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Making new 'Solidarities': The Polish intelligentsia and the lasting legacy of the historical social movement

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Abstract

This article returns to sociological investigation of the intriguing phenomenon of the Solidarity social movement. Contrary to a popular position which sees Solidarity as important but closed chapter in Polish history, we argue that its legacy, in contrast to other historic events such as Prague's spring and Hungarian uprising, should be seen as an ongoing social process in Poland and in the broader region of Eastern and Central Europe. In order to lay out our argument we describe Polish intelligentsia members' practices aimed at the reproduction and strengthening of the legacy of Solidarity – an important tool which legitimizes intelligentsia's dominant position in the post-communist Poland. In the empirical part we are particularly interested in analysis of efforts aimed at strengthening the legacy of Solidarity by universalizing it at the transnational level, which we analyzed on the case study of interaction between members of the Polish and Ukrainian elites.

Keywords: Solidarity; Poland; Ukraine; elites; intelligentsia

1 Introduction

The Solidarity social movement is commonly presented as one of the greatest achievements of Polish society in the 20th century. Some have even compared it to such social phenomena as the civil rights movement in the U.S. and the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa (Kubik, 2015). However, a number of intellectuals as well as scholars have argued that the social energy Solidarity generated dissipated after 1989 (Krasnodębski, 2011; Krzemiński, 2013; Kubik & Linch, 2006), leaving it as an event belonging to the past, alongside such events as the Hungarian Uprising of 1956 and the Prague Spring of 1968. In consequence, works on the heritage of Solidarity can be located most often within the field of memory studies and memory policy research (cf. Pearce, 2015).

Contrary to this position, we will show that the legacy of Solidarity still functions as an active semantic frame, which is being related to ongoing political processes in contemporary Poland and to political developments in other states of Central and Eastern

Europe. We explain its persistent functioning by interpreting it as an important item of symbolic capital confirming and strengthening Poland's distinctive role within the Western world, and the dominant position of the Polish intelligentsia elite¹ as the key actor fulfilling this role.

We argue that Polish intelligentsia's social practices that reinforce the significance of the Solidarity movement, also valorize the significance of the anti-communist opposition, the core of which was the intelligentsia. This group stood at the forefront of Solidarity, especially after the trade union was delegalized (following the introduction of the martial law in 1981) and had to 'go clandestine'. Anti-communist intelligentsia members later became the main domestic interlocutors with the ruling communist elite, during the so-called Round Table Talks. At least in the dominant narratives, the fact that in the frame of Solidarity, most of society, led by the intelligentsia counter-elite, disobeyed the Communist Party confirms the democratic mandate for this social group to hold political power after the fall of the communist system.

Indeed, it was the intelligentsia elite that reached for full political and symbolic power in 1989, which can also explain why the Solidarity revolution was never considered to be completely over. For it should be remembered that not only does the Solidarity trade union still exist (although in 1989 there were numerous voices that its name should be changed in connection with the fall of communism), but – as we will show – a number of institutions and informal circles declare that they are engaged in further implementation of Solidarity's ideals, both in Poland and on the international scene.

The legacy of the Solidarity movement is also important for Polish elites as one of the main symbolic tools legitimizing Poland's distinctive role in the Western community. The legacy of this movement includes its interpretation as a milestone on the road to the peaceful dismantling of the Eastern Bloc and the expansion of the zone of democratic order. Thus, the importance of the legacy of Solidarity is also related to its function as a narrative legitimizing Poland's engagement in geopolitical transformation in Eastern Europe after 1989, including in the first place in Ukraine. Contrary to approaches that interpret this engagement in terms of imperial ambitions (Markov, 2013) or as motivated by Russophobia (Taras, 2014) we see this phenomenon in terms of class interests – as motivated by the desire to accumulate the symbolic capital related to the legacy of Solidarity. Thus, the Solidarity legacy is a factor that both legitimizes the above-mentioned engagement and provides incentives for such activities.

The legacy of Solidarity is particularly interesting due to its functioning at the transnational level as an 'expanding' phenomenon. What we mean here, is that in order to reproduce and strengthen the legacy of Solidarity through its universalization, the Polish elite has attempted to symbolically incorporate contemporary political and social processes in Eastern Europe into the tradition started by the movement. Within this framework, these events become 'new Solidarities' and actors involved in the events – new

¹ Following Eyal, Szelenyi and Townsley (1994) as well as Zarycki (2009) we understand the intelligentsia elite as a group that bases its social position mainly on cultural capital; in contrast to the bourgeoisie (economic capital) or the nomenklatura (political capital).

'heirs' to Solidarity. The uniqueness of this phenomenon can be seen when contrasted with other mythologized movements leading to the overthrow of communism, such as the Czechoslovak 'Velvet Revolution' or the Baltic 'movements in support of perestroika' like 'Sajudis'. The symbolism of none of these is actively used today to describe contemporary political processes, either in specific countries or in the international space.

We analyze this process on the case study of Polish–Ukrainian relations and the Revolution of Dignity in 2014. The second Maidan revolution – seen as one of the most important steps in geopolitical reorientation of the post-soviet space – was an event that generated enormous engagement within Polish elites and wider parts of society. Against the backdrop of a widespread activity of Polish elites, the functioning of discourses related to Solidarity is thus particularly observable.

As we will show, the attempts to 'brand' this event as a continuation of the Solidarity tradition by Poles have been accepted by some important parts of the Ukrainian elite, including the highest representatives of political power and politically involved intelligentsia members. Their use of the 'new Solidarities discourse' can be seen as a compensation for Polish support for their cause. Last but not least, a similar appreciation for Polish elites in the form of legitimization for such symbolic incorporations also comes from Western elites, particularly Americans.²

In order to show the functioning of the legacy of Solidarity in Polish–Ukrainian relations, we will focus on the elites' interactions within two 'social spaces': the highest echelons of the political elites, and on spontaneous interactions between members of the Ukrainian diaspora in Poland, who were active during protests in Warsaw supporting the Revolution of Dignity and Poles, who joined these street actions (Dunin-Wąsowicz & Fomina, 2019; Łada & Böttger, 2019; Lapshyna, 2019). The first case, encompassing official addresses by leaders of both countries in their parliaments, can be seen as an indicator of a certain 'weight', that the discourse of 'new Solidarities' achieved – being included in the symbolic framework of mutual relations.

In contrast, the second case seems very useful as an example of a quite spontaneous and yet spectacular functioning of the legacy of Solidarity outside the cabinets of elected officials – illustrating the breadth and multidimensionality of this discourse within the different elite circles. Although the group under study is restricted to supporters of a certain set of socio-political ideas (which can be summarized as a support for pro-Western geopolitical orientation of Ukraine), it is relevant also due to gradual yet constant strengthening of such stance withing Ukrainian elites and broader parts of society as well as in the face of strengthening of Polish–Ukrainian relations during the recent phase of the Russian invasion in Ukraine. We may thus argue that the synchronization in the symbolic sphere, described in this article will likely play even more important role, should such rapprochement continue.

We see the legacy of Solidarity primarily as a discursive tool and a symbolic item. However, in contrast to approaches that locate this phenomenon solely in a symbolic

² In his speech in 2014, the then American president Barack Obama announced: 'The Ukrainians of today are the heirs of Solidarity – men and women like you who dared to challenge a bankrupt regime' (Obama, 2014).

sphere (Cizewska, 2010; Gawin, 2002), we will try to show that it is strongly embedded in a non-discursive sphere. The proposed perspective thus contributes to analysis of symbolic struggles among CEE elites (Zubrzycki, 2006), especially within the non-culturalist paradigm which departs from explaining the mechanisms of contemporary Polish society from a solely culturalistic perspective (cf. Zarycki et al., 2017). Moreover, sociological profile of the Ukrainian activists and their Polish counterparts (described in the next parts of this article) – suggesting their proximity to Polish intelligentsia – further elucidate the often-omitted class dimension of functioning of different identity discourses in CEE, including the one on the Solidarity legacy.

This article will focus on the analysis and critical reinterpretation of the practices of commemorating and reproducing the Solidarity movement and its legacy. First, through institutions created to popularize the legacy of Solidarity and social practices such as naming the streets and erecting commemorative monuments. Second, through synchronization of interests and actions of several other institutions and groups within the given symbolic frame. Thus, this work contributes to memory studies in CEE memory studies and memory policy research (Bernhard & Kubik, 2014).

Solidarity's legacy is used to legitimize contemporary political or even economic interests (through their universalization). At the same time, such active uses of a given legacy, confer on it the status of a 'real' social phenomenon. This is well visible in the case of Polish-Ukrainian relations, in which an important background for synchronization in the symbolic sphere between elites of the two countries has been created through political actions and material assistance.

2 Methodology and data

The empirical part of the article is based primarily on qualitative research into discourses voiced by the important parts of the elites of Poland and Ukraine, and on participant observation during protests in Warsaw.

First, we analyze official speeches of the highest political leaders from Poland and Ukraine referring to the mutual relations and recent history. We applied a purposeful selection of texts, aiming – on the one hand – at including the key speeches from the point of view of their political salience, and on the other – at gathering speeches that made any reference to the Solidarity movement. In this respect, the speeches delivered by leaders during official visits were of the utmost importance. Such addresses are characterized by a high degree of solemnity. In order to increase the representativeness of the presented discourses, while selecting the texts we tried to take into account politicians from different elite factions, as well as providing a historical perspective – the earliest of the examined texts came from 2005, and the latest from 2021. In such a way, we analyzed some of the most important speeches (guest addresses to joint sessions of parliaments) made by the leaders of both countries during mutual visits since 2005.

Secondly, we analyze the narratives voiced by members of the Ukrainian diaspora in Poland who were involved in organizing public support for the Ukrainian Revolution of Dignity. For this purpose, we use empirical material from in-depth semi-structured inter-

views conducted in Warsaw and Wrocław,³ in 2015 and 2016. The respondents were predominantly activists associated with NGOs operating in Poland. The basic criterion for selection was their participation in the actions of support for Euromaidan mentioned above. Respondents were recruited through participatory observation centered on various events related to Ukraine and organized by multiple social actors; this lasted for approximately 12 months. We also gained access to some respondents via recommendation (snowball effect).

3 The intelligentsia and the Solidarity movement in previous scholarly interpretations

The spectacular events surrounding the emergence of the Solidarity social movement, which saw representatives of the working class and intelligentsia cooperating on an unprecedented scale prompted a robust scholarly literature. The initial wave of academic publications on the so-called first Solidarity included works by Alain Touraine and his team (1984), Timothy Garton Ash (1984), and Jadwiga Staniszkis (1984).

Perhaps the most famous was the first one, by a well-known theorist of social movements, who interpreted Solidarity as a 'total social movement', encompassing national, democratic, and class-related aspirations. At the same time, he believed that issues of political freedom, which were particularly strongly supported by the intelligentsia, came to the fore over time. This can be interpreted as evidence of the growing influence of representatives of the opposition intelligentsia (including in the frame of the Committee for the Defense of Workers) acting as 'advisors'. The crucial importance of the movement's intelligentsia leaders was emphasized by a number of early accounts of the revolution (Bromke, 1983; Garton Ash, 1984; Pelczyński, 1988). This interpretation was in line with the view presented by the Polish intelligentsia themselves, including its members actively involved in the events (Kołakowski, 1983; Lipski, 1985; Michnik, 1985).

After the collapse of real socialism, Laba (1991) and Goodwyn (1991) presented a 'revisionist' position on the importance of the role played by the intelligentsia. Both argued that Solidarity was primarily a working-class movement, while the role of the intelligentsia was overestimated. They explained this by how representatives of the intelligentsia had acted as intermediaries in contacts with Western observers, through which the former could spread the myth of their central role, among other factors (cf. Karabel, 1992). Goodwyn also referred to 'scholarly over-identification with sundry roles played by intellectuals in politics of protest' (Goodwyn, 1991, p. xxix). Goodwyn and Laba's theses provoked a number of polemics from Western scholars (Bernhard, 1991; Kubik, 1994b; Tymowski, 1991).

³ 46 interviews were conducted in the frame of the doctoral project on activities of social movements of Ukrainian diaspora members in Poland, conducted by one of the authors of this article. As it turned out, part of this empirical material was consistent with the research questions underpinning this article and could be used to illustrate our thesis.

The question of the significance of the activities of the intelligentsia opposition for the emergence of Solidarity was raised in many other publications published after 1989 (Bernhard, 1993; Kennedy, 1991; Kubik, 1994a; Osa, 1997; Ost, 1990).⁴ The class interpretation, however, has rarely been taken up by other scholars (cf. Siermiński, 2020). Thus, the dominant picture of the rise of the Solidarity movement in Polish and foreign academic literature is therefore consistent with that presented by representatives of the Polish intelligentsia.

Similarly, the scarce scientific literature concerning the functioning of the legacy of Solidarity after 1989 corresponds to the view vastly present in Polish public sphere – that this legacy has been lost (Krasnodebski, 2011). In his context, a strong position is taken by Kubik and Linch, who argue that

‘Solidarity’ – one of the most massive and consequential social movements in history – has not had a particularly dazzling political and scholarly afterlife. It was one of the major causes of state socialism’s downfall yet it has neither come to play an active and crucial role in the Polish historical memory nor has it entered a canon of routinely studied ‘great’ revolutions or social movements. (Kubik & Linch, 2006, p. 9)

This interpretation can be combined with Ost’s (2005) observations on the dissociation of former Solidarity leaders, led by representatives of the intelligentsia, from the trade union base as part of the introduction of the capitalist order. The disintegration of the social movement – both vertically (divisions between the intelligentsia and the working class) and horizontally (divisions within the elites) – seems indisputable.

On the other hand, other scholars point out, that the symbolic heritage of Solidarity was eagerly used by Polish elites for political purposes after 1989 (Bielasiak, 2010). This included the competition over who were the ‘true’ heirs of Solidarity, and attempts at social mobilization with reference to the movement’s heritage. In our text we would like to complement this complicated picture by pointing out that although Polish intelligentsia elites remain deeply politically divided over the interpretation of Solidarity’s legacy, they are united by a neutralized conviction of the value of this legacy, as well as by such an interpretation of it that makes it possible to present the intelligentsia as the rightful heirs of Solidarity.

4 The legacy of Solidarity as Polish intelligentsia’s symbolic tool

In order to grasp the meaning and functioning of the Solidarity legacy, one has to take into account a specific feature of the Polish elites: the centrality of the intelligentsia (Zarycki, 2009). This social group, especially prominent in Eastern Europe, bases its social position on the resources of cultural capital.⁵ One of the consequences of the hegemony of the intel-

⁴ For a comprehensive review of the debate about the roots of Solidarity movement see (Bloom, 2013; Meardi, 2005; Mielczarek, 2019)

⁵ The gradual increase of cultural capital at the expense of political capital in post-communist Central Europe has been first noticed by Eyal et al. (1998); Zarycki (2014).

ligentsia is the great importance that struggles over cultural and identity issues play in Polish social life. The function of these, not always obvious to outside observers, is to establish internal hierarchies through the distribution of a specific symbolic capital (Zarycki et al., 2017).

The legacy of Solidarity can be seen as one of the most important sources of this capital.⁶ The appreciation of the importance of this social movement – including its role as one of the main factors contributing to the fall of communism in Eastern Europe – also appreciates the activity of the intelligentsia democratic opposition as the ‘heirs’ of this movement. The Solidarity experience also validates claims about the agency of Polish society in the frame of major geopolitical changes in the 20th century, in contrast to the post-World War II settlement, symbolized by the detested Yalta agreements.

The role of the legacy of Solidarity as an important resource of symbolic capital within Polish elites can be noticed by observation of their social practices; in particular, actions strengthening and reproducing the legacy of Solidarity. The significance of this myth is shown by the scale of these practices. However, an attempt to present the entirety of actions taken by the Polish elite to strengthen and reproduce the legacy of Solidarity would exceed the scope of this article. It is sufficient to mention regular celebrations of successive anniversaries of the creation of the movement, and the innumerable references to the importance of these events in official political, media, and academic discourses. The symbolic legacy of Solidarity is also present in the architectural dimension, in the form of monuments, commemorative plaques, or street names. Moreover, it appears just as often in the contexts of current political life. It can, for example, be noted, that the current motto of Poland’s most important opinion newspaper, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, is ‘There is no freedom without Solidarity.’

Importantly, the strengthening and reproduction of Solidarity’s heritage also have a strong institutional dimension. As of 2019, Poland has two publicly funded institutions established for this purpose – the European Solidarity Centre (pol. Europejskie Centrum Solidarność, ECS) and the Solidarity Heritage Institute (pol. Instytut Dziedzictwa Solidarności, IDS). The existence of two institutions with very similar tasks is related to something else that proves the importance of the Solidarity heritage: the recognition of its significance by all dominant factions within the Polish elite. The first of these institutions was created back in 2007 on the initiative of the Civic Platform and is characterized by a ‘liberal’ profile. In turn, the Solidarity Heritage Institute, established only in 2019 under the rule of the Law and Justice-led coalition, has a ‘conservative’ profile. A recognition of the movement’s role was expressed even by the faction of former communist apparatchiks led by the then-president Aleksander Kwasniewski (*Udział Prezydenta RP w Konferencji „Od Solidarności Do Wolności”*, 2005).

This widespread recognition of the value of Solidarity’s heritage simultaneously entails a rivalry, at the core of which is the dispute over the status of the legitimate ‘heir[s]’ (Bielasiak, 2010). These struggles are particularly intense in the periods before anniversaries

⁶ One can point to some other similar sources, such as the tradition of the Polish underground during World War II (especially the Home Army) or the Warsaw Uprising. The other example could be famous intelligentsia members such as the anti-communist émigré activist and editor – Jerzy Giedroyc (Turkowski, 2020).

saries of the creation of Solidarity (Szuldrzyński, 2011). Regularly, they even involved court battles over the legal right to use the movement's historical logo (Dąbrowska, 2016; cf. "Nie po to miliony naszych rodaków walczyło o demokrację, aby dziś pluto im w twarz," 2022; Socha, 2021) as well as attempts to strengthen (and weaken) the significance of roles played by particular working class leaders involved in the movement; afterwards affiliated with different intelligentsia factions, such as Lech Wałęsa, Hanna Krzywonos and on the other hand – Anna Walentynowicz and Andrzej Gwiazda.

The attitudes of the Polish intelligentsia elite to the legacy of Solidarity are also clearly visible in one of their typical social practices: the publication of books. In these books, the phenomenon of Solidarity is not only commemorated (thus, reproduced) but also treated as a lasting foundation for legitimizing competing ideas aimed at (re)organizing the Polish state or, more broadly, the public sphere. In this context, looking at only the youngest generations of the Polish intelligentsia, several books can be mentioned (Łuczewski et al., 2015; Mazur, 2017; Rojek, 2009; Siermiński, 2020; Sowa, 2015). The fact that Solidarity is not just an academic or historical issue is visible not only in the content of the abovementioned books but also in the career patterns of their authors. Some of them have held purely political positions; others have been part of advisory bodies to politicians. Finally, references to the expertise in interpreting the Solidarity phenomenon are used to legitimize their contributions to the media sphere on current political issues (Sowa, 2016).

The legacy of Solidarity as a resource of symbolic capital also has an international dimension related to the appreciation of the movement, including in particular from Western elites and societies. This was manifested above all by the Nobel Peace Prize awarded to Solidarity's leader Lech Wałęsa, but also in material support from actors and social groups ranging from the labor movement (Goddeeris, 2010) to political elites (especially American) and the world of culture (Krasnodębski, 2006; Ost, 2016). In Western Europe, Solidarity pushed intellectuals on the road to the final abandoning of socialist economic ideals (Krasnodębski, 2006). In the United States, Solidarity put wind in the sails of American conservatives and their neoconservative foreign policy, which included the idea of democracy promotion around the world (Muravchik, 2002).

Thus, the legacy of Solidarity became one of the key symbolic elements in the relationship between Polish and U.S. elites, in particularly their cooperation in supporting post-communist transformations in Eastern Europe. In this context, one can recall the Polish–American initiative 'Community of Democracies.' One of promoters of this initiative, the then Minister of Foreign Affairs Bronisław Geremek (and one of the key leaders of Solidarity) stated during the inauguration ceremony:

I come from a movement that took the noblest human feeling as its name: Solidarity. And I want to remain faithful to that solidarity. Mature democracies, comprising about a third of the world's states, owe solidarity both to those who are deprived of freedom and those who are building democracy with difficulty. (Montgomery & Jabłońska, 2000)

This example draws attention to another dimension of the phenomenon under scrutiny – that, with the notable exception of Lech Wałęsa, it is mainly the intelligentsia that is able to represent Poland abroad in the frame of elite interactions, particularly on more or less official occasions. This is also true of Solidarity, both historically (Goddeeris, 2011) and after 1989 (cf. Kaczyński, 2006). Such ability to control international elite interactions serves as an additional source of strength and legitimacy for the intelligentsia.

To sum up, the legacy of Solidarity should be seen as a resource of symbolic capital over which various factions of the Polish elite compete. This rivalry, however, should not obscure the fact that, paradoxically the myth of Solidarity is simultaneously strengthened by constant and frequent references by members of intelligentsia, as a whole. In the next part of this article, we will show that the process of reproduction and strengthening of the legacy of Solidarity also works at the transnational level.

5 The legacy of Solidarity in Polish–Ukrainian relations

A good perspective for observing processes of reproduction and strengthening of the legacy of Solidarity at the international level is provided by the analysis of interactions between elites (cf. Kuus, 2004). In this section we will focus on these interactions – resulting in synchronization of symbolic interpretation of political events in Ukraine – in two different social spaces: Parliaments and gathering of activists.

In order to understand the successes of the Polish intelligentsia's efforts in reproduction of Solidarity discourse in cooperation with Ukrainian elites, it is important to see their interactions as embedded in a non-discursive sphere. In the case of relations with Ukrainian political elites, one should consider, in particular, support for Ukraine's integration with the West.

Since 1989 Polish ruling elites have been consistent in their support for Ukraine's integration with the West, lobbying for Ukrainian entry into the EU and NATO, as 'Ukraine's advocate'. Polish politicians were personally engaged during critical moments of political upheavals in Ukraine. Among the most spectacular cases was former president Aleksander Kwaśniewski's mediating mission during the so-called Orange Revolution in 2004. The historical leader of Solidarity, Lech Wałęsa, and many other key Polish politicians also traveled to Kyiv to support the protesters. Similarly, during the Euromaidan, representatives of the Polish political class from both sides of the aisle (including some who were active in Polish Solidarity) readily visited the Maidan. Then foreign affairs minister Radek Sikorski was also engaged in dramatic negotiations between the protesters and Ukrainian authorities.

Back in Poland, they would present these events as falling within the Solidarity tradition, as Kwaśniewski did during the 25th anniversary of Solidarity („Od Solidarności do wolności” Konferencja Międzynarodowa, 2005, p. 13). Importantly for its universalization efforts, such a framing of important political events in Ukraine has been seized on by some of the Ukrainian political leaders themselves. For example, Viktor Yushchenko, who became president on the wave of the Orange Revolution, publicly linked this event (and consequently his access to power) to the legacy of Solidarity (Światowi przywódcy o roli Solidarności, 2005).

Similar references accompanied the second revolution in Ukraine. Thus, in his 2015 speech in the Verkhovna Rada⁷ of Ukraine, the then president of Poland – Bronisław Komorowski – pointed out to Ukrainian political elites, the Polish experience of Solidarity as an inspiration for carrying out reforms bringing Ukraine closer to the West:

⁷ Verkhovna Rada is the 450-member unicameral national parliament of Ukraine.

A week ago, I met in Warsaw with a group of deputies to the Verkhovna Rada, representing a new generation of Ukrainian parliamentarians – I can see some of these faces even today in this hall. I admit to being deeply moved during that meeting, because I looked at this group of young, brave people serving their own homeland a little as if I were looking at my own circle from 25 years ago. A milieu of Solidarity people, a milieu of former revolutionaries who grappled with reality, already as a member of civil service, of the government or parliament. I told these young Ukrainian parliamentarians what I really deeply believe – that the Polish experience says clearly that in the face of the greatest danger it is sometimes easiest, or at least necessary, to find in oneself a deep determination to act and to carry out reforms. (Wystąpienie Prezydenta RP w Radzie Najwyższej Ukrainy, 2015)

Again, these words can find positive response from the Ukrainian side – in a solemn speech by the Ukrainian president Petr Poroshenko, which he delivered at the forum of the combined houses of the Polish Parliament shortly after the end of the Revolution of Dignity (and a few months before the speech quoted above by Komorowski). Already the accompanying gestures clearly showed the process of 'extending' and 'accepting' the legacy of Solidarity. The Solidarity heritage was mentioned even before the Ukrainian president started his speech. While introducing him, the then Speaker of the Sejm compared Poroshenko to the leader of Solidarity, Lech Walesa, because of the former's role during the protests in Kyiv's Maidan. In turn, the Ukrainian leader appeared in the parliament with a badge celebrating the 25th anniversary of the 1989 elections, which used the characteristic font from the Solidarity logo. The content of Poroshenko's speech fitted well into the framework outlined by the Polish Speaker of the Sejm. He inscribed the recent events in Ukraine, which catapulted him to the highest post, into the heritage of Solidarity:

Today Ukraine is a free and democratic country, just as the Polish Solidarity once fought for it. We will always remember this. For this we will always be grateful. ("Uroczyste Zgromadzenie Posłów i Senatorów w dniu 17 grudnia 2014 r.," 2004, p. 3)

In these two crucial speeches made by the leaders of Poland and Ukraine in the months following the Revolution of Dignity, we can see a synchronization of interpretations of this important political event, which included linking it to the tradition started by Solidarity movement.

6 The diaspora in Warsaw on the wave of the revolution in Ukraine

6.1 The US-sponsored platform for interactions between Polish and Ukrainian elites

In order to show the exceptional persistence and 'transnational expansion' of the legacy of Solidarity, we show that the discourse of 'new Solidarities' functions also in spontaneous interactions between Polish and Ukrainian elite members. At the center of our analysis are members of the Ukrainian diaspora who played active roles in activities in support of the Euromaidan in Warsaw. Although the group was diverse in terms of social status, pro-

fessional background, and migration trajectory, its informal core was made up of Ukrainian activists connected to NGOs, media outlets, and the world of academia (Dunin-Wąsowicz & Fomina, 2019; Łada & Böttger, 2019; Lapshyna, 2019); These protests also attracted Poles who wanted to express their solidarity. As with the Ukrainians, among them were representatives of broadly understood elites, drawn from politics, the media, and NGOs (cf. Gawlik, 2014). Thus, we can argue that these interactions occurred among people with a similar social status as members of the intelligentsia.

As in the case of the realm of high politics, the functioning of the discourse of ‘new Solidarities’ among the community of activists and intellectuals has been founded on strong non-discursive pillars. In particular, one must mention the robust Polish assistance for different segments of societies in Eastern Europe, aimed at integrating these countries with the West. The systematic description of the landscape of actors involved in the support, and the catalogue of their actions, vastly exceeds the scope of this article.⁸ Let us just briefly sketch the assistance for our case study: Ukraine, which has been among the most important recipients of this support. We will focus on a few examples of institutions and actions taken towards non-governmental actors in Ukraine, as some of them subsequently ended up as members of the Ukrainian diaspora in Poland, participating in the above-mentioned protests.

After 1989, Polish elites launched a number of support projects, sponsored and carried out by both state-affiliated institutions and NGOs, directed at activists, students, researchers, journalists, and artists in Ukraine – roles and professions often occupied by intelligentsia members. Artists and intellectuals were offered the government-sponsored ‘*Gaude Polonia*’ scholarships (Kowal, 2017). In the academic sphere, one can point to the Centre for East European Studies at the University of Warsaw, the Graduate School for Social Research at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences (GSSR PAN), and the College of Europe in Natolin – as examples of leading institutions educating prospective elites from Ukraine. Alumni include Andrii Deshchytsia, the former Ukrainian minister of foreign affairs and ambassador to Poland at the time of the protests (25 Lat Studium Europy Wschodniej UW, 2015). The Polish intelligentsia has also built bonds with Ukrainian elites through various projects related to media outlets (Galus, 2019).

An important role in the assistance to Poland’s eastern neighbors was played by institutions from the Third Sector. As stated by an activist from a prominent umbrella NGO, the Batory Foundation, at the beginning of the 21st century, ‘almost all important Polish non-governmental organizations were in various forms engaged in activities [in Ukraine]’ (Kosiewski, 2003, pp. 7–8).

An important aspect of the success of creating such a platform for Polish–Ukrainian interaction has been involvement of international donors, including the United States in the first place. Although Polish NGOs were already engaged in Ukraine by the mid-1990s, particularly important was a decision by American donors to redirect assistance for post-communist transformation from Central to Eastern Europe. In these schemes, Polish

⁸ For a comprehensive description, see for example Pospieszna (2014).

institutions often played the role of contractors (Petrova, 2012) and the legacy of Solidarity has been used to legitimize such cooperation. As an excellent example, one can point to the Polish–American Freedom Foundation, which launched the Lane Kirkland scholarship program (mainly for Ukrainians) – funded by U.S. donation and named after a legendary American trade union leader who supported Solidarity and assisted it during communist times.

In addition to the name of the program, the persistence of the legacy of Solidarity is visible in the fact that one of the institutions hosting students and coordinating the scholarship program is the Center for East European Studies at the University of Warsaw, founded by a community of former opposition members from the intelligentsia who during the communist period strove to strengthen contacts with anticommunist activists in the Eastern Bloc (Turkowski, 2020, pp. 87–88). Thus, in a symbolic dimension, the Center can be said to continue its underground intelligentsia mission for the integration of the Eastern European elites under the auspices of the US.

Such a Polish–US cooperation was favorable for intelligentsia members who worked in other institutions engaged in support of Ukraine. Some of them had personal experience of being active in the 'original' Solidarity (Chimiak, 2016). Such favorable circumstances allowed them to continue their mission of bringing freedom and democracy to the East as well as to act as important 'heirs' of the Solidarity legacy. Thus, discourses about the legacy of Solidarity have been strongly present, providing a rationale and legitimization for Polish international assistance (Drażkiewicz-Grodzicka, 2015).

Moreover, members of the Ukrainian diaspora in Poland were also engaged in the realization of these programs, thanks to their language skills as well as their local knowledge. In this way they gained activist experience which they later utilized in mobilizing the diaspora during the Euromaidan protests (Dunin-Wąsowicz & Fomina, 2019). One can suspect that such cooperation may have likely exposed Ukrainian diaspora members to discourses on the legacy of Solidarity.

6.2 Maidan as a continuation of Solidarity

The events related to the Ukrainian Revolution of Dignity led to an intensification of the discourses of the 'new Solidarities'. Efforts to build a symbolic bridge linking the events in Ukraine with the history of Solidarity included the use of symbols related to the movement. For example, the authorities of the trade union Solidarity decided to support the Ukrainians by hanging flags over their headquarters with the famous union logo in the colors of the Ukrainian flag. In Gdańsk, by the Monument to the Fallen Shipyard Workers, local authorities together with the European Solidarity Center organized a commemorative ceremony to honor of the victims of protests in Ukraine ("Kilkaset osób wzięło udział w wiecu solidarności z Ukrainą," 2014). Also significant in this context was the establishment of the Civic Committee of Solidarity with Ukraine in January 2014. Its name clearly refers to the tradition of Solidarity with its civic committees, created for the organization of the 1989 election campaign. The newly established committee gathered members of the intelligentsia, including those with experience in the Polish Solidarity movement.

The discourse of ‘new Solidarity’ reached protesting members of the Ukrainian diaspora, evident from the recollection of one of the Ukrainian activists engaged in protests outside the Ukrainian Embassy:

During the Maidan, almost every Pole said that we are now experiencing what they were experiencing during the Solidarity movement. They tried to tell us something, help, tell us what they did, share their experience. And many Solidarity activists came to us, they participated very actively and helped in every possible way ... For me it was something positive, because such people came with their own experience and willingness to help, and not to lecture someone. I think both we and they understood that we were operating in completely different times. When they told us how they were dealing with samizdat, they were printing some leaflets somewhere in the basement. Fortunately, we didn’t have to do it anymore, because there is the Internet and there is Facebook. Our activity has already worked completely differently in practice. However, when it comes to the theory and values for which we and they fought, we rather have a lot in common. [WAW 1]

One can argue that these protests ‘triggered’ Polish intellectual elite members’ memories of their own social and political activities in the frame of Solidarity. One can point to similarities between this period and the 1980s. While back in communist times Polish intellectuals served as ‘advisors’ to workers, more recently they swiftly adopted the role of ‘advisors’ to Ukrainians. From a class perspective, one can see here the functioning of a class privilege that allows intelligentsia members to easily take on the role of ‘advisors,’ most likely, without even sensing the inequality underpinning such a relationship. Here one can again recall the official speech by former president Komorowski, in which he pointed to his milieu as an example to follow.

This mechanism, however, is not restricted to people with personal experience in Solidarity. Another interviewee – a Polish national married to a Ukrainian and also an activist in a Ukrainian diaspora NGO – also made a comparison with the movement:

Anyway, for my generation, who had no clue what the strikes in the 1980s looked like ... because it’s not our history and we just don’t remember it, it’s 2004 when you go out on the street for a good cause and suddenly the world changes and it is as it should be. It was cool, I won’t say. Anyway, it was my first experience. [WAW 2]

Thus, one can again stress that such an ‘association’ or ‘memory’ exceeds personal or even group boundaries and has become a strong narrative among Polish elites.

Importantly, as we have shown above, through intra-elite interaction this discourse has not only reached but also has been accepted by representatives of Ukrainian elites supporting a pro-European agenda for Ukraine.⁹ As one Ukrainian immigrant, who had lived in Poland for three years prior to the outburst of protest, said at the time:

⁹ A similar phenomenon can be observed in relations within Belarusian elites. For example, Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, one of the leaders of Belarusian opposition, took part in the ceremony inaugurating a monument commemorating the Solidarity movement in Warsaw. Other leaders of the Belarusian opposition made public comparisons between Solidarity and their struggle against Aleksandr Lukashenko’s regime (Krzysztozek, 2021; see also for example Szoszyn & Dylewski, 2021).

There is great support from Poles, and, above all, it is an exchange of experiences. They [the Poles] experienced what we have today over 30 years ago. And the Ukrainians today should listen to everything that was happening in Poland back then. (Karpacz-Oboładze, 2022)

One can hypothesize that at least partial motivation/incentive for such references relates to (Western) European ambitions on behalf of this part of Ukrainian elites. In this context Poland, with its political mythology, serves as a point of reference and an important intermediary, which may be seen as the flip side of its role as Ukraine's advocate in the West.

7 Conclusion

In this article we have argued that the phenomenon of the Solidarity social movement is not of a purely historical nature but has been continuously present in social life in Poland since 1989. Moreover, despite the deep factionalization of the Polish elite, there exists a naturalized core, related to Solidarity's legacy which is shared across the political and ideological spectrum. We have identified its function within the Polish intellectual elite as a specific item of symbolic capital reaffirming the intelligentsia's dominant position within Polish society, a mechanism of social hierarchization and for synchronization of political and ideological stances. Thus, one can argue that intra-elite rivalries over the legacy of Solidarity after 1989 should be seen as a sign not of Solidarity's diminished relevance but, on the contrary, of the continued relevance of its legacy.

In order to emphasize the importance of this source of symbolic capital, we have pointed to selected yet substantial and diversified discourses about the legacy of Solidarity as well as to practices aimed at its reproduction and strengthening. At multiple levels, in different social spaces, and in national and international dimensions; the common denominator in all these is the dominant role of the Polish intelligentsia. Although our analysis did not intend to precisely reconstruct the different social fields and spaces, the prevalence of these discourses in different social spaces attests to their pervasiveness within contemporary Poland, and at the transnational level in Central and Eastern Europe. Widespread use of these discourses as well as the above-mentioned rivalry of different factions with the Polish elites over a symbolic capital related to the legacy of Solidarity also indicates that despite the rhetorical radicalism of some of these disputes (leading some commentators even to talk about 'the two Polands'), Polish elites are homogeneous, at least in terms of identifying main stakes and tolls in intra-elite rivalry.

We have argued that practices of reproduction of the legacy of Solidarity also have a transnational dimension, as attested by discursive efforts to universalize this phenomenon by referring to other important social movements in other countries as follow-ups of Solidarity. We have branded this narrative the 'new Solidarities' discourse and analyzed its functioning in the case study of interactions between Polish and Ukrainian elites, especially during and after the Ukrainian Revolution of Dignity.

Our findings allow us not only to better understand internal Polish processes and the symbolic sphere in Polish-Ukrainian relations, but also the motives behind Poland's strong engagement in Ukraine and more broadly in Eastern Europe. Contrary to views

that see certain inequalities in relations between Poland and Ukraine in terms of imperial ambitions – such voices are especially popular in the Russian media sphere¹⁰ – we would argue that the stakes on the Polish side are indeed high for the intelligentsia, but they belong mostly to a symbolic sphere.

Although our case study was limited in time, recent events – with the Russian mass invasion of Ukraine – have confirmed our thesis. Due to limited space, we can only mention ‘The Initiative New Solidarity’, under which a group of Polish intellectuals from different ideological backgrounds prepared a report focused on a need to adjust public policies in order to be able ‘to take care of our guests’ – a reference to the massive inflow of Ukrainian refugees after the Russian invasion (Erbel & Łachecki, 2022; Kędzierski, 2022; “Wszyscy musimy się posunąć na ławeczce”. “Powstał raport Inicjatywa Nowa Solidarność”, 2022). In this context, it is also interesting to refer to the opinion of the well-known French sociologist – Michael Wieviorka, who also interpreted the help for Ukrainian refugees as a revival of Solidarity and contrasted it with the French protest movement of May 1968, which he sees as belonging to the past and no longer inspiring new generations (Wieviorka & Krasnodębski, 2022).

Last but not least, from a methodological point of view, we have presented an innovative approach to studying symbolic struggles among Polish elites. First, we have attempted to capture a social phenomenon by analyzing elites’ behavior at different levels, in different contexts, and via different methods (discourse analysis, interviews), in order to show its pervasiveness. Secondly, while trying to explain discursive phenomena, we have gone beyond the discursive or cultural sphere, attempting to reveal their non-discursive foundations.

Our analysis also appears to be a potential contribution to research being conducted in the broader field of memory studies. For it points to an important distinction: between historical memory which may be strongly naturalized and often used, but functions mainly as a past-defined reference point for contemporary discourses – on the one hand; and on the other hand – historical memory, which is used and experienced as an earlier stage of continuously ongoing social processes. In this sense, it is not a purely ‘museum’ memory, but an ‘active’ memory. From such a point of view, the comparison of Polish Solidarity to the struggle against apartheid in South Africa seems justified. Paradoxically, much more different from the Polish case, in this sense, are the cases of seemingly much closer anti-communist movements in other Eastern European countries.

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¹⁰ Recently, such interpretations have been frequently voiced by Russian political elites. See for example Poljakova (2022).

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