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‘ETERNAL RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN FRIENDSHIP’ – A CASE STUDY OF HOW A POLITICAL CONCEPT WAS MEMORIALIZED AND IS DEMEMORIALIZED

ABSTRACT

The article touches on a concept that was in the very essence of imagining relations between Ukraine and Russia: ‘The Friendship of People’. The historical imagination had a tangible impact on Russian politics, and no political concept has ever been so damaging for Ukraine as this one. This concept undermined Ukraine’s subjectivity and led to the ‘rewriting’ of Ukrainian history. Monuments dedicated to the ‘friendship’ of these two peoples reveal the centrality of this notion in Soviet politics toward Ukraine. Notably, these monuments appeared only in Ukraine – there are none in Russia.

The article analyses the erection of these monuments and how they have been dealt with since the start of the Russian war in Ukraine in 2014. It also shows how monumental art is used to foster specific interpretations of the past to define the present and future, and how this particular story of monuments and narratives has always been problematic in Ukraine. The article questions the homogeneity of Soviet political monumental heritage, presenting the complexity of monuments that depict national and Soviet narratives. These monuments and their interpretations should be discussed in the framework of a political campaign aimed at tying Ukraine to Russia. Therefore, the Ukrainian perspective on the notion of ‘friendship’ and its memorialization is fundamental.

KEYWORDS:

monuments, Ukraine, Pereiaslav agreement, Russia, friendship of people

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In July 2021, Putin presented his imperialistic views on the past and present of Ukraine and Russia in the article 'On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians'. The 'historic union' is a bizarre phrase since it has to mean an eternal union. At the same time, history itself is all about change. Reference to this union undermines Ukraine's subjectivity, pointing to the fact that only in relations with Russians can Ukrainians prosper and exist. Due to the author's personality, the piece was much discussed and raised a high alert in terms of international security. Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine proved that this threat was genuine. Moreover, the Russian authorities have covered the occupied territories with the posters and billboards stating that "Russians and Ukrainians are one people, one entity".

The idea that the two nations have unbreakable ties is rooted in Soviet mythology and ideology, specifically in the Friendship of the Peoples notion that was introduced by Stalin in 1935, when Soviet authorities launched a campaign that promoted the Brotherhood of the Peoples – a metaphor for the proletarian unity of the socialist states against the capitalist West. By 1938, the Friendship of the Peoples became the main characteristic through which relations within the USSR were described.¹ In the words of Terry Martin, the Friendship of the Peoples "was the Soviet Union's imagined community".² Being a symbolic and propaganda principle of a multi-ethnic union, the Friendship of the Peoples also granted Russians and Russian culture a primary role in the Soviet Union – the first among equals. But nowhere else in the Soviet Union did this notion become so emphasized as in Ukraine. Here, it gained the additional meaning of the 'eternal and historical' union of two nations, which was grounded in a seventeenth-century event, namely the so-called 'Pereiaslav Agreement', the military union between Cossacks and the Muscovy Tsar. The Soviet regime fostered the interpretation of the Pereiaslav Agreement as an 'act of reunion' of the peoples (not elites)³ in the 'Theses on the Three-Hundredth Anniversary of the Reunion of Ukraine with Russia', which was issued by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1954. By promoting a particular interpretation of the Pereiaslav Agreement and what followed it, the Soviet authorities established the idea of unique relations between Ukrainian and Russian people. This seventeenth-century event was embodied with great political and cultural significance; it was presented as a historical act that defined the relations of these two peoples – as a turning point in Ukrainian history, when Ukrainian people "re-

¹ Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939* (Cornell University Press, 2011), p. 432.

² *Ibid.*, p. 461.

³ Serhii Plokhyy, 'Renegotiating the Pereiaslav Agreement', in *Ukraine and Russia Representations of the Past*, ed. by Serhii Plokhyy (University of Toronto Press, 2008), pp. 90–112 (p. 109).

linquished themselves of foreign rule and entered a union” with culturally and politically close Russia.

In academic discourse, up to 1951 the word ‘accession’ was used instead of ‘reunion’ by historians,⁴ and in 1966 the notion of reunion was openly challenged by Ukrainian historian Myhailo Braichevsky in his article ‘Joining or reuniting?’. For this act, Braichevsky was dismissed from his post at the Institute of Archaeology. In 1972, his article was published in Toronto.⁵ At the same time, official Soviet historicists promoted the official Soviet version of the Pereiaslav Agreement.

Serhiy Yekelchuk in his book⁶ focuses on the notion of Ukrainian-Russian relations in the historical memory, particularly the way these relations were negotiated by the Ukrainian local elite, intellectuals, and the central Moscow authority, and then presented to the public. Yekelchuk’s research covers only the Stalin period, but it provides useful insights into how the image of the relations between these two nations transformed from the early Soviet period to the end of the 1950s, including the interpretation of the Pereiaslav Agreement – from “less evil” to the “manifestation of the eternal union of the two nations”. Importantly, Serhiy Yekelchuk challenges the homogeneity of Stalin’s memory project, revealing acts of cooperation and resistance between the Soviet Ukrainian political and intellectual elites and central authorities. It was Khrushchev’s idea to widely celebrate the 300th anniversary of the Pereiaslav Agreement in order to connect Ukrainian and Russian history. Recognizing the leading role of Russia in the Soviet Union, Soviet Ukrainian elites proved their alliance to the Soviet project but at the same time contributed to the formation of Ukrainian national identity, revealing Ukraine’s long historical tradition⁷

So, what happened in Pereiaslav? The seventeenth century was marked by numerous Cossack uprisings within the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth; however, the most important one, which led to the establishment of the Cossack state, was Khmelnytsky’s uprising of 1648. In the course of fighting with Polish forces, Hetman Bohdan Khmelnytsky entered into a military alliance with the Crimean Khanate. Still, as the Khan proved not to be a reliable partner, Hetman turned to Muscovy to gain a military advantage over the Polish army. For a long time, the Tsar of Muscovy stayed out of the conflict, fearing confrontation with the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. However, in 1654, as the Commonwealth weakened, Tsar Alexei

⁴ Serhiy Yekelchuk, *Imperia pamiati Rosiysko-ukrainski stosunki v radianskiy istorychnii uiavi* (Krytyka, 2008), p. 166.

⁵ Myxajlo Brajčevs’kyj, *Pryjednannja čy vozz’jednannja? : krytyčni zavvahy z pryvodu odnijeji koncepciji* (Toronto: Novi dni, 1972).

⁶ Serhiy Yekelchuk, *Imperia pamiati Rosiysko-ukrainski stosunki v radianskiy istorychnii uiavi* (Krytyka, 2008). (also publish in English: Serhiy Yekelchuk, *Stalin’s Empire of Memory. Russian-Ukrainian Relations in the Soviet Historical Imagination* (University of Toronto Press, 2004).

⁷ Yekelchuk, *Imperia pamiati*, p. 217.

Mikhailovich sent his representative, the noble Muscovite Vasiliy Buturlin, to Pereiaslav to meet with Cossack Hetman and prepare the ground for future agreements between the Muscovy and Cossack states.

The availed sources indicate that no document was signed in Pereiaslav, and the Tsar's approval of the conditions of the agreement was given much later in Moscow. The Pereiaslav Agreement was not a formal treaty (a written document with defined spheres of responsibilities and obligations) but an agreement between two sides that was less fixed in meaning. It consists of the Articles of Bohdan Khmelnytsky and the Tsar's response. Because they had different political cultures, the Cossack state and Muscovy interpreted the agreement differently: Muscovy, with its autocratic tradition, treated it as an act of eternal submission of the Cossack state to Muscovy; the Cossack state, on the other hand, with its political constitutionalism⁸, treated it as a voluntary military union of two equal subjects that depended on the willingness of each party to keep its promises⁹. Importantly, it was not a (re)union of two nations in the modern sense but the start of communication between the Cossack and the Muscovy political elites¹⁰. The Pereiaslav Agreement was constantly mentioned and revised in the context of Muscovy's relations with the Cossack state. The Cossack nobility referred to the agreement of 1654 as a document that ensured their autonomy, rights, and privileges; they did not consider this agreement as eternal submission, which is why, in the following years, Cossack leaders tried to enter into the agreement with Poland.

The Pereiaslav Agreement remains the most contested document in Ukrainian and Russian historiography¹¹ because it has been subject to various interpretations. It was most strongly instrumentalized in the Soviet Union¹² with the promotion of the concept of the Friendship of Peoples. The Pereiaslav council appeared to be very useful for Soviet ideology, which, on the one hand, recognized the existence of the Ukrainian nation as a socialist nation and, on the other hand, promoted the vision of the 'natural' union of these two nations since only in a union with Russia could Ukraine develop freely in the political, economic, and cultural spheres. The issue of reunion became central for narrating the Russian-Ukrainian relationship in Soviet times.

By the 1950s, the concept of the inevitable 'reunification' of the Ukrainian and Russian peoples emerged as the only 'right' approach

⁸ Serhii Plokyh, 'Renegotiating the Pereiaslav Agreement', in *Ukraine and Russia Representations of the Past*, ed. by Serhii Plokyh (University of Toronto Press, 2008), pp. 90–112 (p. 92).

⁹ Serhii Plokyh, 'Russia and Ukraine: Did They Reunite in 1654?', in *The Frontline Essays on Ukraine's Past and Present*, ed. by Serhii Plokyh (Harvard University Press, 2022), pp. 37–53 (p. 53).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

¹¹ Plokyh, 'Renegotiating the Pereiaslav Agreement', p. 90.

¹² *Vossoednenie Ukrainy s Rossiei. Dokumenty i Materialy. V treh tomah* (Moskva: Isdatelstvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1953).

in Soviet historiography.¹³ As well as medals, postcards, stamps, decorative art, street names, metro stations, and squares, several memorials appeared that commemorated the 300th anniversary of the Pereiaslav Agreement and visually fostered the notion of the “friendship of Ukrainian and Russian peoples” in the public space of Soviet Ukraine: a commemorative plaque in the Kharkiv region;¹⁴ a monument of two female figures in traditional costumes at the entrance of the city of Sumy; a ‘Forever Together’ monument and a memorial sign at the place where the Pereiaslav council supposedly took place; a sculpture of two male peasant figures on the Kharkiv bridge; and a memorial stone in Cherkasy, where Khmelnytsky presumably wrote a letter to the Tsar asking for a protectorate for the Cossack state.

In this article, I will focus on two monuments that became central in the memorialization of the Pereiaslav Agreement in Soviet times: the Peoples’ Friendship Arch complex in Kyiv and the ‘Forever Together’ monument in Pereiaslav. Artistic discussions around them reveal the peculiarities of the visual representation of the Pereiaslav Agreement and the notion of Russian-Ukrainian friendship; at the same time, they present the complexity of Soviet monumental heritage in Ukraine. Also, this is a story about the interpretation of a particular historical event that still requires demythologization and decolonization in the historical memory of Ukrainians¹⁵. These monuments present a worthy case study of a contested heritage – the use of the past in military conflicts. As the Guardian summarizes the war in Ukraine, “this is a conflict, like so many others, that’s not just about controlling territory – but owning narrative”.¹⁶ The central narrative is the “historical union of two nations”, with the leading role being played by Russia.

The seemingly ‘civilized’ break-up of the Soviet Union and the partial liberalism of the Yeltsin government led to the perception that no military conflict was possible between these two post-Soviet states in the 1990s and early 2000s. However, the Ukrainian government had no illusion about

¹³ The concept of reunion of two nations – often with the emphasis on the strong figure of Bohdan Khmelnytsky and heroic episodes of Cossack history – started to be promoted during the Second World War to mobilize Ukrainians’ national feelings in the fight against Nazi forces. The image of Bohdan Khmelnytsky and the narrative about the Pereiaslav agreement was to a great extent formed by the works of Ukrainian Soviet writers. In this regard, Oleksandr Korniychuk’s play *Bohdan Khmelnytsky* (filmed by Savchenko in 1941), Natan Rybak’s historical novel *Pereiaslav council* of 1948, Lubomyr Dmytreko’s play *Forever together* of 1951 should be mentioned.

¹⁴ The plaque in the village of Ruska Lozova was targeted a number of times. Demolished in 2021, the plaque was restored by a member of the pro-Russian oppositional party, but it was subsequently destroyed again. (<https://www.rbc.ua/ukr/styler/znak-druzhy-ukrainskogo-russkogo-narodov-1616615695.html>). In 2022, Russian military forces occupied the village and used it as a base for shelling Kharkiv.

¹⁵ The historical memory of Russians about the Pereiaslav Agreement is beyond the scope of this article and deserves a separate study.

¹⁶ The Guardian view on Ukraine’s cultural heritage: a second front. Editorial, *The Guardian*, 10 March 2022 <<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/mar/10/the-guardian-view-on-ukraines-cultural-heritage-a-second-front>> [accessed 8 September 2022].

the imperialistic attitudes of the Russian government and politicians.¹⁷ This was proved by numerous disputes and conflicts.

The concept of Friendship between Peoples and its memorialization are just some of the elements that help one to understand the dynamics of the post-Soviet time. Unlike Lenin's monuments, these monuments are not only tied to the Soviet state and its achievements, so monuments to 'The Friendship of People' did not turn into reminders of the past because the Soviet state had ceased to exist. Monuments to Russian-Ukrainian brotherhood are more complex in meaning and aim to foster the notion of the cultural and historical proximity of these two nations. The notion of 'eternal union' of Russians and Ukrainians became even more problematic to contest as it uses an element of national historiography: the Khmelnytsky Uprising.

ERECTION OF THE MONUMENTS IN KYIV AND PEREIASLAV

To memorialize the 300th anniversary of the Pereiaslav Agreement in 1954 and stress the friendship between Ukrainian and Russian people, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine planned to erect a monument to Khmelnytsky in the city of Pereiaslav-Khmelnytsky,¹⁸ where the Pereiaslav council took place, and erect the Triumphant Arch in Kyiv, the capital of Soviet Ukraine. Generally, the Ukrainian-Soviet elites contributed to the promotion of Khmelnytsky as a hero of national pride, a strong leader, and one of the chief figures of the Cossack period, by supporting literary, scholarly and artistic work about him. However, in the case of the monument to the 300th anniversary of the Pereiaslav Agreement, Ukrainian authorities later gave up the idea of erecting a monument to Khmelnytsky in Pereiaslav or any other Ukrainian city to avoid being accused of promoting the national (separate) history of Ukraine.¹⁹ Instead, the Central Committee and the Rada of the Ministers of the Ukrainian RSR focused on a monument that would praise Russian-Ukrainian friendship not a particular historical figure. Two hundred and fifty-seven designs for the Arch in Kyiv were submitted for an art contest²⁰ that was held by

¹⁷ Paul D'Anieri, *Ukraine and Russia From Civilized Divorce to Uncivil War* (Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 38–43.

¹⁸ Pereiaslav was renamed to Pereiaslav-Khmelnytsky in 1943 by the Soviet authorities in honor of Hetman Bohdan Khmelnytsky.

¹⁹ Yekelchuk, *Imperia pamiati*, p. 213.

²⁰ Mykola Tsapenko, 'Proekt Triumfalnoi Arky v Kyevi na Chest 300 richchia Vozednannia Ukrainy z Rosieiu', *Arhitektura ta Budiivnytstvo*, 5 (1954), 11–13.

the executive office of Kyiv city council, and one hundred and twenty-seven designs were submitted for the monument in Pereiaslav.²¹

Traditionally, a triumphal Arch is erected in honour of a military conflict over territory; however, in Kyiv the Arch had to celebrate the friendship of two nations. The main idea was to create an impressive monument at the city's entrance, on the right bank of the Dnipro, near the Paton bridge. The May issue of the 1954 *Journal of Architecture and Reconstruction* published the designs that won the contest.²² Three collective projects of Kyiv and Moscow artists shared the first and second prizes. The names of the designs were symbolic: "300", "Ear of Corn with a Star", and "To the People-Heroes". However, none of these designs were implemented due to a lack of funds and bureaucratic inefficacy caused by the sudden death of Stalin in 1953.

Before the 300th anniversary of the Pereiaslav council, a major change in power occurred in the Soviet Union. After the death of Stalin in 1953, Nikita Khrushchev won the internal power struggle, became the new Soviet leader, and started a period of thaw and liberalization of the political regime. Also, the number of Ukrainians in the party institutions of Soviet Ukraine increased, and Oleksiy Kyrychenko became the first secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine, the *de facto* leader of the Ukrainian Soviet republic. With this change of leadership, the atmosphere of the celebration of the 300th anniversary transformed: the event became highly important and was widely celebrated on the level of the republic. It was within this celebration that Khrushchev gave Crimea to Ukraine as a gift, but monuments that marked this event appeared much later in the 1960s and 1980s.

Only in 1982 was the monument to Peoples' Friendship erected in the city centre to celebrate the 1,500th anniversary of Kyiv and the 60th anniversary of the creation of the Soviet Union. Although the name was the same, the project was significantly different from the one that won the competition in the 1950s. Now, it was not a triumphal arch but a composition that linked two time periods in one space: the Soviet period (the arch and the statues of Soviet workers) with a seventeenth-century historical event, namely the Pereiaslav Agreement (a granite sculpture group of Hetman Bohdan Khmelnytsky and Vasilii Buturlin, a representative of the Tsar).

The thirty-five-meter-tall Arch (unofficially called the 'yoke' or 'rainbow') is made of titanium sheets. Above it, there used to be an

²¹ Mykola Onishchenko, 'Monument u Pereiaslavi Khmelnytskomu. Do Pidsumkiv Konkursu na Monument u misti Pereiaslav Khmelnytsky na Chest 300 richchia Vozednannia Ukrainy z Rosieiu', *Arhitektura ta Budiivnytstvo*, 4 (1954), 21–25.

²² Mykola Tsapenko, 'Proekt Triumfalnoi Arky v Kyevi na Chest 300 richchia Vozednannia Ukrainy z Rosieiu', *Arhitektura ta Budiivnytstvo*, 5 (1954), 11–13.

eight-meter-tall bronze sculpture of two male Ukrainian and Russian figures of workers (*Homo Sovieticus*), symbolically holding the Soviet Order of Friendship of Peoples. The sculpture's pedestal was marked with a metal inscription in the Russian and Ukrainian languages: "In commemoration of the reunification of Ukraine with Russia". This sculpture of workers was the only part of the composition that was removed in 2022 (more about this in the final section).

The monument in Pereiaslav was erected in 1961. The designs submitted to the art contest included columns, obelisks, sculptures of two or more figures, and monument panoramas. The joint first prize went to the compositions "Glory to the nations-brothers" and "Trumpet", both of which include two female figures that represent Ukraine and Russia and are half hugging in semi-traditional costumes. The commission preferred the female sculptures to the abstract monument, arguing that people do not always properly understand the meaning of abstract forms.²³ As a result, the winner's design "Glory to the Nations-Brothers" by architect Vasyl Hniezdylov and sculptor Vasyl Vinaykin under the name "Forever Together" was implemented. Due to the commission's comments, it had to be adjusted to the surrounding landscape of the small city in order to be in harmony with it,²⁴ and reflect the symbolism and epicness of the memorized event. During the debate on the projects, the main issue was the way women interact with one another. The participants of the discussion proposed that the women in the statue would be shaking hands or walking in a half-hug; the idea was to stress equality and to avoid the impression that the Russian figure was pushing the Ukrainian one. Also, the sculpture had to create the impression that these "two nations" were "forever together, not temporary". Vasyl Hniezdylov's final design included two female figures wearing stylized national costumes. Walking in a half-hug, the Russian woman is raising her hand in a call for communism,²⁵ and the Ukrainian woman is holding a book – the Constitution of the USSR. On the pedestal, the description reads "Forever together – forever with the Russian people"!

In their sculptures, Ukrainian artists often tried to present Russian-Ukrainian relations as equal. Although the artists were successful in this in the cases of the monument in Pereiaslav and the statue of workers in Kyiv, the sculpture group at the bridge in Kharkiv clearly presents the superior role of the Russian toward the Ukrainian figure. The Russian figure

²³ Onishchenko, 'Monument u Pereiaslavi Khmelnytskomu', p. 25.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

²⁵ 'Instrukcii do druzhby. Iak 61 rik tomu u Pereiaslavi Khmelnytskomu vidkryly monument "Naviky Razom", iakyy nezabarom mozhut znestu', *Novoe Vremia*, 23 February 2022 <<https://nv.ua/ukr/ukraïne/events/monument-naviki-z-rosiyeyu-u-pereiaslavi-mozhut-znesti-yak-yogo-vstanovlyuvali-u-1961-novini-ukrajini-50025021.html>> [accessed 8 September 2022].

is leading and supporting the Ukrainian. Moreover, the Russian men look more confident and older.

The monuments to the Pereiaslav Agreement not only present the event that launched the process of incorporating Ukrainian lands into the Russian Empire; they also set in stone the formless concept of the friendship of Ukrainian and Russian people. In this way, these monuments contributed to fostering an interpretation of the Pereiaslav Agreement as a reunion of Ukrainians and Russians (through the socially marked figures of workers and peasants) and as one of the central events of Ukrainian history; they also served as visual reminder of the cultural closeness of Ukrainians and Russians. The sculptures presenting a Ukrainian and a Russian are almost indistinguishable: only the costumes, which include ethnic motifs, help us understand who is who.

Although there were plans to build a monument to Ukrainian-Russian friendship in Moscow, it has never been realized. In 1954, a granite stone was placed in the square near “Kyiv railway station” in Moscow with the inscription “On this spot, a monument in commemoration of 300 years of the reunion of Ukraine and Russia will be erected”. Russian authorities held three architectural contests for the design of the monument, but due to bureaucracy and a lack of political will no monument was ever erected in Moscow as a result. Only the “Three Sisters” monument was erected in 1975 on the borders of Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine to memorialize the friendship of these three peoples.

In 2000, the majors of Kyiv and Moscow initiated the installation of a small sign in the form of two pillows painted in the colours of the Ukrainian and Russian flags in an alley with the same name on the outskirts of Moscow. However, after the full-scale Russian invasion, the pillars were painted white, and the commemorative plaque with information on the occasion of the erection of the sign was removed.

INDEPENDENT UKRAINE. TEXTBOOKS' NARRATIVES AND HISTORICAL ATTITUDES

In order to analyse the Ukrainian institutional memory of the Pereiaslav Agreement in independent Ukraine and to learn how historical attitudes defined interpretations of monuments dedicated to the Pereiaslav Agreement, I studied seventeen textbooks on the history of seventeenth-century

Ukraine,²⁶ published from 2006 to 2021 and recommended by the Ministry of Education of Ukraine for 8th-grade school students. Often, books by the same authors have been republished several times with minor or no changes, including the narrative of the Pereiaslav Agreement.

All the authors of these textbooks very positively evaluate Khmelnytsky and his deeds. His orientation toward the Russian tsar is justified by military necessity, the complicated diplomatic situation of the Cossack state, and the religious proximity between the Ukrainian and Russian people.²⁷ Khmelnytsky's decision to seek a military union with Muscovy is presented as well-calculated, pragmatic, and logical, due to the need for a powerful military ally.²⁸ "Having started the war with the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Khmelnytsky understood the need to maintain good relations with the Muscovite kingdom. The Cossacks declared their defence of the Orthodox faith, and Muscovy at that time was the only independent Orthodox state".²⁹ The authors of these textbooks often stress the numerous attempts to establish contacts with Muscovy. For instance, Olga Dudar, and Oleksandr Huk mentioned contacts between Cossack leader Dmytro Vyshnevetsky and Moscow: "in the sixteenth century, according to the tsar's order, gunpowder, weapons and food supplies were supplied from Muscovy to Sich";³⁰ another example from a 2016 textbook reads "The alliance with the Moscow kingdom, with which the Cossack state shared the Orthodox faith and with which Bohdan Khmelnytsky had long maintained diplomatic ties, appeared to be the most profitable".³¹ The authors Natalia Sorochynska and Oleksandr Hisem pointed out that "belonging to one religion was of decisive importance in the world of that time. Ukrainians considered themselves to belong, together with Muscovites, to one Orthodox nation, and they expected help from their brothers in faith in

- ²⁶ Oleksandr Martunuk, *Istoria Ukrainy: Pidruchnyk dlia 8 klasu* (Kharkiv: Ranok 2006), pp. 124–27; G. Shvydko, *Istoria Ukrainy: Pidruchnyk dlia 8 klasu* (Kyiv: Heneza, 2016), pp. 152–62; Vitaliy Vlasov, *Istoria Ukrainy: Pidruchnyk dlia 8 klasu* (Kyiv: Geneza, 2008), pp. 151–56; Oleksiy Strukevych, Ivan Romanuk, *Istoria Ukrainy: Pidruchnyk dlia 8 klasu* (Kyiv: Hramota, 2008), pp. 137–40; Shvydko, *Istoria Ukrainy*, pp. 175–79; Oleksandr Hisem, Oleksandr Martynuk, *Istoria Ukrainy: Pidruchnyk dlia 8 klasu* (Kharkiv: Ranok, 2016), pp. 149–53; Vitaliy Vlasov, *Istoria Ukrainy: Pidruchnyk dlia 8 klasu* (Kyiv: Geneza, 2016), pp. 136–39; Vitaliy Vlasov, Oleksandr Panarin, Yulia Topolnytska, Oleksiy Strukevych, *Istoria Ukrainy: Pidruchnyk dlia 8 klasu* (Kyiv: Litera, 2016); I. Burnenko, O. Naumchuk, M. Kryzhanovska, O. Shtanko, *Istoria Ukrainy: Pidruchnyk dlia 8 klasu* (Aston, 2016), pp. 150–53; N. Guoan, I. Smagin, O. Pometun, *Istoria Ukrainy: Pidruchnyk dlia 8 klasu* (Kyiv, 2016), pp. 163–66; Oleksiy Strukevych, *Istoria Ukrainy: Pidruchnyk dlia 8 klasu* (Kyiv: Hramota, 2016), pp. 128–34; Natalia Sorochynska, Oleksandr Hisem, *Istoria Ukrainy: Pidruchnyk dlia 8 klasu* (Ternopil: Bohdan, 2016), pp. 154–57; Oleksandr Hisem, Oleksandr Martunuk, *Istoria Ukrainy: Pidruchnyk dlia 8 klasu* (Kharkiv: Ranok 2021), pp. 95–97; Olga Dudar, Oleksandr Huk, *Istoria Ukrainy: Pidruchnyk dlia 8 klasu* (Kyiv: Osvita, 2021), pp. 107–10; M. Mudry, O. Arkush, *Istoria Ukrainy: Pidruchnyk dlia 8 klasu* (Kyiv, 2021), pp. 120–26; Vitaliy Vlasov, Oleksandr Panarin, Yulia Topolnytska, *Istoria Ukrainy: Pidruchnyk dlia 8 klasu* (Kyiv: Litera, 2021), pp. 132–40; Ihor Shchupak, Borys Cherkas, and others, *Istoria Ukrainy: Pidruchnyk dlia 8 klasu* (Kyiv: Orion, 2021), pp. 112–17.
- ²⁷ Oleksandr Martunuk, *Istoria Ukrainy: Pidruchnyk dlia 8 klasu* (Kharkiv: Ranok 2016), pp. 149–53; id., *Istoria Ukrainy* (2006), pp. 124–27.
- ²⁸ Strukevych, Romanuk, *Istoria Ukrainy*, pp. 137–40.
- ²⁹ Martunuk, *Istoria Ukrainy* (2006), p. 126; id.; *Istoria Ukrainy: Pidruchnyk dlia 8 klasu* (Kharkiv: Ranok 2021), p. 95.
- ³⁰ Dudar, Huk, *Istoria Ukrainy*, p. 107.
- ³¹ Burnenko, Naumchuk, Kryzhanovska, Shtanko, *Istoria Ukrainy*, p. 150.

the war against the authorities of Catholic Poland. As a result, pro-Moscow sentiments spread in Ukrainian society during the War of National Liberation".³²

The textbooks I studied emphasize that the Cossacks' military council unanimously supported Khmelnytsky's decision to conclude an alliance with the Muscovy tsar. However, there is also a contradiction, as the authors of these textbooks also point out that several prominent Cossack leaders (namely, Ivan Bohun and Ivan Sirko) refused to support the Pereiaslav Agreement and take an oath to the Tsar. The Cossack leaders criticized the political system of Muscovy, in which the Tsar had absolute power and was known for the oppression of nobility, while Cossacks shared the constitutional principles of the governance of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, namely a parliamentary elective monarchy. Importantly, all authors of the textbooks I studied generally did not question or discuss the relevance of the notion of cultural and religious proximity in the context of Ukrainian-Russian relations. This point deserves particular attention as cultural and religious closeness is often cited as the factor that facilitated the union between the Cossacks and Muscovites. However, this is a more retrospective point of view: historical seventeenth-century sources show that the Muscovy defined Ukrainians as quite different from them even in religion. Also, the Ukrainian Orthodox clergy did not take an oath to the Tsar and rejected the Pereiaslav Agreement. The references to similarities between Ukrainians and Russians in religion, language, as well as the common historical legacy of Kyivan Rus appear to be less emphasized in the 2021 textbooks than in those from 2016.

Interestingly, in their textbook of 2008, Strukevych and Romanuk explain the Ukrainians' inflated expectations regarding the alliance with Muscovy by the fact that they did not have a chance to meet with Muscovites in person, so they did not know their traditions, education, and cultural level.³³

The central episode in the story of the Pereiaslav council is about the oath. All the textbooks I read for this article stress that the Cossacks took an oath to the tsar, but the Tsar's representative refused to do so on his behalf, arguing that the Tsar does not take an oath to his subjects. "It unexpectedly turned out that the Muscovites were expecting only Ukrainians to take the oath. Hetman, in accordance with Ukrainian and European traditions, insisted on a mutual oath: on providing military aid and guaranteeing the rights and freedoms of Ukrainian states. However, Buturlin refused, explaining that the Tsar would never swear an oath to

³² Sorochnytska, Hisem, *Istoria Ukrainy*, p. 154.

³³ Strukevych, Romanuk, *Istoria Ukrainy*, pp. 137–40.

his subjects because it would degrade his royal dignity. The negotiations dragged on for several hours. In the end, the Ukrainian side relented. [...] Ukraine really needed a military ally. Hetman agreed that the Tsar's word equals his oath". However, as Strukevych points out, "This should not be considered as a terrible diplomatic mistake by Hetman. After all, according to the European tradition, the failure of a protector monarch to fulfil his duties towards his subjects automatically exempted him of his duties".³⁴

A common feature of the textbooks is that they tend to highlight some positive outcomes of the agreement (recognition of the independence of the Cossack state; the Cossacks were able to end the war with Poland and keep the conquered territories) as well as some negative ones (the start of Muscovy's political dominance over the Cossack state). In 2016, Vlasov in his textbook also talked about the positive potential of the agreement in that it could have brought benefits to both sides,³⁵ but the agreement was short term because the tsar did not do what was agreed – it did not work out as expected. A textbook from 2021 notes that "The terms of the Ukrainian-Moscow treaty of 1654 were generally mutually beneficial [...] The treaty included the establishment of protectorate relations that were common in Europe at that time. Hetman did not see the terms of the agreement as something permanent: rather, it was a tool to achieve the ultimate goal".³⁶

In the textbooks from 2021, the interpretation of the agreement became less concrete, noting that there was much misunderstanding on both sides; it is characterized as a type of protectorate that included two sides that had to fulfil their obligations. Although all the blame was put on the Tsar and Muscovy, some authors mention that the two sides understood the agreement differently from the beginning and had different expectations but preferred not to notice this inconsistency. "The Ukrainian-Moscow agreement of 1654 meant the establishment of formal vassal dependence. Many issues remained debatable and could be interpreted by the parties in their own ways; however, at the time of its signing, the Ukrainian Cossack State actually had no other choice".³⁷ Overall, the Pereiaslav agreement with Muscovy is presented as a turning point in the history of Ukraine.

³⁴ Strukevych, *Istoria Ukrainy*, p. 131.

³⁵ Vlasov, *Istoria Ukrainy*, pp. 136–39.

³⁶ Vlasov, Panarin, Topolnytska, *Istoria Ukrainy*, p. 135.

³⁷ Shchupak, Cherkas, and others, *Istoria Ukrainy*, p. 114.

The available sociological data on the historical attitudes of Ukrainians generally reflects the textbooks' narratives.³⁸ The Pereiaslav Agreement is perceived as one of the most important in Ukraine's history and, according to surveys in all regions of Ukraine (6,000 respondents) conducted in 2013, 2015, and 2017, Khmelnytsky remains a major hero.

Of the 6 thousand people who took part in the surveys from all regions of Ukrainian, almost half of them listed Bohdan Khmelnytsky among the three most influential figures in Ukraine's history. This constancy in Khmelnytsky's evaluation makes him one of Ukraine's most recognized and well-known historical figures. Also, his image is very positive: 87–93% of those who mentioned Khmelnytsky among the three most important historical figures in the history of Ukraine evaluated him rather or very positively (Table 1).

The respondents of the surveys of 2013, 2015, and 2017 were asked to name the most important events in the history of Ukraine, and the Pereiaslav Agreement turned out to be on this list. In 2013, 70.7% of respondents who took part in a survey evaluated this event as rather or very important. In 2015, it was 62.94%, and in 2017 it was 67%. At the same time, since 2015 we have been able to see minor changes in the evaluation of the Pereiaslav Agreement: after Russia's military aggression against Ukraine, the number of undecided (those who did not choose the options 'yes' or 'no') grew from 16.3% in 2013 to 20.32% in 2015, and 18.7% in 2017 (Table 2).

Although the majority of the respondents considered the Pereiaslav Agreement significant, they were not asked if this event was positive or negative. If we compare the Pereiaslav Agreement to other historical events on the list given to the respondents of the surveys in 2012, 2015, and 2017, we see how less relevant it became after 2014. In 2013, out of 15 historical events on the list, the Pereiaslav council was in sixth place. In 2015, out of 17 events, it was in 12th place; and in 2017, out of 19 events it was again in 12th place.

³⁸ The first survey was conducted in February 2013; the second was in February–March 2015; the third was in the fall of 2017. While the 2013 survey covered all Ukrainian oblasts, the 2015 and 2017 surveys did not cover the Crimean Peninsula or the occupied areas of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts due to the annexation of Crimea and Russian military aggression. The surveys were financed by the Swiss National Science Foundation and the Wolodymyr George Danyliw Foundation; they were conducted by the Sociological Group "Rating" and by the Center for the Study of Public Opinion "Sotsioinform". The project website is <http://www.uaregio.org/>.

TABLE 1. Response to the survey question “What is your attitude toward Bohdan Khmelnytsky?”

Bohdan Khmelnytsky	Very negative	Rather negative	Hard to answer	Rather positive	Very positive	The most significant
2013	0.2	1.1	2.6	49.9	46.1	54.8
2015	0.86	1.91	5.01	48.71	43.52	44.6
2017	0.4	1.3	11.3	38.6	48.4	53

TABLE 2. Response to the survey question “How important is the Pereiaslav council – an agreement between Ukraine and Russia in 1654?”

	Not important at all	Rather unimportant	Yes and no	Rather important	Very important	Never heard about it
2013	1.6	3.9	16.3	32.5	38.4	7.3
2015	2.62	6.22	20.32	32.57	29.92	8.30
2017	1.6	4.4	18.7	32	35	8.3

The evaluation of the Pereiaslav agreement was associated with the evaluation of Khmelnytsky and the Cossack period in general, which remained very positive in independent Ukraine. The agreement was considered important and justified by the political situation; Khmelnytsky was not criticized for it, and all the blame was assigned to Moscow, which failed to do what was agreed.

DEALING WITH THE MONUMENTS

In 2003, a president's decree was issued to commemorate "350 years of the Pereiaslav council". Conferences, round tables, exhibitions, cultural and educational events, and publications were planned.³⁹ Unfortunately, the same year was marked by a major crisis between Ukraine and Russia. In order to establish control over the Azov sea, Russia declared Tuzla island, located in the Kerch Strait, its territory. After that, Russia began building a dam to connect Tuzla with the Russian coast. The conflict was avoided only after direct talks between the presidents of Ukraine and Russia.

The adoption of so-called 'memory laws' in 2015 as a result of the protest movement of 2014 and Russian military aggression placed acts related to the dismantling of Soviet monuments within a legal framework. As for monuments to Russian-Ukrainian friendship, the decommunization law could not be easily applied to them. Although these monuments were produced in Soviet times, they referred to events before the Soviet period. The decommunization law called for the demolishing of images, monuments, commemorative signs, and inscriptions dedicated to events related to the activities of the Communist Party, and the establishment of Soviet power on the territory of Ukraine or in separate administrative and territorial units.⁴⁰ Therefore, only the removal of the sculpture group of two workers in Kyiv holding the Soviet emblem could be justified by the laws, but the controversy around the monuments to Ukrainian and Russian friendship became more pronounced.

In 2016, a representative of the Right Sector, Andrii Kozii, initiated the covering of the Pereiaslav monument's Russian figure with a black cloth. This action was broadly discussed on social media.⁴¹ In Kyiv, unknown persons vandalized the statue of workers below the Arch, paint was poured over the monument, obscene words were written, and the nose of the Russian Ambassador Buturlin was broken off. Later, in 2018, the Arch became the subject of an artistic intervention when an installation called 'Crack of Friendship' was added to it. The crack painted on the Arch was dedicated to the Ukrainian political prisoners held by the Kremlin, including film director Oleg Sensor. Art workers and curators considered this artistic intervention very successful as its meaning could be easily read

³⁹ Decree of the President of Ukraine, *On the commemoration of the 350th anniversary of the Pereiaslav Cossack Council of 1654* No. 162/2003 <<https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/238/2002#Text>> [accessed 8 September 2022].

⁴⁰ Law of Ukraine, *On Condemnation of Communist and National Socialist (Nazi) Totalitarian Regimes in Ukraine and Prohibition of Propaganda of Their Symbols*, № 595-VIII, 14 July 2015 <<https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/317-19>> [accessed 8 September 2022].

⁴¹ Naviky Razom, *Mist.Online*, 9 October 2014 <<https://meest-online.com/history/action/naviky-razom/>> [accessed 8 September 2022].

by viewers, while the intervention itself was minimal.⁴² At the same time, this installation signified that friendship had existed in the past. The installation undermined the monument's meaning but did not challenge the narrative itself.

In 2016, the Ministry of Culture of Ukraine declared its intention to remove statues representing the friendship between Ukrainian and Russian people, but the Arch was preserved. As a representative of the Ministry noted, the fate of the Arch demands broader public discussion.⁴³ This official mentioned the possible transfer of the sculpture to a statue park of the Soviet period that the authorities declared they would create. The reference to a 'statue park' aimed to demonstrate orientation toward 'European' practices in dealing with contested monuments and therefore helped 'to cool' the public outcry over the monument. However, this park has never been established. Also, there were no major changes in the representation of Soviet times in museum exhibitions, so the references to European practices remained more of a communication strategy than an action plan. Because of their artistic and historic value, these monuments could not be as easily neglected and removed as numerous typical Lenin statues.

In February 2022, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine again discussed the fate of the Arch in Kyiv and the need to remove the statues from it. It was decided that the Arch should be preserved as an example of modernist architecture and a valuable engineering object. A working group with representatives from the city administration, the Ministry of Culture, and the Institute of National Remembrance has been formed to develop a strategy for dealing with the Arch and its sculptures. The Ukrainian online journal *The Village* ran a piece on this topic.⁴⁴ The journalist talked with experts and presented their views on what to do with the monument. The monument was discussed as an example of Soviet monumental propaganda, not as a tool for memorizing a particular interpretation of a historical event.

In 2009, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine deprived the Pereiaslav monument of the status of a cultural heritage monument of national significance. However, half a year later, when the pro-Russian president Viktor Yanukovich came to power, the monument was included in the local Register of protected monuments by another order of the Ministry of Culture

⁴² "Trishchyny" vzhe ne dostatno? Shcho robyty z Arkoui druzhby narodiv?, *The Village*, 23 February 2022 <<https://www.the-village.com.ua/village/city/cityplace/322921-scho-robiti-z-arkoyu-druzhibi-narodiv>> [accessed 8 September 2022].

⁴³ 'Minkult ne bude znosyty Arku druzhby narodiv', *Dzerkalo Tuzhnia*, 23 May 2016 <https://zn.ua/ukr/UKRAINE/minkult-ne-bude-znositi-arku-druzhibi-narodiv-u-kiyevi-209059_.html> [accessed 8 September 2022].

⁴⁴ "Trishchyny" vzhe ne dostatno.

of Ukraine. Therefore, in order to dismantle the monument, it first had to be released from the status of protected monument.

To define the artistic, historical and cultural significance of the monument in Pereiaslav that is dedicated to the 300-year anniversary of the 'reunion' of Ukraine and Russia, in March 2019 the Kyiv regional state administration, Department of Culture asked the Institute of Art, Folklore and Ethnography of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine (NASU) for its scholarly opinion regarding the historical and cultural significance of the 'Forever Together' monuments. A group of local deputies from Pereiaslav sent a similar request to the Institute of History of Ukraine of NASU in December 2019. These two academic institutions arrived at more or less the same answer: they stressed the historically incorrect interpretation of the past that laid behind the monument and pointed to its propagandistic nature. Scholars of the Institute of Art, Folklore and Ethnography and the Institute of History of Ukraine agreed that monument in Pereiaslav should be removed from public space and placed in a museum as a relic of the communist regime.⁴⁵ Using the official reply from the two aforementioned academic institutions as an argument, the group of Pereiaslav deputies and educators argued for the removal of the monument from the State register by the city council of Pereiaslav. Not wanting to take this decision on their own, the executive committee of Pereiaslav city administration stated that such issues have to be managed by Pereiaslav city council, which is an elected representative body of the community. However, in 2021, a public city council hearing on the removal of the monument from the list of protected monumental heritage did not lead to any results.⁴⁶

On 22 February 2022, two days before the full-scale Russian invasion, the monument in Pereiaslav was again discussed at public hearings: 80% of participants supported the removal of the monument from the city's central square,⁴⁷ but the Russian invasion made the implementation of this decision impossible.

In April 2022, the monument in Pereiaslav was vandalized: a group of young men wrote the names of destroyed Ukrainian cities on the monument, pointing to Russia's war crimes in Ukraine.⁴⁸ On 19 May, the local council

⁴⁵ Oleksandr Ihnatenko, 'Het vid Moskvy chy naviky razom? Shcho robyty z pamiatnykamy, iaki vykonuiut rol ideolohichnoi otruty', *Pereiaslav.City*, 29 March 2020 < <https://pereiaslav.city/blogs/70141/get-vid-moskvi-chi-naviky-razom-scho-robiti-z-pamyatnikami-yaki-vikonuyut-rol-ideolohichnoi-otruty> > [accessed 28 September 2022].

⁴⁶ 'Pereiaslavskyi symvol totalitarnoi "druzhy" nareshti demontuii', *Pereiaslav.City*, 19 May 2022 < <https://pereiaslav.city/articles/213443/pereyaslavskij-simvol-totalitarnoi-druzhy-nareshti-demontuyut-erishennya-sesii-> > [accessed 8 September 2022].

⁴⁷ 'U Pereiaslavi znesut pamiatnyk "druzhy" Ukrainy i RF', *Dzerkalo Tuzhnia*, 23 February 2022 < <https://zn.ua/ukr/UKRAINE/u-pereiaslavi-znesut-pamiatnik-druzhy-ukrajini-ta-rf.html> > [accessed 8 September 2022].

⁴⁸ 'Na pamiatnyku "druzhy" z krainou-agresarom napsaly nazvy rozbomblenyh rashystamy mist', *Pereiaslav City*, 4 April 2022 < <https://pereiaslav.city/articles/204424/napamyatniku-druzhy-z-krainoyu-agresarom-napsali-nazvy-rozbomblenih-rashystamy-mist> > [accessed 8 September 2022].

unanimously voted to dismantle the monument.⁴⁹ The removal of the monument happened on 7 July 2022, on the 134th day of the Russian invasion.

In turn, the Kyiv authorities dismantled the sculptures of Soviet workers below the Peoples' Friendship Arch early on 26 April 2022, on the 62nd day of the invasion. This occurred in the presence of its creator, 87-year-old architect Serhiy Myrgorodsky, who publicly supported the process.⁵⁰ During the dismantling, the head of the Russian worker fell off and rolled with a crash on the polished foundation stone.⁵¹

While the statue of workers was publicly dismantled, the Arch and the sculpture group of the Khmelnytsky and Muscovy delegates, which was created by Kyiv sculptor Oleksandr Skoblikov and was also a part of the Arch complex, remained. In the political sphere and the media, the sculpture of the two Soviet workers resonated while the sculptural composition of the Khmelnytsky and Muscovy delegates was not so contested.

City major Vitali Klitschko, who was present during the dismantling process, promised to rename the Arch. On 14 May, by the decision of Kyiv city council, the Arch was renamed as "Arch of the Freedom of Ukrainian People".⁵²

The full-scale Russian aggression toward Ukraine in 2022 caused a push for radical changes in the symbolic sphere. As a result, not only Soviet communist heritage has been targeted, but also cultural and military figures of the Russian Empire (for instance, poet Aleksander Pushkin and Russian Army General Aleksander Suvorov) and war memorials to fallen Soviet soldiers. While sporadic dismantling continued, including by militia,⁵³ debates on Russian and Soviet heritage in Ukraine began between representatives of the Ministry of Culture and Informational Policy, the Institute of National Remembrance, and the art community.⁵⁴ However, these debates have only taken place on certain online platforms, with a focus on the issue of the monuments themselves, not on the interpretations. Therefore, the material remnants from the Soviet period have not been differentiated and problematized.

⁴⁹ 'Pereiaslavsky symbol totalitarnoi "druzhby".'

⁵⁰ 'U centri Kyeva pochaly znosyty pamiatnyk "Druzhby narodiv". Avtor proponue znyshchyty', *Liga. Novyny*, 26 April 2022 < <https://news.liga.net/ua/all/news/v-tsentre-kieva-nachali-snosit-pamyatnik-drujby-narodov-avtor-predlagaet-ee-unichtojit> > [accessed 8 September 2022].

⁵¹ 'Arka druzhby narodiv: shcho tse bylo i shcho byde?', *Ukrinform*, 27 April 2022 <<https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-ato/3468987-finis-arki-druzbi-narodiv-nu-oriki-teper-vam-točno-skoro-kinec.html>> [accessed 8 September 2022].

⁵² 'Arku druzhby narodiv u Kyevi pereimenuvaly', *Ukrainska Pravda*, 14 May 2022 <<https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2022/05/14/7346176/>> [accessed 8 September 2022].

⁵³ 'U Chernigovi viiskovidemontuvaly pamiatnyk Pushkinu', *DeloUA*, 30 April 2022 <<https://delo.ua/uk/incidents/u-chernigovi-viiskovi-demontuvali-pamyatnik-puskinu-shho-prostoyav-ponad-120-rokiv-video-396727/>> [accessed 8 September 2022].

⁵⁴ 'Derusyifikatsia – decomunizatsia – decolonizatsia', *Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance Video* <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mhj1wYXVxY>> [accessed 8 September 2022]; 'Pohovorymo pro mystetstvo u publichnyh prostorah?', *Derzhmystetstvo Video* <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oQRXcwMWCfc>> [accessed 8 September 2022].

Art expert Eugenia Moliar has argued for more nuanced, less emotional attitudes toward Soviet monumental heritage. In an article written after the dismantling of the monument to Ukrainian-Russian friendship in Kyiv, she points out that it is harmful to erase Soviet heritage from the history of Ukrainian art as it has cultural value and presents a specific period. Also, she calls for a non-political, critical, and scholarly approach in dealing with Soviet heritage that includes going beyond the 'destruction/restoration' strategy.⁵⁵ It is notable that central and local authorities' practices and methods of dealing with these monuments – including how decisions are made, implemented, and communicated to the community – are often the focus of criticism. Therefore, the participants of these debates are often not only experts but also civic activists who actively engage in reshaping public space.

It is too early to say what the results of these debates will be. However, David Art points out that the success of these discussions is defined by their width, the number of actors with different political views involved, the intensity of the communication, and the duration, which should be at least one year;⁵⁶ therefore, for public debates to succeed, they should extend beyond any particular institution and should include political elites that discuss these issues from different political angles.⁵⁷ In the Ukrainian case, this means going beyond the narrow circle of art and cultural experts and appearing in the political sphere. Importantly, these issues are not perceived as necessary in terms of raising a debate in Ukrainian society due to the security situation and the need to constantly resist Russian military threats: any discussions in the sphere of heritage and its interpretations are not part of the current social and political agenda.

Attitudes regarding visual representations of friendship between Ukraine and Russia have been impacted to some extent by the deterioration of Ukrainians' view of Russia since Russian military aggression started in 2014: positive attitudes dropped sharply from 78% in February 2014 to 52% in May 2014. The share of Ukrainians who have a negative attitude towards Russia has almost tripled (13% in February 2014, rising to 38% in May 2014).⁵⁸ The full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine has strongly contributed to this process: in May 2022, 92% of respondents expressed a negative attitude towards the Russian Federation, including 90% in the South

⁵⁵ 'Ruinatsia. Pro viinu z pamiatnykamy I monumentamy', *YourArt*, 29 May 2022 <https://supportyourart.com/columns/ruj_nacziya/?fbclid=IwAR2xqkxeaPNnkfbaSTCs5FJZ9-KK3JmZikQ_g5j-AWzF6mDQRkxcSqsPopCl> [accessed 8 September 2022].

⁵⁶ David Art, *The Politics of the Nazi Past in Germany and Austria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 63.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁵⁸ 'Dynamika stavlennia naselennia Ukrainy do Rosii ta naselennia Rosii do Ukrainy', *Kyiv International Institute of Sociology*, 4 March 2014 <<https://www.kiis.com.ua/?lang=ukr&cat=reports&id=236>> [accessed 8 September 2022].

and 85% in the East.⁵⁹ Another opinion poll demonstrates similar trends regarding the question “After Ukraine’s victory and the de-occupation of its territory, will you support the complete termination of all relations with the Russian Federation, including a complete ban on the entry of Russians into Ukraine?” 59% of respondents said ‘yes’, and 32% said ‘probably yes’.⁶⁰

CONCLUSION

In Ukrainian-Russian relations, the interpretation of the past has always been essential. Russia uses a particular interpretation of the past to justify its political domination and geopolitical ambitions. In contrast, Ukraine has been struggling for decades to release its memory landscape from the Soviet remains and to regain its subjectivity in the historical process. The debate over the interpretation of Ukrainian-Russian relations has never been just a matter of academic debate: it is a political issue.

Monuments to the Friendship of Peoples were an element of Soviet ideology – the embodiment of a notion that defined the nature of relations between Soviet republics. Although there are several monuments celebrating friendship between Soviet republics across the former Soviet space, the Ukrainian case is an exception due to the number of monuments, references to the ‘eternity’ of this friendship, and the grounding of this notion of friendship within the narrative of a particular historical event. The campaign to promote the idea of reuniting Ukraine and Russia as a people’s union was massive and included the erection of monuments as a revision of Ukraine’s history. Notably, this was intended to not only emphasize the idea of friendship but also to eliminate the differences between Ukrainians and Russians, as if these two peoples were doomed to be together. Within this concept, power relations between these two nations have been discussed. It is notable that all these monuments to Ukrainian-Russian Friendship appeared in Ukraine, but none were realized in Russia. Perhaps it was Ukrainians that needed to be convinced about this notion. Also, analysis of this notion of friendship has revealed the peculiarities of the Soviet authorities’ policies regarding Ukraine – the central status of Ukraine not only within Soviet politics but also within Russian history.

The story of Pereiaslav continues to occupy a prominent place within Ukrainian historical memory. Removal of the monuments that

⁵⁹ Iryna Balachuk, ‘92% ukrainsiv stavliatsa do Rosii pogano’, *Ukrainska Pravda*, 26 May 2022 < <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2022/05/26/7348625/> > [accessed 8 September 2022].

⁶⁰ ‘How the War Changed the Way Ukrainians Think About Friends, Enemies, and the Country’s Strategic Goals’, *The Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation*, 30 May 2022 <<https://dif.org.ua/article/yak-viyina-vplivae-na-dumku-ukrainsiv-pro-druziv-vorogiv-ta-strategichni-tsili-derzhavi>> [accessed 8 September 2022].

memorialized the Soviet interpretation of the agreement between Hetman Khmelnytsky and the Muscovy Tsar will downplay the importance of the Pereiaslav event, but not substantially. This historical event is deeply embodied in Ukraine's narrative of the past. The task is not only to overcome the Soviet historical framework of how this agreement is interpreted but to discuss which events and historical figures are in the focus of the narrative about the past. Why is the Pereiaslav Agreement considered such an important event that it is discussed in detail in history books? Is it important because of what happened in 1654, or is it due to the later (mis) use of the event by Russian and Soviet political actors? Challenging the very basis of this idea is an important factor in understanding contemporary events and the ideological background of Ukrainian-Russian relations.

A monument cannot grasp the meaning and complexity of a historical event, but it does not have to. The aim of a monument is to memorialize an event in a particular way. Therefore, monuments cannot help us understand historical events – they just foster a certain image of an event in collective memory. Rethinking the monuments to Russian-Ukrainian friendship also includes rethinking the notion of heritage. In the present tradition, heritage is understood through its materiality and stands for all that is good about the past and that has contributed to the cultural development of society. This interpretation proves problematic as there are different kinds of heritage, but not all of them are 'positive' in meaning. Heritage is not a monument or a place but cultural values and meanings. Emma Waterton and Laurajane Smith note that heritage is a "cultural process and performance that is concerned with mediation and negotiations of cultural and historical values and narratives".⁶¹ Due to this approach, the object is not so important: the meaning is of primary importance.

So, what values and narratives are constructed around the discussed monuments? Labelling them as Soviet ideological monuments simplifies their meaning and makes dealing with them easier as it places the Peoples' Friendship Arch complex in Kyiv and the 'Forever Together' monument in Pereiaslav, which aimed to memorialize the Soviet interpretation of the Pereiaslav agreement (and, even more broadly, Soviet interpretation of the history of Ukraine), in 'the box' of Soviet heritage. These monuments present an idea that goes beyond the Soviet period and for which Khrushchev was much responsible: the idea that, on the one hand, Ukrainian history has existed since ancient times; on the other hand, it was destined to develop only within a union with Russia

⁶¹ Emma Waterton, and Laurajane Smith, 'There is no such thing as heritage', in *Taking Archaeology out of Heritage*, ed. by Emma Waterton, and Laurajane Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), p. 15.

In a time of open military conflict and ongoing security threats, the issue of monuments is less relevant to the public. War-torn Ukraine has left gaping wounds in the Ukrainian psyche and on the landscape. Ukrainian's economy, politics, and demography are undergoing a significant transformation. Ukrainians are becoming more radical in their views and verbal expressions. However, as the data shows, these changes in Ukrainians' attitudes to history had already started before Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

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