Memory Politics in Dnipropetrovsk, 1991–2015

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This chapter is the first scholarly study of memory politics in Dnipropetrovsk between 1991 and the 2013–2014 Euromaidan Revolution. The Russian-speaking city of Dnipropetrovsk has been traditionally viewed as pro-Russian while at the same time, results from elections over this period show a gradual but steady increase in the share of votes won by pro-European parties. Memory politics and de-Sovietisation played an important role in the decline of pro-Russian political forces in Dnipropetrovsk. In this chapter, historical memory is defined as the interaction of family and public memory. Family memory is transmitted mainly in the form of traditional stories and folklore from the older generation to youth, not necessarily within one family. This type of memory can be learnt from the experience of the older generation who are recognised as an authority by the recipient.

Pro-Ukrainian and pro-Russian actors fashioned memory politics in Dnipropetrovsk. Each of them has its own vision of what constitutes memory. Those considered pro-Ukrainian were liberal and conservative while pro-Russian actors were nostalgic for the Tsarist Russian Empire and Soviet era. Scholarly research has analysed how each of the two groups interpreted three key historical periods: the Cossack era, Tsarist Russian Empire and Soviet Union. In analysing pro-Ukrainian and pro-Russian memory politics it is important to bring in policies by state and local authorities.

Scholarly Research on Memory Politics in Dnipropetrovsk

Since 1991, memory politics in Dnipropetrovsk has been a neglected field of academic research. Despite the importance of Dnipropetrovsk to Soviet and Ukrainian politics, scholars have largely ignored the city and region, preferring instead to focus on the Lviv-Kyiv-Donetsk axis. Among the few exceptions is the collective monograph *Historical memory of the Dnipropetrovsk region* which includes a chapter devoted to memory politics undertaken by the regional authorities during the celebrations of the 75th and 80th anniversaries of the region, as well as the activities of institutions such as the Dmytro Yavornytskyy Dnipropetrovsk National Museum. Another chapter analysed the transformation of historical memory in the region through the development of historical and local lore (Svitlenko 2012, 344–427).

An interesting analysis of different approaches to the problem of the emergence of the city was provided by Andrii and Tetiana Portnova (2015, 223–250). They outlined the main approaches to the founding of the city of Dnipropetrovsk within the 'imperial' paradigm, noting that typologically, celebration of the city's 100th anniversary in 1878 and the city's 200th anniversary in 1976 were very similar. Their theory is based on the idea of Russia's civilising role for the region. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, some historians in Dnipropetrovsk began to substantiate the idea of the emergence of the city from settlements in the Cossack era, an approach aimed at searching for a Ukrainian identity for the city.

Memory politics in Dnipropetrovsk was analysed in *Politics and Memory. Dnipro – Zaporizhzhya – Odesa – Kharkiv. From the 1990s to the present* by several authors, including myself (Kasianov 2018, 20–21, 39, 54–56,

67–68, 78–79, 84–85, 87, 94–95, 100–101, 108–110, 133–135, 138–140, 202–219). This detailed study identified the main contours of memory policies undertaken by the authorities and public figures during historical events. The material on each of the cities is divided into sections, with authors analysing the 'myths of the foundation,' the Tsarist Russian Empire in memory politics and memory politics in the twentieth century. The study (Kasianov 2018) analyses competition between Cossack and imperial myths of Dnipropetrovsk's emergence, uncertain perceptions in the nineteenth century and controversial approaches to events in Soviet history. The authors emphasise that controversy is inherent in all areas of Ukrainian memory politics, with a specific focus on the period after World War II when the city was closed to foreigners and became the centre of Soviet nuclear missile production. Textbooks on the history of the region describe the post-Soviet era as a period of prosperity. The second part of the study is devoted to analysis of public opinion polls conducted in 2013 and 2015 in several Ukrainian cities, including Dnipropetrovsk, which showed attitudes to Ukrainian history and memorialisation of history in public spaces. The study included several interviews with Dnipropetrovsk residents from different generations who outlined their perception of the city and memory politics. Researchers have found that the most dramatic historical event in the city is World War II.

Perceptions of Historical Memory in Dnipropetrovsk

To understand the mechanisms of memory politics in Dnipropetrovsk one must first analyse the perceptions of its residents about the history of their region. In general, there are two images of the past, Cossack and Tsarist Russian imperial with Soviet memory divided into several components.

If we discuss oral traditions, the Cossack past continues to be developed through two types of legends, family through ancestors of Cossacks, and toponymic, through the origin of names associated with events or figures from the Cossack era. The Tsarist Russian imperial era is represented somewhat more broadly. There is also a living tradition; for example, legends about landlords and their influence (both negative and positive) on the life of a particular village.

Memory politics of the Soviet era is very different in terms of how it is evaluated and very much dependent upon a family's experience of the communist system. The key historical moments are in 1917–1921; the *Holodomor*, collectivisation, and political repression; and the Second World War. Memory politics of the post-Stalin era is divided into when the USSR was led by Nikita Khrushchev (1953–1964), Leonid Brezhnev (1964–1982) or Mikhail Gorbachev (1985–1991). Here, to a certain extent, we find a public perception that during the second half of the twentieth century there was a gradual improvement of standards of living, a myth of a 'golden age' in the 1970s and deterioration of living standards in the second half of the 1980s.

Another approach to the interpretation of historical memory in Dnipropetrovsk is by dividing public opinion into on the one hand pro-Ukrainian (both conservative and liberal) and on the other, pro-Russian Imperial and Soviet. Despite the existence of certain differences within these two large groups (pro-Ukrainian and pro-Russian Imperial and Soviet), they are quite clear in how they identify themselves when discussing with the competing 'Other.'

Now let us attempt to instrumentalise the history of these two groups. There is a certain consensus between them in recognising the Cossack era. At the same time, those with a pro-Ukrainian identity emphasise the place of Cossacks in their historical memory while those holding a more Imperial and Soviet identity typically display, with certain exceptions, an ignorance about them (which is discussed below).

Interest in Cossacks had always existed in the region; Ukrainian Communist leader Petro Shelest had praised them in his 1970 book *Ukrayina nasha radyanska* (Ukraine. Our Soviet Land) for which he was accused of 'national deviationism' and removed two years later (Tillett 1975). It was not surprising that interest in Cossack history was revived in the late Gorbachev era during the uncovering of 'blank spots' in Ukrainian history. This came to the fore in 1990 during the 500th anniversary of the formation of Ukrainian Cossacks when Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhhya hosted events which gathered upwards of 20,000 people from the region and visitors, mainly from Western Ukraine and Kyiv. Rallies were held and a monument to a young Taras Shevchenko was unveiled.

A striking event was the march by thousands of people along the central avenue of Dnipropetrovsk to the D.

Yavornytskyy Museum and a rally at the end of the commemoration in the Taras Shevchenko Park. There were minor skirmishes in the city with Soviet veterans from the Afghanistan war who opposed the Ukrainian national revival. This commemoration not only revived and reclaimed the Cossack past, but also other national liberation struggles in 1917–1921 by the Ukrainian People's Republic (UNR) and in the 1940s by the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA).[1]

Since the early 1990's the Dnipropetrovsk region has registered 49 so-called 'Cossack' pro-Ukrainian and pro-Russian Cossack organisations. Most of them were interest clubs who occasionally gather a small number of their members and undertake respectable activities. *Kodak Palanka* of the Zaporizhzhyan Cossack Army, which stands out among the pro-Ukrainian organisations, regularly participates in the 'Sokil-Yura' regional competition, has defended a school playground from illegal construction, created a 400-strong Maidan self-defence group, and defended state buildings in Dnipropetrovsk in spring of 2014 from their take-over by Party of Regions and pro-Russian vigilantes.[2]

The most successful pro-Russian Cossack organisation is the Ekaterinoslav Cossack District, ideologically based on the not so historically important Ekaterinoslav Cossack army which fought for the Tsarist Russian Empire. They strongly support the concept of the Russian World and have organised processions with the Russian Orthodox Church in Ukraine in honour of military victories by the Tsarist Russian Empire. They established a Cadet Corps for young Cossacks and organised visits by Cossacks from Russia. Since 2014, they have been not surprisingly inactive.[3]

Cossack organisations in Dnipropetrovsk traditionally celebrate the Intercession, the Day of Remembrance of Hetman Ivan Sirko on 14 October. In 2000–2010, the *Samarska Pokrova* festival took place on the territory of the Old Samara fortress (located in the modern village of Shevchenko in Dnipropetrovsk). On 1–2 August, commemorations of Hetman Sirko are traditionally held at his gravesite in the village of Kapulivka. During celebrations prior to 2014, there were often conflicts between pro-Ukrainian and pro-Russian Cossack organisations, with the latter supported by the authorities during Viktor Yanukovych's presidency (2010–2014).[4]

Competition Over Who Founded Dnipropetrovsk

One of the important areas of conflict between pro-Ukrainian and pro-Russian Imperial and Soviet memory politics is the founding of the city of Dnipropetrovsk. The year 1776 was celebrated by the Soviet regime in the 1970s as a way of deliberately coinciding with the 70th anniversary of Brezhnev's birth. This replaced the previously dominant date of the founding of Dnipropetrovsk during the visit of Tsarist Empress Catherine II in 1787 which was traditionally used by historiography as the city's foundation year. Since the 1990s, attempts have been made to revise these Tsarist and Soviet dates and, more importantly the context by expanding discussion into the media. In the 1990s, the most prominent scholar who regularly addressed this topic was Yuriy Mitsik who argued that the history of the city should be dated earlier from the construction of the Cossack Kodak Fortress in 1635.[5]

Discussion about the origins of the city of Dnipropetrovsk intensified following the 2004 Orange Revolution when several civic organisations and academic centres (e.g., Institute of Ukrainian Studies, Institute of Social Research), appealed to scholars and local historians to begin research into the Cossack era foundation of Dnipropetrovsk. Based on the monograph *Palimpsest: settlements of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries in the history of Dnipropetrovsk*, they launched a public campaign to redefine the origins of Dnipropetrovsk by proposing 1645 as its founding year. Press conferences in Dnipropetrovsk and Kyiv, round tables, petitions to the city's mayor, billboards on streets, and the unveiling of a memorial on the territory of Novyy Kodak were used to popularise the Ukrainian claim to having established the settlement of Dnipropetrovsk.

The city authorities moved towards the Ukrainian claim to having founded Dnipropetrovsk through symbolically recognising the Cossack component of the history of Dnipropetrovsk by naming one of the streets in the centre of the city of Polovytska in honour of the settlement of Polovytsya established around 1743. Interestingly, the names of districts within Dnipropetrovsk, such as Mandrykivka, Diyivka, Kamyanka, and others are linked to Ukraine's Cossack past. The biggest revival of Cossack historical names took place during the process of decommunisation in

2015–2018 which is analysed in the next chapter by Kocherhin (see Repan 2007).[6]

Pro-Russian Imperial and Soviet memory politics on the founding of Dnipropetrovsk is weakly endowed with scholarly support; nevertheless, it was dominant among the city's political elites prior to the 2014 crisis. The*History of the City of Dnepropetrovsk*, which was commissioned by the City's Council, uses 1776 as the date of the founding of Dnipropetrovsk which influences the city's annual Day of the City holiday and the celebration of other anniversaries. Even between 2014–2015, during the Russian-Ukrainian war, social advertising was embellished in the city centre with the foundation year of 1776 – supposedly to promote local unity in the face of the threat from foreign invasion (Bolebrukh 2006).

At the heart of the pro-Russian Imperial approach is a thesis of the civilising influence of the Tsarist Russian Empire on the development of the Dnipropetrovsk region. Tsarina Catherine II and Prince Potemkin allegedly aimed to fashion Katerynoslav into the third capital of the Tsarist Russian Empire. In the 1990s, this thesis was used to justify the uniqueness of Dnipropetrovsk. The costumed characters of Tsarina Catherine II and her favourite courtiers participated in the Day of the City celebrations and were aired in television commercials. Local businessman Hennadiy Balashov named his chain of 'Moskva' shops after figures from the Tsarist Empire, such as Katerininsky, Potemkin, Orlovsky and others. These shops were part of the city landscape for a long period of time.[7]

In 2005–2006, following the Orange Revolution, a heated debate broke out in the local media over the erection of new monuments. Attempts to erect monuments to Tsarina Catherine II were successful in several Ukrainian cities and in Dnipropetrovsk there was an initiative to install a monument to her next to the building of the Central Cathedral of the Russian Orthodox Church in Ukraine. The head of the Dnipropetrovsk state administration Yuriy Yekhanurov, appointed by President Viktor Yushchenko, was opposed to this proposal, arguing it represented homage to the Tsarist Empire and demanded an end to its construction. Supporters of the pro-Russian Imperial approach to memory politics actively promoted 'St. Catherine' by attempting to provide the Empress with a saintly image.[8]

The importance of the mythology about Tsarina Catherine II was demonstrated during the 2012 visit of Russian President Vladimir Putin's political technologist Konstantyn Zatulin, who was accompanied by a team of historians and a film crew from the Russian *Kultura* television channel to Dnipropetrovsk and other cities in Eastern-Southern Ukraine. The visit was to mark the 225th anniversary of the so-called 'Great Journey' of Tsarina Catherine II and to promote her memory as that of a 'civilising mission' into so-called 'wild lands.' The Party of Regions organised several supporting events in Dnipropetrovsk oblast library, promotions in the media, and presentations by Party of Regions deputy Oleh Tsarev (who in the 2014 crisis became a separatist leader). Subsequently published Russian media reports and pseudo-academic work by Russian historians were of low scholarly quality, primarily consisting of disinformation about the life of 'Russians' living in Dnipropetrovsk.[9] This view of 'Russians' inhabiting Eastern-Southern Ukraine had already been propagated by Putin in 2008 to a NATO audience.[10]

Not all historic figures were unacceptable in the competition over the origins and identity of Dnipropetrovsk. Two historical figures, Dmytro Yavornytskyy and Olexandr Pol, were acceptable to pro-Ukrainian and pro-Russian Imperial and Soviet memory politics of Dnipropetrovsk. They were both represented in the public space with monuments. During the decommunisation process the central avenue of Dnipropetrovsk was renamed after Yavornytskyy while a large avenue on the right bank of the city was named after Pol. Besides a monument to him as a historian on Dnipropetrovsk's central avenue the city's Historical Museum also bears his name.[11]

Yavornytskyy satisfied supporters of the pro-Ukrainian interpretation of Dnipropetrovsk history because he was a populariser of Cossacks, an archaeologist, and activist of the Ukrainian cultural organisation *Prosvita*. His work made him a legendary figure during his lifetime and following his death, positive memories were published of Yavornytskyy which were incorporated into the city's folklore. Consequently, his legacy did not provoke opposition from civic groups.

Pol's memory was revived after it had been banned in the Soviet era. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Pol was influential as a historian who imbued a self-confident identity to Dnipropetrovsk. Pol was traditionally supported by those holding a pro-Russian Imperial identity of Dnipropetrovsk because he was an

aristocrat, had taken part in the *Zemstvo* movement, and actively lobbied for the construction of a railway through Ekaterinoslav which had assisted the development of the region's metallurgical industry. At the same time, he was favourably received by those upholding a pro-Ukrainian identity of Dnipropetrovsk because he identified himself as a 'Little Russian' with Cossack ancestry and because he was interested in Ukrainian ethnography. Pol's memory was revived through many newspaper articles, publication of a monograph and a popular scholarly book, opening of a monument to him near the City Council's building, and the re-naming of a street after him. In 2020 on the initiative of Dnipro Mayor Boris Filatov his anniversary was honoured in official ceremonies (Kocherhin 2002; Platonov 2002).

Ukrainian National Liberation Struggle in Dnipropetrovsk Memory Politics

The 1917–1921 national liberation struggle was not actively debated in Dnipropetrovsk during the first two decades of Ukrainian independence. Dnipropetrovsk inherited street names which commemorated the Soviet interpretation of the 'Russian civil war,' such as the plaque on the *Holovposhti* (Main Post Office) which commemorated the Bolshevik victory against 'counter-revolutionaries.'

Prior to, and especially since 2014, there have been attempts to rethink the 1917–1921 period of Ukrainian history. A crucifix was installed at the burial place of UNR soldiers on Zhovtnevyy (re-named Sobornyy) Square in the upper part of the city of Dnipro. Initially, the city authorities did not allow the installation of the crucifix memorial and dismantled it, but it was replaced by a stone cross unveiled by Mayor Filatov.[12] Other memorials to UNR officers installed by civic activists were unveiled in the villages of Dniprovokamyanka (Spyrydon Tropko) and Verkhnodniprovsk (Nykyfor Avramenko).[13]

Reviving the memory of anarchist leader Nestor Makhno was less problematical. In the Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhhya regions many legends about Makhno continued to persist with one of the most common being his mistress had lived 'in our village.' A memorial plaque was erected at the *Ukrayina* Hotel where Makhno established his headquarters during his occupation of Katerynoslav. A Makhno Public Bar also operates on a street in the centre of Dnipro. A monument to Makhno was erected in Nikopol.[14]

Other ways in which historical memory has been revived is through the romanticisation of the 1917–1921 Ukrainian national revolution through the songs of the Dnipro *Vertep* (travelling drama theatre). The 'ultras' (football club extremists) of the Kryvyy Rih football club *Kryvbas* are fond of the UNR Hetman Kost Pestushko who was one of the most ardent anti-Bolshevik leaders in the Dnipropetrovsk region.[15]

The Holodomor was denied by the Soviet regime until 1990. Knowledge about the Holodomor was revived during the Gorbachev era's unveiling of blank spots in history and of course from 1991 in independent Ukraine. President Viktor Yushchenko devoted a good deal of attention to reviving memory of the Holodomor and mobilised an international campaign to persuade governments it constituted a genocide against Ukrainians. A memorial to the victims of the Holodomor in Dnipropetrovsk was unveiled in 2008.[16] Yanukovych's presidency adopted a Russophile stance on the 1933 famine as an all-Soviet tragedy (not a Ukrainian genocide) leading to a decline in interest in the Holodomor by state institutions. In the public arena the Holodomor continued to be of interest to civic groups and scholars.

Great Patriotic War and World War II

In 2000–2010, the most heated discussions in memory politics dealt with the myth of the Great Patriotic War and OUN and UPA. Dnipropetrovsk had many Soviet memorial plaques and monuments upholding the Soviet myth of the Great Patriotic War. Ukraine inherited celebrations of the Liberation Day of the city and Victory Day (9 May). The Party of Regions exported to Dnipropetrovsk the transformation in Putin's Russia of the Great Patriotic War into a quasi-religious cult and promotion of the St. George ribbon. This was especially evident in the 'Immortal Regiment' of people marching on 9 May with portraits of Soviet heroes from their families; in reality, they were often teachers and state officials ordered to attend. In 2013, the cult of Victory Day was promoted by a huge injection of resources into the re-staging of the crossing of the Dnipro River in 1943 during the Great Patriotic War during which hundreds of thousands of Soviet soldiers died.[17] In May 2013, a march by pro-Ukrainian civic groups and activists was attacked by young vigilantes from a sports club funded by the Party of Regions.[18]

Memory politics aimed at honouring the memory of OUN and UPA was systematic but slow. The Dnipropetrovsk branch of the Brotherhood of Soldiers of UPA had operated since the 1990s and public commemorations of UPA on 14 October were regularly held. Publications in the mass media and scholarly conferences devoted to the Ukrainian nationalist movement led to bitter debates in the city. Supporters of the pro-Ukrainian memory politics and nationalist groups publicised OUN and UPA through torchlight processions in Dnipropetrovsk. After 2014, 'ultras,' civic activists and patriots held portraits of OUN leader Stepan Bandera in marches to demonstrate their hostile attitudes to Putin and Russian military aggression against Ukraine.[19]

Negative attitudes towards Ukrainian nationalism in response to Russian military aggression waned and since 2014 more Ukrainians have had a positive view of OUN and UPA (Oliinyk and Kuzio 2021, 831–832). An ethnic Russian fighting in Ukraine's armed forces compared volunteers like himself with the volunteers who had joined OUN and UPA. Bandera had, Anatoliy Lebidyev believed, in the same manner as they were, defended their own land, seeing nationalism as 'vaccine' against genocide by Ukraine's neighbours and believing that if there had been no nationalism in Western Ukraine there would have been 'genocide' against the local Ukrainian population (Reva 2020, 250).

Jewish Life in Dnipropetrovsk Memory Politics

The Ukrainian Institute for Holocaust Studies 'Tkuma' and the Museum of the History of the Jewish People and the Holocaust in Ukraine, both located in the city of Dnipro, were created, and headed by historian and author of school textbooks Ihor Shchupak (see the chapter by Ishchenko). They became a public platform which provided an opportunity for dialogue and presentation for supporters of both the liberal and conservative wings of pro-Ukrainian memory politics. Their premises were used by the Dnipro Historical Club[20] which regularly invited Ukrainian historians, such as Vladyslav Hrynevych, Volodymyr Vyatrovych, Ivan Patrylyak, Yaroslav Hrytsak, Paul R. Magocsi, Sergei Zhuk and Timothy Snyder. The contents of their lectures expanded discussed of Ukrainian history in the local media.[21]

The museum's exposition presented materials which demonstrated a moderate stance towards Ukrainian nationalism while seeking to advance understanding between Jews, who had no love for the USSR, and Ukrainian patriots. The exhibition included examples of cooperation between the OUN and Jewish community during World War II, participation of Ukrainian nationalists in the Holocaust, rescuing of Jews by Ukrainian nationalists and participation of Jews in the UPA.

The museum exhibition presents far more than the Holocaust with visitors experiencing the Jewish world of Ukraine which preceded the Shoah. The museum does not attempt to show the history of the Jews in an unblemished manner, and they are represented as both victims and perpetrators. Ukrainians are similarly presented not as one homogenous group of murderers or patriots, but as either participant, indifferent to what is taking place around them, and rescuers in the Holocaust. It is noteworthy the museum's exposition presents the tragedies of a broader number of peoples who include Armenians, Chechens, and Crimean Tatars who have also suffered genocides.[22]

Euromaidan Revolution and Russian-Ukrainian War

Historical debates over memory politics subsided during the Euromaidan Revolution. The exception was how the greeting 'Glory to Ukraine! Glory to its heroes!' became popular at that time. Dnipropetrovsk experienced its own Maidan which was savagely attacked by Party of Regions vigilantes in January 2014.

After Yanukovych fled from office in February 2014, the situation in the city became precarious. At a time when there were demoralised and paralysed state structures, following the disintegration of the Party of Regions, the vacuum was filled by Euromaidan Revolution supporters and Ukrainian patriots. On a symbolic level, the removal of the large Vladimir Lenin monument in the central square of Dnipropetrovsk was an early symbolic victory. Its removal over eight hours was broadcast live by several local television channels.[23]

St. George's ribbons were worn by supporters of the anti-Maidan and Party of Regions vigilantes. Annual 9 May

Victory Day celebrations often experienced fierce confrontations between those holding a pro-Russian Imperial and Soviet identity who insisted on the right to wear the St. George's ribbon and those holding a pro-Ukrainian identity who interpreted the ribbon as a symbol of the Russian World and Russian military aggression against Ukraine. In 2015, after the adoption of four decommunisation laws, poppies dominated the public space in Dnipropetrovsk and a far smaller number of supporters of the Opposition Bloc (one of two successor parties to the Party of Regions) continued to wear the St. George ribbon. In 2017, and therefore beyond the scope of this chapter, Ukraine's only exposition dedicated to the Russian-Ukrainian war, the Museum of the ATO[24], was opened in Dnipro.[25]

Conclusions

In 1991–2015, memory politics in Dnipropetrovsk resembled that found on the national level, but with some local differences as memory politics in Dnipropetrovsk were often inconsistent and schizophrenic prior to the Orange Revolution. Yushchenko's presidency officially promoted the Holodomorand a pantheon of heroes of Ukrainian nationalism. Yanukovych's presidency attempted to undertake a counter-revolution against pro-Ukrainian memory politics and imported approaches to the 1933 famine and quasi-religious cult of the Great Patriotic War propagated in Putin's Russia.

Yanukovych and the Party of Regions built on pre-existing Soviet memory politics. Post-Soviet local elites in Dnipropetrovsk had tolerated the Cossack past of the region but strongly objected to memory politics of the UNR and especially OUN, which had operated a sizeable underground in the city during World War II. The only significant event which was firmly entrenched in the public space was the Holodomor because of support given by the central government coupled with a strong memory of the tragedy which had survived in local family history.

Fundamental changes occurred in response to the victory of the Euromaidan Revolution, 2014 crisis and Russian military aggression. Prior to then there had been a gradual growth in pro-European and Ukrainian patriotism and those holding this identity came to power in 2014. This was ironically personified in Deputy Governor and (from 2015) Mayor Filatov, Governor Ihor Kolomoyskyy and Deputy Governor Hennadiy Korban, an ethnic Russian and two Jewish-Ukrainians respectively, leading the counter-offensive against pro-Russian forces and Russian military aggression. Their support made Dnipropetrovsk and Dnipro the most radical implementor of decommunisation in Eastern-Southern Ukraine.

The roots of the gradual change in electoral sentiment and coming to power of pro-Ukrainian forces is to be found in the revision and de-Sovietising of identity and promotion of pro-Ukrainian memory politics which had taken place since 1991. Other important factors were a pluralistic approach to the Ukrainian past (unlike in neighbouring Donbas), diversity of activists and scholars working in the field of memory politics and official support given to a pro-Ukrainian identity by government institutions.

Supporters of Soviet memory politics were clearly at a disadvantage during the bulk of the period from 1991–2013, except during Yanukovych's presidency, and were completely defeated in 2014–2015. The smaller influence of pro-Russian memory politics is explained by two factors. Firstly, their activities were to a great extent inspired by external support through funding from the Russian World Foundation or the Donetsk-based Party of Regions, rather than from local support. Secondly, their activities most often relied on the support of state institutions (such as during Yanukovych's presidency) or the Russian Orthodox Church in Ukraine — rather than from local civil society.

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