the transformation stage in the development, the process of permanent updating of standard-and-symbolic components of the consciousness is natural. The typical feature of the mythmaking transformation in Ukraine in 2014 was a shift of focus from social problems onto the national-and-democratic ones. The hyperbolization of the ideal community became an important component of the Ukrainian myth.

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