

# THE INFLUENCE OF BULGARIA'S POLITICAL ELITES ON THE POLICY OF HISTORIAL MEMORY FORMATION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE POST-COMMUNIST TRANSFORMATION OF SOCIETY

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The article examines the relevance of historical memory research as a key factor in the formation of national identity and an instrument of state policy. At the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century, the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, in particular Bulgaria, faced the need to develop a balanced historical policy amid transformational processes. This study aims to identify and summarise the main political practices that shaped social consciousness in the post-communist period.

The article analyses the influence of political elites on the formation of historical memory policy in Bulgaria in the context of the post-communist transformation of society. The goal is to identify and generalise the main dimensions of memory policy and political practices, and to determine their influence on the formation of historical consciousness and the national idea in the context of post-socialist changes. Special attention is paid to comparing Bulgaria's experience with Ukrainian realities, which is relevant in the context of modern hybrid warfare and the fight against historical myths.

The study is based on the analysis of historical, political, and social aspects of memory policy-making. Approaches are used that allow studying commemorative strategies, in particular regarding decommunization, revising the content of textbooks, and constructing a new national pantheon of heroes. The analysis includes the study of legislative initiatives (such as laws on the criminal nature of the communist regime and the decommunization of science), the activities of institutions (such as the Commission for the Opening of Documents and the Institute of National Remembrance), and public discussions. The influence of external factors, such as Russian information propaganda, is also taken into account. The study uses a comparative approach, comparing the Bulgarian experience with Ukrainian realities.

For the first time, the influence of political elites on the politics of memory in Bulgaria after the fall of the communist regime was systematically analysed, focusing on the mechanisms and practices of decommunization, the revision of historical narratives, and the formation of a new national identity. It has been proven that these processes were not always straightforward, as society showed an ambiguous attitude towards the communist past, combining its criticism with a certain nostalgia for the past. It is studied how the politics of memory is used as a tool to ensure social unity and counter external threats. The role of historical myths in the formation of the «image of the enemy» and the manipulation of public opinion is revealed.

An effective public policy of memory is an important tool for ensuring social unity and consolidation, contributing to the formation of a Bulgarian-centric national identity. Although the process of decommunization in Bulgaria was

slow, it included important legislative steps, such as the recognition of the criminal nature of the communist regime. Political elites oriented towards European values played a key role in abandoning the socialist past and regaining power. At the same time, the existence of a pro-Russian political bloc indicates the use of historical memory to destabilise the country. The experience of Bulgaria shows that the revision of textbooks, the creation of a pantheon of heroes, and the fight against historical myths are key elements in the formation of a new historical consciousness.

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## ВПЛИВ ПОЛІТИЧНИХ ЕЛІТ БОЛГАРІЇ НА ПОЛІТИКУ ФОРМУВАННЯ ІСТОРИЧНОЇ ПАМ'ЯТІ В КОНТЕКСТІ ПОСТКОМУНІСТИЧНОЇ ТРАНСФОРМАЦІЇ СУСПІЛЬСТВА

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**Ключові слова:** Політика пам'яті, історична пам'ять, декомунізація, Болгарія, трансформація суспільства, політичні еліти, історичні міфи, національна ідентичність.

У статті розглядається політика пам'яті як ключового чинника формування національної ідентичності та інструменту державної політики. Наприкінці 20 – початку 21 століття країни Центрально-Східної Європи, зокрема Болгарія, постали перед необхідністю розбудови збалансованої історичної політики в умовах трансформаційних процесів. Це дослідження є спробою виявити та узагальнити основні політичні практики, що вплинули на формування суспільної свідомості в посткомуністичний період.

У статті досліджено вплив політичних еліт на формування політики історичної пам'яті в Болгарії в контексті посткомуністичної трансформації суспільства. Метою є виявлення та узагальнення основних вимірів політики пам'яті, політичних практик та визначення їх впливу на формування історичної свідомості та національної ідеї в умовах постсоціалістичних змін. Особлива увага приділяється порівнянню досвіду Болгарії з українськими реаліями, що є актуальним в умовах сучасної гібридної війни та боротьби з історичними міфами.

Дослідження базується на аналізі історичних, політичних та соціальних аспектів формування політики пам'яті. Застосовуються підходи, що дозволяють вивчати комеморативні стратегії, зокрема щодо декомунізації, перегляду змісту підручників та конструювання нового національного пантеону героїв. Аналіз включає вивчення законодавчих ініціатив (наприклад, законів про злочинний характер комуністичного режиму та декомунізацію науки), діяльності інституцій (таких як Комісія з відкриття документів та Інститут національної пам'яті) та суспільних дискусій. Також враховано вплив зовнішніх чинників, таких як російська інформаційна пропаганда. Дослідження використовує порівняльний підхід, зіставляючи болгарський досвід з українськими реаліями.

Системно проаналізовано вплив політичних еліт на політику пам'яті в Болгарії після падіння комуністичного режиму, зосереджуючись на механізмах і практиках декомунізації, перегляді історичних наративів та формуванні нової національної ідентичності. Доведено, що ці процеси не завжди були прямолінійними, оскільки суспільство демонструвало неоднозначне ставлення до комуністичного минулого, поєднуючи його критику з певною ностальгією за минулими часами. Досліджено, як політика пам'яті використовується як інструмент для забезпечення суспільної єдності та протидії зовнішнім загрозам. Розкрито роль історичних міфів у формуванні «образу ворога» та маніпуляціях громадською думкою.

Ефективна державна політика пам'яті є важливим інструментом для забезпечення суспільної єдності та консолідації, сприяючи формуванню болгароцентричної національної ідентичності. Хоча процес декомунізації в Болгарії був повільним, він включав важливі законодавчі кроки, такі як визнання злочинного характеру комуністичного режиму. Політичні еліти, орієнтовані на європейські цінності, відігравали ключову роль у відмові від соціалістичного минулого та оновленні влади. Водночас, існування проросійського політичного блоку свідчить про використання історичної пам'яті для дестабілізації країни. Досвід Болгарії показує, що перегляд підручників, створення пантеону героїв та боротьба з історичними міфами є ключовими елементами формування нової історичної свідомості.

**Problem setting.** At the end of the 20th – early 21st century, in the context of transformational processes, the states of Central and Eastern Europe, including Bulgaria, faced the issue of developing a balanced historical policy. The problems of memory policy were actualized in the vast majority of the countries of the region, whose political elites set out to achieve the final decommunization of historical memory.

Transformational processes contributed to a new political situation, which required independent states to defend their national interests, preserve political and economic stability, and solve problems of social and regional character. One of them is the formation of collective historical consciousness and national idea in the conditions of social transformation. The new circumstances required the cooperation of various political forces and structures in this area.

The formation of a new, post-socialist collective historical consciousness accelerated the orientation toward the European vector and adherence to European values. The process of reconstruction and modernisation of the historical problem has begun, which was an integral part of the political practices of the transformational period, including Bulgaria. These issues are actively discussed not only in academic communities, but also enter into the modern political discourse of the countries of the region of Central and Eastern Europe. French researcher Georges Mink emphasizes that the communist past is at the centre of political debates and issues of memory<sup>1</sup>.

The components of the Bulgarian politics of memory are topics related to the historical past. Among the most important issues are the problems of the national Renaissance, the period of Turkish domination, as well as the modern process of

decommunization. The communist regime lasted in Bulgaria for more than four decades, from the 40-s to the 80-s. That is why the process of decommunization is a significant tool of the modern policy of memory of the Republic of Bulgaria. The main tasks of which are to declare the desire to finally break with the socialist past and accelerate the renewal of the ruling elite of the country. The priority is to find strategies for the formation of the national memory space and the issue of protecting its historical past, especially in the context of information hybrid wars of our time.

Therefore, the study of the issue of formation of memory policy in Bulgaria is important on the one hand for the development of a democratic regime and building long-term and stable relations between countries. For Ukraine, especially in the context of the modern Ukrainian-Russian war and the incitement of «hate speech», the issue of forming an effective policy of memory is relevant. The experience of implementing a policy of memory of other countries, especially Bulgaria, can be useful.

In his context, **the purpose of** scientific intelligence is an attempt to identify and generalize the main dimensions of memory policy and political practices, to determine their impact on the formation of historical consciousness and national idea in the post-Soviet transformation of Bulgarian society. Within the framework of this material, it is impossible to disclose all the existing issues of this topic, so attention will be focused only on several aspects.

**Analysis of recent research and publications.** This problem stands at an interdisciplinary cross-roads and is the subject of attention of several sciences, such as Political science, history, psychology and others.

The issues of political use of the past have also entered the circle of scientific interests, first of all, historians and political scientists. In the second half of the twentieth century. Various aspects of this problem have found coverage in the works of such

<sup>1</sup> Європа та її болісні минувшини / авт.-упоряд. Ж. Мінк і Л. Неймайєр у співпраці з П. Боннаром. Пер. з фр. Є. Марічева. Київ: Ніка-Центр, 2015. С. 30.

well-known researchers of the politics of memory<sup>2</sup>. The works reveal the main directions of research on historical memory, forming key definitions. The request of the authorities and society on this subject has led to an increase in scientific developments on this subject.

Among the works on this issue, one can note the works of domestic researchers, such as. A. Kiridon, L. Nagornaya and others<sup>3</sup>. The focus of attention of most scientific studies is on the historical policy of memory. Researcher I. Foschan studied the experience of the formation of memory policy in Bulgaria and compared it with that of Ukraine<sup>4</sup>.

The culture of memory and discussions around the problems of social collective historical memory allow for to generalize of the impression of the content of the historical past and to build policies and political approaches. Relevant policy in the field of historical memory.

### **Presentation of the main material.**

Historical memory is one of the main factors in the formation of national consciousness, an important factor in ensuring the national security of the state. Modern approaches to the politics of memory have become a whole system of ideologically marked measures that form and consolidate certain historical ideas about the past in society and affect the present. The end of the Cold War, the collapse of the USSR, and the fall of totalitarian regimes were marked by the transformation of historical policy and the processes of democratisation. The dialogue between political elites and society becomes extremely relevant in such conditions, and the representation of images of the past is enhanced by the modern political context and the need to achieve political compromises.

During the transformational processes that have intensified in Bulgaria since the late 80s, especially the important task of the state policy of historical

memory, was the replacement of totalitarian symbols of the past. Not paying attention to this important task, not solving the issues of decommunization, can lead to aggravation of the political situation in the country and even political crisis and conflicts.

Among the political elites of Bulgaria from the beginning of the transformation processes in the country to the present day, most have pro-European forces. At the same time, there is a powerful political association focused on the modern Russian vector, headed by President Rumen Radev. The pro-Moscow Union includes the Revival, Coalition for Bulgaria, and the left! The pro-Moscow bloc is shaking the political situation in Bulgaria and repeatedly trying to destabilise the country. And uses the basis of historical memory as a means for provocations. Namely, according to the initiative of the President of the country and his supporters, the organization of such events as the March «Immortal Regiment»<sup>5</sup>. West was saturated with neo-racist symbolism. The memory of World War II is deliberately used for propaganda actions that threaten political stability.

In this context, the replacement of totalitarian symbols of the past is one of the priority tasks of the state policy of historical memory. Underestimating this important issue could lead to political crises or even more threatening scenarios.

During the transformation of Bulgaria, the task of forming a holistic view of the historical past at the level of collective memory, including the communist experience in the country, appeared. The political elites of the country had to reckon with the nostalgic sentiments among a part of the population for a balanced life in the Bulgarian Democratic Republic. Which were associated with the feeling of loss of the usual life guidelines in the conditions of transformational processes. Such sentiments, to a certain extent, leave their imprint on the formation of the corresponding features of the Bulgarian culture of memory.

Awakening the sense of community of historical destiny is an important component of the internal policy of the state power and a necessary condition for democratic European development. Political elites are implementing a set of commemorative strategies and practices focused on the formation of collective ideas about the past, which are part of the policy of national security in the humanitarian sphere.

According to the researcher Ya. Foshchana, a significant tool of the modern policy of memory of

<sup>2</sup> Ассман А. Простори спогаду. Форми та трансформації культурної пам'яті. Київ: Ніка-Центр, 2012. 440с.; Felman Sh., Laub D. Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History. New York: Taylor & Francis. 1992. 283 р.; Neal A. National Trauma and collective memory. New York, 1998 224 р.; Nora P. Between memory and history / P. Nora *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past*. New York, 1996. Vol. 1: Conflicts and Division. – Р. 3–25.

<sup>3</sup> Киридон А. Гетеротопії пам'яті. Теоретико-методологічні проблеми студій пам'яті. Київ: Ніка-Центр, 2016. 320 с.; Нагорна Л. П. Історична пам'ять: теорії, дискурси, рефлексії. Київ: ІПІЕНД ім. І. Ф. Кураса НАН України, 2012. 328 с.

<sup>4</sup> Фощан Я. І. Досвід становлення політики пам'яті в Болгарії С. 196–201. Україна: контекст світових подій. Аналітичні записки Державної установи «Інститут всесвітньої історії Національної академії наук України» (2017–2019 рр.) / [за заг. ред. А. І. Кудряченка]; НАН України. Київ: ДУ «Ін-т всесвіт. історії України НАН України», 2019. 447 с.

<sup>5</sup> Дехто у Болгарії заразився «російським побєдобесієм» URL : <https://www.golos.com.ua/>

the Republic of Bulgaria, is the desire to finally break with the socialist past and accelerate the renewal of the ruling elite of the country, among whom there are now many immigrants from the Soviet system<sup>6</sup>.

The main vectors of the policy of memory within our scientific intelligence are focused on the issues of formation and implementation of the policy of memory regarding the communist past in Bulgarian society. Modern Bulgaria demonstrates a rather typical example of a post-socialist «culture of memory», in which an ambiguous and sometimes even apathetic attitude prevails. The communist past there, on the one hand, is perceived as something imposed from the outside and «alien» to the national system of values. However, on the other hand, it is emphasised that the communist regime contributed to modernisation to some extent, and then «not everything was so bad». At the same time, today the Bulgarian «old» and «new» elites interact with each other without any problems due to an important common feature – their inherent nationalism, which is to some extent characteristic of almost all post-socialist countries.

For quite a long time, the process of breaking up with the communist past took place in Bulgaria slowly, largely due to the friendly attitude of the broad layers of Bulgarian society to the USSR. According to Bulgarian researchers, there is a considerable social stratum in the state for which nostalgia for Soviet times is characteristic, although such views are not dominant among the population.

During the great political changes and social breaks, the culture of memory is radically transformed, which is why it is easy to see, watching the situation in post-communist countries after 1989–1991, including Bulgaria. The fall of the Iron Curtain in the 1990s created conditions for a new wave of interest in the subject. It turned out that from the beginning, it was necessary to abandon the theory that the Soviet Union was only a saviour and winner, and the influence on the Bulgarian community was exceptionally positive.

New views on the Soviet past and interest in national history began to appear. At the centre of discussions about the past world wars, totalitarian, antidemocratic regimes, and cooperation with them is such a far from a complete list of topics that democratic criticism has put in the foreground.

<sup>6</sup> Фощан Я. І. Досвід становлення політики пам'яті в Болгарії С. 196–201. Україна: контекст світових подій. Аналітичні записки Державної установи «Інститут всесвітньої історії Національної академії наук України» (2017–2019 pp.) / [за заг. ред. А. І. Кудряченка]; НАН України. Київ: ДУ «Ін-т всесвіт. історії України НАН України», 2019. 447 с.

In the process of transformation of Bulgaria's political system and changes of elites, new legislative norms were adopted, including in the context of historical memory. Important in the process of decommunization of Bulgaria was the adoption in 1992 known as the law Paneva or «Law on the Decommunization»<sup>7</sup>.

It provided for temporary requirements for members of the executive bodies and the higher Attestation Commission, according to which former Communist Party activists and teachers of scientific communism had no right to hold senior positions in higher educational institutions and scientific institutions. However, the law did not last long: On April 3, 1995, the Bulgarian Parliament abolished it.

At the same time, Bulgaria turned out to be a country from the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, which introduced special legislation on the criminal nature of the communist regime. It is about the law adopted in 2000, «on recognition of the criminal nature of the communist regime in Bulgaria». It defines the responsibility of the top leadership of the Bulgarian Communist Party for the purposeful destruction of the values of European civilization in the period from September 9, 1944 to November 10, 1989, deliberate violation of human rights and freedoms, moral and economic decline of the state, the destruction of traditional principles of property rights, encroachment on religious freedom, etc. This gave grounds for recognizing the crimes of the communist regime in Bulgaria and the political elites at that time. Accordingly, the actions aimed at resistance and opposition to the communist regime and its ideology were declared fair, morally justified and deserving of respect and recognition.

A significant impetus for the de-communization of the country and rethinking the historical past was the creation in 2006–2007 of the «Commission for the opening of documents and the announcement of the belonging of Bulgarian citizens to the state security agencies and intelligence services of the Bulgarian People's Army». The activities of the Commission are primarily related to the processing and opening of archival documents formed by the communist security services. The main task of the Commission was to determine the involvement of Bulgarian citizens in the security and intelligence services on the basis of the collected documents. Also, according to the Law «on political and Civil Rehabilitation», the Commission issues certificates

<sup>7</sup> Law on Declaring the Criminal Nature of the Communist Regime in Bulgaria <http://www.decommunization.org/English/Articles/BZ1.htm>

on rehabilitation for victims of repression based on materials stored in the archive.

An important place in the process of transformation of the political system of Bulgaria was played by the creation of the Institute of National Memory, which is the leader of the relevant policy in the country. His activities focused on the research and identified approaches to defining historical events for Bulgaria and society. The establishment and operation of the Institute of National Memory in Bulgaria contributed to the formation of the policy of national memory in the country. Through political regulation, public opinion is constructed, and assessments are formed of the historical past.

In the process of building a democratic society and trends in the renewal of public memory in Bulgaria, analytical centres and organizations occupy an important place. The Centre for the study of Democracy (CSD). It was founded at the end of 1989 as an interdisciplinary public policy research institute<sup>8</sup>. In the early 2000s, the CSD prepared analytical reports on the scale of corruption in the country and examined relevant public and political attitudes. This work was closely connected with the general in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

In the public discourse of recent years, certain concepts from the past have been updated, on which the historical policies of Bulgaria and North Macedonia are based. Thus, in May 2020, the Bulgarian interpretation of historical issues, set out in the Memorandum on Relations between the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of North Macedonia, according to the Bulgarian official interpretation of history, the Slavic inhabitants of North Macedonia are Bulgarians who speak Bulgarian<sup>9</sup>. The artificial «Macedonian» identity allegedly imposed on them by the communist regime of Yugoslavia, this historical discourse complicated relations between countries and political elites and became an obstacle to the European integration of North Macedonia.

In the context of political transformations, after the collapse of the Soviet regime, the society and the elites of Bulgaria faced the problem of reconstruction and preservation of their own national identity. Rethinking history, the need to overcome biased assessments drew attention to issues of the national past. Important topics of research, most often used

<sup>8</sup> Center for the study of democracy (Bulgaria) URL: <https://uncaccoalition.org/anti-corruption-platforms/europe/bulgaria/center-for-the-study-of-democracy>

<sup>9</sup> EU – North Macedonia accession negotiations: the implications of the Bulgarian conditions. URL:[https://epi.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/EU\\_MK\\_f](https://epi.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/EU_MK_f)

in Commemorative practices of Bulgaria in the late twentieth – early 21centuries. There were events of world wars, totalitarian regimes, and issues of national history. The initiated processes of modernization and Europeanization in post-communist Bulgaria contributed to their discussion and actualization. Researcher N. Rzhevska notes the controversial, sometimes quite acute nature of Bulgaria's commemorative practices for the retransmission of the country's historical past, also stressing the traumatic nature of a number of topics<sup>10</sup>. In addition, the Russian information influence was exposed, which was powerful and generally more successful in the Soviet era. It was assembled during the post-communist transformations in Bulgaria and other countries, which in the twentieth century were part of the sphere of control. The success of Soviet and Russian propaganda can be explained by the reliance on the exploitation (use) of loyal local actors, political elites, and established cultural ties<sup>11</sup>.

At the centre of constructing the historical policy of memory of the people's Republic of Bulgaria was the attempt of political elites to form a view of the history of the nation as a series of crimes against Bulgarians. Ottoman rule in the Bulgarian lands was considered by researchers exclusively as a «Turkish yoke». The focus of attention was political, national-religious, socio-economic oppression and humiliation. This, in turn, became the basis for the formation of the «enemy image».

Another important aspect of the construction of the Bulgarian policy of memory is the period of national «revival»<sup>12</sup>. Which is associated with the processes of struggle for independence of Bulgaria, with the formation of the nation and the cultural and educational movement. In this context, historical memory focuses on the heroic struggle of the Bulgarian nation for independence. Separately, representatives of the elites are noted, and the processes of glorification take place.

A significant role in the formation of the state policy of memory in modern Bulgaria is occupied by the Holocaust. The history of the Holocaust in Bul-

<sup>10</sup> Rzhevska N. Stanovenie political Analysis and Forecasting in Eastern Europe: The Bulgarian experience. Visnyk of Lviv University. A series of philosophies. -political scientist. Studio. 2015. Vol. 8, C. 106.

<sup>11</sup> Russian Information Warfare. Assault on Democracies in the Cyber Wild West. Naval Institute Press, 2022.

<sup>12</sup> Свириденко В. О. Болгарське Відродження як «місце пам'яті» / В. О. Свириденко. Вісник Харківського національного університету імені В. Н. Каразіна. № 119. Серія: Історія України. Українознавство: історичні та філософські науки. Вип. 18. Харків, 2014. С. 55–62.

garia was characterized by mass protests of the population against the destruction of Jews. Actualization and appeal to these issues contribute to the creation of an image of a «country without anti-Semitism», which in turn affects rapprochement with European partners and integration with the EU. Bulgaria's political elites emphasize that the state has historical experience in protecting national minorities, and hence identity with European countries.

In this case, there is a classical reception of the state policy of memory, when attention is consciously and selectively focused on some historical events or individuals and others are silenced. However, systemic information distortions are quite dangerous and can lead to negative consequences in the future. They create the basis for manipulation and influence, especially in the political sphere during transformations and crisis periods, and election campaigns.

An important factor of political influence in Bulgaria, especially during the processes of decommunization, is the control by the authorities over the policy of historical memory. When forming a certain type of historical memory, important events are actually the object of political influence. And also, the source of arguments in political discussions, for example, to legitimise the country's independence or to stay in power. Memory as a resource of influence helps to confirm, sometimes even justify, the correctness and legitimacy of political decisions or actions. As a tool of influence in the political sphere, the mobilization potential of memory is often used, as well as to change value orientations in society.

In the context of the formation of true historical memory, it is also very important to review the content of textbooks, especially on history, which was initiated by the political elites of Bulgaria and has been carried out in stages since the end of the 90s of the 20th century. Under the influence of the country's political elites, new approaches in historical education and new plots in textbooks, the sacralization of figures of famous figures in national history is being formed<sup>13</sup>. This national revolutionary hero has always been a respected figure, but in new textbooks his image was further sacralised. His struggle for independence from the Ottoman Empire is presented as a key element in the formation of national consciousness, and his ideas became the

basis for modern Bulgarian democracy. This narrative emphasizes the continuity of the national liberation struggle, relegating the communist past to the background.

The basis of activities in this direction is not only the creation of new elements of memorial memory, but also the so-called conservation of the already existing cultural heritage. The country has a diverse arsenal of historical monuments. In addition, the authorities actively contribute to the preservation and reproduction of the centuries-old culture of the people. The priority of Bulgaria's historical policy was the creation of a new national pantheon of heroes. An example of the creation of a national pantheon of heroes and the preservation of the existing cultural heritage is the Pantheon of Bulgarian Revival Figures (Pantheon on the Ascension) in the city of Ruse, where 39 outstanding figures of the 19th century were buried. This memorial complex, although opened in 1978, was the object of political rethinking after the fall of the communist regime. In particular, after 1989, a cross was installed on the dome of the Pantheon, and a chapel was arranged inside, which symbolized the rejection of atheistic ideology and the return to Christian values<sup>14</sup>.

At the same time, Bulgarians remain characterized by a careful attitude to the historical events of the past. Evidence of this is the opening of the Museum of Socialist Art, which is a branch of the National Art Gallery, in Sofia on September 19, 2011<sup>15</sup>. Its main tasks are the collection, storage and demonstration of art samples from the period 1944–1989, which are thematically related to the era of socialism. Given the nostalgic mood among part of the Bulgarian population, this is an example of finding compromises in memorial politics and understanding in society.

Since the beginning of the post-communist transformation of Bulgaria, the country's political elites have been actively fighting Soviet vestiges (remnants). The authorities promote scientific research and its popularization in the country, to form the basis of a new memorial policy and deconstruction of the collective memory of the country's population of existing stereotypes formed in Soviet times. The influence of the authorities on the formation of collective historical consciousness and the national idea remains important and relevant in modern conditions.

<sup>13</sup> After 1989, the approach to the figure of Vasil Levsky changed in textbooks on the history of Bulgaria. Celebrating Bulgaria's National Heroes Through History. URL: <https://www.mexicohistorico.com/paginas/bulgarian-national-heroes-legends-and-myths-83ca850f.html>

<sup>14</sup> Celebrating Bulgaria's National Heroes Through History. URL: <https://www.mexicohistorico.com/paginas/bulgarian-national-heroes-legends-and-myths-83ca850f.html>

<sup>15</sup> Bulgarian National Revival Leaders URL: <https://www.foreigner.bg/bulgarian-national-revival-leaders>

### Conclusions.

As a result of the conducted research, the relevance of studying the practices of implementing decommunization processes and the impact on the state policy of memory was proven. And also the role of political elites of countries in these processes.

Among the most significant components of the Bulgarian policy of memory, it is worth identifying the modern process of decommunization, which began during the transformation of the country. The transition stage was accompanied by the establishment of new political elites. The main goal of the decommunization process was the desire to finally break with the socialist past and accelerate the renewal of the country's ruling elite. Among which, unfortunately, many people from the Soviet system remained. The development of an effective public policy of memory is an important task for the contemporary political elites of Bulgaria and contributes to the formation of a Bulgarian-centric national identity. Which, in turn, is an integral basis for social unity and consolidation. During the transformation processes, the vast majority of representatives of the country's political elites demonstrated unity with European values in their approaches to the formation of the state policy of memory. Since the declaration of the country's independence, the policy of reviewing approaches to the study of historical events has intensified. First of all, it concerns the Soviet period and the rethinking of the communist past in the history of Bulgaria.

In the conditions of increasing external threats and challenges in international relations, it is a very important task for the modern political elites of Bulgaria to build balanced, balanced approaches

to historical memory. As well as refuting historical myths, revising «white spots of national history» and falsifications, especially common in Soviet times. This is also rethinking and education in the spirit of respect for the country's historical past and important events.

Quite effective measures in the process of decommunization of Bulgaria contribute to the reduction of populism and right-wing radical sentiments among society and political elites. An unbiased attitude to the tragic pages of history, nostalgic sentiments contribute to understanding in society and the establishment of diplomatic dialogues and relations between countries, especially in the region of Central and Eastern Europe.

Memorial policy in Bulgaria is implemented through a number of specific political practices. The efforts of the ruling elites are aimed at preserving and maintaining «places of memory, installing memorial complexes and cities of memory, and celebrating important events.

This approach makes it possible to consolidate multi-vector representations of the past, limit the fragmentation of collective visions and search for nationwide integrative national ideas. The practical experience of the political elites of Bulgaria in the implementation of decommunization measures in commercial practices is also useful for our country.

**Prospects for further research:** We note that the current direction of scientific developments remains theoretical problems regarding the issue of memory policy, and the further direction of study of the topic must necessarily take into account comparative studies of experience in the formation of memory policy, how the countries of Central and Eastern Europe of other regions of the world of communist ideas and myths were spread in the days.

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