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## The Government's Remembrance Policy: Five Theoretical Hypotheses<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** Remembrance is a powerful instrument of social mobilisation, identity construction and political competition. Its impact on individual and shared beliefs or attitudes makes it an object of government's interest, because remembrance can be used to legitimise ideologies or policies. Theoretical considerations of a government's role as a narrator lead us to the general definition of the government's remembrance policy, which we understand as a complex of narratives and interpretations presented to influence citizens' attitudes, behaviours, beliefs and identities. The paper develops the definition with five theoretical hypotheses on the effectiveness of remembrance narratives. It argues that the government's remembrance policy is myth-motivic, non-scientific, emotional, based on commitment and that it is a type of social influence. The study is an initial verification of theoretical approach, and I believe that my arguments will motivate other researchers to investigate different aspects of a government's desire to narrate past events.

**Keywords:** *government's remembrance policy; politics of memory; political influence; political behaviour; political attitudes*

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*The struggle of man against power  
is the struggle of memory against forgetting*  
Milan Kundera (2000, p. 130)

## Introduction

It is clear that remembrance is a political asset. Governments make use of it to legitimise themselves and to promote their ideologies. Politicians 'exploit' remembrance in order to influence citizens' attitudes or behaviours and to strengthen citizens' obedience to political elites (Dianina, 2008, pp. 908–909). Social scientists have collected numerous evidence of such actions and they investigate countless examples of them. However, even if remembrance narratives are recognised as an instrument of political mobilisation (Khalili, 2007, p. 222), a question on what makes them an effective stimulus is still open. In this paper, I would like to offer five hypotheses which can be considered as possible explanations for politicised remembrance; and I discuss them with reference to theoretical aspects of a role of government's narratives on the past as an instrument of political influence.

Theoretical hypotheses presented in the paper are discussed with reference to research evidence collected in the experimental study on the influence of remembrance narratives. The study – realised with 364 participants – has showed that changing a way how a story is narrated affects its results, measured by memorisation of basic information, a change of attitudes towards government's remembrance policy and a real-life behaviour (Wawrzyński, 2015; Wawrzyński & Schattkowsky, 2015; Wawrzyński et al., 2015a; 2015b; 2015c). For experiments, we had produced three, slightly different, short movies about the 1945 Augustów Roundup, an example of the Stalinist Crimes in post-War Poland (one of the major narratives of the martyrdom in the Polish culture of remembrance), and we presented them to participants. The first film presented emotionally neutral version, the second one included inspirations of pride, while the third one – inspirations of sorrow. Moreover, participants were randomly assigned to low commitment or no commitment conditions, in which they were asked to write a short persuasive or non-persuasive text about the presented story.

## The Government's Remembrance Policy as a Theoretical Concept

Individual memory of past experiences is an essential source of behaviours and a core of one's identity (Engel, 1999, p. 44). Every human being struggles with a dilemma what has to be remembered and what should be forgotten (Misztal, 2010, p. 26). Moreover, every group faces a question whose testimonies or recollections will be recognised as dominant description of significant past events. This choice influences

not only story-telling, but it also leaves a mark on collective identity and inter-group dynamics, because – through a culture – everyone is able to symbolically ‘experience’ past events which are not a part of his or her personal experience (Zybertowicz, 2001). The initial conflict of interpretations, subsequent social production and reproduction of these stories are commonly recognised as politics of memory (Fogu & Kansteiner, 2006, p. 292).

However, the symbolic participation in past events is strictly limited to experiencing narratives – selected and reproduced, subjective recollections or imaginations of an event (Tokarz, 2005, p. 4). This experience is not so different from one’s individual memory – as it is universally constructed as a system of narratives (Trzebiński, 2002, p. 31) and as it is not an accurate (but subjective and emotional) record of past events (Lehrer, 2007, p. 95). Both, individual experiences and shared narratives, can fulfil basic roles of memory: shaping behaviour and influencing identities. These features constitute the remembrance as a political asset. If its narratives are able to influence citizens’ actions, attitudes, values and identities, they become a powerful instrument of political competition. And – what is probably the most significant aspect of this phenomenon – narrating the past comes to be less about considering the history and more about imagining the future (Crawford, 2006, p. 226).

All three aspects of the remembrance – shaping behaviour, influencing identity and imagining the future – are related to contents of remembrance narratives. And as social sciences show humans tend to memorise two kinds of experiences: pleasant moments of joy and success or sore moments of sadness or pain (Reisberg & Hauer, 2004). Therefore, the politicised remembrance (to mimicry individual memory) also ‘re-enacts’ times of glory or times of suffering – in both cases the goal is legitimisation of behaviours, identities or political visions (Misztal, 2004, p. 77). We may agree that emotions regulate selection of narratives. Presence of an affect often determines if an experience will be remembered or if it will be forgotten. Yet, an event still has to be recognised (by the narrator) as significant and useful to be incorporated into a culture of remembrance (Singer & Conway, 2008).

We are able to, at least, define seven features of the remembrance which influence a way how governments may politically ‘exploit’ past experiences (Marszałek-Kawa et al. 2017, pp. 114–116). Firstly, participation in the remembrance is possible through individual involvement in an event or through the culture (which protects sites of memory). Secondly, remembrance narratives are interpretations of the past, not accurate records of events. Thirdly, the remembrance protects experiences which shape an identity. Fourthly, it collects useful information based on an evaluation of past actions. Fifthly, its narratives are future-oriented. Sixthly, it is regulated by a dichotomous relationship of remembering and forgetting, as well as a subjective

selection of significant experiences. Finally, remembrance is dependent on emotional arousal.

Moreover, the features of remembrance should be recognised as a constitutional framework of the government's remembrance policy. I consider the government's remembrance policy as a form of government's influence on contents of a national culture. It offers a set of interpretations of past events which are promoted by a state as correct understandings of nation's historical experiences. Its objective is to influence political identities thanks to narrating these events which are essential for the political community (Hoskins, 2007, pp. 246–247; Kattago, 2001, pp. 28–30). It also defines which past actions were good and which were wrong, so the remembrance policy 'stimulates' behaviours and it manages social understandings of attitudes, ideas, imaginations, norms, patterns and values (Koczanowicz, 1997, pp. 259–260). Besides labelling past actions, it is a mechanism which offers a government possibilities to manage collective memory thanks to 'imperious' selection of significant and insignificant past experiences of the nation (Uldricks, 2009; Klein, 2000). Finally, it is able to influence individual and collective memories through recipients' emotions which enables citizens to commit themselves to a narrative and to symbolically 'experience' past events (Labanyi, 2008, pp. 120–121, Curran, 2003, pp. 321–322). "In general, the politicised remembrance's main objective is to deliver simplified interpretations of the reality that citizens may use as a source of knowledge in the decision-making process" (Marszałek-Kawa & Wawrzyński, 2016, p. 13).

These seven key features makes possible scientific delimitation of the government's remembrance policy within the landscape of politics of memory. They also show that – even if it seems to be a paradox – the remembrance is concurrently related to representations of the past and imaginations of the future; therefore, a government's use of it should not be reduced to an attempt to influence just collective memory as Anna Wolff-Powęska (2007, p. 10) suggested in her paper. Although the government's remembrance policy operates within the existing framework of narratives of the past, its most significant goals – as the chairman of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Archbishop Desmond Tutu (1999, p. 30–32) emphasised – are shaping the future and protecting the nation from repeating past mistakes. Thus, the politicised remembrance mimics individual memories not only to legitimise itself, but also to manipulate citizens' political behaviours and decision. In a simplified manner, we may assume that its main objective is altering knowledge which can be used as a reason for individual political choices to guarantee citizens' obedience to present (or future) rules of political competition (Weston, 2008, p. 41–49).

Considerations of remembrance as a political asset has led to a general definition of the government's remembrance policy. I understand it as an narration of past

events and their interpretation by a government the objective of which is influence on political identity of a society, social-shared knowledge – beliefs, ideas and values – or political attitudes and behaviours of individuals, thanks to the management of collective memory and/or emotional involvement of a recipient. The policy includes two basic strategies – remembering and forgetting – and an application of them is a result of an ‘imperious’ decision of a government which past experiences are considered as essential for political identity and may inform (‘orientate’) a society in the present or in the future. Therefore, we argue to understand it as a government’s instrument of social influence, which enables the narrator to control and change citizens’ behaviours in accordance with national or government’s interests<sup>2</sup>.

From this general definition I draw five theoretical hypotheses, which are discussed in this paper with reference to research evidence from an experimental study. Firstly, we assume that the policy is **myth-motivic**, so its main function is to inform (‘orientate’) a society in conditions of uncertainty. Secondly, it is **non-scientific**, so the authenticity of a narrative is not based on conformity to scientifically-recognised historical facts. Thirdly, it is **emotional**, so its effectiveness is related to an arousal of recipients’ emotions. Fourthly, it is **based on commitment** of recipients to an act of story-telling, so it has to involve citizens in the symbolic re-enactment of past events. Finally, it is an **instrument of government’s influence** on citizens’ political behaviours, so it is regulated by the rules of social influence.

### Myth-Motivics of the Government’s Remembrance Policy

The first hypothesis is based on Jan Assmann’s perspective presented in his influential book *Cultural memory and identity in ancient societies*<sup>3</sup>. German academic offered a valuable and useful (for political scientists) reinterpretation of Maurice Halbwachs’ vision of social frameworks of memory and a balance of remembering and forgetting (Traba, 2008, pp. 21–22) which has enriched understanding of political representations of the past in the present (Assmann, 2003, pp. 12–16). Assmann (2008, pp.

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<sup>2</sup> The general definition does not differentiate use of the politicised remembrance in distinct political regimes. However, I agree that a practice of the government’s remembrance policy differs in consolidated democracies, transitional democracies, authoritarian regimes, military juntas and totalitarian regimes. It also differs in a degree of manipulation: from totalitarian propaganda to democratic support of pluralism and protection of minorities. However, in all cases narrating the past has one common denominator: an influence on political identity, knowledge, citizens’ attitudes and behaviours, see e.g. Marszałek-Kawa et al., 2017; Wawrzyński & Stańco-Wawrzyńska, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> The book was published in English in 2011 by the Continuum Publishing House (London–New York). In this paper we use Polish translation of it published in 2008.

47–58) noticed that remembrance as a political asset has – for a government – two main qualities: it can be used as a substantiation and a legitimisation of present political actions, and it can be employed to reorganise social-shared interpretations of past events and – thanks to that – it becomes an instrument of influence on political identity.

German scholar unambiguously emphasised that the politicised remembrance – like the most of acts of commemoration – is oriented towards the present and the future, thus governments tend to strengthen a role of these narratives which corresponds with their interests (Assmann, 2008, pp. 76–81)<sup>4</sup>. The direct involvement of a government in story-telling occurs as “the alliance of power and memory” and this alliance has three main forms: the legitimisation through the past, the prospective perpetuation in the future, and the defensive forgetting of events which may interfere with regime’s stability (Assmann, 2008, pp. 86–87). Therefore, realisation of the remembrance policy is an essential attribute of the state, and every governments aspires to manage shared interpretations of the past. However, narrator’s influence is not limited to a decision what to remember and what to forget. Government has also a power to determine how a narrative will inform its recipients: it can use the past to legitimise the present as an essential, inevitable and sensible continuation of the history or it can use the past to emphasise the absence of something which was present in the history and to establish a noticeable opposition between the past and the present. Thus, the politicised remembrance is myth-motivic – its role is to inform citizens if a present state of the nation is legitimised by past experiences or if it is a state of deficiency and a society has to focus on re-establishment of the heroic times (Assmann, 2008, pp. 93–95).

The government’s remembrance policy may determine if the narrative is a symbolic confirmation of the present or if it will be considered as an act of resistance against the oppression. In both cases it integrates a group and consolidates an identity in the face of a threat (Assmann, 1995, pp. 130–132). It is clear that every remembrance policy aspires to be myth-motivic, because this feature transforms simple story-telling into a powerful political instrument which enables a government to manage not only contents of narratives, but also its orientation and its role within the national culture. Being myth-motivic means being able to influence how citizens interpret current (and future) situation of a state and controlling their political choices. Moreover, myth-motivic remembrance narratives have a power to determine imagined Ideal Self of the community (Boyatzis et al., 2012; 2013) and to define relationships between the imagined future and the present state of the nation – this aspect is

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<sup>4</sup> See also: Assmann 2006; Elsner 1994; Koselleck 1979.

clearly observable in transitional politics, when a government uses both narratives of legitimisation (to strengthen its authority) and narratives of deficiency (to support a path of transformation).

In the experimental study we asked participants two related questions. In both cases, we observed support higher than average, what shows that citizens recognise remembrance narratives as a valuable source of information and orientation in the reality. In the first one, we asked participants how much<sup>5</sup> they agree with a sentence *history is one of the most important subjects in school, because it helps to educate conscious citizens* (item B2), while in the second one, we asked about attitude towards a sentence *commemoration of significant historical anniversaries is important to national esprit de corps, even if it is connected with an enforcement of one vision of the past* (item A2). In the first case we observed the general average on 4.67 (average for all items in the B-questionnaire: 4.47), while in the second one it was on 4.68 (for all item in the A-questionnaire: 4.34). It means that participants of the study rather agreed with statements which referred to the myth-motivic aspect of remembrance narratives.

However, our study also enabled us to observe an unpredicted relationship. We noticed that in most cases participants' support for above-mentioned sentences was stronger before presentation of short movies then after it. An exposure to an emotionally neutral version and a clip with additional arousal of sorrow caused a significant decrease of support<sup>6</sup>, while an exposure to a version with additional arousal of pride increased participants' compliance with a statement (for the first question it was 4.28%, for the second one – 4.40%). Moreover, in the case of item A2 we observed a significant difference between low-commitment and no-commitment conditions, and the increase was present only when the arousal of pride co-occurred with the committing act (7.37%). These results show that the myth-motivics of remembrance policy is – in some degree – related to the use of positive emotions; and both types of narratives – the legitimisation and the emphasis of deficiency – require images of the past which can inspire pride in narrative's recipients. So, we may presume that the positiveness of interpretations make them myth-motivic, and that may be a reason why communities of trauma often fail to inform their members about the reality (and to integrate them), and why they has to transform themselves into communities of glory or heroic imagination (and prevent themselves from disintegration) in a long-term perspective.

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<sup>5</sup> We used seven-point Likert scale, where: 1 – strongly disagree; 7 – strongly agree. For more details, see Wawrzyński, 2015.

<sup>6</sup> In neutral: -2.55% for item B2 and -2.59% for item A2. in sorrow: -5.11% for item B2 and -9.29% for item A2.

## **Non-Scientific Character of the Government's Remembrance Policy**

The aspiration of governments to make their remembrance policy myth-motivic has a deep impact on a relationship between promoted narratives and the academic history. For the politicised remembrance the past is an argument which can be used to legitimise ideology or government's agenda, while for the science the past is an object of investigation which can be studied through its artefacts (Le Goff, 2007, pp. 286–287; Jacob, 1995, p. 82). The difference between them is the difference between a symbolic re-enactment of events and a formal reminiscence (Hutton, 1994, pp. 96–97). Therefore, the narrator's authority in this two cases is quite different – the academic history's credibility results from the belief in scientific objectivity and accuracy of research methodology, while the government's remembrance policy becomes 'true' thanks to just an act of story-telling (Lewis, 1975, p. 52).

Despite these substantial differences politicised remembrance needs academic history. It may transform research results into own narratives, it may use them as an evidence to support own interpretations; but – as Jacques Le Goff (2007, p. 61) noticed – government may also try to mimicry scientific narratives in order to use the academic history's credibility as an objective source of knowledge (Abrams 1983). However, this mimicry is rarely applied as narrative strategy, because – even if the science is useful as an argument or an evidence – the government's remembrance policy mimics the myth as a non-scientific source of knowledge about the reality (Szacka, 2003, p. 12). The application of academic history in the policy is rather limited, since methodological requirements restricts science's 'plasticity' in creation, omittance, selection and manipulation of narrative's contents. The politicised remembrance requires 'moulding' a story and this process is not able to meet the academic history's methodological requirements; as a result – like mythology – the government's remembrance policy becomes true because a government as the narrator has the authority (or the power) to interpret and to explain citizens what happened in the past. The non-scientific character of narratives makes them persuasive and integrative, instead being strictly informative alike the science (Kłoskowska, 2007, p. 164; Kołakowski, 1994, p. 116).

The results of our experiment show that participants are used to scientific narratives about past events. The emotionally neutral version of the movie was recognised as the most interesting one (5.39, while the clip with additional arousal of pride got 4.94 and the clip with additional arousal of sorrow – 4.62), the most touching one (4.99 vs. 4.50 vs. 4.42) and the least difficult to comprehend (2.32 vs. 2.40 vs. 2.51). It means that presenting a narrative in the scientific manner is the easiest way to share it with recipients, because they often experience this type of stories and they do not need



some additional effort to understand a purpose of communication. Moreover, in the emotionally neutral condition we observed the highest overall memorisation of basic information (91.75% vs. 90.00% vs. 90.00%) which was especially significant in the question on a number of victims of repressions (87.70% vs. 75.21% vs. 77.69%).

At the same time, the measurement of attitudes towards government's remembrance policy showed that participants expressed less support for statements which were related to the popularisation of scientific history. When we asked participants if public television newscasts (item A16) and newspapers (item B16) would be more interesting if they offer more information about the history, we observed significantly lower support – respectively 3.62 and 3.88. Moreover, instruments which rather reproduce symbolic representations of the past – cinematography (item B5) and museums (item A10) – were recognised as more interesting and more touching – respectively 4.30 and 5.01. It means that the scientific narrative may be the easiest way to communicate with recipients, but it is not the most effective one. The experimental results show that participants of the study preferred these ways of narrating the past which enable them to 'experience' history and to individually consider importance of a narrative, rather than learn about scientific investigations<sup>7</sup>. Therefore, the government's remembrance policy to achieve its goals has to have a non-scientific character, as well as its narrative style cannot be dominated by the academic history's story-telling practice.

### **Emotional Character of the Government's Remembrance Policy**

The politicised remembrance cannot exist without emotions. Emotions are one of basic sources of knowledge about ourselves, a setting and a current situation (Schwarz & Clore, 1988). They activate our cognitive processes, they accelerate processing of information and they motivate us to act (Clore, 2012, pp. 96–101). Moreover, they constitute individuals as a part of a community and they help to manage interpersonal relationships (Turner, 2007, p. 170). Therefore, we may assume that emotions inform (*orientate*) the individual about the reality, so a narrative needs them (and information) to become myth-motoric. The re-enactment of past events is – in some degree – just a recollection of emotions which were present in the past, and these

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<sup>7</sup> We also observed that participants of the experiment rather did not agreed with an additional financial support for research on contemporary history (item A4, overall result: 3.82). However, we noticed that those of participants who were assigned to the low-commitment condition rather agreed with this statement after they had watched the movie (regardless of which of three clips had been presented).

re-aroused emotions bond the individual with a narrative and commit recipient to an act of commemoration.

We assume that the alliance of power, memory and emotions has three main aspects. The first one is similar to the effect of emotions observed by Mark J. Landau, Daniel Sullivan and Jeff Greenberg (2009) in their experimental study on prejudice towards immigrants. American psychologists noticed that manipulation of participants' emotions influenced their attitudes – the presentation of a movie about dangerous bacteria increased a fear of illegal immigrants. The government's remembrance policy makes use of this effect and it aspires to transform recipients' attitudes in compliance to an emotional vector of narrative (i.e. Russian Victory Day's celebrations transforms pride of war victory into pride of contemporary political leadership of the state).

The second aspect of the alliance can be discussed with reference to the valuable research study by Barbara L. Fredrickson and Marcial F. Losada (2005). They proved that negative emotions influence the individual more than positive emotions, and one's well-being requires a surplus of positive experiences. In the context of human psyche, the bad is stronger than the good (Baumeister et al., 2001), therefore, if the government's remembrance policy aspires to inspire citizens' well-being its narratives have to be dominated by positive emotions (Fredrickson, 2001). Thus, the abuse of sadness, sorrow, fear, anger or contempt may cause ineffectiveness of the policy, unless its objective is the evocation of grief, anxiety or aggression.

The third aspect of the alliance is closely related to the second one. Arousal of positive and negative emotions differs not only in the result, but it also implies quite different physiological reactions of the organism. Negative emotions result with the fight-or-flight response, while positive emotions reduce stress, inspire creativity and activate learning processes (Boyatzis et al., 2013, pp. 160–164). Therefore, the effectiveness of government's remembrance policy is dependent on a recipient's pleasure in being a participant of the act of communication. This is the reason why myth-motoric narratives often inspire hope, which is a powerful instrument of social integration and a source of enjoyable feelings, creativity and openness (Boyatzis & Akrivou, 2006, p. 629; Snyder, 2000). These three aspects make emotions crucial for the politicised remembrance, as they enable a government to change citizens' attitudes or behaviours, to influence their well-being and to balance between the defensive fight-or-flight response and the innovative openness towards new stimuli.

In our experimental study we used three short movies which represented distinct emotional strategies: neutral, positive (pride) and negative (sorrow). The results show differences between their impact on participants. As we noticed before, the emotionally neutral version was the most effective in terms of overall memorisation of basic information. However, when we asked about the main hero's name and his organisation,

participants assigned to conditions with additional arousal of emotions were more accurate. The difference in overall result was mostly caused by better memorisation of the number of victims in the non-emotional condition.

We also measured change of participants' attitudes towards the government's remembrance policy (test and re-test method). The results show small differences between three experimental conditions, however we have to emphasise that the presentation of short (seven-minutes-long) clip cannot be recognised as a powerful manipulation. Yet, our study demonstrates that arousal of positive emotions has the strongest impact on recipients – in this condition, we observed 3.54% increase of support for a government as the narrator of remembrance, while in the emotionally neutral condition it was 3.10% and in the condition with additional arousal of sorrow it was only 1.15%. Even if it cannot be recognised as the final prove of our theoretical hypothesis, it shows that emotions may influence effects of the politicised remembrance. Moreover seven days after the experiment, we invited participants to sign a petition to the president on national commemoration of the 1945 Augustów Roundup (which was a subject of the narrative). Only four from 348 participants<sup>8</sup> decided to support the initiative (1.15%), one watched the neutral clip (0.85%), one – the positive version (0.86%), and two – the negative version (1.75%). Unfortunately, these behavioural results has very limited credibility and they may be only considered as the evidence of Polish students' lack of engagement in civic activities.

At the same time, questionnaires included six questions related to the role of emotions in the government's remembrance policy. The results allow us to argue that participants of the experiment rather agreed with statements on close relationships between the remembrance and arousal of emotions, i.e. they disagreed that *listening or reading about national heroes from the past does not arouse emotions* (item B17. average result: 2.83), they rather agreed that *lack of commemoration of national heroes is sad* (item B15. average result: 4.77) and they rather agreed that *visiting national sites of memory causes strong emotions* (item A1, average result: 4.54). Moreover, we observed that the highest increase of the support characterised participants who had watched the movie with additional arousal of pride, while the smallest increase was noticed in the group assigned to the condition with additional arousal of sorrow. This observation supports our presumptions about the alliance of power, memory and emotions, however it still cannot be recognised as the final validation of them. Therefore, we argue that the nature of these relationships should be investigated in next studies and follow-up experiments.

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<sup>8</sup> 16 of 364 participants of the experiment had not share with us their contact details, so they were not invited to sign a petition.

## Commitment and the Government's Remembrance Policy

The myth-motivic character of the politicised remembrance is also based on commitment. Charles A. Kiesler simply defined it as a relationship between an individual and this individual's actions (Joule & Beauvois, 2006, pp. 58–59). Commitment's *psychological fuel* are the need for consistency and the expectation that there is some noticeable dependence between our actions or words and our beliefs or thoughts. Therefore, when there is no significant reward or punishment, people interpret their actions as consistent with their beliefs or attitudes, even if this premise has not been a real motivation for action. So, in some degree commitment can be recognised as a defence mechanism of an individual's psyche, personality and identity (Kiesler, 1977, pp. 66–68; Burke & Reitzes, 1991, p. 243).

Scientific discoveries of the psychology of commitment have a deep impact on the theory of policy-making. We can agree that a governmental system of rewards and punishments may be effective, but it does not lead to commitment of citizens to preferred actions. Of course, tax allowances may motivate an entrepreneur to employ a disable person or a possible fine may prevent an intoxicated citizen from driving under influence, but do they recognise the equality of chances as an appropriate and fair idea, and the driving under influence as an inappropriate behaviour? Probably not, because they are not committed to these action, but to saving their money – and the reward or the punishment has been their motivation.

The government's remembrance policy can be realised in three different manners. Firstly, the narrator may decide that its role is to inform citizens about the past, and an act of story-telling will be a sufficient legitimisation of a narrative. Secondly, it may choose to persuade citizens and to commit them to an act of story-telling. Thirdly, it may establish a system of rewards and punishments (the totalitarian indoctrination), and force citizens to act with compliance to contents of a narrative. The psychology of commitment shows that the second strategy is the most effective – it causes attitude change, it uses citizens' need for consistency and it is resistant to counter-persuasion (Kiesler, 1977, pp. 75–76; Kiesler, Munson, 1975, p. 437–438). Moreover, it seems to be the only possible strategy which influences recipients' identities and their choices (Burke & Reitzes, 1991, pp. 240–242; Burke & Stets, 2009, p. 40). Thus, in democratic conditions commitment becomes an instrument which enables a government to influence – but not to manipulate or to terrorise – citizens through remembrance narratives.

In our experimental study we measured differences between low commitment of participant (persuasive text) and no commitment of participants (non-persuasive text), however in 19 cases we observed a reversed commitment (persuasive text against

statement). Participants in the low-commitment condition found the movie as the most interesting (5.14; no commitment: 4.95; reverse commitment: 4.00), the most touching (4.70 vs. 4.64 vs. 4.11) and the least difficult to comprehend (2.31; 2.38; 3.53). Moreover, they memorised basic information better than participants assigned to the no-commitment condition and then those who experienced a reversed commitment (92% vs. 90.5% vs. 79%).

However, the most significant effects of commitment we observed in measurement of participants' attitudes towards the government's remembrance policy. In the low-commitment condition the support for a government as the narrator of remembrance narratives (on average) increased by 3.42%, while in the no-commitment condition it was 2.38% and participants which had experienced a reverse commitment decreased their support by 3.19%. The difference between conditions is clearly noticeable, and we need to emphasise that it was a result of merely watching short movie and answering one simple question, without additional persuasion.

Moreover, we observed that commitment and arousal of emotions complement one another – additional arousal of pride with low commitment caused 4.60% increase of the support (no commitment: 3.05%; reverse commitment: -1.98%) and additional arousal of sorrow with low commitment caused 2.49% increase (0.66% vs. -5.44%), although in the emotionally neutral condition lack of committing act (3.37%) gave better result than presence of commitment (3.13%) and a reverse commitment's impact was the weakest (-1.30%). As Paul M. Munson and Kiesler (1974) stated in their paper, effects of commitment are stronger if an emotional labelling is also included. On the other hand, our measurement of real-life behaviour showed no difference between the low-commitment condition and the no-commitment condition<sup>9</sup> – in our opinion, it proves that only arousal of high commitment (e.g. public presentation of an answer) may affect participants' behaviour. So, our initial hypothesis that even low commitment causes observable narrative's influence on recipients' actions has not been confirmed in the experiment. Yet, our study proved that it may influence their attitudes towards a government as the narrator of remembrance and it substantiated interest in commitment as possible explanation of the effectiveness of politicised remembrance.

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<sup>9</sup> In both cases only two participants signed a petition.

## The Government's Remembrance Policy as Social Influence

Our understanding of a government's desire to interpret past events and national history includes the assumption that politicised remembrance is an instrument of government's influence on citizens' political behaviours (Koczanowicz 1997, p. 259–260). As a result, narratives can be used to manipulate recipients and their actions, but also their effectiveness may be explained with reference to rules of social influence: reciprocity, consistency, social proof, liking, authority and scarcity (Cialdini 2003). However, we believe that rules of reciprocity and scarcity are less significant than other four in terms of the remembrance policy as their application is rather limited.

The need for consistency is – as we stated before – ‘a psychological fuel’ for commitment and it plays a key role in preservation of behaviours. The social proof helps to reduce the uncertainty and it locates an individual as a member of group, even if it often causes improper behaviours (Latané & Darley, 1968; Ross, 1971). The liking makes an individual more compliant, if a narrator is recognised as attractive, similar or friendly. Finally, the rule of authority constitutes content of a narrative as credible and a narrator as reliable. Moreover, as famous, Stanley Milgram's (1974) experiments proved, people tend to follow instructions, if they believe that an instructor is a recognised expert. Therefore, to increase effectiveness of the remembrance policy a government should take advantage of rules of social influence in an arrangement of story-telling.

The design of our experiment did not include measurement of rules' impact on participants memorisation, attitude change and real-life behaviour. However, we used the rule of authority in the construction of presented movies. In all three clips we portrayed the narrator as a witness of events and we supported his authority with the authority of institution established to investigate national history. As a result, anyone from 364 participants did not question credibility of presented information and the most of participants showed high level of obedience to authority in their answers on open questions. This observation is quite surprising, especially as we expected that some participants might recognise the narrative as a subjective recollection of a witness. But they all accepted his authority and they believed in his words.

It suggests that investigating an impact of rules of social influence may be a valuable direction and that this direction may deliver a number of interesting observations on the government's remembrance policy or its effectiveness. We believe that further studies will also answer how these rules can be used in strategies of remembrance story-telling, especially in terms of the *modal* instrument of remembrance policy – the use of different narrators that present same plot, which we call the polyphony of narratives (Cappalletto 2003; du Pisani 2007; Jõesalu 2010; Webber & Mullen 2011).

## Conclusion

The paper presented theoretical framework for the studies on politicised remembrance and it defined the government's remembrance policy as an organised complex of narratives and interpretations of the past which are used to influence citizens' attitudes, behaviours, decisions and identities. It explained what motivates a government to realise its remembrance policy and why it considers the past as a valuable and powerful asset in political competition. It leads to five theoretical hypotheses on the effectiveness of politicised remembrance as an instrument of political influence. I have called the policy: **myth-motoric** as its substantial aim is to inform ('orientate') citizens in the reality; **non-scientific** as its credibility is not based on applied methodology, but it is constituted by an act of communication; **emotional** as an inspiration of emotions may determine if a narrative will be recognised by recipients as significant for them and their identity; **dependent on commitment** as an establishment of relationship between an individual and an act of communication may determine recipients' change of attitudes or their future behaviour; and I have recognised the government's remembrance policy as a **type of social influence** which is regulated by its rules.

In general, results of discussed research project initially supports my theoretical hypotheses, however, they cannot be recognised as definitive. The study has showed that even small differences in short movie and one open question can cause different impact on recipients. Yet, we are not able to answer a number of questions, especially these related to effects of long-term exposition to remembrance narratives. I believe that this paper will realise its main objective which is to emphasise the necessity of further investigations on a government as a narrator of remembrance and the remembrance as an effective political stimuli.

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