

LUDOVIIKA UNIVERSITY OF PUBLIC SERVICE

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THESIS

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**Examining the Role of Memory, Symbols, and Protocol in the Formation of
National and Military Identity**

Ph.D. dissertation

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Relevance and Justification of the Research Topic

In recent years, public discourse and the wider media have increasingly echoed the view that the Hungarian Defence Forces have evolved into a modern, capable, and well-trained 21st-century military force equipped with state-of-the-art weaponry. This transformation, however, is not confined to technological innovation or the procurement of new combat vehicles; it is equally reflected in the remarkable revitalisation of the domestic defence industry. Alongside these developments, greater emphasis has been placed on recruitment, the expansion of personnel numbers, and the strengthening of relations between the Hungarian Defence Forces and civil society. To support these objectives, a number of social and cultural initiatives have been launched, particularly with regard to the preservation of Hungarian military traditions and heritage.

Following the political transition, Hungarian society experienced a shift in the civilian perception of military presence: uniforms and the visibility of the Defence Forces became associated primarily with major state and national commemorations. As a result, the military—both as an institution and as a profession—partly receded from public view, which in turn weakened the bond between civilians and the armed forces.

This dissertation sets out to reinterpret the relationship between the Hungarian Defence Forces and society and to examine the strengthening of military identity. The analysis rests on three conceptual pillars: collective memory, national and military symbols, and military protocol. It seeks to demonstrate how these elements, both individually and in interaction, contribute to reinforcing the internal cohesion of the armed forces while also fostering closer, emotionally grounded cooperation with civil society.

In the Hungarian context, these factors—collective memory, symbolic frameworks of national and military identity, and protocol practices—play a particularly significant role in shaping national identity, self-perception, and historical consciousness. Historical commemorations and anniversaries provide institutionalised frameworks for the deliberate and directed presentation of symbols that express national unity. Owing to Hungary's rich yet often tragic and conflict-laden history, historical memory is frequently constructed around narratives of trauma and rupture. This is well illustrated, among others, in György Földesi's *Ívek és töréspontok* and in *A mi 20. századunk*, edited jointly by Gábor Gyáni, Pál Pritz, Ignác Romsics, László Szarka and

Béla Tomka. These works reveal how key elements of Hungarian collective identity are rooted in historical traumas and generational upheavals.

Accordingly, the dissertation not only seeks to shed new light on the relationship between the Hungarian Defence Forces and society but also to demonstrate how military identity, national memory, and protocol practices may serve as crucial instruments of social cohesion and national self-identification in 21st-century Hungary.

The diverse responsibilities of the Hungarian Defence Forces and the cultivation of a positive public image are also emphasised in the *Hungarian Defence Forces Brandbook*. In its introduction, the author highlights several points central to the present research and underscores the legitimacy of the questions posed here, observing: *"Domestic research indicates that society does not always have an accurate understanding of the activities and capabilities of the Hungarian Defence Forces. At times, it may even misinterpret them. This is why it is important to build a strong and unified brand. If we do not tell our own story, others will tell it for us. We must engage with the nearly ten million citizens whose safety we are sworn to protect, as well as with the millions of others who may support us out of allied commitment. The brand of the Hungarian Defence Forces makes this special service to the nation and its unique organisation more widely recognised, and it facilitates public understanding of who we are, what our objectives are, and what we do."* (MH Brandbook 2023:7.)

Military protocol—such as ceremonial flag-raising, military honours, or the wearing of dress uniforms—represents a key responsibility of the Hungarian Defence Forces, functioning both as an instrument of organisational cohesion and as a vehicle of social visibility, expressed through collective and cultural memory. On occasions marked by military protocol and ceremonies, remembrance of past sorrows is coupled with the recognition and celebration of historical figures whose achievements shaped the nation. In this way, long-enduring generational traumas may be partially set aside, giving way to the reinforcement of national unity, identity, and patriotism. Such events are not only of importance to the armed forces themselves, but also resonate with society at large. They allow citizens to gain deeper and more personal insight into the activities of the armed forces, while strengthening national pride and deepening public trust in the institution.

Formulation of the Scientific Problem

On the basis of the above, two principal instruments are available for bringing the Hungarian Defence Forces and civil society closer together, depending on the target audience, its age, gender, and the extent or direction of its interest in the military. The first of these instruments is the defence industry, which naturally attracts broader public attention, as it offers more visible and engaging developments for both younger and older generations alike.

For the purposes of this research, however, it is the second instrument that proves more decisive: a complex triad requiring deeper knowledge and interest, namely collective memory, national and military symbols, and military protocol. To define the theoretical framework of this study, I draw upon Jan Assmann's conception of collective memory; for the interpretation of symbolism, I rely on the work of Ágnes Kapitány and Gábor Kapitány; and for the incorporation of military protocol, I base my analysis on both my own observations and the research of Nikoletta Hossó. Beyond the Hungarian context, the study also offers a brief international perspective by examining the role of military protocol in the commemorative practices of the Italian Republic. This comparative outlook seeks to outline the points of divergence between the two countries as well as their common practices, thereby raising the question of whether such elements might represent universal procedures across many nations with comparable historical roots.

Research Objectives

The principal research aims of the dissertation can be summarised as follows:

- **Objective 1:** To examine the role of institutions in preserving and transmitting traditions.
- **Objective 2:** To analyse how national and military symbols influence communities' historical awareness and their emotional attachment to the past.
- **Objective 3:** To explore the role of collective memory in strengthening national identity and cohesion, with particular emphasis on the use of national and military symbols.
- **Objective 4:** To investigate the social significance of commemorative practices (e.g. ceremonies, wreath-laying, military parades) in the context of community identity and the processing of the past.

- **Objective 5:** To understand how both the historical and contemporary roles of the Hungarian Defence Forces contribute to national pride and the reinforcement of collective identity across different social strata and generations.

In addition to these principal objectives, the dissertation also seeks to address the following:

- The character of commemorative practices is profoundly shaped and determined by a country's history, and by the national identity and worldview derived from it.
- The introduction of the national holidays of the Italian Republic, with particular attention to the role of military protocol in their observance.

Research Questions

On the basis of these objectives, the dissertation formulates the following research questions:

1. Which institutions and instruments contribute to the creation of collective memory?
2. How does military protocol shape the dignified performance of commemorative rituals and the community's historical consciousness?
3. In what ways do military ceremonies linked to state holidays affect social cohesion and the preservation of collective memory?
4. How do collective memory and the symbols associated with it contribute to strengthening national identity in modern societies?
5. What specific role does the Hungarian Defence Forces play in shaping national identity, particularly among younger generations?

Hypotheses

On the basis of the scientific problems formulated above, the research objectives, and the research questions, five hypotheses are proposed.

The **first hypothesis:** The emergence and preservation of collective memory—that is, the shared recollections and narratives of a community's past—are not random or spontaneous processes, but the result of deliberate communal activity. Communities sustain the memory of their common past through regularly repeated ceremonies, rituals, celebrations, and symbolic

elements (such as flags, statues, commemorative speeches, music, and attire). These recurring events serve not only the act of remembrance and the refreshing of memories, but also generate shared emotional experiences that deepen the sense of belonging, thereby functioning as key instruments for reinforcing community identity, reinterpreting shared values, and transmitting traditions across generations. Through such conscious cultivation of memory, members of the community are able to identify with the common past and, in its spirit, shape their vision of a shared future.

Hypothesis 1: Collective memory does not evolve spontaneously; rather, through the community's deliberate use of regularly enacted ceremonies, rituals, and symbols, it contributes to the strengthening of communal identity, the preservation of traditions, and their transmission to future generations.

The **second hypothesis**: National and military symbols that appear in collective memory—such as the flag, anthem, public squares, or monuments—play a decisive role in reinforcing the identity and cohesion of the community participating in the events. These symbols embody meanings and emotional associations transmitted across generations, prompting members of the community to recall and reinterpret past events. Military symbols, in particular, serve to represent strength, solidarity, and the importance of defence. On this basis, the following assumption is formulated:

Hypothesis 2: The presence and use of national and military symbols within collective memory strengthen both the identity awareness of community members and their sense of national belonging.

The **third hypothesis**: The regulated ceremonies of military protocol—such as parades, receptions of heads of state, or wreath-laying events—evoke powerful emotional responses from participants, thereby enhancing the significance of these occasions. The formal order and symbolism of such ceremonies convey respect and dignity, while at the same time reinforcing the community's connection with its historical past. The third hypothesis may thus be stated as follows:

Hypothesis 3: The regulated ceremonies of military protocol increase the emotional impact of commemorative events, thereby deepening the community's connection to its historical past.

The **fourth hypothesis**: Military ceremonies associated with state holidays play an important role in strengthening public respect for the Hungarian Defence Forces, since their elements and the symbols displayed embody patriotism and historical heritage. It is essential that values of respect and patriotism be communicated in ways appropriate to different age groups, thus ensuring social unity and reinforcing commitment to the Defence Forces. Based on this reasoning, the fourth hypothesis is formulated as follows:

Hypothesis 4: Military ceremonies held on state holidays increase public respect for the Defence Forces, though their impact may vary across different age groups.

The **fifth hypothesis**: Defence education for younger generations represents a key instrument in the long-term preservation of collective memory and national identity. Beyond acquiring knowledge of defence and military matters, young people are supported in their understanding of the historical past and its significance, thereby strengthening their sense of patriotism and responsibility. At the same time, they learn respect for communal solidarity and national symbols. Accordingly, the fifth hypothesis is as follows:

Hypothesis 5: Defence education of youth constitutes an effective instrument for the long-term preservation of collective memory and national identity.

Methodology

In view of the research objectives, and following an extensive review of the relevant literature, a detailed research plan was developed. On this basis, the research problem, aims, questions, and hypotheses were defined. The overarching aim of the study is to explore how collective and cultural memory are manifested in Hungarian military protocol, with particular attention to state and military ceremonies, as well as to the interpretation of national and military identity-forming symbols. In the next stage, the key concepts underlying the research were identified (memory, symbol, protocol), followed by the specification of more particular concepts: collective memory, cultural memory, Hungarian national symbols, object symbolism, spatial symbolism, tradition, and military protocol.

Table 1: Overview of the research concepts (Source: Author's own compilation)

Category	Concept	Short definition
Basic concepts	Memory	The recollection of past experiences by individuals and communities.
	Symbol	A form, object, or action that carries symbolic meaning.
	Protocol	Regulated forms of behaviour at official events.
Specific concepts	Collective memory	The collectively preserved and transmitted image of the past of a community.
	Cultural memory	The system of culturally mediated memories, e.g. rituals, monuments.
	Hungarian national symbols	Elements that signify Hungarian identity and national belonging.
	Object symbolism	The symbolic meaning of objects, particularly in ritual or national contexts.
	Spatial symbolism	The symbolic interpretation of places and spaces within a given culture.
	Tradition	The inherited set of customs, values, and rituals.
	Military protocol	The official rules of conduct governing the military at ceremonial and formal occasions.

The research is based on a qualitative, descriptive-interpretive approach, drawing on secondary sources and case study-based content analysis. The purpose of the document analysis was to map official narratives, their historical continuity, and their transformations over time. Due to its qualitative nature, the study does not aim at representativeness or quantitative generalisation. Furthermore, the analysis deliberately avoids contemporary political interpretations, instead focusing on the social and cultural functions of symbolic and protocol elements without assigning normative judgments.

Table 2: Research methods applied (Source: Author's own compilation)

Method	Description	Function
Document analysis	Analysis of legal texts, ceremonial scripts, and military regulations	Mapping historical and official narratives
Content analysis	Interpretation of symbols, rituals, speeches, and visual elements	Uncovering the meanings of national–military representations
Case study	August 20th celebrations and the officer commissioning ceremony	In-depth analysis through concrete examples
Interdisciplinary theoretical framework	Cultural memory, identity theory, representation	Providing theoretical grounding for the interpretation of symbolic practices

The research draws upon Hungarian, English, and Italian scholarly literature, as well as official documents and protocol materials. International sources—particularly from Anglo-Saxon and Italian contexts—have made it possible to situate Hungarian practices of memory politics and military protocol within a broader comparative cultural and semiotic framework, thereby allowing for contrasts and parallels with the practices of the Italian Republic.

Summary of the Dissertation

Hungarian collective and cultural identity is shaped and reinforced through the simultaneous presence of remembrance, symbols, and (military) protocol, all of which contribute to the strengthening of national and military identity. The topic was examined through sociological, military science, and international relations research. In order to provide a vivid interpretation of the research problem, key national and military ceremonies were selected for case study analysis.

The dissertation defines four main research questions, aligned with the overall aims of the study and the hypotheses presented in detail in the introduction. This chapter also outlined the literature consulted in the course of the research, as well as the overall structure of the dissertation.

Chapter Two introduces the methodological framework of the research, including the legislation and regulations examined and interpreted, the processing of the most important scholarly works addressing the three core concepts of the study, and the identification of conceptual linkages. The chapter also describes the use of online newspaper archives and film newsreels, which proved particularly useful for the analysis undertaken in Chapter Five.

Chapter Three discusses the fundamental concepts that underpin the research and their academic background, thereby outlining the theoretical framework of the dissertation, which is divided into three units. The first unit examines the concept of **memory**, disaggregating it into smaller categories and analysing the notions of individual, collective, and cultural memory separately. This is followed by the second unit, which addresses **symbols and emblems**, including a detailed exploration of Hungarian national symbols, object symbolism, and spatial symbolism. The final unit focuses on the concept of **protocol**, with particular emphasis on the elements and functions of military protocol.

Chapter Four provides an international perspective by examining the national and military identity of the Italian Republic in the context of its national holidays. This chapter is organised into four main sections: (1) a historical overview, (2) an introduction to the armed forces with a focus on military protocol, (3) an overview of military (higher) education, and (4) a detailed study of the *Festa della Repubblica*, the national day of the Republic. Overall, the chapter highlights how Italian national and military identity, as well as collective memory, are closely intertwined with the country's modern history—particularly the nation-building process of the 19th century (*Risorgimento*) and the subsequent political and social transformations. The foundation of Italian national identity lies in a unified system of symbols—flag, anthem, coat of arms—as well as the unifying role of the Italian language and culture. Military identity is expressed through the preservation of the history and traditions of the armed forces and through state representation, reinforced by Italy's international military commitments. National holidays and commemorative days play a central role in shaping collective memory, placing past traumas and victories into a narrative framework that strengthens citizens' sense of belonging. Sites of memory—such as the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier—serve not only to

commemorate the past but also to act as instruments for the continuous reproduction of both national and military identity through their symbolic function.

Chapter Five turns to the Hungarian context in the 20th century, examining the political eras that significantly influenced the development of national identity and modes of thought. Accordingly, the chapter is structured into five units—(1) the Dualist period, (2) the Horthy era, (3) the Rákosi era, (4) the Kádár era, and (5) the regime change. Each is introduced with a brief account of the historical background and dominant political ideology, along with their impact on the shaping of national identity. These processes are illustrated through the detailed analysis of the August 20 national holiday. The findings demonstrate that national and military identity, as well as collective memory, are closely linked to the interpretation of state ceremonies and commemorations. The examples of August 20 and the officer commissioning ceremony reveal how state power utilised memory politics as a tool for identity formation. Each political era adapted interpretations of the past to serve its ideological purposes: while the Dualist period and the Horthy era drew upon national traditions, the communist dictatorships sought to establish new narratives. After the regime change, emphasis shifted to the rediscovery of traditions and the restoration of historical continuity.

Chapter Six explores national and military identity in the 21st century, again focusing on the elements of the August 20 celebrations as the basis of analysis. This research was divided into three parts: (1) the symbolism and social significance of August 20 as a state holiday; (2) the role of the Ludovika Academy in military socialisation and identity formation; and (3) the historical, social, and military role of the 32nd Guard Regiment, with special attention to the preservation of national and military values. From this analysis, several conclusions were drawn: national and military identity, together with collective memory, are closely interwoven with state ceremonies and symbols, which reinterpret historical traditions to shape collective self-understanding. The August 20 celebrations and the officer commissioning ceremony are pivotal sites of this process, where cultural memory is actualised through institutionalised rituals. National symbols—such as the flag, the uniform, and the oath—not only commemorate the past but also affirm the continuity of statehood and the sense of belonging to the nation, thereby playing an active role in identity formation.

Results of Hypothesis Testing

In line with the aims of the research and the defined research questions, the dissertation formulated five hypotheses. Below, I present the results of their examination.

First Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1: My assumption was that collective memory is not shaped spontaneously but contributes to the reinforcement of community identity, as well as to the preservation and intergenerational transmission of traditions, through the regular actualisation of consciously maintained ceremonies, rituals, and symbols.

Based on the research carried out, I conclude that collective memory is an organised and institutionalised process which, through consciously maintained symbolic acts, serves to strengthen community identity and ensure the transgenerational continuation of traditions. Several subchapters of Chapter Six support this conclusion, demonstrating that national holidays (e.g., 20 August, 15 March, 23 October) and the military ceremonies connected to them—such as flag-raising (6.7.3), officer commissioning and oath-taking (6.7.4), as well as the use of the historical flag line (6.7.5.2)—play a key role in sustaining community identity. These symbolic events not only serve to actualise the historical past but also reinforce the emotional commitment to national belonging and to the military vocation. The analysis revealed that collective memory is mediated through state holidays and military traditions, where the conscious use of national symbols (flag, anthem, coat of arms), sacral spaces (e.g., Kossuth Square, the area around St. Stephen's Basilica), and ceremonial narratives is aimed at shaping a shared cultural consciousness. The transformations following the regime change (6.1; 6.1.1) likewise confirm that the development of collective memory is not accidental but occurs through reinterpreted ceremonies and practices of remembrance shaped by political and social changes, actively influenced by state memory politics. The symbolic structure of the 20 August celebration and the officer commissioning ceremony serves as a means of representing the past and maintaining state legitimacy. These findings confirm my first hypothesis.

Second Hypothesis

Hypothesis 2: The presence and use of national and military symbols within collective memory strengthen individuals' sense of identity and their feeling of national belonging.

The research confirms that national and military symbols play a crucial role in reinforcing national identity and the sense of belonging, as they connect people to shared values, history,

and traditions (6.5). These symbols, deeply embedded in everyday life, promote social cohesion by providing a common foundation for understanding and accepting social norms (6.5). Their presence within military protocol further underscores that national symbols such as flags, coats of arms, and anthems are tangible and verbal expressions of state sovereignty and national identity (6.5). Such symbols bind members of the community together, reinforcing belonging—especially on national holidays, when historical events and heroes are commemorated (6.5). The research demonstrates that schools—both civilian and military—play a fundamental role in introducing younger generations to national symbols, thereby ensuring the continuity of national identity and community cohesion. The Committee of National Remembrance also actively supports the preservation of cultural memory (6.4). Moreover, the dissertation emphasises the significance of state and military ceremonies in safeguarding cultural heritage and national identity (6.9.2.5). Military symbols—such as uniforms and flags—are indispensable elements of state holidays, as they manifest state sovereignty and the capacity for defence (6.6.5). The 32nd Guard Regiment, for instance, plays a distinguished role in state and military celebrations, reinforcing national pride and military traditions (6.9.3). The use of these symbols in collective memory not only expresses respect for the past but also strengthens national unity and identity in the present (6.6.7). By evoking past events, they provide orientation for present and future generations, ensuring the continuity of historical consciousness and national identity while promoting unity and the transmission of state and military traditions (6.11). These findings confirm my second hypothesis.

Third Hypothesis

Hypothesis 3: The regulated ceremonies of military protocol increase the emotional impact of commemorative events, thereby deepening the community's connection to its historical past.

The research confirms my hypothesis that regulated ceremonies of military protocol enhance the emotional resonance of commemorative events, thus strengthening the community's ties to its historical past (1.1). Elements of military protocol—such as flag-raising ceremonies and military salutes—serve as tools of organisational cohesion and social visibility, communicating through collective and cultural memory (1.1). These ceremonies not only recall past hardships but also highlight the merits of historical figures, thereby reinforcing national unity, identity, and patriotism. The embedding of collective and cultural memory within military protocol underlines the role of military ceremonies in preserving cultural heritage and national identity.

Military symbols—such as uniforms and flags—remain essential components of state holidays, as they represent state sovereignty and defence capability (6.5). The 32nd Guard Regiment plays a significant role in state and military celebrations: through its ceremonial duties and preservation of historical traditions, it strengthens national pride and military traditions (6.6.2; 6.9). Furthermore, the strict regulation and traditions of military protocol create a unified and disciplined appearance that heightens the solemnity of commemorative events and draws public attention. These ceremonies contribute to the preservation and transmission of social history, identity, and values, ensuring that past events and heroes are not forgotten. The integration of military ceremonies into state and national holidays increases respect for the armed forces and emphasises the values of patriotism and historical heritage, thereby fostering social unity and commitment to the Defence Forces.

Fourth Hypothesis

Hypothesis 4: Military ceremonies during state holidays strengthen the relationship between civil society and the armed forces and may contribute to enhancing respect for the Defence Forces.

The research partly confirmed the first part of this hypothesis, namely that military ceremonies associated with national holidays increase societal respect for the Defence Forces. The second part of the hypothesis was only partially validated, as the impact of these ceremonies may vary across different age groups (6). Such ceremonies function as tools to strengthen the relationship between civil society and the military, while enhancing the prestige of the armed forces (6). The embedding of collective and cultural memory within military protocol highlights the role of state and military ceremonies in preserving cultural heritage and national identity. Military symbols—such as uniforms and flags—are integral to national holidays, symbolising state sovereignty and the capacity for defence (6). The 32nd Guard Regiment plays a prominent role in state and military celebrations, reinforcing national pride and military traditions (6.6.5.3; 6.9.2.5). The unit's activities go beyond strictly military protocol, becoming instruments for conveying Hungarian statehood, the values of the armed forces, and respect for the historical past (6.9). The effectiveness of these ceremonies in fostering respect and commitment may vary across generations: while participation in such events introduces civilians to the military and can elicit respect and recognition, for younger people they may also serve as motivational impulses toward choosing a military career or officer training. For the younger generation, the integration of defence education can help foster understanding of historical significance, the

role of national symbols, and the importance of community belonging. For older citizens, in contrast, the sense of national identity is already established, and military ceremonies primarily reinforce existing values and convictions.

Fifth Hypothesis

Hypothesis 5: Defence education of youth is an effective means of ensuring the long-term preservation of collective memory and national identity.

The research confirms that the defence education of young people is indeed an effective means of safeguarding collective memory and national identity over the long term. By acquiring an understanding of historical significance, national symbols, and the importance of community belonging, such education strengthens the national consciousness of younger generations (6.5). The embedding of collective and cultural memory within military protocol underscores the fundamental role of schools in acquainting young people with national symbols, which is essential for the development of national identity and community cohesion (6.5). This ensures continuity of historical awareness and promotes unity, while transmitting state and military traditions to future generations. The presentation of historical events and symbolic figures within educational contexts further supports emotional identification with these symbols (6.11). The traditions and values of the Ludovika Academy are today carried forward by the National University of Public Service, ensuring that students are not only professionally prepared but also morally and patriotically committed to public service (6.7.6). This continuity contributes to the preservation of cultural memory and the strengthening of national identity, in which state holidays such as 20 August serve as pivotal pillars (6.11). The integration of military ceremonies into state and national holidays further emphasises the values of patriotism and historical heritage, promoting social unity and commitment (1.1). Defence education thus represents a significant means of fostering responsibility and national pride among young people. These findings, together with the relevant chapters, confirm my fifth hypothesis.

New Scientific Contributions

This dissertation advances seven main findings. Five of these correspond directly to the research objectives, questions, and hypotheses outlined in the introduction, while the research process and subsequent analyses yielded two additional contributions.

1. Contribution:

The study demonstrates, through analysis and case studies, that collective memory does not emerge spontaneously but is actively constructed through deliberate actions embedded within institutional frameworks. Military protocol has become a functional instrument of memory politics, enabling the structured transmission of national narratives to future generations. Ceremonial events, in particular, operate as a form of “*ritual theater*”, providing a stage on which collective memory is enacted and reinforced.

2. Contribution:

The findings show that the national holiday of 20 August and the parallel officer commissioning ceremony are not merely state festivities but concentrated manifestations of cultural memory. Both events function as identity-forming nodes, where national mythology (such as the figure of Saint Stephen) is mobilized to secure a sense of historical and political continuity.

3. Contribution:

The research establishes that symbolic rituals—such as the oath-taking at commissioning, the military parade, and the incorporation of historical flags—are central to the consolidation of national and military identity. These practices are not simply acts of representation but performative moments of identity formation, during which individual identities are embedded within a wider communal (national-military) framework.

4. Contribution:

The consistent use of symbolic locations in state rituals is shown to be a key means of spatially anchoring cultural memory, thereby preserving a shared historical consciousness. The choice of sites such as Heroes’ Square, Kossuth Square, or the forecourt of Saint Stephen’s Basilica is not accidental; rather, their historical significance reinforces the memory encoded within these spaces.

5. Contribution:

This dissertation provides the first comprehensive analysis of the evolution of Hungarian national and military identity in the 20th and 21st centuries through the combined lens of memory, symbolism, and the co-presence of symbolic forms, drawing on an extensive interdisciplinary literature.

6. Contribution:

The research introduces a novel perspective by interpreting the institutionalized forms of collective memory and the role of military protocol within the broader discourse of memory politics.

7. Contribution:

Finally, the study shows that the interpretation of national and military symbols is dynamic and historically contingent, reflecting the memory politics and identity constructions of different political regimes. The meanings attached to symbols such as the flag, the Holy Crown, and historical uniforms have shifted in line with the political and social contexts of each era.

Recommendations – Applicability of Research Findings – New Directions for Research

Recommendations:

- The investigations carried out in this dissertation in the field of national and military symbolism provide a foundation for their conscious development in the context of state ceremonies. Reinterpreting symbolic systems and reinforcing their contemporary relevance can strengthen civic attachment and national identity. The deliberate visuality of rituals (flags, uniforms, music, location) fosters cultural cohesion.
- By applying the findings and extending them into the field of education, younger generations can be more effectively integrated into the narratives of national celebrations. Educational and communication programs can promote historical awareness and encourage more active engagement with rituals. This is particularly important in the interpretation of the symbolism of the officer commissioning ceremony.
- The dissertation as a whole—and especially the analyses presented in Chapter Six—offers valuable guidance for the 32nd Guard Regiment in refining the educational and integration processes of soldiers in ceremonial training. The research highlights the historical and cultural significance of the unit, and raising awareness of this during training can contribute to strengthening collective identity and fostering commitment to the profession.

- Given the military science character of this dissertation, the research and analyses could be incorporated into the foundational course requirements for first-year students at the Faculty of Military Science and Officer Training of the National University of Public Service. This would also serve to strengthen long-term commitment to the military profession.
- Due to their military, historical, and political science relevance, the research findings can provide guidance for domestic institutions conducting scholarly work in related fields.
- The comparative analyses and international perspective of this dissertation can serve as a basis for further research on the development of military education and training. This is particularly relevant given that the Italian Republic has a significantly larger number of military educational institutions and a higher student enrollment compared to Hungary.

Applicability of Research Findings

Due to its interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary character, this dissertation can be utilized across multiple fields, making its analyses and research findings widely applicable.

- **Social science education and research:** The findings can be integrated into the study of collective memory, ritual theory, and identity research, contributing to the theoretical analysis of national representations.
- **Cultural policy and memory politics:** They may support a more deliberate handling of the social effects of symbolic commemorative acts and encourage the rearticulation of historical and protocol elements.
- **Military and state protocol development:** In the further development of the officer commissioning ceremony and the August 20 celebrations, the research offers guidance for aligning events with social changes while preserving their historical and cultural depth.
- **Community and school identity formation:** The pedagogical interpretation of national and military symbols can serve as a tool for strengthening identity formation.

New Directions for Research

This dissertation primarily examined the role of Hungarian national and military identity through the study of memory, symbols, and (military) protocol, complemented by a comparative analysis with the Italian Republic. It focused on research conducted in sociology, military science, and international relations. The scope of the dissertation did not allow for the exploration of additional areas; therefore, future research should consider the following topics:

- **Civil society’s relationship to military celebrations:** Future studies should investigate how society perceives and evaluates the cultural significance of military ceremonies and what generational differences in attitudes can be identified.
- **The impact of visual elements of protocol on identity formation:** Research should analyze how ceremonial visual elements (e.g., dress uniforms, locations, choreographies) influence the shaping of national identity.
- **Comparative study of the officer commissioning ritual:** Further work should compare the Hungarian commissioning ceremony with military rites in other countries, identifying both similarities and differences in their identity-forming functions.
- **The “life cycle” of symbols in the context of social media:** Studies should explore how the representation and societal interpretation of symbols change in the online space, and how these dynamics influence official memory politics.
- **The representation of female roles in military protocol:** Research should examine how female soldiers are represented in protocol events, the narratives that frame their presence, and what changes have occurred over the past decades.

The recommendations, together with the theoretical and practical applicability of the research findings and the proposed new research directions, create opportunities to situate Hungarian national and military identity within the international discourse on collective and cultural memory and identity studies. Moreover, they contribute to strengthening the relationship between civil society and the armed forces. By presenting the traditions of the Hungarian Defence Forces (units), these efforts can bring the two closer together, while also reinforcing in service members a sense of responsibility for preserving and transmitting defense, military, branch, and unit traditions.

Related Publications of the Author

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2. Füleki Réka (2021a). A kulturális emlékezet megjelenése a katonai protokollban. Hadtudományi Szemle 14/1. 101. ISSN 2676-9816. DOI: 10.32563/HSZ.2021.1.7.
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The Author's Professional Biography

The author obtained a Bachelor's degree in English Studies at the University of Debrecen, followed by a Master's degree in Translation and Interpreting with a Hungarian–English–Italian language combination. She continued her studies at the Budapest Metropolitan University, where she earned a degree in Protocol Consulting and Event Management, completing her thesis entitled *Military Protocol at State Ceremonies from Trianon to the Regime Change*.

She participated in several ERASMUS+ and Campus Mundi exchange programs in Italy, studying at the Università degli Studi "G. d'Annunzio" Chieti–Pescara, the Università degli Studi di Padova, and attending Italian language courses at the Università per Stranieri "Dante Alighieri" è l'Ateneo di Reggio Calabria. After completing her Master's degree, she undertook an internship in Florence at the Europass Italian Language School.

She uses English and Italian as working languages and is continuously developing her German and Spanish proficiency to support the accuracy and scope of her future research. Her academic work is listed with 15 entries in the Hungarian Scientific Bibliography (HSB), with publications in Hungarian and English appearing in national journals and international conference proceedings.

Professionally, she worked as an international officer at Ludovika University of Public Service, gaining several years of experience in hosting foreign delegations, organizing official missions, and coordinating the ERASMUS+ program. Subsequently, she was employed at the Hungarian Defence Forces „vitéz Szurmay Sándor” Budapest Garrison Brigade, at the Directorate for Protocol, Delegation, and Event Security, where she served as Senior Translator and Interpreter. Her responsibilities included interpreting at official events and translating specialized protocol-related documents. The professional experience gained in this position significantly contributed to the advancement of her research, the results of which she has presented at both national and international conferences. She has also occasionally served as a panel chair at conferences organized by the Ludovika University of Public Service.