National patriotic day parade: the politics of historical memory and reconstruction of the Russian identity during Putin era

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Abstract: This article aims to analyze the politics of historical memory, the function and meaning behind the procession of the Parade on the Russian National Victory Day (Dend Pobeda) every May 9th. The day has become a ritual for the Russian nation since the Soviet Union era; it has become a collective memory for the Russians who had defeated the Fascist German military at the end of World War II. Russia’s government during Vladimir Putin presidential tenure has tried to reproduce and reconstruct memories by holding grandeur events of the Parade in the Red Square. This article then proposes some questions: why does Putin feel that he bears the authority to reconstruct it? What are the meanings behind the Parade for the Russians and Putin’s government? It used Putin’s official speeches between 2000–2018 as the primary sources to explore and reveal what made Putin’s regime to put the Victory Day parade as the instrument to reconstruct and reproduce the post-Soviet Russian national identity. By using historical approach within the collective memory conceptual framework, it found that the May 9th Parade ritual comprises various symbolic meanings, including the meaning of giving, blessing, success, history, and togetherness. As a ritual that is practiced annually in

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PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

This study analyses the politics of historical commemoration held by Vladimir Putin’s regime between 2000 until 2018. Russia under Putin had utilized the Parade on the Russian National Victory Day (Dend Pobeda) every May 9th as the instrument to reconstruct and reproduce the post-Soviet Russian national identity. By using historical approach within the collective memory conceptual framework, and analysed Putin’s official speeches between 2000–2018 as the primary sources, it found that the May 9th Parade ritual comprises various symbolic meanings, including the meaning of giving, blessing, success, history, and togetherness. As a ritual that is practiced annually in a national-wide ceremony, the May 9th Parade has subtly functioned as a pseudo religion to Putin’s regime. Putin’s effort was an action to nurture the memory of the success and greatness of the Russian nation so he could glued Russian society into a solid national entity. This is what can be said as a form of politicization of collective memory.
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Subjects: Central Asian; Russian & Eastern European Studies; History; Social & Cultural History

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1. Introduction

World War II is considered a major war for nations in Europe and North America. The collective memory of this war has long been the subject of study (William L. Warner and George L. Mosse as cited in Schreiner, 2006: 339) and once examined the influence of deceased soldiers who evoked collective memory and became the basis for the formation of national consciousness in Europe and North America. Other scholars point out the spatial representation of collective memory as visualized in warning signs, monuments, and tombs to emphasize the importance of their identity and national spirit (Malinova, 2021, pp. 1–6; Seniavskii & Seniavskii, 2017, pp. 337–378; Verovšek, 2016, pp. 529–239).

In ex-war countries, unknown soldiers symbolize patriotic commitment and sacrifice to the state and nation. They are presented again in warning signs, in tombs, and uniquely personified in national symbols. It becomes more vivid if the deceased is a military or government figure or leader. They are the culmination of collective memory for the formation of a national identity (Roth, 2012; Schreiner, 2006, pp. 339–340, Forest 2011). Various reconstruction and reproduction of these events were then carried out by European countries, including in the Soviet Union (Russia) after World War II.

Victory Day (Dend Pobeda) or also known as Patriotic Day on May 9th is the day of victory for Russia (Soviet Union) and the allied over German Fascism in World War II. The day was considered important for everyone in Russia as every Russian family felt involved in it as soldiers, nurses in hospitals, weapons factory workers, or farmers who supplied the needs of the real war. The collective memory of the event formed a paradox for the Russian nation. On one hand, it was considered a sad traumatic day because of the deaths of millions of Russians. On the other hand, it was considered a special day of happiness because they succeeded in winning the war against Germany. For the government, the victory of the war must be remembered by a victory parade in the Moscow Red Square. Victory days are also celebrated in various cities and regions throughout Russia, especially cities that have been involved in the German Fascist invasion of World War II, while almost every family also celebrates it. Moreover, it seemed to be an obligation if the house is where the head of family had participated directly in the war and had received the highest award from the Russian Soviet Government.

This military parade is held every May 9th. It began in 1945 when the Soviet military returned from their victory over German Fascists. At the end of World War II, the Soviet military moved to the city of Berlin, even ahead of the allied army movement. The victory was shown by the success of a Soviet Army raising a Soviet flag at the tower of the German Parliament building (Reichstag). However, the anniversary of the victory day had not been held for 20 years. It was in 1965 that the Victory Day Parade was held again until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. The ritual of this parade was stopped for several years after the collapse of Soviet Union but has been resumed from 1995 to the present. Red Square (Krasnaya Ploschad) which means grandeur becomes the place of the Great Parade.

During Putin’s administration (Period I: 2000–2008, Period II: 2012–2018, and Period III: 2018–present), Russian government has given many contributions to modernize Russian society. This can be seen from the opinion of the Russian public which has been very supportive during his administration and support him to be the president for the second, the third, and even the fourth time,
despite being interrupted as Medvedev’s Prime Minister (2008–2012). One of the factors that made Putin very popular in Russia was his struggle to defend Russia’s national interests, although he had to sacrifice a lot of things by closing the voices of the opposition (Frye et al., 2016; Hutcheson & Petersson, 2016; Wilson & Lee, 2020).

Putin’s popularity arose because his success brought Russia back to prosperity and the reappearance of Russia to the world stage. Evidently, he managed to get a vote of 76.63% in the Presidential Election in 2018 by defeating 7 other presidential candidates. However, during his reign, Putin always faced issues regarding the concern for critical domestic and foreign policies. Domestic issues include the living standards of the Russian people, the decline of the post-government spirit of Boris Yeltsin (1992–2000), and the ethno-nationalist emergence of several states, which threatens the spirit of Russian nationalism (Hutcheson & Petersson, 2016).

The Russian Federation which inherited a large part of the Soviet Union left the burden of uncertainty about its identity. President Putin has the duty to restore Russia’s role at the national, regional, and international levels. Putin conducted a series of work by reminding the important and fundamental values of nationalism and the spirit of patriotism for the young generation of Russia, so they would know their grant and strong national identity. He always reminded it during his speeches (Putin 2014 – 2018) and his national program, which is patriotism education, especially for young people (Gosudarstvennaia 2005–2015, Hue’urou, 2015, p. 32; Khodzhaeva & Meyer, 2017, pp. 2–4; Kratochvil & Shkhanova, 2020, pp. 1–9; Omelchenko et al., 2015, pp. 27–34).

Departing from the above phenomenon, it can be said that Vladimir Putin tried to awaken and direct the identity of Russian people and how to maintain this identity in conjunction with regime’s consolidation of domestic power and politics. In that context, Putin carried out a national wide project of reconstruction and reproduction of various collective memories of Russian nation, so that they could be remembered and accepted by the new generation of the Russian people. One of the national wide projects of reconstruction and reproduction of the collective memories brought back by Putin’s regime has been the Celebration of the Great Patriotic War every May 9th. This article aims to analyse Putin’s political policies that reconstruct and reproduce the procession of the National Victory Day Parade on May 9th, as a collective memory to foster and revive the spirit of nationalism and patriotism of the Russian nation as part of its national identity.

1.1. Conceptual framework: historical memory and the problem of identity

Historical events are social facts that contain various collective mentalities from the structure of various individuals who interact socially. The process of bequeathing the memory of historical events requires an instrument and mechanism carried out by a community and the authorities to maintain and develop their identity. Collective memory is always related to the place where the memory is created, especially places that do have special meanings, such as shrines, places of birth, and places of battle. Therefore, all monuments are physical forms of material (sites) from the collective memory of a society (Halbwachs, 1957; Fowler, 2007; Assmann, 2011; Verovšek, 2016: 529–539).

As a result of experience and interpretation, the collective memory is open to be reproduced and reconstructed by various parties according to their level of needs and interests. In this context, the process of preserving memory also cannot be forgotten, including traumatic memories of a nation. Stories about negative events from the past can actually be a glue of strong collective identity and create a deep sense of togetherness for a community that has experienced it (Bellah as cited in Edy, 2006: 11).

Memory is a dynamic entity, crafted and recrafted in dialogue with the political, social, and cultural imperatives of the present (Maurantonia, 2014, p. 1). Politicians frequently make use of collective understandings of the past to mobilize remembrance as an instrument of politics in the present. In certain cases, they use historical analogies to frame and think through important issues (Khong 1992 as cited in Verovšek, 2016: 529); at other times they deploy the past strategically,
manipulating memory to legitimize their actions with reference to formative events in the collective consciousness of their community (Hayden 1992 as cited in Verovšek, 2016, p. 529).

Politicians appeal to the past for various purposes. They strive to construct identities and consolidate groups, to mobilize support and discredit opponents, but above all, to legitimate power. This is particularly evident when the point of reference is the recent past. Pointing to a continuity or emphasizing a contrast with predecessors in power is an often-used way to claim legitimacy. For this reason, politicians tend to construct narratives of the recent past ahead of historians (Malinova, 2021: 2–3).

According to Bell, the memory and trauma of the past play an important role in building a country’s future. Trauma of past events produces a memory that will form a separate narrative to build a future with a better identity (Duncan Bell, 2006: 72). Memory politics does not only arouse past romantism for the present, but also simultaneously strengthens the value and identity of the nation that was once the winner of the war. It is different for the losers of war, like Germany and Japan. Events of past defeat are embarrassing events and are considered as punishment for them (Seniavskii & Seniavskii, 2017: 362).

Therefore, generally, the collective memory of the past is something that is always kept, as can be seen from the various objects displayed at the museum. There are various facts, sites, and artifacts, but those can have meaning if there is a narrative that assembles it into an explanation which can be accepted by other parties. The effort to compile the story is referred to as reconstruction and reproduction efforts (Munslow, 1997: 30–45; Edy, 2006: 3). Collective memory itself is generally kept by narrating story from generation to generation, through various means and uses of various instruments, both through persuasive and coercive actions (Maurantonio, 2014: 7–10; Kasamara & Sorokina, 2015: 2; Verovšek, 2016: 532 – 534).

Considering the nature of historical memory, we can note the following: (1) historical memory is a system of representations about the past that exists in the minds of most members of society; (2) this system of representations is influenced by two factors—the actual experience of participants and witnesses of past events and official history, memorials, media, literature, and so forth; (3) historical memory is selective—it stores only the events that most affected the lives of all the people; (4) events stored in historical memory are symbolic in nature, crystalizing many similar events and embodying the people's concepts of the normative and the heroic. All these factors are present in the collective memory of World War II in different countries, especially, Germany and Russia (Nikiforov, 2017: 381 see also Lebow, 2006).

The discussion of collective memory will always be related to politics of memory because collective memory is often used as a tool to record, remember, edit, construct, and even manipulate a version of historical facts that were previously removed, obscured, and hidden by other parties (Nasrallah, 2005; Assmann, 2011: 16–21 and 111–114). The role of politics of memory aims to reconstruct the truth of collective memory of trauma and amnesia from a historical event. The role of politics of memory is to uphold justice and restore the rights of victims who were previously ignored and oppressed by the state ruling regime or oppressed by a group or a dominant community in a region (Nasrallah, 2005; Verovšek, 2016: 539; Kratochvil & Shakhanova, 2020: 2–8). In this connection, the parade of May 9th is an effort to reconstruct and reproduce the collective memory of Russian nation which aims to restore shared memories of their role and success in the World War II against Fascist German for new generation of Russian youth (Kasamara & Sorokina, 2015: 138; Odesskii & Dmitrii, 2008: 109–23; Malinova, 2021: 1–3).1

Two main narratives that underlie official propaganda in the contemporary Russian Federation, which are the formation of identity in the modern era and the commemoration of the victory of the Soviet Union in the great Patriotic War, can be seen as examples of Eric Hobsbawm’s “invented
tradition”. Both can be considered as examples of “cultural product” propaganda carried out by the Putin government.

2. Methodology
This qualitative study uses historical methods, starting by doing some steps to collect various historical data, both from primary and secondary sources, several materials from official documents such as speech documents, national song lyrics, documentary films, photographs from various internet sources, accompanied by criticisms of interpretations from various references related to the topic of this article. We use Putin’s speeches from 2014 to 2018 as the primary documents to explore and reveal how the regime under Putin’s presidency interprets past events to reconstruct and reproduce the identity of Russian nation. After reading the documents thoroughly by using discursive analysis, we elaborate the facts and events that occurred from 2000 until 2018 to understand why Putin’s regime chose the commemoration of Patriotic Day on May 9th as an instrument for national identity reconstruction and reproduction.

As for the analysis, this article uses several concepts and theories from the fields of collective memory (Maurice Halbwachs and Peter J. Verovsek), cultural memory (Jan Assmann), political memory (Nicole Mauroantonio), ritual (Catherine Bell), national identity (Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay, Castells and Edensor) and patriotism (J. Paul Goode). The survey from literatures above shows that there was an opportunity to enrich the discussion in the fields of collective memory and identity. Collective memory is often used as a tool to record, remember, edit, construct, and even manipulate a version of historical facts that were previously removed, obscured, and hidden by other parties. Some facts were used, but the others were hidden just to retain the most significant events of the past that were of great importance to the present. We found that Putin’s regime not only had chosen the commemoration of great patriotic war as the sole instrument, but also ritualized the parade as the identity of the Russian people in the post-Soviet era.

In this regard, this analysis is also assisted by the results of previous studies by other authors who examine aspects of nationalism and patriotism in the era of the Russian Federation. Through these several approaches, it will be concluded that what Putin has done is a reconstruction and reproduction of collective memories owned by Russian nation to strengthen Russian identity in internal and external contexts.

2.1. Rituals and social changes in Russian society
Since the 1950s, the Soviet government has determined three calendars for the ritual of national events for the people of Russia (Soviet). First, state rituals related to the victory of the October and the day of Soviet Constitution were combined and held every November 7th-8th. Second, state rituals related to the success and victory of the workers are held every May 1st-2nd. Third, the state rituals associated with the day of great victory when the Soviet army succeeded in defeating German Fascism every May 9th.

Great Patriotic Day or Victory Day, on May 9th was attended by the Politburo and several World War II veterans, along with other families and sympathizers. But in November 1988, during Gorbachev’s reign, the parade had been simplified by not showing the superiority of the Soviet military technology industry, which was usually the place to show off their military industries. At that time, the parade only showed parades of military ranks (Lane, 1990: 267).

After the Soviet Union collapsed, several new national rituals and traditional rituals that once had been frozen were revived, such as Christmas, Mass, Easter, and some old ceremonial traditions. Nonetheless, there are still some ceremonial activities attached to the Soviet regime but it has been more simplified and evaluated to fit in the existing conditions. One of them is the Great Patriotism Remembrance Day or Victory Day (May 9th). During the Soviet time, the anniversary day became a place of legitimacy to remind of the existence of state enemies, such as Fascism, the United States, Capitalism, and Imperialism.
As also stated by Assman (2011), collective memory, which is the construction of a group’s identity, is basically determined by how the group constructs the other groups, which are considered different. During the era of Russian Federation, commemoration of these activities was still held. Besides still referring to the common enemy category of the nation, namely other powers outside Russia (United States of America and the European Union), other legitimacy is aimed at reminding the spirit of nationalism and patriotism of the new Russian community identity.  

A ritual originates from the historical product and the cultural products of the supporting community (Turner, 1982: 4–6). Ritual activities carried out continuously, over time can form a tradition (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1987: 3–12). A ritual’s meaning and function can change according to the development and demands of the supporting community.

In the analysis of structural functionalism, rituals are seen as a means of need. Rituals are also seen as a symptom that has a relationship and depends on the part of a larger element that can be in the form of society, empowerment, and government (Catherine Bell, 1992: 2–8). Rituals can be seen as a text that is bound and depends on the context in the form of the social, cultural and historical environment of a supporting community.

The classic functions of rituals are various, including (1) to bind and strengthen awareness among its people and serves as a venue for social solidarity (Durkheim as cited in Catherine Bell, 1992: 23–25 and 171–173; Cappet, 1992: 97–115), (2) to function as a mechanism for reevaluating group solidarity and traditional values, (3) to serve as a symbol of communication and interaction, and (4) to function as a venue for cognitive didactic socialization to instill the cultural values of the supporting community (Malinoswki as cited in Homans, 1979: 57–60). Based on these functions, the May 9th parade has a complex function for the needs of Russian lives, so they do it every year.

The ritual is also a strategy to form the authority of tradition and habitual habits in the community that are carried out continuously. Tradition is solid because it is always repeated (Bloch and Mayerhold as cited in Catherine Bell, 1992: 123–124). In other words, a ritual is formed because of the need to continue the legitimacy of the dominant values of the past as well as a means of justification for the future. That function was realized by Putin. Aside from being a venue for didactic socialization, this parade also became a legitimacy for Putin to remind the spirit of nationalism and patriotism, as well as the identity of new Russian society (Hue’rrou, 2015, pp. 30–32; Omelchenko et al., 2015, pp. 27–29).

Rituals that become a part of a community’s institution system can be formed based on joint conventions or through coercion. The ritual of parade can be said to be a form of shared awareness of their historical values that need collective memory to be preserved in the form of a parade performance. It is a direct practice of the essence of collective memory.

2.2. The meaning of the parade
Symbolic concepts are generally manifested in various forms of text, including oral, written, parade, festivals, shows, visuals, and can be expressed in a ritual activity. Such rituals indirectly reflect the meaning of normative values contained in a supporting community. The normative values found in the May 9th parade ritual are the gratitude and high respect to every people involved, whether still alive, died during the war, or losing somewhere unknown as Immortal Regiment (Bessmertniy Polk), during the great patriotic war between Soviet Union with the Fascist Germany. Marcel Mauss sees that in the context of ritual there is always a relationship with other parties based on the concept of giving. The three components are (1) Obligation to give, (2) Obligation to accept gifts, and (3) Obligation to return gifts. Each gift from anyone demands a balanced return. Giving is a form of reciprocal exchange (Mauss, 1992: 56 61).
The May 9th parade can also be a gesture of gratitude to the heroes who have surrendered themselves to the country and nation of Russia, as their obligation to give sacrifices as well as to receive gifts from a new generation of Russians. Whereas the new generation of Russians has an obligation to give gratitude in various ways, namely by holding joint ritual activities and giving flowers, as a sign of respect and gratitude, which both are directly to the veterans and are placed in various tombs of the heroes. It can be said, the Parade ritual is based on the obligation and responsibility of the Russian people to return the form of gifts they get from their predecessors in the previous era while defending the Russian homeland.

The sacred conception that has become a convention and joint consensus must be constantly reminded, established, and renewed, using means of ritual. In this case, the ritual means is the May 9th parade on the Red Square. A ritual is not just a custom, but it plays a role and is meaningful as a tradition that refers to the agreed value of the guideline. A ritual is formed because of the need to continue the legitimacy of the dominant values of the past from the community concerned.

The meaning of a ritual can also be seen from the etymology of the ritual itself. Den Pobeda is synonymous with symbols, such as May 9th, Parade, Red Square, Kremlin, aircraft acrobatics, weapon parades, war veterans, St George’s ribbons, victory songs, national anthem, marching, flowers, family, eating and gathering together. Various images of the symbol refer to historical meanings, such as (1). Togetherness, means that together in the Red Square public space in front of the Kremlin or watching television, or together holding a ceremony in sharing cities in Russia, (2). Nationalism, referring to the meaning of the formation of a sense of nationality by showing the courage of the Russian nation to defeat opponents and defend their homeland, (3). Patriotism and heroism, shown by veterans who participated in the march to socialize their sacrifices to the next generation of Russians, (4). The success, depicted in showing the public that Russia was not only successful in World War II, but also succeeded in building a large and sophisticated military industry, as well as grandeur in the implementation of its paradigm. Red Square has become an identity symbol for the Russian nation. More than that, Red Square is the arena of memory contestation for all parties involved. In the parade, Putin became a representation as a re-enumerator or interpreter of the parade. Another meaning is that the parade itself shows a representation of the official memory form of the Putin’s government regime.

2.3. Politics of memory of russian nationalism in victory day
Collective memory can be understood as a social reconstruction of the past from the present perspective. The essence of a society is its collective memory, which is fluid and always changing. Interpretations of the past and people’s understanding of history and collective memory create the collective identity of the community, which can determine the future of the community, especially with regard to the various products of political policy that it takes today. Collective memory also complements historical data with other aspects, such as subjective interpretations, perceptions, emotions, and feelings of people who experienced events in the past. Collective memory confirms the unity of a community. It ties various people with diverse backgrounds into one community. In this sense, collective memory can be understood as a collective identity of a society, which serves to preserve its collective identity as well as to develop it (Halbwachs, 1957; Assman 2011). Other researchers who are also interested in the practice of collective memory in the Russian Federation are Kasamara and Sorokina (2015), Verovšek (2016), and Malinova (2021).

According to Halbwachs, collective memory is always mediated through complex mechanisms of conscious manipulation by elites and unconscious absorption by members of society. These social frameworks not only give meaning to individual memories; they also provide the broad historical imaginary that shapes the selection and interpretation of formative events (Verovšek, 2016: 531).
Historical memory is a highly complex and multilayered manifestation of social consciousness. It belongs to the sphere of mass social psychology, which is in many respects spontaneous, and to the ideological sphere, which is generally of particular concern to state, society, and their official institutions (political organizations, agencies of education and socialization, the media, religious organizations, etc.). Historical memory is the foundation of national self awareness, which, in turn, exerts a decisive influence on a country’s development and the viability of a people or a state, especially when the nation or state is in grave crisis (Seniavskii & Seniavskii, 2017, pp. 340–341).

Assmann (2011: 17–31) explains that there are six aspects of this collective memory, namely reconstruction, identity confirmation, formation, regulation, binding, and reflexivity. First, the aspects of reconstruction are referred to as aspects of the affirmation of identity, or the concept of the association of oneself with the group because collective memory reinforces and binds the unity of a community, which has different backgrounds. Collective memory confirms the identity of a society by distinguishing it from other societies, namely identity as a war-winning nation, identity as a great nation, identity as a nation that has a reputation among other nations and feels responsible for other parties that will damage humanity, both in the country and in neighboring countries. That goal was put forward by Putin in each of his speeches at the parade ceremony on May 9th (Putin, 2014f, 2015b, 2017 also see Omelchenko et al., 2015; Merzliakova et al., 2017; Repina, 2017; Yasaveev, 2017: 12–14).

The second aspect is reconstruction. In this context, collective memory serves as a tool to achieve an understanding of the past from the present perspective. The past is not merely a presentation of an event that has occurred, but it is also the result of an interpretation of the present with all its needs and interests. This was shown in the parade by showing the sophistication of the Russian military industry which served to defend the Russian homeland.

The aspect of formation. Society is a manifestation of collective memory, which functions to regulate shared life in society. These functions will then be continued to the next generation as well as forming their identity. Here the ritual parade directly became a means of political education for the new generation of Russians (Goode, 2018: 258 – 265; Kratochvil & Shakanova, 2020, pp. 1–8; Merzliakova et al., 2017, pp. 392–396; Repina, 2017, pp. 318–323).

The aspect of regulation. In this case, society can be understood as an organization. For this reason, the community needs a set of rules to organize life together. These rules govern the daily lives of people in the community. The procession of the parade itself shows a form of layered structure, which is shown from the sequence of lines, as a structure in the life of Russian society, according to their respective interests.

The aspect of binding. Every community must have a collective self-image which is their collective view of themselves. This collective self-image consists of a collection of values and knowledge. In accordance with its function, this aspect plays a role in the formation of identity, representation and reconstruction of the identity of the community concerned. Awareness of this conception also encourages a grand and lively annual parade.

The aspect of reflexivity. Collective memory has a reflective aspect on three levels: level of praxis, level of self, and the level of self-image. These three levels have one common goal, namely, to ask critical questions on various things that have existed and developed in the community, such as the rules of daily living, speaking styles, rituals and various other habits. There is always the possibility for the community to reinterpret everything in the collective memory, especially if there are new perspectives or interests that are developed in the community. In this case, the parade that had stalled in the time of Boris Yeltsin (1992–2000) was revived in Putin’s government with more grand and festive modifications (Malinova, 2021, pp. 1–3; Nikiforov, 2017, pp. 386–389).
A key complementary policy to this is the state’s effort to (re)construe the Russian collective memory, promoting Russia's own interpretation of historical events and limiting the influence of conflicting Western narratives inside the Russian public domain and even in some other post-Soviet states. In such interpretations, Russia is presented as “a great power, where greatness is still defined by referring to the Soviet past” (Morozov 2015 cited Kratochvíl & Shakhanova, 2020: 1). These are the two fundamental elements of Russia's current treatment of the historical memory: the anti-Western narrative and the renewed inclusion of the Soviet heritage both temporally and spatially. Domestically, patriotism and the need for patriotic education have become the central notions employed to support this new narrative. The need to revitalize the teaching of history and (re)construe the Russian collective memory is perceived so strongly that it even led to the creation of several comprehensive programs targeting all segments of Russian society with the goal of rendering them immune to Western ideas (Kratochvíl & Shakhanova, 2020: 1 – 2, see also Nikiforov, 2017; Khodzhaeva & Meyer, 2017).

Understanding the past also depends greatly on various interpretations that exist in the community and become a reflection of the collective identity of the community. An understanding of the Russian nation's past in World War II has formed a collective awareness of its nationalism. Although the victory of World War II was known as the victory of the Red Army (Soviet Army), it is still claimed to be the victory of the Russian nation because most Red Army soldiers came from Russia. In addition, the celebration is one of many historical events that has been chosen to be a special moment for Russian society.

The choice of Victory Day has clear political advantages but also equally evident drawbacks. On the one hand, the victory was already a consolidated myth in Soviet times. On the other hand, the choice of the Great Patriotic War involves, in one way or another, having to deal with matters that are not limited to the victory “without context”. The Great Patriotic War, thus, becomes a foundational myth of the new Russia. A myth with a raison d'être that demands “comfortable” references to the past helps confront current changes with the energy and vigor shown by today’s war veterans. Ritualized repetition reproduces and strengthens the myth; the public holiday probably most patronized by the authorities. The Great Patriotic War, as a narrative, is the complement of a discourse—that of modernization—anchored in the future. Thus, the narratives of modernization and historical memory become the two sides of hegemonic political discourse in Russia.

Collective memory cannot be separated from various forms of media that provide information and memories about the past. These various media are used to understand, interpret and remember the past. All these media preserve the past as a part of collective memory of society in the present. The concrete example is a variety of inscriptions in cities, monuments, and museums, including the use of public spaces for parades as a venue to strengthen the collective memory of local communities (De Groot, 2009, p. 107; Smith, 2009, pp. 61 and 74). All of them are tools for storing memories. With the various media, a society can understand its past.

For a long time, books and writing were the best media for this purpose. Pictures have also long been a tool for storing and preserving collective memories. Some other media are also developed as a collective media for storing memory, such as photography, literature, comics, theater shows, videos, films, and including the tradition of parades (Dubin, 2011; Maurantonio, 2014: 6–15; Verovšek, 2016: 529–539).

A memorial ritual can form a collective memory for its people. Warning is an opportunity to let various feelings flow, such as joy, nostalgia, gratitude, sadness, even shame. All that can be expressed with songs, music, even without sound at all, such as by a moment of silence in front of photos, flowers, or certain warning signs. Various expressions of feeling were also given space and opportunities in the May 9th parade procession.
Collective memory needs to be built because it serves to reconstruct and represent the past, both bitter and sweet life of a nation. For this reason, Putin took the initiative after 10 years of the communist regime. The Russian nation needed to re-demonstrate its identity through the political reconstruction of its collective memory in various forms. One of them is in the form of a colossal parade on every May 9th. It should be emphasized that the parade is not a parade remembering the greatness of the Soviet Union but a greatness for the national history of the Russian Federation.

Whatever the name is, a memorial can be a place to live and liven, as a meeting room between citizens, to reflect or to remember, to be a place for a joint discussion, to honor those who died in the event, to be a source of new hope, to look at back and forth, and as a reconstruction effort through shared awareness and didactic tools for their young generation. Given that every nation needs to have a certain place for its identity, the Russian nation preserves and maintains its collective memory through various spaces, times, and objects, including parade shows, through these sacred and formal events.

2.4. Political identity during Putin era
Identity politics is a part of individual participation and part of a regime’s policies (Castells, 2010: 8). Identity politics is a mechanism tool to achieve shared goals in the same scope of symbols. The choice of the use of identity politics departs from the social, economic, and objective politics of the concerned community.

Identity politics is also a form of political policy that wants to involve a person or group of people who have similarities in their historical background, characteristics, race, nationality, religion, ideology, and orientation in forming a shared identity. Identity politics is also always a politics of creating differences from other parties, or it can be referred to as political of categorization or political of differentiation, which is based on the search for differences towards other parties because identity search requires a line of difference from others (Hall & Du Gay, 2003, pp. 14–15, Tafjel as cited in Benwell & Stokoe, 2006, pp. 25–33).

Identity politics is an effort to construct and even exploit the identity of dominant power relations, aiming to demand a sense of ownership and mutual attachment (Harrison, 2013: 146). Identity politics tends to be a politics of recognition that is coercive towards national identity. In the sense of the word institutionalized identity becomes a politics of integration or a politics of unification. (Jenkin and Calhoun as cited in Edensor, 2002: 24 and 35). The agenda of identity politics are (1) To mobilize political, economic, and cultural interests, (2) To get equal recognition, and (3) To maintain and develop the cultural identity of the community. This condition allows each social group to perceive other groups (outgroups) as competitors, evil threats, while at the same time the opposite tendency will emerge, namely ingroup themselves as better and superior. In addition, identity politics in Russia is filled with issues of patriotism and nationalism (Horvath, 2015: 819–39).

Politics of identity then becomes the political tool for ethnic groups or nation to achieve their objective to raise their image of identity. Its presence can be caused by some certain factors seen by an ethnic group or nation, such as pressure, threat, injustice, and the feelings of having the same fate with other people in the area. Thus, they show their identity in a political fight to get power or separate themselves from the previous power.

Russia, like other countries in the world, perceives influence of globalization, economic interdependence and intensification of migration flows, cultural unification and global connectivity. These global processes have provoked considerable increase of inter-ethnic tension and irreversible changes in national identities. Social studies show that the impact of globalization on national identity is not univalent. Some authors consider it a force that weakens national identity and reduces attachment to the nation among the public, while others argue that globalization
strengthens national feelings (Ariely, Norris & Inglehart, Calhoun and Guibernau cited in Omelchenko et al., 2015, pp. 27–29).

Globalization has opened the possibility for many people to find their identity. There are five responses related to globalization to the existence of ethnic identity. First, is the defense mechanism. Second, is taking countermeasures. Third, the opening of the democratic system. Fourth, is creating a new identity or re-identification. Fifth, strengthen nationalism and patriotism (Woodward, 2001). In the contemporary network of identity formation, the national is found in a bewilderingly dense profusion of signifiers, objects, practices and spaces. Although globalization has produced a complexification of flow and networks, there remain an abundance of nodes, events and situations which foreground national identity. In a globalising world, national identity continually reconstitutes itself, become re-embedded, reterritorialised spaces, cultural form and practices (Urry as cited in Edensor, 2002: 33).

On that basis and that aspect was also emphasized by Putin (2014 − 2017) in his speech, who tended to direct Russian opinion towards fanaticism towards his country, and at the same time legitimized Putin’s government, which succeeded in raising the dignity of its people, even though it had received economic sanctions by western countries after intervention Russia in the Crimea. (Cadayev & Loginov, 2007; Putin, 2014f, 2014h, 2015b, 2015d, 2015j, 2017).

According to Castells (2010, pp. 8–9) there are three forms of national identity development.

(a) Legitimating identity is an identity introduced by an institution that dominates a society to rationalize and continue its dominance to social actors, such as a state institution that tries to improve the national identity of members of society. The institution has indeed gained legitimacy to do so.

(b) Resistance identity is a process of forming identity by social actors who are in a depressed condition with the existence of domination and stereotypes by other parties so as to form resistance and the emergence of identities that are different from those who dominate, with the aim of group survival or group.

(c) Project identity is an identity in which social actors form a new identity that can determine new positions in society while transforming the structure of society as a whole.

These three models of identity formation seem to have been done by Putin’s government by carrying out a series of activities, which first legitimized their national identity through ritual mechanism and aroused their collective memory on May 9th. Second, he established an identity by categorizing the common enemy of the Russian nation, such as the United States and European Union. Third, by issuing an identity politics policy as a major national project of patriotism education, which in the end will lead to the goal of forming a national identity that allows different individuals and communities to unite in a frame called the state, to then form a sense of togetherness (Merzliakova et al., 2017, pp. 392–403, see also Kasamara & Sorokina, 2015: 137–139; Laruelle, 2015: 8–27; Yasaveev, 2017: 12–14).

The Patriotic revival has become top priority in Russia in recent decades. Patriotism is gradually becoming the leading state ideology, with patriotic education serving as the key mechanism for mobilizing the Russian population to support the political regime. Today, PE (Patriotic Education) is well incorporated into the Russian legislative system and includes federally funded program that motivates state agencies and executive bodies to implement PE in various field, including youth and educational policy, leisure and cultural activities, media outreach, and many others (Khodzhaeva & Meyer, 2017: 2–7 see also Omelchenko et al., 2015, pp. 27–24; Hue’urou, 2015: 28–47; Goode, 2018: 258–275, and Gosudarstvennaila programma (2005–2015).
After Putin’s election for the second term in 2004, patriotism became a key reference point in his presidential speeches. Patriotism started to be understood not primarily as a celebration of past events, but as a guiding principle that Putin started to claim repeatedly that after the collapse of the Soviet Union, an ideological vacuum emerged and with it the danger that it would be filled by extremists and nationalists, or else with Western ideas. To prevent this, Russia must become patriotic again, it has to unify around a strong state and its traditional values. As this consolidation is predicated upon a sense of common history, culture, and traditions, all these have to be fostered and defended from Russia’s enemies (Kratochvíl & Shakanova, 2020; Malinova, 2021). When Putin came back to the presidential office in 2012, he “instructed the government to pay more attention to development of patriotic and military education” (Tsygankov as cited in Kratochvíl & Shakanova, 2020) and “to instill patriotism and other virtues in the Russian youth and general public” (Sharafutdinova as cited in Kratochvíl & Shakanova, 2020). The state authorities have adopted five specific programs on patriotic education for the respective periods of 2001–2005, 2003, 2006–2010, 2011–2015, and 2016–2020. Also, a new draft law titled “On Patriotic Education in the Russian Federation” (Kratochvíl & Shakanova, 2020: 1–11, see also Laruelle, 2009, p. 154).

One of the most visible manifestations of this rehabilitation of Soviet history and military patriotism was Putin’s revival of the use of military vehicles in the Victory Day (9 May) every year. While previous plans emphasised historical celebrations (especially Victory Day) and propaganda, the 2016 plan allocated more than a third of its budget (628.2 million roubles) for “youth military preparation”. Patriotism is defined almost universally as “love for the motherland”, while the motherland, in turn, is principally associated with one’s place of birth, family, culture and history. All vernacular understandings of patriotism in Russia begin with the commonplace definition or patriotism as “love for the motherland” (liubov’ k roditu). This movement towards simplifying the notion of patriotism holds part of the key for understanding its transformation into nationalism (Kucherenko, 2011; Goode, 2018: 258–280).

In Vladimir Putin’s Russia, the state has actively promoted patriotism, often as a tool to gain support for the idea of a strong state and of great power (derzha). Indeed, official patriotic narratives can be seen everywhere in the public sphere: social advertising campaigns to increase the birth rate, promote local food products, and encourage people to join the border guards, vibrant public commemorations at national holiday rallies, and new narratives about Russian and world history in new textbooks. While patriotism is a tool that officials efficiently use to promote their political goals, it is also a symbolic resource that Russian society uses in its attempt to reformulate a new collective identity. The “official” notion of patriotism and subsequent social practices promoted “from above” do not always converge with patriotism “from below” (Hue`uro, 2015, pp. 30–46 see also Liňan, 2009).

Identity politics can flourish in any country, especially in Fascist, Communist, and Democratic countries. The regime leaders exploited historical and clan factors and cultural symbols to mobilize political support for internal, regional and international interests. The presence of identity politics in the plurality of a nation-state must be pursued in order to stay in the framework of unity in diversity for the strength of a strong unitary state (Hue`uro, 2015; Kratochvíl & Shakanova, 2020, pp. 1–11; Nikirov, 2017, pp. 379–391; Repina, 2017, pp. 318–336).

That was what Putin then did, by seeing the parade stage as an arena that could generate collective memory as well as an arena for strengthening Russia’s national identity and youth patriotism. Moreover, basically, identity formation tends to be police political. Cultural identity, as stated by Castells (2010), is not something given, but a continuous process that must be fought for, kept, preserved, maintained, and promoted through various political mechanisms.
3. Conclusion
Nationalism project is seen as a movement that is entirely political and modern, which aims to control the existence of the state, as well as the government regime in power. The importance of nationalism project lies in its ability to offer a common platform for diverse ethnicities or nations through symbolic mobilization, coordination, and legitimacy in a colossal state ritual. However, ritual is not merely a praxis of a religious belief. Rituals can also be driven by a model of social beliefs that are similar to religion and function like religion (pseudo religion). From the above phenomenon, that ritual in the context of pseudo religion is a means or reminder used to repeatedly reverse normative values, while placing a person in the identity of his/her community and in a historical context, as part of people’s collective memory.

The collective memory used to arouse national identity is not only used to fight a regime for amnesia and trauma of an event that has happened, but also used for the sake of arousing the spirit of patriotism and nationalism of a nation, in this case the Russian nation. In order to remember events related to the victory of the Russian nation against German Fascist in World War II, Putin government carries out continuous reconstruction and reproduction of the collective memory of The Patriotic Day in the form of a Parade ritual held every May 9th.

The May 9th Parade ritual comprises various symbolic meanings, including the meaning of giving, blessing, success, history, and togetherness. In addition, the Parade carried out by the Russians shows its function as a means for them to show success and at the same time reflect on identity and be a didactic tool for their new generation. Based on the complex functions and meanings, Putin as the President of Russia is aware to establish, preserve, and demonstrate various functions and meanings in the form of a parade every May 9th in Red Square along with Russian society, in an effort to remind their national identity symbol.

Putin considered it a great achievement of his first and second presidential terms that “Russia has returned to the world stage as a strong state, a country that others heed and that can stand up for itself” (Putin, 2018). This claim was supported by the persistent representation of Putin’s policies in terms of a contrast between strength and weakness. Political memory is always identical with identity politics, and vice versa. Both Putin’s policies have the same goal, namely, to raise the dignity (achievement and prestige) of his people in the eyes of their citizens and in the eyes of their neighbors. Putin as President has political capital to arouse Russian nationalism. Putin’s effort was an action to care for the memory of the success and greatness of the Russian nation. This is what can be said as a form of politicization of collective memory.

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Notes
1. For more clearly can look at the program: Gosudarstvennoia programma (2005), “Patrioticheskoe vospitanie grazhdan Rossisskoi Federatsii na 2006–2010 gady” [State programme ‘Patriotic Education of Citizens of the Russian Federation for 2006–2010], 11 July, (last accessed 8 August 2016) and Gosudarstvennoia programma (2015), “Patrioticheskoe vospitanie grazhdan Rossisskoi Federatsii na 2016–2020 gady” [State programme ‘Patriotic Education of Citizens of the Russian Federation for 2016–2020], 30 December, (last accessed 8 August 2016) cited from Goode in Pål Kolstø (Editor) and Helge Blakksrud (Editor) (2018: 279).
2. In the quantitative research of the Russian Center Institute for Public Opinion Research (VsiOm), in 2004, more than 90% of young Russian respondents said it was positive and important to hold May 9th parade of The Great Patriotic War (Seniovskii & Senievskii, 2017, p. 357; see also Khodzhaeva & Meyer, 2017, pp. 2–4).

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