

Anthropological Dimensions of the Political Culture of Transition Societies

Political Culture versus Political Memory

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Abstract

The authors discuss the significance of anthropological concepts in the analysis of political culture as carried out in both applied and theoretical studies of current political communications transitional political processes. Drawing on a history of methodological and theoretical debates in political science and anthropology, the authors examine methodological issues of studying discourses of political memory as a symbolic representation of socio-cultural specifics of temporal dimensions of a given political culture. They emphasize the importance of describing and theoretically analyzing the role of political myths and symbols present in political memory in transition societies and point out that analysis of political myths as a symbiotic mechanism (or as a source of reproducing and delineating 'political passions') closely connected with symbolic practices of coercion highlights the role of culture in variability of political transition processes. They argue that a focus on political culture as a historically specific form of social memory allows one to examine differences in models of political culture within structures and practices of everyday life. Using an anthropologically oriented political analysis as a theoretical basis, the authors suggest a new theoretical approach to the study of contemporary political communications and argue for a need to develop new strategies of research of political culture in sociology and political science.

Keywords: anthropological dimensions; political culture; political memory; political myth; symbolic representations

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1. Introduction

The disintegration of the USSR political monolith into a varied range of national communities, political ideologies, and new structures of governance has highlighted a necessity to properly theorize anthropological dimensions of political processes. A 'new era' in the world politics due to a disappearance of the USSR dominance radically transformed the geopolitical map of the post-WWII world and gave rise to questionable changes of the very foundations of the political and economic order of things (cf. Gill, 2002; Katsikides & Koktsidis, 2015). These transformations within post-Soviet European space radically changed the rules of political games, introduced novel concepts of political solidarity and integration and gave rise to new modes of symbolic representation. The fall of socialist regimes in Eastern Europe and in the USSR not only brought down 'Communist Gods' and replaced them with liberal-democratic ideology, but also introduced ongoing conflicts within identity politics and ushered in games of 'politics of memory' within their socio-political terrains (cf. Mink & Neumayer, 2013).

Ideological priorities of intellectual and power elites certainly played a role in the course of this transformation, but it is symbolic structures and patterns of political memory within the larger society in the former Soviet state that have determined and directed the course of evolution of emergent transition societies. As both the actual politics as well as political philosophy are grounded in fundamental anthropological concepts, i.e. those basic ideas about human beings and their place in the world, a science of 'new sensuality' (or esteziology, to borrow Filippov's concept) as a counterpart to the study of a 'rational citizen' will hold the key to understanding political processes. As Filippov puts it, 'the one who owns a vocabulary of a new sensuality will own the vocabulary of <public> mobilization' (Filippov, 2008, pp. 127–128, 140).

Despite a significant rise in the number of studies of political-cultural phenomena and an increase in individual methodologies in the field of political transitology, this field currently lacks a unifying political epistemology that could consolidate positivist analysis of political-cultural variables and processes of construction and structuring of political symbols, meanings, and representations. Based on this, the authors would like to posit the following questions central to further development of this field: What common epistemological foundations should political scientists and anthropologists consider in their studies of political-cultural processes? What are the cultural specifics of structures and symbols in political processes that shape contemporary political cultures? What role does political mythology play in transitory processes? What analytical benefits do studies of political memory and symbols have for studies of transitory processes within post-Socialist spaces and beyond? The authors are convinced that a deep understanding of contemporary political communicative practices is impossible without detailed answers to these questions. A continuous replication of studies of political behavior and constant introduction of new variables and concepts without a search for a unifying epistemological frameworks of research and understanding of symbolic practices can give rise to non-productive 'conflict of interpretation' and theoretical reductionism that demotes analyses of contemporary political processes to descriptions of manipulative techniques of elites' ideological control over

political behavior and prohibits understanding of qualitatively novel aspects of politics in contemporary societies.

2. Challenges of interdisciplinary communication in studies of political culture in political science and anthropology

Most theoretical models of a political culture currently dominant in political science are not sensitive to politico-cultural specifics of symbolic forms and structures of new political communities. In the majority of the contemporary research on political-cultural transformations during post-communist transitions, ideological clichés of uniformity in understanding and accepting such basic political values as freedom, equality, human rights, and social justice are prevalent despite the stated goals of multidisciplinary and complex understanding of these phenomena (Pridham, 2005). Assessment of political events and specifics of national preferences within a hierarchy of these values might vary, but, theorists contend, peoples of these countries unequivocally support democratic ideas and principles. The value-normative order of democracy and its politico-cultural dimensions are considered as given, unavoidable realities (Gill, Fish, & Petrovic, 2017; Whitefield, 2005). That is why the authors contend that such a strategy of research requires a deeper understanding of political-cultural dimensions that integrate analysis of inner mechanics of values through an understanding of how practices of political memory develop at different levels of political structures.

A necessity to closely examine anthropological dimensions of political cultures arises due to emerging forms of communications and identification in a contemporary world that no longer fit traditional models of political association and political legitimation accepted within a paradigm of the classical political science. Today, social identities multiply, diverge and intermix due to new political codes, network structures, technological and geopolitical transformations, thereby requiring creation of new approaches to theorizing and describing political realities.

Even early, fairly incomplete and fragmentary attempts to shift theoretical models and to broaden our understanding of political processes to include a larger context of political cultures require 'anthropologization' of political knowledge, i.e., a shift of one's attention towards revealing variable symbolic structures (a kind of 'political genome') that can explain co-existence of 'the past' in 'the present' and in 'the future' that is typical of emerging national communities. In addition to purely theoretical significance, this shift in political analysis can have applied implications. To a large extent, the success or failure of reform policies under conditions of radical socio-political transformations depend not only on a commitment of new elites to values of democracy but also on peculiarities of appealing to symbolic sensuality, or of capitalizing on a symbolic potential of everyday life typical of a given political space. While a contemporary society might seem completely rational and void of an emotional component in its political life, all political processes exploit a nexus of rationalization and feelings (Melucci, 2003, p. 71).

A simple commitment to or a rejection of democracy by elites and participants of political processes in transition societies cannot explain a range of variation in practices and

conflicts of emerging political orders, and, what is most important, do not answer the question of how values and norms are employed in particular circumstances (Panov, 2011, pp. 24–25). If people do not recognize ideological innovations as ‘familiar’ (or ‘palpable’) collective symbols, then substantiations of the future (‘how it will be’) lose a connection with the past (‘why so’) and are no longer able to adequately mobilize populations to support or oppose political decisions of elites.

Interpretations of cultural dimensions of political reality have revealed a conceptual similarity of analysis in political science and political anthropology. For example, concepts of national symbols and memory play a role in interdisciplinary research projects on political culture, political legitimacy, transitional states of political processes and their influence on institutional dynamics (cf. Aronoff & Kubik, 2013; Ballinger, 2006, pp. 341–359). Constructivist models of the ‘symbolic power’ and ‘symbolic politics’ in political anthropology highlight the conceptual interconnectedness of the present-day politico-cultural and politico-anthropological studies. Yet, a problem of interdisciplinary dialogue and cooperation remains acute and could potentially lead to an identification of new anthropological parameters for more complex explanations of contradictions in establishing democratic regimes in transition societies.

Realization of this research agenda evident in investigations of anthropological dimensions of emergent regimes’ politico-cultural designs remains problematic due to a range of methodological issues. One needs to fully investigate potential for convergence of methodology of research in political science and political anthropology when studying symbolic power and its contents. At the same time, it is also important to outline limitations to this interdisciplinary dialogue and to identify specific theoretical and methodological models that could offer a more efficient convergence of the two disciplines. In this paper, we examine foundations for theoretical and methodological connections between political science and cultural anthropology in the investigation of political culture.

In the current age of global information exchange, configurations of symbolic power in a given polity can be attributed to activities of power elites and multiple network communities who manage and control other groups’ access to the public debate. Elites and dominant communities employ their power to design, control and maintain discursive structures of social domination over the public consciousness thereby controlling the socially significant behavior of the masses (van Dijk, 2010, p. 32). Thus, research of symbolic power is obliged to give answers to the following questions: who controls the public discourse in all of its multiple semiotic manifestations and how; who gets excluded from the process of public representations at the various levels of social interactions and by what means (van Dijk, 2010, p. 14)?

Theoretical investigations of ideal components in contemporary politics have been progressively drifting towards investigations of symbols in politics. Despite the nuances of analytical differences, many researchers concur that the study of symbolic politics requires an investigation ‘of the ways of interpretations of social reality and struggle for their dominance as well as the ways of symbolic representation and legitimation of the multiple practices of political domination’ (Malinova, 2012, p. 10; Potseluyev, 2012). Interdisciplinary semiotic theories serve as a foundation for theoretical and methodological constructions in investigations of symbolic politics while ‘history and culture’ appear to be the major dimensions of producing symbolic dominance (van Dijk, 2010, pp. 16–17).

The range of theories of political symbolic constructions is fairly diverse in contemporary political science and political anthropology. Thus, it is important to identify promising approaches towards an examination of political and cultural dynamics and the potential for interdisciplinary collaboration on the basis of convergent, 'hybrid' approaches. Such theoretical-methodological 'convergence' of anthropology and political science could be realized in a shared subject area of an investigation of symbolic and theoretical interpretations of basic concepts, thereby 'building bridges' (for example, Aronoff & Kubik, 2013) between political science and political anthropology as sub-disciplines within varied frameworks of the study of politics in social sciences.

3. The study of political symbols in political science and political anthropology

While some investigations of the symbolic dimensions of political processes in political science and cultural anthropology encountered a number of common theoretical challenges, they did maintain their theoretical and methodological autonomy. Attempts to expand and deepen the empirical and theoretical base of political science and cultural anthropology with the help of sophisticated scientific analyses of the symbolic dimensions of social communication can be traced to the early days of subject development in contemporary political science. For instance, H. Lasswell emphasized that it is necessary to overcome a tendency among political scientists to 'homogenize' the subject area of political science because political science is 'a living discipline' reflective of actual political behavior in all its contradictory and varied manifestations. A diversity of patterns of state governance at various levels is predicated on a wide range of cultural phenomena that have a profound, even if at times indirect or ambiguous, impact upon institutionalized events (Lasswell, 1951, pp. 310–325). Lasswell's remarks regarding Charles Merriam's ideas about the interconnectedness of 'crendenda' politics (i.e. what one is supposed to believe), the politics of official/formal and doctrinal substantiation of an existing institutional order (i.e., decisions made by politicians), and 'Miranda' politics (i.e. what one ought to identify with) are anthropological in their essence. Thus, he argued for the necessity to properly theorize an emotional perception of politics where political myths, rituals, and patterns of heroic sacrifice play a significant role (Lasswell, 1971, pp. 91–92). The intellectual influence of H. Lasswell's theoretical premises on further research problems of symbolic politics in political science is traceable in the works of M. Edelman, who developed these ideas when studying the symbolic influence of political elites (Edelman, 1977).

Anthropologist Leslie White held an even more radical position regarding the significance of symbolic studies when he repeatedly argued for the need to develop a 'supra-psychological' approach necessary to overcome the subjectivism of psychological and psychoanalytical interpretations of symbolic politics and the abstract objectivism of sociological analysis of cultural processes. As L. White discussed, it is important to 'open culture' as a 'new field of scientific research' by creating a peculiar, 'supra-psychological' science about political behavior, i.e., cultural studies. White perceived culture as a continuum, as a stream

of events freely flowing through time from one generation to another, from one domain of existence to another, thereby emerging as a process of selective ordering of events in compliance with a 'time'-principle and predicated upon the human capacity to use symbols. In his interpretation, human behavior is first and foremost a symbolic behavior, and if it is not symbolic it is not human because all civilizations at all times emerged and vanished in the process of creating and destroying symbols. A social event is always an event of culture because it is concurrent with the production of symbols. At the same time, he argued, 'determinants of culture' should be looked at from within the culture itself since, from the point of view of a scientific analysis, its interpretations can be treated as *sui generis*, and that is why a culture needs to be explained only by means of its own elements and on its own terms. According to White, the scientific basis for an investigation of culture can be found at the intersection of the study of biological foundations of human activities and their cultural manifestations (White, 2004, pp. 11–31).

On the basis of these methodological premises, as it will be shown below, theorists had foreseen present day anthropologically oriented approaches towards the analysis of a political culture in its relation to institutional and organizational structures. At the same time, articulated over sixty years ago, White and Lasswell's heuristic intentions on complex interdisciplinary studies of symbolic structures of political culture are still very far from laying a foundation for an integrated, complex strategy of cultural measurements of the effectiveness of political communications.

At first glance, an interconnection of the contemporary research in political anthropology and political science seems to be quite natural. From the start, political anthropology as a scientific discipline has used ethnographic methodology to understand the emergence and evolution of practices of political domination and state institutions (data collection during field studies, modelling of local ethnographic conditions and their description) and extended conceptual and methodological instruments towards an investigation of political phenomena not only in social and cultural anthropology, ethnology and history but in sociology and political science as well. At present, there is a relative agreement among Western and Russian representatives of political anthropology regarding a general orientation of anthropological studies towards an investigation of the genesis and current functioning of power institutions in polestar societies. At the same time, they are also aiming to study transformations of traditional political institutions in processes of political modernization and globalization (cf. Kradin, 2011; Kurtz, 2001; Lewellen, 2002; Tishkov, 2001). The titles of M. Fortes and E. Evans-Pritchard's early works, which institutionalized political anthropology as a relatively independent and autonomous branch of social studies in the 1940s, are symptomatic of this research agenda. 'African Political Systems', an academic anthology edited by M. Fortes, and 'Political System of the Anuak of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan' by E. Evans-Pritchard highlight the role of systematic investigation of political structures by means of ethnographic analysis. These researchers positioned themselves as representatives of empirical, scientific knowledge of political processes and aimed to analyze specific institutional practices. As they eloquently state in the introduction to the academic anthology 'African Political Systems', both Evans-Pritchard and Fortes were skeptical of the scientific significance of political philosophy for political anthropology, which, in their opinion, in contrast to comparative political science, cannot help in understanding the societies they

studied because its conclusions are not proved by empirical anthropological observation of the people's behavior (Fortes & Evans-Pritchard, pp. 4–5).

In the second half of the 20th century, under the influence of structuralist and constructivist theories, political anthropology expanded its subject area to include the study of symbolic structures of transit societies and political cultures emerging in their process of modernization and under the influence of globalization. For example, research on the symbiosis between traditional and modernized political cultures gave rise to investigations of a phenomenon of neopatrimonialism. In a context of globalization that gave rise to new network institutions and practices, politico-anthropological studies combined comparative analysis of the impact of culture on political institutions at a local level with research on basic ontologies and day-to-day subconscious representations of power hierarchies. Thus, the study of diverse practices of political life and analysis of the impact of symbolic representations on authoritative decisions in a given polity become an obvious point of convergence of research agendas and strategies of contemporary political anthropology and political science.

The history of the interrelationships of political science and anthropological studies reveal vast differences in interpretations of meaning and contents of politico-cultural phenomena. Committed to more traditional research strategies of political culture and political values and inclined to behavioralism and rational choice theory, political scientists criticize anthropologists for ignoring deep political scientific theory. Sociologists and political scientists sarcastically remark that anthropologists have expanded the concept of 'culture' to such an extent that in order to make it useful again one needs to get rid of it altogether or to subject it to the most brutal anthropological scrutiny (which it would ultimately destroy it altogether). At the same time, rationalist schemes of politico-cultural evolution and political communication popular in classical political science frequently fail the test of empirical validity offered in fieldwork-based research of political anthropologists. Thus, anthropologists succeeded in broadening the widely accepted notion of a singular 'political culture' and challenged the universal uniformity of political values hierarchy. Social anthropologists were correct in their assessments that wide-spread use of formalized formulas for depicting political processes in traditional societies turns political analysis into 'somewhat equivalent of the written constitution, free from anything superfluous, not taking into account the conflicts and not giving a serious assessment of the balance of forces. Interpretations, in this case, may inevitably appear to be incorrect' (Douglas, 2000, p. 168). Contemporary political anthropology or – as it is positioned by some anthropologists in relation to the traditional problematics of political anthropology, the anthropology of politics – plays a significant role in studies of new institutionalism based on the theoretical premise, shared by many political anthropologists, that domination arises from symbolic practices of violence control.

The study of symbolic structures in political science and its compatibility with scientific strategies of research on political culture in political anthropology look, in our mind, fairly complicated. To a large extent, it is related to differences in the interpretation of meaning and contents of political culture. 'Methodological autonomy' in the studies of political culture in political science frequently gives rise to profound 'conflicts of interpretations' in political science and the actual 'cultural', anthropologically-oriented research works. Also, at the time of political science's methodological expansion of the theory of rational choice,

oriented on modeling politics as a process of rational political activities, the concept of political culture appeared to be superfluous to explanations of sociocultural evolution.

Loss of interest in the concept of culture in political science in the 1960s was due to changes in methodological approaches to the study of politics. G. Almond, who elaborated a methodological basis for scientific investigation of the empirics of political culture as a set of clearly defined socio-psychological orientations, moved political science beyond the framework of philosophical essentialism. While he was able to operationalize a concept of 'political culture', he did so by transforming it into a 'set of variables' that aims to reveal the specifics of a given political system.

Strategies for studying political culture based on such a theoretical approach, which appeared to be dominated by positivist attitudes and value-based ideological clichés, emerged in the 1960s, but they are also present in a latent form in contemporary empirical political science. Contemporary studies of politics in transitional societies perfectly illustrate this proposition, as processes within these societies are mostly discussed as dependent on socio-economic dynamics. Political-cultural variables, such as the distribution of democratic values, that are measured through degree of (or abstinence from) participation in democratic institutions are considered secondary tier variables and lack self-explanatory power (Pridham, 2005; Rohrschneider & Whitefield, 2006; Whitefield, 2005).

To be fair to his legacy, it is important to keep in mind that Almond did not completely dismiss the possibility of creating a theory of political culture on the basis of 'external variables' (Almond, 1989, p. 26). Another problem that emerged from this line of research is more methodological. One needs to find a way to link 'dependent variables' and value preferences with the larger context of political meaning and symbols that can never be fully reduced to quantitative categories or value attitudes on an institutional system or political organization.

A further critique of empiricist universalizing research in political science pointed to fallacies in explaining cultural dynamics through pre-givens or universal value systems that determine human behavior, prevalent in behavioralism and the theory of rational choice. Thus, political science had to nominally acknowledge the significance of cultural symbolization as a basis for rational action in a given polity (Greenfeld & Malczewski, 2010, p. 411). The authors of this article find convincing the position of one British political scientist (see Welch, 2013) who identifies two major approaches within the field of political science – a positivist and a constructivist interpretation of political phenomena. The two paradigms are predicated on the basis of 'ontological duality' in understanding the interplay of culture and politics that manifests itself either as a positivist or an interpretive search for models of explanation. The first model is based on empirical measures and aims to distinguish between causes and consequences of phenomena. The second model is predicted on the autonomy of cultural symbols and their roles in shaping political processes.

There are attempts to overcome epistemological deficiencies of such strict 'ontological duality' in contemporary anthropologically-oriented cultural sociology. J. C. Alexander, a leading scholar in the field of cultural sociology and a specialist on civil society and civic participation, played a significant role in this regard. Alexander underlines that a majority of the models in the traditional sociology of culture have fundamental flaws due to the fact that culture is not considered to be an independent variable but is a derivative of other variables of social structures (Alexander, 2003, pp. 11–26). This tendency is most apparent

in contemporary studies of ‘discursive constructions of identity’ (Mole, 2007) that examine ‘Europe’ as a product of variable spatial and temporal discourses of representation specific to national and ethnic communities.

Changes in theoretical and methodological studies of historical evolutions of political institutions lead to the proposition that culture is significant not only as a derivative of institutional establishments but as an autonomous social structure that makes an impact on the symbolic design of power in various forms and at different levels (Dean, 2008; Tompson, Verweij, & Ellis, 2006, pp. 319–340). Political culture, in this case, is interpreted as a social stock of knowledge and symbols and a process of cultural legitimation of structuring and ordering of the system of symbols thereby substantiating the identity and solidarity of communities. Thus, political science and political anthropology finally converge in their methodological and theoretical evaluation of culture as a formative concept (rather than a dependent variable) of the political. Further convergence of research strategies of political anthropology and political science is possible, in our opinion, by means of actualizing the studies of political memory and of the contemporary political myth. In this subject area, research interests of political science and political anthropology overlap in the most clear-cut way. Thus, scientific anthropologization of political science and its consequent penetration into the subject matter of political anthropology, as well as a comparative analysis of political processes in ethnographic and ethnologic studies, become not only possible but real and urgent. A political myth is a phenomenon where cultural symbolization and the bio-sociological level of human existence intersect and where political anthropology and political science can meet and enhance each other’s investigation of social life.

4. Mythical dimensions of a political culture

Influence of political symbolization on everyday political behavior depends on the effectiveness of communicative structures of political memory that manifest a dynamic interplay of symbolic schemes of popular retrospection and anticipation of future political events. A myth narrative in a society semantically catalyzes diverse political discourses of everyday life when legitimation and de-legitimation of political domination are carried out along with symbol expressions of a body-sensuous perception of heroism and sacrifice. Identifying the potential for symbols’ impact clarifies the influence of a political myth on the social construction of political identities and makes this analysis far more substantive.

Despite a wide range of variation in contemporary sociological interpretations of a political myth-making, a theoretical paradigm of a myth as a set of shared collective sub-conscious categories (archetypes, stereotypes, mentalities, etc.) that are inherited from the past and play a role in the present continues to remain dominant. Studies that link difficulties in the transition to democracy among post-Soviet states with an influence of mytho-ideological constructs are telling in this regard (Bassin & Pozo, 2017; Simons & Westerlund, 2015). However, despite certain constructive contributions, studies of mythological components in transitional societies are limited at best. Thus, the German anthropologist Jan Assmann, while considering the origins of an alliance between power and memory, has

warned against a simplified juxtaposition of a 'fictitious' myth and a 'real' history and suggested instead to analyze their symbiosis and interpenetration. Assmann raised concerns about the fact that a myth emerges as 'a substantiation of representations of oneself' by means of 'semiotyzing cosmos' that took place in 'cold societies' that existed in the 'absolute' past and kept an equal distance from the present. However, the myth continues its social existence in the 'hot', 'state-based' societies where the past is constantly interiorized by the present. By so doing, the political myth carries out its functions of 'substantiating historical past' by 'semiotyzing history' (Assmann J., 2004, pp. 80–85). However, one needs to ask, what are the politico-anthropological foundations of such semiotyzing?

In anthropological studies of myths, there is a greater emphasis on people's necessity to constantly reason their life experiences in sensually symbolic ways. Therefore, dynamics of the social practices of political mythologization is in a considerable measure predetermined by the specifics of the evolution of 'political corporeality', i.e., an emotional-sensuous perception of politics and its symbolization in political communication is an integral dimension and a semantic catalyzer of political communication in any society. This hypothesis substantiates a replacement of fairly abstract and arbitrary instances of 'symbolic workings' of a political myth with an analysis of morphology and dynamics of specific historical 'symbolic figures' of a political myth.

In our opinion, to further deepen an examination of political symbolization within both political science and political anthropology, the ideas of Niklas Luhmann that extend far beyond a subjectivist model of social communications are of particular interest. Luhmann's reflections on symbolic foundations of power are not directly focused on an analysis of the political myth. However, his theoretical work addresses issues of the structuring of social memory and mechanisms of social identification. In his studies on processes of social and political identification, he argues that emergence and symbolization of social identities ('the pulling up of meaning') is driven by a communal capacity to inhibit and expel unsuitable expectations (Luhmann, 2007a, p. 413).

This communal capacity is predicated on a mechanism of creating specific symbols that influence expectations of participants of communication by means of symbolizing experiences of their corporeal existence. Luhmann assumes that such symbolization gives rise to particular signs since sociocultural evolution 'does not exclude the matter' but leads to more diverse symbolic combinations (symbiosis) of corporeality and functionally specific communication (Luhmann, 2007a, pp. 329–333). Thus, in his terms, symbiotic symbols emerge due to a necessity to 'take into account corporeality' in the process of communicative interactions. Symbols emerge as a means of manifesting such a connection (symbiosis), facilitating the 'corporeal provision' of a communicative process (Luhmann, 2005a, p. 205). In contemporary secular society, the significance and autonomy of such symbols increase because they stop being 'witnesses of meanness' and no longer refer to divine or universal principles when representing social identities. It is not difficult to notice that Luhmann's considerations align well with Assmann's anthropological reflections regarding the transfer of 'semiotyzing cosmos' to a specific 'semiotyzing history'.

Luhmann's position on symbiotic symbols of power is of particular interest for anthropologically oriented political science. As in the case of symbiotic symbols of other social communication, symbiotic symbols of power impose a ban on self-satisfaction of bodily

requirements. An 'inhibiting' function of power communication is manifested in symbolic restrictions on the use of physical violence, given that a justification of its employment rests on the practice of carrying out political decisions, and it reminds one about the risks of using physical coercion by participants of political communication (Luhmann, 2005a, pp. 220–224).

Public power comes from a multiplicity of sources – state authority, law, social morality or privileges. Yet, it is the symbolic significance of physical violence and the very possibility of its use that remain constant and that serve as a foundation of power. That is why the use of power is a constant reflection of the use or avoidance of violent means of power, of the balance between displaying force or avoiding employment of sanctions. This is a fundamental problem of power communications: there is a necessity to communicate a threat without appearing threatening; there is a necessity to break an impasse with a 'hint' of symbolic structures and conditions without making a firm commitment as to what is going to be done if an order is not fulfilled (Luhmann, 2005a, p. 229). Control over the use of physical violence requires a symbolic representation of possible violence through references to political events of the past, of the present and of the future. At the same time, in our mind, Lehmann's position on an inhibiting function of a symbiotic symbolization might not hold as strong ground because control over communications is ambivalent and may incite the use of physical violence and further legitimize it. During periods of political and social transformations, a necessity to create a system of such symbols increases as evident from an enduring interest of post-Soviet political scientists and politicians in the social engineering of heroic symbols.

Luhmann's remarks on the role of symbiotic symbols of power in structuring political communications open up the possibility for a more flexible interpretation of the role of a political myth in the present. It expands a semantic saturation and an extent of variability of communicative capacities of a political myth that penetrates day-to-day reality with the help of contemporary media technology and is incorporated into the vocabulary of a 'new sensuality'. In addition, as a number of researchers have rightly emphasized, the significance of political mythology as a symbolic catalyzer of power communications under conditions of a growing diversity of social discourses is increasing. Mythologization of the day-to-day reality is an indisputable part of contemporary political communications due to a proliferation of media-technologies and biopolitics that substantially extend the possibility of actualizing the mythical, thereby making its impact 'more ominous' than in the past (for example, Bottici, 2007, pp. 243–248, 358).

As myths stimulate a corporeal perception and understanding of the social world as a 'world of things' that could be pragmatically used in the given circumstances from the point of view of their significance, their role in the social change of current forms of social reality increases. Such a pragmatic resonance in expectations stimulates 'politicization' of the practical experience of existence in political communities. A political myth symbolically transforms regular day-to-day expectations into expectations of a 'specific group' that acquires its 'heroes' who act as its 'representatives' and symbolize its political destiny (Tudor, 1972, pp. 130, 139). Eventually, this symbolic political community turns into a political actor, a creator of political events, who further politicizes other groups that used to be non-political in their social activity (Tudor, 1972, pp. 138–139).

An experience of 'body' impressions in the past and in the present plays a significant role in the emergence of a practical 'political imagination', which arouses collective passionarity, i.e., a striving for joint activities and preparedness for self-sacrifice in order to realize a group's right to such an activity. That is why a political myth should be treated not only as an indicator of mass political energy but, first and foremost, as a process of social engineering of political identities.

The political myth is not based on stereotypical representations of collective interactions but serves as a symbol of a collective will to carry out social actions. It is a manifestation of the social significance of the everyday activities of a people. That is what predetermines the efficacy and relevance of the political myth and ensures the variability of its symbolic configurations. The political myth's narrative is pragmatic and anthropomorphic. Therefore, practices of mythical symbolization are often 'heroic' and 'sacrificial'. Mythological and rationalist discourses of the political take place in a complex semantic symbiosis. The myth is a 'lens' that amplifies political meanings, which are integrated into all social discourses and practices. As K. Bottici pointed out, the specifics of a political myth are determined not by its claim to the truth but by its capacity to articulate the significance of people's practical political experiences (Bottici, 2007, pp. 14, 216). The narrative character of myth manifests itself in substantiating an emotional component-part of political existence.

While assessing 'progressive' or 'conservative' influence of political myths on political dynamics of contemporary society, one must determine their capacity to adapt to changing circumstances and examine the potential of a mythical narrative to evolve. K. Bottici, while comparing the complex coexistence of contemporary political myths with other kinds of social discourses, suggested a classification of possible types of political myths based on the relative congruence of their rational contents to the requirements of current social pragmatics (Bottici, 2007, pp. 259–260). Thus, she offers the following theoretical classification of contemporary political myths: 'a religious political myth', 'a scientific political myth', and 'a historic political myth' (Bottici, 2007, pp. 259–260). The study of the specifics of politico-mythical symbolic presentations and representations in the context of their body-sensuous, emotional pragmatics inevitably articulates a problem of political memory as a semantic sphere where various political myths coexist and evolve.

Much of political and sociological research on the processes of post-Soviet political transition focus on mythologized discourses of traumatic events of World War II and of the USSR authoritarian domination. Meanwhile, processes of ethnicization and religious sacralization of violence are de-historicized and are presented as an absolute of a mythological or teleological process of democratization. Such semantic practices are used to construct violent events of the 'recent' and 'distant' past (traumatic periods in ethnogenesis, genocidal acts, forced assimilation, revolutionary upheavals, and civil wars). As A. Miller, a Russian researcher in the field of memory politics, notes, a major difference between politics of memory in Europe and in contemporary Russia is that unlike much of Central and Eastern Europe, Russia does not create its identity on the basis of victimhood. Instead, it capitalizes on images of a victimized 'besieged fortress' (Miller, 2016).

Symbolic constructions of political expectations of community members could have mixed consequences. As practices of European integration illustrate, such symbolic engi-

neering could result not only in solidifying positive civil solidarity and common identification, but also lead to social degradation and a reduction of political practices. Thus, destruction of Soviet institutional foundations and standards of social life at the end of the 1980s within the Post-Soviet space gave rise to a number of simulacra of a 'common past' that did not encompass visions of a 'common future' (Gill, 2002, p. 203). A radical reversal of basic symbolic tropes of political memory (semantic schemata of 'criminality' and 'victimhood', 'heroes' and 'enemies') in creating a foundation of new symbolic structures of national memory could lead to an accumulation of potential for political aggression and have a destructive impact on society. If we were to borrow a concept from computer science, one could say that in relatively autonomous and ethnically heterogeneous political spaces, such temporalization of ethnicity and nationality destroys the common 'interface'. In this case, scripts of political memory become corrupt and incompatible, and impact the general usability of the motherboard.

5. Symbolic forms of political memory as a basis of a political culture

Anthropological studies of political processes analyze symbolic structures and by so doing articulate meaningful formulas, codes, and programs that serve as a 'memory' of political communication. This kind of memory is needed when 'history repeats itself' and ensures a prolongation of a communicative process. This social memory reveals itself in the presence of 'some certainly known presumptions about the reality that are not required to be articulated or justified' (for example, Luhmann, 2005b, p. 104; Luhmann, 2007b, p. 110). Alternatively, remembering accounts for an additional investment of time and stimulates 'dissolution', a selective blocking and confirmation of decisions (Luhmann, 2007a, pp. 79–85). In order to motivate community members to act, 'presumptions' of political memory enforce certain common generalizations. Thus, 'memory' is not so much about preserving past identities as it is about accumulating knowledge from the past for its use in the future; it is a process of collective comprehension of the new by re-actualizing the past and the possible future that, in their turn, symbolically structure expectations within a specific social and time horizon.

A periodically emerging interest in concepts of 'social memory', 'cultural memory', 'political memory', and 'politics of memory' in the contemporary interdisciplinary socio-cultural studies is congruent with this theoretical take on the role of memory. The notion of 'social memory' might be used as a metaphor for characterizing a range of cultural-historical factors of social interactions; alternatively, it could also be considered as a specific method of studying 'social frameworks' of such interactions or a claim to a new categorical instrumentation of the study of contemporary communicative practices in sociological and historical theory. Yet, we are compelled to agree with Dijk that despite the fact that the general structure of social memory is relatively obscure, it is possible to study it as a process of social engineering based on 'knowledge, positions, ideologies, norms, and cognitive models' (van Dijk, 2013, pp. 208, 215).

A relatively abstract mental structure that Dijk refers to as 'memor' determines cognitive processes and representations. He differentiates between a 'short-term' and 'long-term memory'. Long-term memory can be episodic and semantic (social) memories (van Dijk, 2013, pp. 197–200). Information in social memory is organized around mental representations (mental structures). In the course of the interplay between these structures, subjects create models of events and actions (event models) thereby determining the meaning of discourses and providing a connection and synchronization of short-term (personal) and social memories. However, these theoretical hypotheses need to be refined when analyzing structures of social memory; this is because Dijk utilizes a conceptual apparatus of psychology that describes behavior as a result of subjective-axiological representations ('subjective characteristics of political cognition') determined in a cultural context on the basis of social communication and interactions. In our opinion, this position is reductionist because it describes structures of social and political memory as variables dependent on space characteristics or on subjective experiences of carrying out political decisions.

Studies of social constructions of common European identity focus on problems of tolerance and acceptance of political memories in countries of the 'old' and 'new' democracies. They highlight a search for common denominators and 'foundational events' in the creation of a 'pan-European' historical narrative (Bonnard & Jouhanneau, 2017; Mälksoo, 2009; Mink & Neumayer, 2013). However, such studies mostly focus on the instrumental use of historical memory and memory politics and therefore overlook a number of lacunas in theoretical and methodological questions. Thus, these studies almost exclusively focus on processes of overcoming the 'communist' past, struggles with 'nostalgia' for the Soviet era and highlight the differences between the European and Russian geopolitical discourses. Yet, while these studies are empirically rich and offer an abundance of valuable analytical material, they are unable to offer satisfactory answers to a number of other important questions. For instance, despite the disintegration of the Socialist bloc and success of Euro-Atlantic integration, why does the traumatic experience of World War II continue to remain conceptually important and give rise to conflicts, thereby defying prescriptions of rational models of democratization? How could one overcome an asymmetry in political memories within the European space but also between Europe and Russia? Such questions imply a need to continue searching for methodological complementarity in studies of political memory.

The theoretic comments of anthropologist J. Assmann, one of the authoritative researchers in a field of communicative structures of 'cultural memory', seem far more productive. Social or cultural memory, in J. Assmann's interpretation, is a system of ideas and meanings objectified in symbolic forms (Assmann J., 2010, pp. 16, 64, 71, 82). As Assmann states, 'recollection is first of all a semiotization and symbolization. Temporal frameworks of social memory are treated in this epistemology as a basic symbolic parameter of cultural communications. Elsewhere he argues: 'synthesis of time and identity is carried out by means of memory' (Assmann J., 2010, p. 109).

Traditionally, a study of social and particularly political memory is carried out through an analysis of political myths as important components of its semantic contents. While defending the necessity to develop a methodology of studying political myths as a semantic nucleus of the cultural memory, J. Assmann emphasized that the notion of memory, due to its semantics, opens up new dimensions in the studies of the very foundations of socio-cultural

communications. J. Assmann assumed that memory is a metonymy, which, due to its semantics, initially private in its relation to culture, enriches meaningful contents of the concept of culture (Assmann J., 2010, pp. 109–111). The concept of memory can help a researcher build a chain of new taxonomies that substantially extends possibilities for analyzing ideal processes in politics. Thus, a study of symbolic practices of political myth-making through an analysis of space-temporal structures of political memory that determine the dynamics and directionality of symbols in a given political reality seems promising. In this case, time is interpreted as a specific cultural ‘dimension of the meaning’ of events in a given political communication when symbols serve as an ‘archived’ presentation of a multiplicity of such events. The study of temporal regimes of political memory opens up possibilities for understanding the choice of semantics and contents of political myths in a representation of the heroic ‘past’, ‘present’ or ‘future’. Thus, Aleida Assmann introduces a notion of the ‘temporal regime of culture’ designating ‘temporal organization and orientation enrooted in culture’ as a basis for emergence of cognitive schemes of collective interactions (Assmann A., 2012).

Sociological models of qualitative analysis of political myths’ symbolic ‘pragmatics’ have been thoroughly developed. When applied to particular cases of ‘memory work’, these models offer ways of studying processes of ‘figuration’ of memory as changing relationships in symbolic representations between the past and the present and offer an insight into the multifaceted nature of political memory. Such figurations are described on the basis of an empirical analysis of the symbolic struggle of ‘memories’ and ‘in the name of memory’ in the social strata, of the means of memory transfer, of genres and profiles of social memory for substantiating the past (‘why it was so’) and the future (‘how it will be’) (for example, Olick, 2010, pp. 158–159). A classification and an analysis of mnemonic practices’ functions and a description of their roles in symbolic politics are an important step in this research agenda.

Analysis of political myths as a basic mnemonic practice of political memory is also possible within a framework of research on ‘cultural pragmatics’ that aims to study various forms of ‘social performance’ and ‘dramas of power’. As Alexander points out, even the most democratic countries and individualized societies need mythological practices in order to maintain collective representations. Social performance is a multi-layered process of symbolic engineering and reproduction of social power; it creates sacred objects and multiple symbolic modes of communication (Alexander, 2006, pp. 29–89). By creating everyday practices of political domination through use of symbiotic symbols of power, political memory plays an important role in contemporary symbolic politics as a foundation for social construction of national identity and the ability to forecast transitional processes.

6. Conclusion

On the basis of epistemological explications of anthropological analysis of the specifics of cultural and political processes in political transitions in post-Soviet states, the authors would like to offer several theoretical and methodological conclusions regarding the role of discourses on *political memory* and *politics of memory* themselves.

Methodological explications of a conceptual anthropologization of the political culture of transition societies explain why most models of political behavior rely on a theoretically narrow understanding of political culture. Within the framework of traditional political science, a concept of political culture examines the dynamics of the ideal in political communications (i.e., political 'values', 'ideals', 'norms') from the point of view of a 'rational citizen'. Even when referring to historical evolution of political structures, those models use the semantics of spatial dimensions of political culture to describe dependent variables and value-based political preferences. Theoretical modeling of the ideal in political communications with the help of conceptual anthropologization of political culture enables us to answer questions of 'how' and 'by what means' the ideal attains a culturally and historically specific meaning in the course of political and social transformations. Politico-anthropological studies of political and cultural processes become a missing link in the studies of political culture and dramaturgy of sensory-corporeal symbolic existence of a homo politicus.

Given the multiplicity and qualitative diversity of the actors involved in political and social symbolic engineering, value-based substantiations of actions are realized through ideology and public rhetoric where ideology frequently 'commits great crimes and argumentation is implicated in minor deception' (Luhmann, 2005a, p. 178). Such a theoretical foundation is key in an adequate description of the specificity of post-Socialist transition when practices of the symbolic construction of national identity are reduced to ideological representations of individual practices of 'victimhood' as universal. Scientific studies of the political culture of transition societies should not be implicated in a search for 'value-based foundations' of democratic process or for declaring a value consensus as an essential condition of democracy but should identify processes of 'setting up the time' in symbolic engineering of the political reality and to delineate temporal horizons for those who 'trigger a particular action, put forward an idea or a self-presentation and by so doing make others react' (Luhmann, 2007b, p. 332). Political values and value-based justifications employed in the course of communicative interaction can be described as 'blind spots' (cf. Luhmann, 1991, p. 206) that drive political actors to seek common symbols of agreement (or schemes of consensus) through the delineation of political values and anti-values (or political cynicism) (Luhmann, 2007a, p. 419). Highly variable systems of value preferences regarding a symbolic balance in discourses of national and pan-European security as well as specifics and symbiosis of temporal regimes of political culture and variability of symbolic codes of social communications legitimize the public sphere in transition societies. Basic instrumentalist analyses of symbolic practices of political 'victimhood' without recognition of the temporal and spatial commonality of perspectives on the horizons of understanding the past and future could transform politics of national identity into dangerous 'games' of symbolic politics. An emphasis on spatial axioms of political values as a foundation for creating typologies of political cultures leads to teleological descriptions of democratization as an expression of timeless indices of democracy.

Legitimation of political practices by way of political narratives (which are mythological in their foundation) that ensure semantic communication in a context of ideological eclecticism and diversity of contemporary political and social processes is an important step in the process of symbolization in contemporary societies. The multiplicity of actors in the contemporary political construction of current events and the symbolic parameters of po-

litical solidarity necessitates a recognition of the role of political mythologization as a reflection of corporeal-sensory and emotional representation of the political. In a contemporary 'digital' society that seemed overly rational at first and reliant on technology, the political movements and cognitive processes that accompany them are increasingly employing emotional and sensory representations. That is why there is a real necessity to forecast tendencies and communicative risks of conceptual 'reversal' of images of heroes and victims that are at the foundation of political mythologization processes.

Analysis of political culture through symbols and codes of political memory makes it possible to overcome narrow theoretical and methodological models that treat political culture as a 'dependent variable'. Various forms of knowledge, symbolically condensed as a national political memory and expressed through common political expectations, appear to be a significant factor in political events and influence varying forms of social solidarity thereby synchronizing the social (personal, corporate) with the political memory and further transforming political elites' aspirations into public policies. Identifying temporal frameworks and regimes of political memory allows one to effectively utilize currently existing models of ordering, classification and contextual analysis of symbols, objects and practices of the political culture in their diachronic development.

Of course, such an agenda of anthropological examination of ideal components of social and political processes of change requires further justification and operationalization. However, one can hope that the theoretical foundations and methodologies of interdisciplinary research outlined in this paper can serve as a starting point for the work on the methodological synthesis of research on politics of memory in transition societies and a search for a common narrative of secure co-existence within a communicative space of the European Union and post-Soviet countries.

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