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JAN KUBIK
AMY LINCH
Rutgers University

The Original Sin of Poland's Third Republic: Discounting "Solidarity" and its Consequences for Political Reconciliation

Abstract: "Solidarity" was one of the major causes of state socialism's downfall and yet it has neither come to play an active and significant role in the Polish historical memory nor has it entered a canon of routinely studied "great" social movements. This neglect is related to (1) the lack of a symbolic closure of the communist period, (2) insufficient ceremonialization of "Solidarity's" success, and the (3) the lack of public, symbolic closure of the Round Table process. A review of the literature on the problem of reconciliation after the fall of a non-democratic regime and the role of collective memory in this process allows us to argue that these three "errors" may be related to the low level of trust and the pervasive sense of corruption that are diagnosed in many empirical studies. In order to better understand these strategic errors of cultural policy we examine Poland and—briefly—several other countries where similar dilemmas were dealt with differently and, seemingly, with more success.

Keywords: "Solidarity," Round Table, (mnemonic) reconciliation, collective memory, political rituals, democratic consolidation

Introduction

"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[1] nor has it entered a canon of routinely studied "great" revolutions or social movements.[2] It has been a subject of several fascinating social scientific works, but very few of them have been written in an idiom of the social movement literature (see Osa 2003 and Glenn 2001; Misztal 1995); even more curiously most of them have been published outside of Poland.

It is not possible in an essay to elaborate all possible social scientific uses "Solidarity" could and should have been put to. We are going to be selective and focus only on

Jan Kubik is Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science, Rutgers University, N.J., USA, and Recurring Visiting Professor of Sociology, Center for Social Studies, Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw, Poland; e-mail: kubik@rci.rutgers.edu; Amy Linch is Doctoral Candidate in the Department of Political Science, Rutgers University, N.J., USA; e-mail: linch@rci.rutgers.edu

[1] It remains to be seen whether this will change as a result of the 25th Anniversary of the Gdansk Accords that occasioned massive celebrations and several publications (see for example Latoszek, ed. 2005).

[2] Tarrow 1998; McAdam, Tarrow, Tilly 2001; McAdam, McCarthy, Zald 1996; Goldstone 2003.

two broad fields of study to which "Solidarology" should make significant contributions: (1) the problem of reconciliation after the fall of a non-democratic regime and (2) the role of collective memory in this process. While investigating these two areas, we will also examine an apparent paradox: Poland is ranked by various foreign experts almost uniformly as one of the greatest success stories in post-communist Europe, yet many Poles—and particularly a significant segment of the nation's intellectual elite—are very critical of the political and social situation in the country (Krasnodebski 2003, Spiewak 2005). At first sight, both groups are right as they focus on different aspects of the Polish postcommunist reality. We will explore this discrepancy. It seems that while the laudatory foreign experts focus primarily on the economic successes and the stability of the basic *democratic architecture*, domestic critics bemoan the pitiable state of Polish political culture and zero in on the unresolved dilemmas that plague the *performance* of Polish democracy.[3]

Kubik in his earlier work (1994) dealt with the question of why the most powerful anti-communist movement emerged in Poland and not elsewhere. He reviewed the existing studies and isolated the host of causal factors ranging from the economic decline, the development of the shadow economy, the generation change within the communist party (liberalization), the undiminished strength of the Catholic Church and the independent intelligentsia, uncollectivized peasantry, relative deprivation and the revolution of rising expectations, the discrepancy between the (communist) ideal and (state socialist) reality. He observed that various constellations of factors from this list existed in several state socialist countries (certainly in East Central Europe), yet none of them produced "Solidarity." There must have been some additional cause at work and Kubik found it in the development of a coherent and extremely attractive set of counterhegemonic discourses, propounded by the Catholic Church, various opposition groups and, finally, the August 1980 strikes that led directly to the formation of "Solidarity."

The Polish anticommunist "refolution" was a massive cultural-political phenomenon that did not have similarly spectacular equivalents in other East European countries. During the 1970s and early 1980s, a substantial number of people engaged in the formulation, development and defense of a counter-hegemonic set of narratives that eventually helped these people to constitute themselves as an "oppositional" cultural-class of "Solidarity" and contributed to the de-legitimization of the state-socialist system. Kubik argued that "Solidarity" was never simply a trade union or a movement, but a cultural class in statu nascendi, never fully "consolidated" and subjected to tremendous internal centrifugal tensions, yet kept together for a while by the centripetal forces of symbolic unification. The cultural frame which held this class together was a polarized vision of "we/the people/Solidarity" versus "them/authorities/communists." Importantly, Poland stood out among other state

[3] Our concern with the functioning of Polish democracy and the gap between internal and external assessments of its institutions leads us to focus on the cultural/symbolic dimension of post conflict reconciliation. We will argue that this dimension is critical to the perception of institutional change and, therefore, impacts the effectiveness of legal approaches to reconciliation such as trials, lustration, purges, or parliamentary inquiries. For a comprehensive discussion of the legal dimension, usually studied under the rubric of transitional justice, see Wildstein 2005, Elster 2004, Nedelsky 2004, Appel 2005, Teitel 2000.

socialist countries because it was the only place where a cultural revolution preceded a political revolution and where a substantial portion of the populace produced enough "symbolic capital" to engender and sustain the subsequent massive social mobilization.

Several students of the 1981–1989 period in Poland concluded that the cultural vitality and political significance of this polar frame during these years not only did not decline, but seems to have increased. Anna Uhlig (1989), author of an excellent study of political symbolism during the 1980s, wrote:

> after December 13, 1981 the opposition's drive to make a distinction between 'our Poland' (the "Solidarity" Republic) from 'their Poland' (Polish People's Republic) intensifies. (1989: 61)

The events which helped the "opposition" to construct this hegemonic polar cleavage included two Papal visits, the murder of Father Jerzy Popiełuszko and the immediate emergence of his cult, and countless street demonstrations and clashes with the police as well as large industrial strikes in 1988. Not everybody participated in this ongoing, political and symbolic, confrontation with the regime of course, nor did everybody accept the polar vision of the conflict. In fact, the actual number of "Solidarity" supporters continually declined throughout the 1980s and rebounded only after "Solidarity's" spectacular electoral victory in 1989 (Jasiewicz 1993: 110–112). Nonetheless, the perception of the hegemonic conflict between "us" and "them" remained the most characteristic feature of Polish popular political culture and served as a mobilizing frame for the most active individuals and groups. The elaborate symbolic polarization effected massive social mobilization that undoubtedly contributed to the downfall of the old regime.

One could have wondered, perhaps, whether these two specific elements of the Polish path out of state socialism would have an adverse effect on democratic consolidation. The surprising paucity of symbolically "overheated" protest politics during democratic consolidation—diagnosed by Ekiert and Kubik (1999)—was a positive development, according to standard democratization theories. But despite the lack of spectacular flare-ups of symbolic politics, the country's political scene has remained strongly divided between the former "Solidarity" and "ex-communist" sides (Jasiewicz 1993, Castle 2003: 223). The existence of this "unfinished business" between the two former adversaries is intriguing: Poland again stands out among its neighbors. This time it is the dominance of symbolic-cultural cleavages over the political-economic ones in Polish electoral politics that sets it apart; the dominance of "rosary" over "pocketbook" as Jasiewicz put it. The persistence of this cultural polarization may be construed as a sign of relative neglect of symbolic politics on the part of newly emerging elites; a neglect that has had—as we will argue—serious, *negative* social and political consequences.

The post-1989 socio-political order emerged very quickly on the ruins of the old system. It immediately became clear that it would be well served—as all new sociopolitical orders are—by a well-articulated and broadly-appealing symbolic frame: a viable myth to anchor the new order and enable it to come to terms with the suffering, persecution and murder that occured under the old regime. "Solidarity," the glorious

and successful movement-cum-social formation (class) seems to offer an abundant reservoir of "symbolic material" out of which skilful political-cultural entrepreneurs should have been able to fashion a compelling symbolic/mythical foundation for the new, post-communist, democratic Polish republic. This has not happened, however. Twenty-five years after "Solidarity's" formation and sixteen years after the fall of state socialism, Poland is marred by a crisis of confidence in its political elites, lack of a shared vision of the future, outbursts of frustration and most importantly, the undiminished viability of the political-cultural polarization. The political culture is largely without a common foundation due to the unfinished process of reconciliation between the two former adversaries.[4]

In the next section we will argue that (1) the lack of symbolic foundation of the new order and (2) the persistence of cultural cleavages are related to each other and result from the *original symbolic sin* of the new regime: *the lack of symbolic closure* of the state socialist period and the negotiation-based transition. We will also indicate that this lack has its roots in the very essence of the Round Table (RT) process. In section 3 we will examine the broader theoretical issue of the relationship between democratic consolidation and reconciliation. Section 4 is an attempt to reinterpret the Polish case in the light of the theoretical analysis presented in section 3.

The Round Table Negotiations as Social Drama

Kubik (2000) put forth an interpretation of the Polish Round Table process as a Turnerian social drama. Victor Turner, a seminal anthropologist, offered a succinct definition of this concept:

> At its simplest, the drama consists of a four-stage model, proceeding from breach of some relationship regarded as crucial in the relevant social group, which provides not only its setting but many of its goals, through a phase of rapidly mounting crisis in the direction of the group's major dichotomous cleavage, to the application of legal or ritual means of redress or reconciliation between the conflicting parties which compose the action set. The final stage is either the public and symbolic expression of reconciliation or else of irremediable schism (Turner 1974: 79).

Analytically, it is useful to add to Turner's four stages one more: pre-redress. At some point during the crisis stage an identifiable change occurs: a new interpretation of the existing situation emerges that may inspire innovative action. The Polish Round Table process, conceptualized as a Turnerian five-stage social drama, can be interpreted in the following fashion:

- The pre-RT period (1980–1986) began with a *Breach* in the socialist status quo: the creation of "Solidarity" in 1980.
- A long phase of *Crisis* followed: Martial Law initiated in 1981.
- The Amnesty of September 11, 1986 opened the *Pre-Redress* phase: all "Solidarity" activists were released from prison.

[4] Again, this may change as a result of the massive celebrations of the 25th Anniversary of the Gdansk Accords, but at the moment of this writing it is too early to tell.

- The RT process (February 6, 1989–August 24, 1989) constituted the *Redress* phase culminating in the formation of the Mazowiecki cabinet. Two pairs of contradictions/tensions emerged: confrontation versus compromise and exclusion versus inclusion.
- The post-RT period, *Schism or Reconciliation*: contradictions persist and play a significant role in Polish politics.

Breach (of the communist routine) and Crisis (martial law)

When Polish communists granted their full legal recognition to "Solidarity" in the fall of 1980, they suspended the rules of the political game the Soviets had imposed on Eastern Europe after WWII. A massive organization, fully autonomous and free from government control, was formed, constituting the most radical breach in the Soviet-type routine since 1945. The government responded with the imposition of Martial Law and delegalization of "Solidarity" on December 13, 1981, as state socialism attempted to re-assert its authority. These measures, dubbed "normalization," did not work however. The "Solidarity" movement was too massive and too deeply entrenched in the society to be crushed. The country entered a five year period of simmering crisis. During this crisis the cultural-political polarization of the polity intensified; a powerful symbolic *bi-polar* cleavage was formed, separating "the society" from the ruling regime.

Pre-redress: Early Conciliatory Moves

The Pre-redress phase began with the full amnesty ordered on September 11, 1986. This was a significant breakthrough point. With the declaration of amnesty the regime signaled its readiness to switch from confrontation to dialogue with the opposition.[5] During this phase the cultural/symbolic maneuvers were particularly important, for many actors were beginning to re-consider their own and their enemies' identities. A gradual process of dismantling prior stereotypes began among some members of both elites. In that process some "enemies" were re-defined as "adversaries one can talk to" and a search for a common platform was underway. Lech Kaczyński noted the paradoxical nature of this phase: "there existed some sort of confusion, which is fairly obvious, between approaching the 'commies' as enemies, and the necessity of eventual talks with them."[6] Geremek succinctly summarized the whole problem as a difficulty of moving from "an ethos of struggle and hostility to an ethos of a civilized political game" (1990: 146). This phase was still dominated by symbolic polarization ("Solidarity" versus the communists), however. The symbolic unity of "Solidarity" was perceived by its key activists as a necessary pre-condition of eventual success. Michnik noted: "I thought that the only method to dismantle communism was a strong social identity, and this was provided by 'Solidarity' and Wałęsa" (Interview Transcript, 15).

[5] The significance of this moment was emphasized in several Michigan interviews and presentations: Lech Kaczyński, Interview Transcript, 4; Mieczysław Rakowski, Interview Transcript, 1–3.

[6] Lech Kaczyński, Interview Transcript, 5.

Undoubtedly, this gradual rapprochement was triggered by the real and perceived changes in the political opportunity structure, noted above. But, while some members of both elites began moving toward a dialogue, others were unwavering in their hostility toward the other side or developed serious misgivings about the *specific details* of the rapprochement process. An analysis of interviews with "Solidarity" leaders and former Communist officials, conducted ten years after the RT negotiations, reveals the persistence of three distinct interpretive frames that the different sets of actors used to understand the events that led to the collapse of the communist regime.

The framing proposed by the Party-state reformers was quite monolithic and geared toward rapprochement with "Solidarity," albeit strictly on Party's terms. Their narratives were embedded in a uniform "economic" discourse. They reasoned that as the economic system of state socialism became increasingly ineffectual and reforms were badly needed "Solidarity" proved its staying power and became a permanent element of the socio-political landscape. Their story, in essence, may be rendered in a simple sentence: in *our* reform plans *we* had to find room for "Solidarity," if *we* were to succeed.[7] Orzechowski, when asked to assess the causal significance of a list of important events leading up to the Round Table, replied:

> Personally I do not reject any of these events, but I regard what happened in 1987 as the most important factor—that is, the realization that the socio-economic system cannot be reformed, that the so called second stage of the economic reform practically collapsed, that without some external assistance—technological, without foreign, that is Western, capital inflows it is impossible to lift the economy from this deep collapse."[8]

In short, the party "reformers" ascribed the primary causal power (agency) to the Party-state. The Party-state initiated the (economic) reforms and in order to make them more effective and comprehensive it had to co-opt "Solidarity." In such narratives, the question of the regime's legitimacy is almost never raised; the analysis is built around the issue of *economic* inefficiency and the necessary *economic* strategy.

The framing offered by the leaders of "Solidarity's" governing and negotiations-prone faction proved to be amazingly diverse, yet it is clear that economic effectiveness is rarely invoked as an interpretive frame.[9] Furthermore, in all of these narratives agency is quite clearly ascribed to the society, the "Solidarity" movement, its representatives, and the Catholic Church (the Pope and/or the Episcopate), rather than the Party-state. Wujec: "The first event, it seems to me, was the creation of 'Solidarity.' The very fact of the creation of 'Solidarity,' because also I believe that this 'Solidarity' is a great Polish invention, and it is about, well, that one had to fight against the socialist system" (Interview Transcript, 2). In sum, the "Solidarity" activists belonging to the "RT faction" emphasize the role of external factors, seeing them either as

[7] Czyrek articulates this line of reasoning very clearly (Interview Transcript, 1–3).

[8] (Interview Transcript, 1). According to Gdula: "In 1980s, in our country's life, it was not unusual both for the authorities or the opposition to think that this state of the economy, the way it was managed, the whole organization of social life, that all this could not be continued, that it had run out, or, as they used to put it mildly, that the real socialism had run out of its developmental possibilities" (Interview Transcript, 1).

[9] It plays a prominent role only in Bratkowski's story. Not all interviewers asked the question about the important events leading up to the RT; not all interviewees answered it when it was asked.

constraining (imperial dependency) or enabling (Gorbachev). But they also tend to grant the power of the primary mover to the "society" and/or its various agencies. They often stress the system's troubles with legitimacy; the question of its economic effectiveness remains in the background.

The third type of framing came from those members of "Solidarity" who eventually ended up being excluded from the Round Table process.[10] The narrative presented by this group goes beyond the "economic" story of the communists and the "underground Solidarity" story of the Walesa-centered, dominant segment of the oppositional movement; it ascribes an important role to the Christian-national tradition. Members of this group often complained that their efforts were marginalized by the Walesa's group, which usurped the right to speak in the name of the whole society, while important voices were silenced, unrepresented or only partially expressed at the RT.

Redress: Polish Round Table

The Redress phase, the period from the inception of the Round Table negotiations to the formation of the Mazowiecki cabinet (February 6, 1989–August 24, 1989), generated or exacerbated two powerful tensions. The first was between the symbolically elaborate *logic of confrontation* that contributed to "Solidarity's" staying power in the 1980s and the reasoned *logic of compromise* that made possible the peaceful systemic change. The second was between the *logic of exclusion* that brought selected elites from the warring sides (self-appointed by some interpretations) to the RT process and the *logic of inclusion* that underlay persistent attempts by both groups of elites to stay in touch with their "bases."[11]

The number of actors directly involved in the political process must be limited if negotiations are to be viable. Thus, the politics of exclusion (who gets in, who is left out, and who makes such decisions) comes to the fore. There is no room here to analyze the process that led to the emergence of "Wałęsa's team," which came to represent the "society" during the RT negotiations. Suffice it to note that "the excluded" almost immediately began generating discourses critical of negotiations, as is invariably the case in such situations.[12] The two most prominent critical discourses

[10] Any generalization here is a bit shaky for there are not many interviews with this group in the Michigan dossier. On the basis of the Michigan transcripts alone one can form a limited picture of the interpretive frame offered by the "absent/rejected." But see also Castle 2003.

[11] See Geremek's vivid and dramatic depiction of this process (1990: 146). Hall observed in his conversation with Castle (2003: 72): "The most important thing was that society, and particularly that part of society which identified with "Solidarity" and with the opposition, did not get the impression that the border between the camp of the authorities and the camp of the opposition had been erased. That it didn't get the impression that the system was being transformed only as a result of co-opting part of the former opposition elite into the ruling elite. That would have meant a defeat, a fundamental defeat for all of us, since we were convinced that our strength resulted above all from social support. For society it must be clear that it isn't a matter of creating a new Front of National Unity, but that instead there are two forces here, each internally differentiated but each clearly distinct from the other: the camp of the authorities and the camp of the opposition."

[12] We are just observing the existence of a common mechanism and are not trying to assess the merits of such criticisms.

developed by those marginalized during the negotiations were 1) that it was unnecessary or ill-conceived (Leszek Moczulski), and 2) that it was an imperfect though desirable (useful, necessary) event (or process) which opened up a whole new field of opportunities. The problem from the latter perspective was the subsequent squandering of these opportunities (Wieslaw Chrzanowski, Aleksander Hall). Moczulski developed a very complex, counterfactual vision of the various unrealized negotiating scenarios that were possible (in his mind) had "Solidarity" only waited a few more months (Interview Transcript, 4–5). He imagined a triangular table that included the Church as a fully-fledged third side rather than merely as mediator, or a square table where the radical, independence oriented, opposition joined the other three for a negotiating team that covered a fuller spectrum of the salient political options of the time. In his story, communism had been disintegrating due to a complex process in which Gorbachev played a prominent role. The main task for the Polish elites was to react properly to Soviet developments, where causative power ultimately lay. Unfortunately, the dominant "Solidarity" elites, because they were "politically, poorly prepared," pursued the suboptimal strategy of premature negotiations at the RT.

Chrzanowski and Hall's vision was different; it had two important components. First, they regarded the composition of the "societal" side at the RT as incomplete. Among the important absent political options were those represented later by Chrzanowski's ZChN, Dzielski's "Thirteen," and Macierewicz's "Głos" milieu (Interview Transcript, 3). Hall's own "Movement of the Young Poland" and other (moderate) conservative circles were "insufficiently" represented (Interview Transcript, 4). Second, the main strategic error came after "Solidarity's" electoral victory on June 12, 1989. As Chrzanowski put it: "After the fall of the Berlin Wall the opposition should have asserted that certain RT agreements were no longer valid. Why is it so? Because as to legal…[UNCLEAR], 'pacta sunt servanda,' that is 'agreements entered into shall be kept,' but there is another legal clause, 'rebus sic stantibus,' that is, 'provided the circumstances have not changed'" (Interview Transcript, 5). After the elections "Solidarity" should have promptly conducted an ideological cleansing and eliminated former communists from public life much more vigorously than they actually did. For both of them, however, the RT was unquestionably the right, "positive" strategic solution for that specific moment in time (Hall, Interview Transcript, 1).

During the negotiations, both sides assumed that the "size" of their respective constituencies ("bases") and the "depth" of their support were powerful bargaining chips. In order to strengthen their positions at the negotiating table both groups invested resources in creating and upholding an image of a "massive base." As Jacek Kuroń, one of the "Solidarity" top leaders famously quipped: "We threatened each other with our bases" (Castle 2003: 73). "The Round Table talks were not only talks between the representatives of the opposition and the representatives of the authorities. They were also our talks with society," observed Piotr Nowina-Konopka, a "Solidarity" spokesman (Castle 2003: 69). After the inaugural meting of the RT, Wałęsa toured several major industrial centers and met with potential supporters at rallies.[13]

[13] It should be noted, however, that Geremek assessed "Solidarity's" communicative attempts negatively (1990: 145). As most observers indicate, these propagandistic efforts of "Solidarity" leaders were extremely

The logic of compromise was relentlessly pushing both negotiating partners to "soften" their images of each other. The basic vision of the polity was still bi-polar for both sides, but a picture of the "untouchable" enemy was being partially replaced by a vision of an adversary-as-a-negotiating partner. Pre-existing stereotypes began giving way to individualized pictures of actual persons; previously demonized personages were increasingly regarded in their human dimension.[14] Jaruzelski, for example, began perceiving Michnik as a "tactical dove but strategic hawk." Such a change is never automatic of course. In Poland it took deliberate actions by several leaders of both sides who realized that negotiations are impossible without a common symbolic platform. To create such a platform, some of them engaged in discursive actions aimed at discharging potentially explosive memories. For example, Reykowski observed:

> Another [condition of successful negotiations JK] that was very important was the principle of not discussing symbolic problems. We were to solve the future, and avoid arguing about the past. We believed, and I think most of us agreed here, that if we started getting into discussions about the past wrongs, we wouldn't accomplish anything. We had to accept the fact that we looked at different things from the past in different ways, and that we had different visions of various symbolic problems. There were situations when someone couldn't help raising such a problem, and the emotions flared, but I think we were in "Solidarity" trying to weaken these emotions during the negotiations (*Communism's Negotiated Collapse*, 121).

Schism and Reconciliation: Round Table's Double Political Afterlife

A sizeable segment of "Solidarity" activists and rank-and-file (drawn mostly from the "excluded") bought into neither the logic of compromise nor into the logic of inclusion, regarding the former as treason and the latter as a sham façade hiding the de facto exclusion of their representatives from the RT deal. They soon began political mobilizing around these "revisionist" frames of interpretation and a powerful cleavage between "reformists" and "revolutionaries" opened in "Solidarity," which until then had been remarkably united.[15] This cleavage existed largely independently from the more obvious one that continued to separate the "Solidarity" camp and ex-communists. Both have remained salient throughout the last fifteen years and still help to explain the basic maneuvers on the Polish political scene. Importantly these two central cleavages in Polish politics have been more "cultural" than in other post-communist Central European states.[16] They have their origin in the *unrealized ritual closure* of both the Round Table negotiations and the entire Polish People's Republic (PRL) period. Such a closure would—an anthropologist is tempted to argue—provide a symbolic base for unity in the divided society.

Quite a few politicians and activists have been trying to shed the double legacy of the authoritarian politics of late communism and the extraordinary, liminal, politics of the Round Table to no avail. Until summer 2005, "Solidarity" never ceremonialized its victory on a grand, nation-wide scale. Consequently, Poland entered a path of

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important, for the size of the base was very unclear and seems to have been weak. There exist, however, evidence indicating that as the negotiations were progressing the support for "Solidarity" increased.

[14] Reykowski, *Communism's Negotiated Collapse*, 120–21; Gebert, personal communication.

[15] For its description see Ekiert and Kubik 1999. See also Glenn 2001: 87–90 and Castle 2003: 223.

[16] Jasiewicz 1999a, 1999b; Markowski 2001; Ziolkowski 2002:20; Castle 2003.

momentous transformations without a ceremonial closure of the redress phase and without a ritualized inclusion of the "society" into the political process. The absence of a ceremonial rite de passage from "communism" to "post-communism" has—we hypothesize—serious consequences for post-1989 public life in Poland.[17] It may be the main cause of the symbolic/moral "disorder" or "malaise" that continues to show in various studies; it certainly results in the persistence of the two dominant symbolic cleavages. Hence, the most important legacy of the Round Table process: a polity dissected by two non-trivial cultural cleavages.

It is also well-established that post-1989 public life in Poland has been characterized by a very low level of trust in political parties and a relatively high level of protest politics (Ekiert and Kubik 1999). Again, the roots of this dissatisfaction with institutionalized politics may lie in the lack of a proper (ceremonialized?) closure of the RT process and the absence of a symbol or ritual signifying the birth of the post-communist Poland. The existing studies leave no doubt that for those who negatively or critically evaluate the current situation of the country the RT marks the beginning of the wrong path Poland has taken since the end of communism. In Chrzanowski's words, such people accept the "black legend" of the Round Table. Significantly, Chrzanowski suggested that the propagation of this legend is politically detrimental and contributes to apathy (Interview Transcript, 9–10). Ireneusz Krzeminski perceptively observed:

> The moral acceptance of former adversaries [by a section of the "Solidarity" camp—JK], including the symbolic persona of general Jaruzelski, [...] delineated the basic lines of political divisions, but first of all it generated unusually strong and emotionally laden *moral divisions* (original emphasis—JK). A moral anathema has been imposed by both sides on each other. The symbolic representation of the society was destroyed and as a result a symbolic picture of the end of the old order and the beginning of the new order has not emerged. Such a symbol, that would dwell in the everyday consciousness and that would constitute a focal point for public rituals, practically does not exist; and yet it is sorely needed (1999).

For those who tend to construe the postcommunist reality in a manner described by Krzeminski, the RT compromise is not seen as an achievement, but rather as yet another example of the murky, if not outright malicious, wheeling-dealing behind the scenes that benefited only the elites of the "Reds" and "Pinks."[18] In particular, they tend to reinterpret the maneuvers of "Solidarity's" negotiating elite as having detrimental long-term consequences.

On the other hand, as Michael Kennedy argues at length (2002), the Round Table, properly "symbolically closed" or not, has provided Poland with a model that constitutes the cornerstone of the country's robust, parliamentary democracy and remarkably non-violent political practice.[19] Hence, the ultimate paradox of the Round Table: the potentially explosive, deep cultural divisions (*schism*) engendered by the Round Table are routinely channeled through non-disruptive political mechanisms

[17] The lingering consequences of this lack of ceremonialization of "Solidarity's" victory are carefully analyzed by one of the main actors of the drama, Bronisław Geremek (1990: 147).

[18] With some exceptions, the "Pinks" are those members of the "Solidarity" elite who negotiated with the "Reds."

[19] Zbigniew Janas emphasized this feature of the RT in his interview (Interview Transcript, 13). In Castle's view this spirit and practice of compromise in the post-1989 Poland are "discredited" thus weak (2003: 222–3).

(*reconciliation*) that also have their origins in the Round Table process, and—more broadly—in "Solidarity's" non-violent ethos.

If the lack of a ceremonial closure of the Round Table negotiations and the lack of a dramatically staged rite de passage from the Polish People's Republic to a democratic Polish Republic help to perpetuate the peculiar "culturalization" and symbolic polarization of much of Polish politics, then a way out of this impasse may lie in the formation and maintenance of social/collective memory of negotiations that emphasizes reconciliation and defines and/or cultivates a broadly accepted closure of the People's Republic. This, in turn, might be achieved through a successful ceremonialization of the Round Table, not just the emergence of "Solidarity."[20]

In the next section we turn to the literature on reconciliation in democratic transitions to assess the importance of symbolic strategies in overcoming political and socio-cultural divisions that led to and were engendered by the regime change, and the potential of those strategies to overcome the effects of the recent past on contemporary political culture in Poland.

Dilemmas of Reconciliation

The concept of reconciliation employed in the literature on transitions to democracy is notable for breadth rather than precision. It refers variously to the process through which a society emerges from civil conflict, to the public acknowledgement or suppression of the past within that process and to the several stages the process entails as well as to the goals of social harmony, human rights, institutional legitimacy and socio-economic justice. In different hands reconciliation denotes both a strategy of confrontation and one of conciliation. In its guise as a specific form of transitional justice, it is alternately denounced as a rhetorical substitute for retribution and championed for eschewing vengeance and creating opportunities for social healing (Tutu 1999, Minnow 1998, Villa-Vincencio and Verwoerd 2000). Its ambiguous referent and connotations of spiritual transformation render it anathema to liberal democracy for some (Ash 1997, Noval 1998, Forberg 2003). For others, such transformation is necessary to heal the fractured social bonds that are the essence and object of legal and economic relationships within a community (Shriver 2003, Biggar 2003, Graybill 2003, Elshtain 2003).

The most comprehensive conceptualization of reconciliation regards it as a multi-level, multi-stage process that involves overcoming structural inequities, proposing new cultural scenarios, changing perceptions, and rebuilding damaged relations on

[20] One could argue that the staging of a relevant ceremony should have happened right after the 1989 transfer of power, that many years after the fact it would lack the necessary cultural credibility. An equal case can be made however, for the impossibility of coordinated action among elites in the aftermath of the Round Table necessary for a successful symbolic inauguration of Poland's Third Republic. Had "Solidarity" been the basis for a national inauguration it might have incited fear among elites invested in the communist regime. Also, as the Soviet power still loomed over the region and Poland was the first country to hold elections its position was far less certain than that of its neighbors. Indeed, as the events of summer 2005 indicate fifteen years of effective democratic institutions may provide a context more conducive to collective consideration and national ceremonialization of "Solidarity's" achievements.

all levels of society. It is an historical process, both in the sense that the means through which these tasks can be accomplished is contingent upon the particular circumstances of the transition[21] and the nature of the conflict, and because it develops in time through changing habits and orientation to political institutions. The goals of reconciliation are commensurate with the type of institutions being established and the vision of the community they serve (Elster 2004).[22]

The brief review that follows considers the literature in terms of the primacy it accords the various levels and dimensions of society at which reconciliation operates and which it targets. We group the literature into three categories of approach: psychosocial, structural and cultural.

Reconciliation as Psychosocial Process

The psychosocial approach emphasizes the importance of change in regard for one another among former enemies—both at the elite and popular level—as precondition, process and goal of reconciliation. Learning to recognize the other as part of one's own future requires emotional and cognitive transformation—"within" an individual—in which anger and hatred yield to forgiveness. Reconciliation is about rehabilitating citizens, changing their roles, releasing and transforming anger, providing individual-level closure and linking personal pain and suffering to the national transition. The destabilizing potential of vengeance must be neutralized through acknowledgement of past grievances so that peace can take root in society (Rasmussen 2001, Fischer 2001, Montville 1995).

Montville (1989, 1995) maintains that conflict resolution that does not address the psychological needs of the victims and victimizers is at best superficial. Recognition, acceptance and respect as well as preservation of identity and self-concept are individual and group needs that render public acknowledgement critical to healing. Schirch similarly emphasizes the importance of identity in mediating an individual's perception of self and community but she focuses on the role of ritual in creating a liminal space through which individual identities can be transformed to heal wounds and reframe conflict or danger. Rituals can promote the reconciliation process by creating or affirming shared identities among people previously in conflict (2001: 156).

Individual truth as well as private memories and experiences are often emphasized in this approach because they are the basis for people's attitudes toward the institutions being established, their confidence in the government as the arbiter of justice, and their willingness to see their former enemies as part of a whole that includes them

[21] From a study of democratization in 35 countries Huntington (1995) concluded that amnesty is inevitable in negotiated transitions.

[22] South African discourse on reconciliation is case in point. Reconciliation defined in terms of a multi-racial, multi-cultural society as a need to simultaneously bridge the past and the divisions among communities competes with definitions that accord with a "nonracial ideology" which entail dissolving the racial identities arising from the policies of the past. Adherents to the latter definition look to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and other reconciliation efforts to transform people into non-racial citizens within a harmoniously integrated society. They seek to replace pre-apartheid identities with new, non-racial ones. Still others understand reconciliation in terms of human rights and the rule of law (see Lombard 2004).

both. While individual level change can have far reaching consequences at the elite level, many scholars argue that changing hearts and minds does not contribute meaningfully to reconciliation unless it either engages structures of power in a way that redefines the relationship between citizens and government (Mertus 2003, Sanford 2003) or develops institutional capacity for guaranteeing that the new rules will not be violated (Elster 2004, Przeworski 1995). Society, in the eyes of the critics of this approach, is more than the sum of its parts. Individual level reconciliation certainly occurs within, if it does not proceed from, important social and political structures that must be accounted for in the process.

Structural Approaches to Reconciliation (Construed as a Political-institutional Process)

A number of scholars consider the architecture of the institutional agreement to be the key object of both study and political practice when it comes to promoting reconciliation. They regard an encompassing view of reconciliation that includes the goals of individual or societal healing, with suspicion: organized efforts to rebuild a society should be focused on establishing liberal institutions as a guarantor of justice and human rights. Time will take care of the rest.

Ash, for example, regards state sponsored reconciliation projects as anathema to liberal principles. He invokes Isaiah Berlin in arguing that liberalism means living with irresolvable conflicts of values and goals. The more modest goals of coexistence, cooperation and tolerance (1997) are more realistic and avoid the "deeply illiberal" potential of reconciliation. Norval agrees, likening the idea of reconciliation more to "an identarian image of apartheid than to a democratic post apartheid society" (1998). Forberg finds the idea of national unity that underlies many reconciliation projects to be problematic. He suggests focusing reconciliation efforts away from nation building toward respect for law and human rights. He disputes the notion that truth is necessary to promote healing, citing the civil war in Finland as an example of reconciliation without truth (2003). Michnik (2001) agrees that official pursuit of "truth" can compromise the democratic process. For him reconciliation means abandoning official means of redress in the interest of the joint project of reform. Truth is not a state matter, but the responsibility of journalists and historians.

Three issues dominate analyses of the "structural" dimension of reconciliation: (1) the question of justice, legality, and retribution; (2) the role of the state; and (3) the role of the elites.

Reconciliation as Justice

For some scholars and observers reconciliation follows from restitution. Changes in culture and individual psyches must begin with retributive justice, reparations and efforts to address the inequities that mobilized people to demand change in the first place. Public disclosure, trial, and punishment of perpetrators of human rights violations under the old regime as well as material restitution and symbolic acknowledgement of the suffering and loss of the victims are a necessary first step in

establishing the legitimacy of the new system and enshrining standards of accountability and a rights-based political culture. Some see material compensation, economic restructuring and institutional reform as a precondition of reconciliation (Zehr 1995, van der Merwe 2001, McCandless 2001) while others regard it as a component of the process (Lederach 2001, Lambourne 2001, Rigby 2001). According to Boraine, "restoration of the moral order and economic justice are two sides of the same coin" (2001). For Przeworski reconciliation efforts should be assessed with respect to their impact on creating infrastructure for securing rights (1995).

The State as the Agent of Reconciliation

State sponsored reconciliation projects are based on the assumption that if local dynamics are to change they require centralized intervention to create the conditions and incentives for local actors to pursue reconciliation processes. Importantly, government-led, top down approaches have the potential to provide a symbolic frame through which people can collectively reconsider their experience on the national stage. *Ubuntu*, the overarching concept of community promoted by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), provided a frame through which South Africans could imagine overcoming the deep divisions within their society.[23] It has also been argued that such top down symbolic operations can undermine attempts to define the terms of social debate in a manner that supports local reconciliation efforts if they are inattentive to the dynamics at the local level (van der Merwe 2001, Wilson 2001). The South African Truth Commission has been criticized by a variety of scholars for such "symbolic suppression" of local reconciliation efforts and the subsequent failure to deal effectively with specific inequities wrought by apartheid (Mamdani 2000, Liatsos 2005). This criticism is focused on the appropriateness of the symbolic frames themselves however, and ultimately affirms the necessity of centralized efforts to promote reconciliation.[24]

Reconciliation as a Process Among Elites

Another approach to reconciliation regards the political class as the primary agent in the process. The emphasis is on interests, willingness to change, and the importance

[23] Ubuntu is significant as an alternative to the individualist paradigm of liberalism in promoting a human rights discourse. There is a growing body of legal decisions based on its implications for rights and responsibilities among citizens of South Africa see for examples www.unisa.ac.za/default.asp?Cmd=ViewContent&ContentID=681.

[24] Mamdani (2000), for example, asserts that the model for the TRC, developed for South America where there were few perpetrators, whose purpose was to perpetuate their own power, was inappropriate for South Africa where there were many beneficiaries of the apartheid system. Focusing on the perpetrators and inviting the beneficiaries to join in public outrage against them effectively absolved the beneficiaries of responsibility for the ways in which they were complicit in perpetuating the system. On the other hand, Mamdani recognizes the power of the commission in framing the terms of social debate and truth seeking and the necessity of examining the relationship between the victims and the beneficiaries of apartheid to effect social reconciliation. Wilson's (2001) ethnographic research in the Vaal during the TRC hearings led him to conclude that the commission's emphasis on forgiveness undermined local attempts to reestablish the rule of law and routinize conflicts.

of communicating new roles to followers. Amnesty and parliamentary inquiries are elite-focused approaches that seek to accommodate powerful members of the old regime in the interest of stability. Carey best characterizes this approach in describing the necessity of reconciliation:

> A process is required because tension resulting from the conflict takes shape and paper solutions are not initially credible. A reconciling process attempts to address and resolve the different goals, interests and powers among competing elites. Successful reconciliation resolves them peacefully, usually through an arduous and gradual process (2003: 27).

A number of scholars of democratization support the premise that elite agreement is a necessary condition for effective transition from authoritarian rule (Linz and Stepan 1996, O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986, Haggard and Kaufman 1995, Przeworski 1995). Negotiated transitions in particular require substantial concessions to entrenched political and economic interests. Empirical evidence suggests, however, that while elite agreement may be critical to initiating democratic compromise it is insufficient for establishing lasting peace and well functioning democratic institutions.[25]

The mechanisms through which elite reconciliation is achieved often do not become institutional resources for promoting democratization and may have a dispiriting effect on politics and the rule of law. As people compare their past suffering with what is often negligible change in their daily lives during transition, the symbolic power of seeing their oppressors go unpunished can undermine their faith in the new government. This is especially true if the handover of power was accomplished through negotiation because the moral authority of the movement leaders may be compromised by perceived complicity with the enemy. A reconciliation process that reaches the larger society is essential both to generate broad support for the new social contract, and to demonstrate an ethical commitment among elites to implement change.[26] An analysis of this process must focus on the mechanisms of cultural (re)production.

Cultural Approaches

Scholars often emphasize the interpersonal level of reconciliation not because they think that the origin and engine of conflict is individuals but because they see "harmonious" relationships as the ultimate end of effective politics. Kraybill argues that the allocation of resources is ultimately subordinate to the purpose of supporting just and satisfying relationships (1995). Since the criteria of "justice" and "satisfaction" are culture-bound, they need to be independently reconstructed. Villa-Vincencio cautions that focus on the level of individual experience should be kept within the larger goal of creating a *culture* (emphasis added) of human rights, "Reconciliation must be first

[25] Data suggests (see Licklider 1995) that in conflicts over identity issues negotiated settlements are likely to break down because segments of the power sharing government retain the capacity to use force after the opposition demobilizes.

[26] The depth of a democracy, furthermore, depends upon the dynamic within its political, legal, social, cultural and economic institutions (Przeworski 1995, Baharona de Brito and Gonzalez Enriquez 2001, Ekiert and Kubik 1999).

and foremost a political goal even as it operates on the level of addressing individual suffering and conflict" (2000: 199). Elshtain, in the tradition of Arendt, understands reconciliation as collective acceptance of moral responsibility for political society, defining it as acknowledgement "that we are all enclosed in a single sociopolitical frame and enfolded within a common ethical-political horizon" (1997).

Cultural approaches to reconciliation focus on the mechanisms of articulation and acceptance of a "common ethical-political horizon" and tend to assume that the emergence of such a "horizon" is coterminous with the establishment of a "single sociopolitical frame," generally a nation. These approaches attempt to address the diverse and factious experiences of the past by invoking or creating a symbolic frame within which people can collectively interpret their experience. The state is inaugurated through the establishment of a national narrative that explains the fundamental relationship among the people who comprise it, accounts for the suffering involved in its creation and ultimately provides a basis for the derivation of justice and fairness.

Democratization requires integration of subnational trust networks, such as opposition movements and kinship groups, into a commitment-based contract with the state. It involves an expansion of identification among members of these groups to include, minimally, acceptance of the state as the arbiter of inter-group relationships (Tilly 2004). Yet, the surrender of group-level loyalties and identities does not automatically proceed from institutional incorporation of groups into a national unit. Furthermore, the elites who are best positioned to facilitate the necessary shift in perception often have the least incentive to do so. That is why culturally oriented reconciliation strategies often include renaming public places and establishing commemorative rituals and official days of remembrance to position the new regime as the regulator of collective experience, as well as creating museums, and rewriting history books to promote a common understanding of the past. Democratization at the cultural level can be thus fostered through *narrative reconciliation*: the cultivation of a shared story of origin that resolves past grievances in terms of a present harmony or potential, or (more specifically) through *mnemonic reconciliation*: the effort to overcome mutually exclusive narratives of the past through public acknowledgement and integration of private memories in a negotiated, publicly held "truth."

Narrative Reconciliation

Culturally focused reconciliation strategies establish a crucial link between reforms at the institutional level and psychosocial experience. Rehabilitating relationships among neighbors, while an important goal of the reconciliation process, does little to enhance institutional legitimacy if those relationships are not framed in terms of the new institutional context. Institutional change on the other hand, while clearly relevant to the success of democratic transitions, must be communicated effectively in order to generate popular support and favorably influence the development of social trust.[27]

[27] Although institutional fairness is one of the strongest indicators of trust in political institutions (Mishler and Rose 1997) Kluegel and Mason emphasize that *perception* of fairness is even more important than their actual promotion of equity (2004). Levi (1997) emphasizes the importance of perception of institutional fairness in compliance with obligations to the state.

While psychosocial experience is the basis for individual perception of institutional legitimacy, interpretation of that experience is itself shaped by stories (narratives, cultural frames) that help to construct collective memories and identities (Aronoff 1989, Connerton 1989, Gillis 1994, Halbwachs 1992, Jelin 2003, Rothstein 2000).

Collective memory is a narratively constructed site of social learning through which people understand who they are and what they can expect in relating to others. It is key to the development of social trust (Rothstein 2000); it also provides symbolic frames through which individuals assess the events of their own pasts and interpret changes at the institutional level. If the hallmarks of a group's identity remain unintegrated into the narrative of nationhood, or the national narrative is incompatible with that of the group, the narrative will be rejected. How a narrative is constructed, whose voices are included and whose memories become history are ethical/political choices with consequences both for the nature and effectiveness of national discourse and for political participation. Without some degree of *mnemonic reconciliation* (discussed below) it is difficult to propose a viable frame for considering a new polity's identity. There is no integration of disparate trust networks, people remain polarized and focused on their own elites, and the public realm remains divided.

In South Africa, the TRC attempted to promote reconciliation by weaving a narrative of forgiveness from the suffering people experienced under the old regime. The TRC symbolically constructed the new nation as an ethical commitment to prevent the abuses of the old regime by creating a culture of human rights. It attempted to promote reconciliation on the societal level by framing the crimes of the past in terms of the unjust system rather than as the fault of individuals. The two years during which the crimes of the apartheid regime dominated public life helped to overcome the severe segregation of social memory among the black and white communities and provide a frame through which they could begin to understand a common future (Asmal, Asmal and Roberts 1997; Gibson 2004; Kraybill 2001; Krog 1998; Liatsos 2005; Vorster 1999).

Successful narrative reconciliation is to a large degree dependent upon the cooperation of the elites who are most invested in perpetuating attachment to exclusive narratives of the past among their constituents. The Spanish case is a rare example of coordinated effort among elites to exclude contentious issues from public debate and mobilize collective memory (of the civil war) as a deterrent to civil unrest. The king became a symbol of national reconciliation in an elite coordinated effort to promote national amnesia and suppress an upsurge of public anger after Franco's death. Twenty five years after the transition from Franco's dictatorship popular pride in the creation of the Spanish democracy is a unifying source of national identity that resists the efforts of political elites to mobilize people by resurrecting past grievances (Aguilar and Humlebæk 2002).

Splits among elites and unresolved private grievances often pose obstacles to acceptance of a unifying narrative frame, as evidenced by the experiences of the southern cone countries of South America, where the military blocked demands for accountability and truth by victims and human rights advocates. Political leaders argued that peace required putting aside principle driven politics. Ethical and ideological com-

mitments were faulted for the collapse of democracy in the late 1960's and early 1970's and reconciliation was construed as moving forward by forgetting the past. In Chile the arrest of Pinochet brought polarizing "irruptions of memory" into the public sphere resurrecting the aborted public debate about both Pinochet's crimes and the state of the country under Allende (Wilde 1999).

Mnemonic Reconciliation

The relationship between the deepening of democratization (Bloomfield, Barnes and Huyse, eds. 2003) or improvement in the level of intra-societal trust and efficiency (Rothstein 2000), and the condition of social memory in a given country has become the subject of a rapidly burgeoning literature (de Brito et al 2001, Davis 2005, Gibson 2004, Gready 2003, Hodgkin and Radstone 2003, Jelin 2003, Liatsos 2005, Torpey 2003, Wilde 1999). The basic theoretical postulate is that the achievement of a high level of political legitimacy and the development of a high level of trust or reconciliation within society depend on or are at least positively correlated with a state of collective memory that may be called *harmonious*. This condition can take several forms and can be achieved via several mechanisms. For example, it can mean the creation of a situation in which (almost) all members of a given society share the same set of memories that are additionally shaped in such a way that they improve the government's legitimacy and/or contribute to the achievement of reconciliation. This is a situation of *mnemonic hegemony*. Another situation is the existence of several memory domains (or memory regimes) in a given society with a set of accepted rules that establish and regulate a *peaceful* co-existence of these domains (regimes). This is a condition of *mnemonic pillarization*. Yet another type of situation emerges when separate memory regimes share a minimal set of common mnemonic fundamentals. This is a situation of *mnemonic reconciliation*.[28] Inversely, a society with a *fractured* collective memory (no single hegemonic collective memory, no mnemonic pillarization or no mnemonic reconciliation among competing memory regimes) will have a weakly legitimized political regime and/or weak post-conflict reconciliation and low levels of social trust.[29]

Mnemonic reconciliation, the condition of collective memory that seems to be most conducive to democratic consolidation, is very difficult to achieve without the state's participation. Minimally, the state can function as a surrogate for the individual in its redress of past grievances: "what the state commemorates and compensates we do not have to" (Olick and Coughlin 2003: 56). Maximally, the state seems to be the

[28] A broadly accepted generalization, to be found in various theoretical works and more practice oriented manuals, runs as follows: "A functioning democracy, then, is built on a dual foundation: a set of fair procedures for peacefully handling the issues that divide a society (the political and social structures of governance) and a set of working relationships between the groups involved" (Bloomfiled, Barnes and Hyuse, eds. 2003). See also Tilly 2003.

[29] Political-cultural entrepreneurs in a country with a fractured collective memory may decide that this constitutes a problem—for example, for the system's legitimacy—and can initiate cultural-political projects aimed at the achievement of some form of mnemonic hegemony or mnemonic reconciliation. It seems that non-democratic regimes will tend to prefer the former, while democracies have no choice but follow some versions of the latter.

only institution capable of staging and cultivating truly collective remembering that can effectively neutralize the volatile potential of private memories and cement the relationship between citizen and state. As Gready observes: "The ideal for the politics of memory is a move from private memory to public acknowledgement, accountability, debate and 'ownership', and a combination of the past and future oriented functions of memory" (2003). In the next section we will examine the issue of mnemonic reconciliation in post-1989 Poland.

Dilemmas of Reconciliation in Post-1989 Poland

Even a cursory review of the most recent (2005) sociological studies and journalistic reports reveals that Polish democracy is diagnosed as ailing, beleaguered by a cancerous growth of corruption, declining trust in public institutions, and a general sense of malaise. The tone of many diagnoses is concerned, albeit measured (*Polish Anxieties*);[30] sometimes it is alarmist (*Parallel Poland*).[31] In the latter piece, its author, Włodzimierz Paźniewski remarks:

> Some of the present-day reformers of Poland want to build a Fourth Republic from scratch. This is naïve reasoning for there is no Third Republic that could be left behind once and for all and without regret. Frankly, it has never been built. Straight from the Polish People's Republic we fell into the paws of the Polish Corrupt Republic, serving the parallel Poland, crooked, dishonest, and one that would rather remain unknown. [Polish Corrupt Republic] turns its back on history and gladly disrespects traditions for it is threatened by them. It can adroitly soil any important value. Transparency and truth are its main enemies (2005).

Corruption is diagnosed by lay people and professional analysts alike as the main problem of the country (Kojder 2004, Kurczewska 2004:408–16); its most "dangerous" dimension is often seen in the uninterrupted, behind-the-scene power of the more or less loosely organized networks of former communist apparatchiks (Staniszkis 1999, Zybertowicz 2002) and/or the continuous, mostly informal, influence of organized, economically grounded, interest groups (Mokrzycki 2001:151; Kurczewski 2004; Gadowska 2002; Rychard 2002:164–5). It is, however, worthwhile to remember that according to two major studies of corruption worldwide (World Bank [WB] and Transparency International [TI]) the Polish situation is not as dismal as the studies of Polish perceptions of corruption indicate. While both the WB and TI studies show that corruption in Poland increased between 1996 and 2004, on the WB scale of six governance indicators (including "Control of corruption") Poland's standing in 2004 was higher than the regional average for Eastern Europe and the Baltics. It was also very close to the average for the upper middle income group of countries, a standard

[30] Domański, Ostrowska and Rychard, 2004.

[31] Paźniewski 2005, "Polska Rownolegla," *Rzeczpospolita*, 06.11.05. Beylin writes (Gazeta Wyborcza, 06.09.05): "Poland is beset by a great mechanism of destroying memory and history that is today unstoppable. It is created not only by politicians; the media and a large segment of the elites are also at work. The needed debates about the past, whose goal is understanding, are transformed into moral judgments of people; their goal is soiling reputations. This phase needs to be waited out and the destruction of traditions and authorities that no other European society has engaged in needs to be recorded."

reference point for many comparative studies including Poland.[32] It is thus possible to conclude that the perception of corruption and the actual problem, are out of sync: Polish citizens and experts assess the Polish situation as considerably worse than it appears in the light of "objective" comparative studies.

Another problem, often discussed in Polish studies, is the low level of trust in public institutions, politicians, and even fellow citizens (Sztompka 1999, Kempny 2004). This lack of trust seems to be related to the very low level of political and civic participation (Kempny 2004, Gliński 2004).

The reasons for this state of affairs are certainly complex and it is not clear to what degree the *unrealized ritual closure* of both the Round Table negotiations and the Polish People's Republic (PRL) period contributes to it. Nonetheless, negative consequences of the lack of such a closure are diagnosed by several writers, most prominently perhaps by Krasnodębski (2003), who writes:

> Essentially, we are in the midst of a battle for memory and this shows how much the coordinates of the intellectual order that existed until 1989 have been shifted. […] It turns out that Poles must communicate afresh about their collective identity. One would think that such identity dilemmas should besiege only those countries whose boundaries have not been completely determined and whose national identity had not been fully developed. Yet after 1989 Poland, rather unexpectedly, also ended up facing up an identity crisis. This crisis has contributed to the weakness of Polish democracy… (2003: 231).

We do not yet possess a generalized, theoretical understanding of the impact the lack of such a closure ("overcoming of the communist past" as Krasnodębski call it) has on a democratic state's political culture (conceived broadly as a set of discourses produced within the national boundaries) and people's assessments of their "situation." We do, however, understand several mechanisms of reconciliation and role of mnemonic reconciliation among them:

- First, reconciliation is a complex, multi-level process that is most successful when progress is achieved, more or less simultaneously, in *all of its dimensions*.
- Second, the basic *goals* of reconciliation are located at an individual "level." The process's aims include rehabilitating citizens, changing their roles, releasing and transforming their anger, providing individual-level closure and linking personal pain and suffering to the national transition.
- Third, such individual goals can be achieved only through *collective* means (societal mechanisms). Moreover, *if the goal is to achieve reconciliation at the national level, a key actor in the process must be the state itself*. While other actors may be involved in the design and implementation of the process, full state support is critical to reconciliation within the frame of the newly established democratic institutions.
- Fourth, the state must provide a legal framework for dealing with past violations of social order, and law that affirms the ethical foundation of the new regime and promotes the institutional and cultural reform necessary to establish a *rights-based political culture*.

[32] For change in time see WB: http://info.worldbank.org/governance/kkz2004/sc_chart.asp. For comparisons with other countries see WB: http://info.worldbank.org/governance/kkz2004/sc_chart.asp. In comparison with upper middle income group, Poland scored higher than average in "Voice and Accountability," Government Effectiveness, and "Regulatory Quality." It scored very close to the average on "Rule of Law," and slightly below on "Control of Corruption." Poland's lowest score in 2004 was for "Political Stability."

- Fifth, while the role of elites in reconciliation is absolutely crucial (without their participation the process fails), the "rest" of the society—often more bitterly divided than the elites—must be eventually brought into the process.
- Sixth, cultural mechanisms constitute an integral and indispensable part of the process. *The resolution of mnemonic controversies, preferably in the direction of mnemonic reconciliation, has a considerable impact on democratic consolidation and the functioning of democracy*.

The argument about the significance of cultural dimension of reconciliation has a very simple logic: if we agree that the proper social location or space for the construction of viable democracy is "nation"—and this assumption seems to be rather uncontroversial (Linz and Stepan 1996: 16–37)—then the role of collective memory in the construction of democracy becomes immediately apparent. Nations are cultural constructs, "imagined communities" in whose creation the narrative arrangement of the past plays a crucial role (Anderson 1989). Who does the narrating and how (through such narratives a nation is endowed with specific features) are issues of tremendous political salience, particularly after major social breakthroughs.

As we observed earlier, one way of achieving the goal of "national unity" is through the imposition of a single story on the whole populace. Communist governments invested enormous resources in such attempts to achieve *mnemonic hegemony*. A more subtle and decisively more "democratic" approach is a strategy of building *mnemonic reconciliation*. The goal is to create a maximally consistent yet sufficiently loose narrative of the *common past*, which—without imposing a single story—provides a symbolic frame that itemizes and amalgamates a minimal set of "memories," acceptable to all, or most, groups in the society. Such a "national" narrative would be compelling enough to facilitate a strong emotional attachment to a set of founding myths (*what* is our "common" beginning), cultural heroes (*who* are our "common" great people), grand events (*how* have we managed to overcome "common" difficulties), and symbolic locations (*where* are our "common" spaces of significance).

After a political breakthrough is experienced—the events in Poland in 1989—an "imagined" community within which a new political order is to be built needs to be constituted through a set of skillfully crafted narratives. The Polish case required a mechanism that would provide a *double symbolic closure*: (1) of the Polish People's Republic (thus a production of the broadly accepted interpretation of what this specific political system was about) and (2) of the Round Table process (whose legacy included two nontrivial social and political cleavages described in Part 2). In the Polish post-1989 context, the achievement of *mnemonic reconciliation* seems to be impossible without achieving such a double closure.

The conditions for achieving closure and reconciliation immediately following the establishment of Poland's Third Republic could not have been better. The country produced one of the most magnificent (and successful) social movements in history, "Solidarity," with rich and multifaceted lore of symbols, narratives and (collective) memories. It had a clearly defined "founding" moment that emerged from a liminal period: the Round Table Accords. It had at least one candidate for a great national hero: Lech Wałęsa. And it could easily add to the considerable list of nation's sacred

spaces one more: the Gdańsk Shipyard. Yet neither the double symbolic closure nor mnemonic reconciliation has been achieved to date. Kurczewska observes that in the 1990s an "integral, populist nationalism" has not been consolidated (2002: 53). As our analysis suggests, neither has there been a symbolic syndrome that would constitute the basis of national mnemonic reconciliation.[33]

What happened? First, a great opportunity to stage necessary ceremonies immediately following the successful completion of the Round Table negotiations was squandered. There may be good political reasons (particularly uncertainty as to the Soviet reaction and the desire to respect the agreements with the communists) that such a ceremony was not staged. Symbolic logic, however, dictates that there is no better time for performing such ceremonies than the liminal phase, a phase in-between, when the societal tolerance for changing the rules of the social game and proposing new interpretations of the collective past is particularly high (Turner 1974: 13–14) and when a liminoid challenge to the status quo rules has a high probability of success.[34] Late 1989–early 1990 was an ideal liminal period.

Second, the establishment of a common symbolic frame of/for collective memory calls for periodic re-enactments of a relevant ceremony, preferably in a calendar cycle (usually as an anniversary). As Zerubavel points out:

> The notion of a collective memory implies a past that is not only commonly shared but also *jointly* remembered (that is, 'co-memorated'). By helping ensure that an entire mnemonic community will come to remember its past together, as a group, society affects not only what and who we remember but also when we remember it (1996: 289).

Until August 2005, the founding events of the Third Republic did not make it into the ceremonial calendar of the new polity as state holidays[35] nor were they celebrated on a broader scale as societal holidays.[36] Mnemonic synchronization—as Zerubavel calls it—of the Polish national community did not rely on any symbolic markers (events, personalities or locations) related to "Solidarity" until August 2005. Curiously, while the achievements of "Solidarity" and the Round Table were not enshrined in the official version of national memory, state functionaries showed several times during the post-1989 period that they do understand the significance of collective memory building, most spectacularly by staging the enormously elaborate Sixtieth Anniversary of the Warsaw Uprising.

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[33] The celebrations of the 25 the Anniversary of "Solidarity" in August 2005 might have change this. But at the moment of this writing (September 2005) is too early to determine this.

[34] Turner introduced a distinction between liminal and liminoid phenomena. The former are "certain intervals of antistructure in simple societies;" the later are "antistructural moments in modern societies [that] are ultimately destructive of the normative order and are often the work of and in service of individuals (although they may have mass effects") (Wagner-Pacifici 1986: 11–12).

[35] There are only two national holidays (according to the official page of the Polish President [http://www.prezydent.pl/x.node?id=441]): May 3, anniversary of the 1791 constitution and November 11, the National Independence Day (1918). The latter is designed to celebrate regaining independence after 123 years of partitions. August 31, The Day of Solidarity and Freedom, a new holiday established by the Sejm on July 27, 2005 will not be a day free of work.

[36] "Fixed in a mnemonic community's calendar, such days ensure members' synchronized access to their collective past" (Zerubavel 1996: 294). As national holidays they have a very important function in generating the sense of community.

Third, no founding myth of the Third Republic has been proposed and commonly accepted. The Republic is an offspring of the Round Table agreements, but their meaning has never ceased to be an object of political-interpretive conflicts, most recently re-ignited by the Polish Families League (LPR).[37] Without a modicum of popular agreement as to the meaning of the transforming political event, it is hard to imagine the formation of a commonly accepted, founding myth of the new Republic. Poles are deeply attached to historical traditions—more so, according to some observers, than people of many other nations (Domański 2004). It is thus bewildering that neither the Polish heroic contribution to the downfall of communism ("Solidarity"), nor the peaceful manner of the conflict resolution (Round Table)—often celebrated and highly valued around the world—became a canonical component of the national tradition until 2005.

Fourth, no attempt has been made to stage a ceremony/ritual that would offer an official interpretation of the previous system and suggest an official frame for coming to terms with that system's wrongdoings. Some observers emphasize very stark consequences of this neglect:

> Amnesia, or perhaps falsified memory, is a fact confirmed by public opinion polls and press statements, and it is a fact of profound significance for the fate of the new state and the democratic system. As many publicists, historians, and priests argue, chaos in the ethical sphere is a result or simply a correlate of forgetting (Śpiewak 2005: 174).

The state never performed a public legal proceeding cum purification/healing ritual as the new South African state did through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It can be argued that Apartheid's crimes were more severe than those of communism and that societal modes of seeking symbolic closure to a controversial past are as good as those conducted by the state. It may be that Polish state socialism was less oppressive than the South African "white" regime. The issue is not the actual intensity of wrongdoings but the lack of official acknowledgement through ceremonial accounting of those that occurred. Additionally the studies reviewed in Part 3 argue that bottom-up, societal mechanisms are *less effective* than top-down state-led mechanisms when it comes to discharging the political potential of negative memories, the formation of a nation-wide symbolic frame for collective memory, and achieving mnemonic reconciliation.

The 2004–2005 round of *files-politics*, whereby the documents from the archives of the Institute of National Memory served as political weapons, indicates that 15 years after the fall of communism Poland was still in a throng of symbolic politics feeding on issues that could have been resolved years before. The past has not been harnessed by a broadly acceptable interpretive frame that would facilitate mnemonic

[37] According to *Gazeta Wyborcza* 06.13.05 (and other sources), Maciej Giertych, LPR's candidate for president opined during his first electoral rally (June 11, 2005): "Już 16 lat rządzą na zmianę PZPR i KOR. Władze podają sobie z rąk do rąk (Polish United Worker's Party and the Committee in Support of the Workers have already ruled Poland for 16 years. They pass power from one to another)"—http://serwisy.gazeta.pl/kraj/1,34317,2763230.html. This framing belongs to a narrative that places power in Poland in the hands of the alliance between the "reds" and the "pinks." For detailed analysis see Ekiert and Kubik 1999: 164–71.

reconciliation; there has not been "a performance that would ultimately enable the state itself to function as a moral agent" (Borneman 1997: 23) and the definitive settler of accounts. An opportunity to rectify this situation presented itself in August 2005. The weight of the symbolic calendar cycle that privileges "rounded" anniversaries (say, 25th), coupled with a resurgence of political will, particularly on the side of former "Solidarity" activists, generated a massive festival of ceremonies, concerts and conferences. It is however, doubtful whether this conspicuous effort advanced the cause of mnemonic reconciliation. In fact, the "mainstream" effort led by a majority of the ex-"Solidarity" leaders and activists was challenged from two directions. A minority faction of ex-"Solidarity" activists staged their own counter-celebrations in a fashion that was sufficiently visible to signal the lack of symbolic closure over the meaning of "Solidarity" and the Round Table within the ex-Solidarity camp itself.[38] On the other side of the political spectrum, ex-communists enjoying a parliamentarian majority brandished their symbolic power by providing official language for a bill that introduced a new national holiday, *The Day of Solidarity and Freedom* (August 31). The bill is a striking illustration of the persistent polarization between the two former adversaries. The original preamble to the bill establishing this holiday as proposed by an ex-"Solidarity" minority faction in Sejm, read:

> In order to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Polish people's historical rising toward freedom and independence that initiated the process of communism's collapse and the liberation of the nations of Central and Eastern Europe, it is decided that:...[39]

The ex-communist majority version that was eventually passed into law by the Sejm is much sparser: "In order to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the historical Polish people's rising toward freedom, it is decided that…"[40] None of the controversial symbolic issues is resolved in the bill. "Solidarity" and the Round Table remain unspecified: another stillborn attempt to begin a state-sponsored process of mnemonic reconciliation.

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[38] On Monday, August 29, 2005, the Patriotic Movement organized a ceremony of the 15 the Anniversary of "Solidarity." It was designed as a counter-ceremony to the "official" celebrations. Andrzej Gwiazda co-organized also "independent" ceremonies in Gdańsk. They began on August 27. In addition to Gwiazda, Anna Walentynowicz and Krzysztof Wyszkowski were the central personages involved in these events.

[39] See "Sejm Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, IV kadencja, druk nr 4376, Sprawozdanie Komisji Administracji i Spraw Wewnetrznych" (http://www.senat.gov.pl/k5/dok/sejm/087/4376.pdf).

[40] Dz.U. z 2005 r. Nr 155, poz. 1295 (http://ks.sejm.gov.pl/proc4/ustawy/4202_u.htm). Sejm's Commission of Administration and Internal Matters split its vote on the bill's project: seven deputies voted for the sparse version, four voted for the more extensive Preamble. See: http://orka.sejm.gov.pl/Biuletyn.nsf/wgskrnr/ASW-24.

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