SOCIAL MEMORY

TOMASZ STRYJEK
Institute of Political Studies
Polish Academy of Science
ORCID: 0000-0002-9137-7537
tstryjek@wp.pl

'AN UNEXPLODED MINE': EXPLAINING THE SOURCES OF THE CONTEMPORARY MEMORY CONFLICT BETWEEN POLAND AND UKRAINE

A b s t r a c t

The text contains an analysis of concepts explaining the sources of the contemporary Polish-Ukrainian memory conflict in the international context. The memory conflict between Poland and Ukraine remains the persistent factor destabilizing their cooperation since the 1989–91 watershed. It should be examined in the full breadth of their memory politics, alongside their policies towards the West and Russia. Explanations of the conflict's origins either deal exclusively with selected aspects of it or are holistic but give preference to one of the two perspectives. Georgiy Kasianov's approach treats politics of memory as primarily top-down, thus exaggerating the role of state authorities and nationalist actors and underrating the community building aspects of historical narratives and societal needs. Oleksandr Grytsenko's approach emphasizes the importance of bottom-up actors, but authenticizes in its own way social expectations and underestimates the influence of nationalist narratives. An additional source of memory conflicts—the vying for high status by states——is revealed by Michał Łuczewski's theory of mnemonic moral capital. Using its assumptions as groundwork, circumstantiating Polish policy—which has exacerbated the memory conflict with Ukraine—becomes possible. Studies of international memory conflicts in the region should combine elements of multiple approaches; their results should also be confronted with comparative research on the historical cultures of each individual state.

K e y w o r d s: memory conflict, politics of memory, Poland, Ukraine, international status of states, mnemonic moral capital, historical culture.

THE TOPIC—STATE OF THE ART, IMPORTANCE, AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

Divergent interpretations of shared history within Poland and Ukraine have been the most constant source of tension between these two large Central and Eastern European states since 1991. The most recent series of events of this type was a heated exchange between their respective authorities—Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine Dmytro Kuleba, President of Ukraine Volodomyr Zelensky and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Poland Radosław Sikorski—between August and October 2024. It concerned, on one hand, Ukraine's failure to reverse its 2017 decision suspending access to Polish agencies working on exhuming the remains of Poles killed by Ukrainian Insurgent Army (*Ukraïns'ka povstans'ka armiia*, UPA) units in 1943–44 (left undiscovered and unburied), and, on the other, Poland's failure to reconstitute in their previous form monuments to UPA partisans who had died fighting Soviet and communist Polish forces in 1945–47 (demolished likely by nationalists in 2017–18). High-ranking Polish state representatives argued that the lack of cooperation from Ukraine on this matter contradicts the Christian and contemporary European values and could prove to be an obstacle on Ukraine's path to the EU.[1] The sources of these tensions remain unextinguished despite the profound shifts following Russia's invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022: Poland's taking in of refugees and support for Ukraine's army and society, Ukrainians' recognition of Poles as the nation most friendly to them, and the significant increase in Polish sympathies towards Ukrainians.[2]

The differences between Poland and Ukraine regarding their common past concern above all responsibility for the crimes committed in the 1939–47 conflict. These encompass the operations of underground armies in 1943–45: the large-scale murder and expulsion of populations in Volhynia and Eastern Galicia (together

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[1]   'Sikorski o Wołyniu: Lepiej, żeby Ukraina załatwiła tę sprawę jak najszybciej', TVP Info, 3 September 2024, https://www.tvp.info/82101523/radoslaw-sikorski-o-rzezi-na-wolyniu-polska-bedzie-decydowala-o-przyszlosci-ukrainy-w-ue/. (Unless otherwise noted at point of citation, all URLs cited in this article were accessible on 8 August 2024.)

[2]   'Otsinka okremykh kraïn za rivnem druzheliubnosti do Ukraïny', Transatlantic Dialogue Center, 1–2 June 2023, https://ratinggroup.ua/files/ratinggroup/reg_files/ rg_ua_international_1000_062023.pdf; 'Stosunek do innych narodów rok po wybuchu wojny na Ukrainie', Komunikat z Badań Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej, March 2023, https://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2023/K_033_23.PDF.

Western Ukraine) in the UPA's anti-Polish operation, and the retaliatory murders of inhabitants of Ukrainian villages by the Polish Home Army (*Armia Krajowa,* AK) and other anti-communist units.[3] It also covers state actions: the mutual deportations of the other nationality's population from border lands undertaken by communist Poland and the Ukrainian SSR in 1944–46,[4] and Poland's deportation of the remaining Ukrainians and Lemkos to the Western and Northern Territories in Operation Vistula in 1947.[5] In the background also appear events from the Polish-Ukrainian war over Eastern Galicia in 1918–19 and Poland's assimilationist policies towards the population of Western Ukraine in 1919–39, occasionally from eras even older——like Polish rule in Ukrainian lands from 1349 on.

The sources of the Polish-Ukrainian memory conflict have so far been explained within the literature from three perspectives. Most attempts tackle the Polish-Ukrainian historical reconciliation process, which developed unofficially in contacts between the two nations' *émigrés* in the West during the Cold War and officially between both states since 1989, as well as the related discourses of historiography and memory. Timothy Snyder has given their mutual recognition and bilateral acceptance of the border dividing the Polish and new Ukrainian state in 1991 the rank of a historical breakthrough, thus underscoring the achievements of reconciliation's first decade.[6] Yaroslav Hrytsak outlined the motivations and strategies of the participants in this process and subsequent geopolitical consequences for Central and Eastern Europe in the first two decades after 1991.[7]

Authors of later publications mostly asserted exhaustion of the post-Cold War atmosphere of historical reconciliation in Central and

[3] Grzegorz Motyka, *From the Volhynian Massacre to Operation Vistula. The Polish--Ukrainian Conflict 1943–1947* (Paderborn: Brill Schöningh, 2023).

[4] Jan Pisuliński, *Przesiedlenie ludności ukraińskiej z Polski do USRR w latach 1944––1947* (Rzeszów: Libra PL, 2017).

[5] Idem, *Akcja specjalna „Wisła"* (Rzeszów: Libra PL, 2022); Grzegorz Motyka, *Akcja „Wisła" '47. Komunistyczna czystka etniczna* (Cracow: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2023).

[6] Timothy Snyder, 'Memory of Sovereignty and Sovereignty over Memory: Poland, Lithuania and Ukraine, 1939–1999', in Jan-Werner Müller, ed., *Memory and Power in Post--War Europe. Studies in the Present of the Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), pp. 39–58, https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511491580.002.

[7] Iaroslav Hrytsak, 'Tiazhke prymyrennia', in idem, *Strasti za nacionalizmom. Istorychni eseï* (Kiev: Krytyka, 2004), pp. 126–37; idem, 'A Stumbling Block of Reconciliation', *New Eastern Europe* 4, 2013, pp. 163–68. See also: Andrii Portnov, *Poland and Ukraine. Entangled Histories, Asymmetric Memories* (Berlin: Forum Transregionale Studien, 2020); Grzegorz Motyka, *Wołyń '43: Ludobójcza czystka – fakty, analogie, polityka historyczna* (Cracow: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2016).

Eastern Europe in the 21st century and the emergence of *memory entrepreneurs* in the local states, who employed *manipulative historicizing strategies* to impose their own narratives about the past and shift all responsibility for the crimes onto the other side.[8] Tatiana Zhurzhenko analyzed official acts of reconciliation at Lychakiv Cemetery in Lviv concerning those killed in the Polish--Ukrainian war in 1918–19[9] and in villages (Pawłokoma and Huta Pieniacka) annihilated by each party in 1944,[10] in the context of the difficult relations between local communities on both sides of the border and state decision-makers' pressure on them to participate in this process.[11] Critical analyses of the 2006 act of reconciliation in Pawłokoma were conducted by Karolina Wigura, who pointed out the lack of authenticity of the presidential declarations, which avoided identifying any perpetrators of the crimes,[12] and Mateusz Magierowski, who revealed the lack of interest of both states in working to achieve reconciliation between relatives and neighbors of the perpetrators and victims.[13] Eleonora Narvselius analyzed the motives behind the promotion of the historical 'multiculturalism' of Lviv among the European public opinion by the Ukrainian intelligentsia, concluding that it does not leave room for public discussion around the trauma of Poles killed in or displaced from Western Ukraine.[14] Lastly, analyses of discourse within Polish and Ukrainian historiography alongside typologies of historians' positions relating to the parties' responsibility

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[8]   Georges Mink and Laure Neumayer, eds, *History, Memory and Politics in Central and Eastern Europe. Memory Games* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

[9]   Tatiana Zhurzhenko, 'The Border as Pain and Remedy: Commemorating the Polish--Ukrainian Conflict of 1918–1919 in Lviv and Przemyśl', *Nationalities Papers* 42: 2, 2014, pp. 242–68, https://doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2013.801416.

[10] Eadem, *Memory Wars and Reconciliation in the Ukrainian-Polish Borderlands: Geopolitics of Memory from a Local Perspective*, in Mink and Naumeyer, eds, *History, Memory and Politics*, pp. 173–92.

[11] On the perspective of the Ukrainian intelligentsia of Volhynia, see Oksana Kalishchuk, *Volyn' '43: Istoriohrafichne piznannia i kryve dzerkalo pamiati* (Lviv: IUAD NANU, 2020). On the contradictions between Polish and Ukrainian state's policy toward memory of UPA 1991–2015, see Jerzy Kardas, 'Oceny OUN-UPA na Ukrainie i w Polsce w latach 1991–2015', *Annales Universitatis Paedagogicae Cracoviensis. Studia de Securitate et Educatione Civili* VI, 2016, pp. 42–72.

[12] Karolina Wigura, *Wina narodów. Przebaczenie jako strategia prowadzenia polityki* (Gdańsk and Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, 2011), pp. 47–104.

[13] Mateusz Magierowski, '(A)symmetry of (Non-)memory: The Missed Opportunity to Work Through the Traumatic Memory of the Polish-Ukrainian Ethnic Conflict in Pawłokoma', *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures* 30: 4, 2016, pp. 766–84, https://doi.org/10.1177/0888325416651328.

[14] Eleonora Narvselius, 'Tragic Past, Agreeable Heritage: Post-Soviet Intellectual Discussions on the Polish Legacy in Western Ukraine', *The Carl Beck Papers in Russian and East European Studies* 2403, 2015.

for the crimes of 1939–47 were published by Rafał Wnuk,[15] Ihor Iliushyn,[16] Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe,[17] and Tomasz Stryjek.[18]

A second explanatory perspective has emerged recently in research on *memory laws* in European states, with a theoretical framework laid out by Nikolay Koposov.[19] Regarding the Polish-Ukrainian conflict, this perspective has pointed out that it is a consequence of a broader tendency to use the past to justify populist rule, and the regime's evolution towards authoritarianism. Still, researchers subscribing to this perspective have paid little attention to international relations. Hence, the conflict has remained outside the interests of both Koposov[20] and authors of other studies.[21]

Finally, a third perspective was formulated by Georgiy Kasianov[22] and Oleksandr Grytsenko,[23] who, firstly, explain the sources of the Polish-Ukrainian memory conflict within the context of theoretical reflection on the study of politics of memory in general and the results of comprehensive research on politics of memory in Ukraine, and, secondly, by Tomasz Stryjek and Joanna Konieczna-Sałamatin,[24] who seek these sources in the structural differences between Poland and Ukraine's *historical cultures*. These lenses provide more comprehensive

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[15] Rafał Wnuk, 'Recent Polish Historiography on Polish-Ukrainian Relations during World War II and Its Aftermath', *InterMarium. On-line Journal* 7: 1, 2004, pp. 1–13, https://ciaotest.cc.columbia.edu/olj/int/int_0701b.pdf.

[16] Ihor Il'iushyn, *Ukraïns'ka Povstans'ka Armiia i Armiia Kraïova. Protystoiannia v zakhidniï Ukraïni (1939–1945 rr.)* (Kyïv: Kyievo-Mohylians'ka Akademiia, 2009).

[17] Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe, 'Der polnisch-ukrainische Historikerdiskurs über den polnischukrainischen Konflikt 1943–1947', *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas, Neue Folge* 57: 1, 2009, pp. 54–85.

[18] Grzegorz Motyka, Tomasz Stryjek and Mariusz Zajączkowski, *Międzynarodowe aspekty akcji „Wisła"* (Warsaw: Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN, 2020), pp. 235–512.

[19] Nikolay Koposov, *Memory Laws, Memory Wars. The Politics of the Past in Europe and Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

[20] Idem, 'Populism and Memory: Legislation of the Past in Poland, Ukraine, and Russia', *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures* 36: 1, 2022, pp. 272–97, https://doi.org/10.1177/0888325420950806.

[21] Alina Cherviatsova, 'On the Frontline of European Memory Wars: Memory Laws and Policy in Ukraine', *European Papers* 36: 1, 2020, pp. 119–36, https://doi.org/10.15166/2499-8249/387; Uladislau Belavusau, Aleksandra Gliszczyńska-Grabias and Maria Mälksoo, 'Memory Laws and Memory Wars in Poland, Russia and Ukraine', *Jahrbuch des öffentlichen Rechts* 69: 1, 2021, pp. 95–117, https://doi.org/10.1628/joer-2021-0005.

[22] Georgiy Kasianov, *Memory Crash: The Politics of History in and Around Ukraine 1980s–2010s.* (Budapest, Vienna and New York: Central European University Press, 2022).

[23] Oleksandr Grytsenko, 'Politics of Memory in Ukrainian-Polish Relations: Poland's Hyper-Activeness and Ukraine's Reactiveness', in Tomasz Stryjek and Joanna Konieczna--Sałamatin, eds, *The Politics of Memory in Poland and Ukraine: From Reconciliation to De-Conciliation* (New York: Routledge, 2022), pp. 36–52.

[24] Stryjek and Konieczna-Sałamatin, eds, *The Politics of Memory in Poland and Ukraine.*

clarifications, grounded in several research methods.[25] The principal aim of this article then is to analyze their and Michał Łuczewski's research approaches[26] and then to indicate the stakes in the conflict that have not been sufficiently highlighted by researchers. Łuczewski formulated a theory explaining the sources of change in the memory policies of Poland, Germany, and Russia in the 21st century that also helps to better understand the motives behind the politics of memory of Poland and Ukraine towards one another. I selected these five authors because their methodological approaches, to examining the politics of memory and explaining the sources of the Polish-Ukrainian memory conflict, regardless of what academic discipline they formally represent, are more diverse than those employed by representatives of the first (historiography) and second perspectives (research on the juridical aspects of politics).

Returning to the conflict's political context, it should be added that the asymmetry between Poland and Ukraine in terms of the importance attributed to their 'bone of contention', that is the anti--Polish operations of the UPA,[27] has a 35-year history. Poland sees the conflict as needing urgent resolution, while Ukraine believes it to have been resolved with the first joint celebrations on the massacre's 60th anniversary in 2003. Polish expectations are that Ukraine designates the UPA as the main perpetrator of the massacres and accepts that it was guided in the Second World War by visions of constructing a monoethnic state. Most of the contemporary Polish public also expects an apology from Ukraine's president.[28] Within Ukraine, the prevailing view maintains that responsibility for the two-way slaughter in Volhynia and Eastern Galicia is shared between the UPA and the

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[25] Similar in-depth analysis also characterizes two other researchers, see Yuliya Yurchuk, 'Reclaiming the Past, Confronting the Past: OUN-UPA Memory Politics and Nation-Building in Ukraine (1991–2016)', in Julie Fedor, Markku Kangaspuro, Jussi Lassila and Tatiana Zhurzhenko, eds, *War and Memory in Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus* (Cham: Palgrave, 2017), pp. 107–37, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-66523-8_4; Anna Wylegała, 'Poland and Poles in the Collective Memory of Galician Ukrainians', in eadem and Małgorzata Głowacka-Grajper, eds, *The Burden of the Past. History, Memory and Identity in Contemporary Ukraine* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2019), pp. 229–49.

[26] Michał Łuczewski, *Kapitał moralny. Polityki historyczne w późnej nowoczesności* (Cracow: Ośrodek Myśli Politycznej, 2017).

[27] Polish and Ukrainian historians dispute not only the responsibility of the UPA and AK, but also the number of victims on each side, see Motyka, *From the Volhynian Massacre to Operation Vistula*, p. 298; Volodymyr Viatrovych, *The Gordian Knot: The Second Polish-Ukrainian War, 1942–1947* (Toronto: Horner Press, 2020), pp. XIV–VIII.

[28] 'Rocznica zbrodni na Wołyniu – pamięć i pojednanie', Komunikat z Badań Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej, July 2003, https://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2003/K_117_03.PDF.

AK, and that the greater number of dead in Western Ukraine suffered by the Polish side is 'compensated' by the attempted nationalization of the Ukrainian minority in Poland after Operation Vistula. There are also those historians who argue that the Ukrainian peasantry was pushed to crack down on Poles in Volhynia primarily by the culture of violence shaped by the Polish state and landowners in 1349–1939.[29]

Since 1991, Ukrainian authorities agreed to participate, together with their Polish counterparts, only in those acts of reconciliation that directly or indirectly refer to the principle of balance in the matter of past guilt. Every five years since 2003, Poland has been initiating joint commemorations of the *Volhynian crime's* anniversary (as it is called therein).[30] At every opportunity, the Polish authorities try to persuade Ukraine to speak more clearly about the role of the UPA through its official representatives. They have so far failed in this attempt, though continue trying. The 2015–23 ruling conservative Law and Justice party introduced additional acts of symbolic and legal pressure on Ukraine. In July 2016, the parliament adopted a resolution recognizing the UPA's crimes in Volhynia as genocide against citizens of the Second Polish Republic and establishing an official day of remembrance.[31] In January 2018, it amended the Law on the Institute of National Remembrance (INR), introducing criminalization with a sentence of up to three years in prison for denying or belittling the Volhynian crime.[32] By the 70th anniversary celebrations in 2013, those in Poland who advocated abandoning the principle of a balance of guilt had won over public opinion.[33] The view

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[29] Bohdan Hud', *Z istoriï etnosotsialnykh konfliktiv. Ukraïntsi ĭ poliaki na Naddniprianshchyni, Volyni ĭ u Skhidniĭ Halychyni v XIX – pershiĭ polowyni XX stolittia* (Kharkiv: Akta, 2018).

[30] In contrast, Ukraine uses the term *Volhynian tragedy*. While the Polish name indicates a planned crime and single perpetrator, the Ukrainian designation implies the source of both crimes in a coincidence, a result of events spinning beyond the control of actors.

[31] 'Uchwała Sejmu Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej z dnia 22 lipca 2016 r. w sprawie oddania hołdu ofiarom ludobójstwa dokonanego przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich na obywatelach II Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej w latach 1943–1945', *Monitor Polski. Dziennik Urzędowy Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej*, no. 726, 29 July 2016, https://www.M20160726.pdf.

[32] 'Ustawa z dnia 26 stycznia 2018 r. o zmianie ustawy o Instytucie Pamięci Narodowej – Komisji Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, ustawy o grobach i cmentarzach wojennych, ustawy o muzeach oraz ustawy o odpowiedzialności podmiotów zbiorowych za czyny zabronione pod groźbą kary', *Dziennik Ustaw Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej*, no 369, 14 February 2018, https://dziennikustaw.gov.pl/DU/rok/2018/pozycja/369. This provision was repealed by the Constitutional Court in January 2019.

[33] Between 2008 and 2013 there was a jump in the number of respondents convinced of exclusive Ukrainian perpetration of the Volhynian crime, from 19% to 52%, see: 'Wołyń 1943', Komunikat z Badań Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej, July 2008, https://www.

that Ukraine seeks to let the exceptional scale and bloody nature of the UPA's crimes 'drown in the sea' of events that is the entirety of these countries' historical relationship has won out.[34] Within Ukraine, Poland's pressure has further strengthened its refusal to unilaterally accept responsibility, especially after Law and Justice leader Jarosław Kaczyński and foreign minister Witold Waszczykowski stipulated in 2017 that Poland would make its agreement to Ukraine's EU accession contingent on condemnation of the UPA.[35]

Also in 2017, the only time since 1989, the Polish government refused to co-finance the events commemorating the 70th anniversary of Operation Vistula, traditionally organized every five years by the Ukrainian and Lemko minorities. Then Minister of Internal Affairs Mariusz Błaszczak stated that the reason was the lack of financing by the Ukrainian government for places commemorating the victims of the UPA massacre in Ukraine. In this way, a kind of Polish retorsion affected not the Ukrainian state, but the Ukrainian minority in Poland, accused of not joining in the public condemnation of the UPA.[36]

Since the Orange Revolution, both countries' authorities have also been participating in joint celebrations to mark the unity of Polish-Ukrainian security. But, following the Euromaidan in 2014, relations between the states deteriorated, as Polish public opinion noticed the popularity of UPA symbolism in Ukrainian society and interpreted it as an expression of nationalism demonstrated against Poland, while in reality it was almost exclusively an expression of defensive determination in the war against Russia. The stakes of the conflict increased even more after the Verkhovna Rada granted legal protection to the memory of the UPA in 2015,[37] the first formal signal from Ukraine that it would not agree to attribute responsibility for the collective perpetration of mass crimes to this underground army.

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cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2008/K_110_08.PDF; 'Trudna pamięć: Wołyń 1943', Komunikat z Badań Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej, July 2013, https://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2013/K_093_13.PDF.

[34] Łukasz Adamski, 'Kyiv's "Volhynian Negationism": Reflections on the 2016 Polish--Ukrainian Memory Conflict', *Journal of Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society* 3: 2, 2017, pp. 253–90.

[35] 'Waszczykowski: Mówimy Ukraińcom, że z Banderą do Europy nie wejdą', Kresy.PL, 4 July 2017, https://kresy.pl/wydarzenia/regiony/ukraina/waszczykowski-mowimy-ukraincom-ze-bandera-europy-wejda/.

[36] 'Błaszczak: Stosunki z Ukrainą muszą być budowane na zasadzie symetrii', Polska Agencja Prasowa, 4 April 2017, https://www.pap.pl/aktualnosci/news%2C907784%2Cblaszczak-stosunki-z-ukraina-musza-byc-budowane-na-zasadzie-symetrii.html.

[37] 'Zakon Ukrainy: Pro pravovyĭ status ta vshanuvannia pamiati bortsiv za nezalezhnist' Ukraïny u XX stolitti', *Vidomosti Verkhovnoï Rady*, no. 25, 2015, p. 190, https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/314-19#Text.

Following the aforementioned 70th anniversary of Operation Vistula in 2017, controversies surrounding this deportation faded into the background,[38] while the crimes in Volhynia finally took the podium as the main historical issue of contention. In 2018, the parties were on such foul terms that the joint annual commemorations to honor victims were cancelled. After Russia's invasion, however, they were held again in July 2023, in Lutsk, Volhynia, and attended by presidents Volodymyr Zelensky and Andrzej Duda. At that moment, a demonstration of unity was needed by both sides more than at any other time since 1991.

Throughout the 1991–2024 period, Polish-Ukrainian relations have deteriorated more than once, foremost for reasons beyond[39] politics of memory. Such reasons represented a side factor, even though they were highlighted in the media during anniversary events. Given that the party defining the reconciliation process as unfinished was Poland, goings-on in its domestic politics alone influenced whether the Volhynia controversy was actualized in mutual relations and how it was linked to other issues on which there were differences of opinion. Ukraine dealt with it almost exclusively in response to Poland's handling of it or when Poland brought the matter up itself.[40]

Polish-Ukrainian tensions over their shared past have never been significant enough to cause a break in relations between the two countries. What has always prevailed has been what they have in common: security, economy, transition process experience--sharing, mutual support in integrating with the West, immigration, and refugees. In the future, however, given the burgeoning conflict over economic interests as Ukraine's accession to the EU draws nearer, recidivism of tensions around memory remains very likely. Thus, the metaphor of the 'unexploded mine' in this article's title is no exaggeration. Though it is unlikely that Poland and Ukraine would ever permanently sever relations over a memory conflict, the

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[38] The last time Operation Vistula attracted public attention was in November 2023, when the prosecutor's office of the INR discontinued the investigation, which the Ukrainian and Lemko minorities and the Ukrainian state authorities expected to end with a finding that the Polish authorities had committed a so-called communist crime in 1947. However, already in July 2024, after the center-left government took power in Poland, the District Court in Warsaw overturned this decision, and the investigation was resumed.

[39] For example, due to negative impacts on Polish farmers in 2023 as a side effect of the diversion of the transit of Ukrainian agricultural exports to Poland following the Russian invasion.

[40] Anna Wylegała, 'Managing the Difficult Past: Ukrainian Collective Memory and Public Debates on History', *Nationalities Papers* 45: 5, 2017, pp. 780–97, https://doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2016.1273338.

sources of this phenomenon—represented by both these contentious memory regimes—and its political exploitation would be worthy of research, even if the stakes amounted to nothing more than cracking an intellectual puzzle.

THE ARGUMENT AND ITS JUSTIFICATION

In the following sections of the text: I analyze ways of explaining Ukraine's politics of history/politics of memory[41] and the sources of the Polish-Ukrainian memory conflict as per Georgiy Kasianov and Oleksandr Grytsenko (III), and demonstrate how the category of *mnemonic moral capital* and Michał Łuczewski's typology of historical accounts of Central and Eastern European states are helpful in identifying the sources of this conflict (IV). I then refer to the category of *cultural immersion in the past*, taken from Tomasz Stryjek and Joanna Konieczna-Sałamatin, and to quantitative studies of attitudes towards the past within both societies. Finally, by combining elements of different approaches, I identify hitherto unnoticed sources and *stakes* in the memory conflict between Poland and Ukraine (V).

I argue that the Polish-Ukrainian memory conflict takes place not primarily because politicians on each side use contentious historical issues to vie for power, and thus pit public opinion against the other, nor because raising these issues is a tried and tested way of attracting media attention, nor because elites in Central and Eastern European countries pursue Western attention by highlighting their country's historical 'Europeanness' while pointing to the threat they face from Russia.[42] Without denying that these factors intensify regional struggles, I argue that conflict is primarily unfolding because Poland and Ukraine, as national communities, perceive their current challenges differently, and therefore draw different conclusions from their past, pursue different goals in the international arena, and have different *historical cultures*.

My proposed explanation highlights the identity and emotional aspects of rebuilding political communities through politics of memory after periods with rule evolving towards authoritarianism (in Ukraine

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[41] The two terms are synonymous in this article. In the various sections I use whichever the author of the given research approach uses. I myself prefer the term politics of memory.

[42] Alexei Miller, 'Introduction. Historical Politics: Eastern European Convolutions in the 21st Century', in idem and Maria Lipman, eds, *The Convolutions of Historical Politics* (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2012), pp. 1–20.

1994–2004 and 2010–14) and war (in Ukraine since 2014), and their social impact. This refers to the positive link between a sense of national identity and social cohesion,[43] as well as to the necessity of realizing the fourth dimension of transition—nation-building (*nationhood*) in states that, like Ukraine, were independent neither in 1945–91 nor 1918–39.[44] I argue that societies—understood as nations in the civic sense—do not merely play the role of 'cannon fodder' in these conflicts, manipulated and mobilized by political actors. These conflicts also take place within the processes of forming and sustaining bonds, mediated by societies' notions of themselves as sustainable communities that allow their members to orient themselves in the social world. Social actors have a subjective stake in the formulation of beliefs about contested historical issues that shape their image and represent communities of memory. In other words, disputes over historical narratives are genuine, though they are also all too often deployed in political battles.

I argue that Poland's entry into NATO and the EU has resulted in Poles believing that national history has been fulfilled through the achievement of the nearly 200-year independence struggle's goal.[45] However, the country's participation in ever-accelerating globalization flowing from the West has created social fears about its survival as a nation in an ethnocultural sense. These have been exploited by the right, which has fanned defensive reactions and attempted to use the dynamics of international change to build up the country's regional leadership position. Resultantly, and especially under Law and Justice's rule, politics in Poland have seen politics of memory decision-makers use history primarily to resist the creep of EU integration and to strengthen the state's position where arguments for such action can be derived from the past—like in relations with its eastern neighbors. The second of these motives has been an important source of a 'didactic' politics of memory towards Ukraine, whereby it was intimated how it should go about dealing with the memory of the UPA's Volhynian atrocities.[46]

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[43] Margaret Canovan, *Nationhood and Political Theory* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 1998).

[44] Taras Kuzio, 'Transition in Post-Communist States: Triple or Quadruple?', *Politics* 21: 3, 2001, pp. 168–77, https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9256.00148.

[45] Counting from the anti-Russian Bar Confederation (1768–72).

[46] The perception by Ukrainians of Poland's memory policy as 'didactic' significantly hinders the achievement of goals such righteous as exhumation and burial of victims. Successive Polish governments are perceived in Ukraine as adopting a 'didactic' pose, regardless of their ideological nature. The sources of such a perception could perhaps

Concurrently, I argue that Ukrainians deem their position as a nation historically unfulfilled. Some four hundred years of struggle against colonizers, primarily Russia, but also Poland,[47] which the current state narrative recounts, has not yet arrived at its happy terminus. There was a growing tendency among the active portion of Ukrainian society from 1991 onwards to demonstrate Ukraine's Europeanness to the West, which found clear expression in the Orange Revolution and Euromaidan.[48] In the period 1991–2014, there was a clash between two identity-related and political orientations: the pro-European and post-Soviet, ending with the former winning a lasting advantage.[49] I believe that what differentiates Ukraine from Poland the most today is that its public sees the main challenge not in defending itself against globalization's consequences on national identity, but, to the contrary, in fully integrating the country into globalization's fountainhead—the Western world, which it believes can strengthen this identity. To that effect, contemporary actors in Ukraine use history less to root themselves in the past and more to warrant projects of the future. These projects are linked firstly to the West (Western Europe and North America), and only secondly to immediate Western neighbors, including Poland, which, in the Ukrainian perception, in its policy alludes too strongly and one- -sidedly to its past roles *vis-à-vis* Ukraine.

UKRAINE'S POLITICS OF MEMORY AND ORIGINS OF POLISH-UKRAINIAN CONFLICT — APPROACHES: TOP-DOWN AND BOTTOM-UP

Georgiy Kasianov's search for the origins of the Polish-Ukrainian memory conflict is based on assumptions that constitute his top-down approach to the study of historical politics in general. These are:

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be explained in the light of the postcolonial approach to interpreting Polish-Ukrainian relations in the past (paternalistic relationship between lord and boor), which is currently represented in Poland by researchers of the so-called *people's turn* in historiography. See Adam Leszczyński, *Ludowa historia Polski. Historia wyzysku i oporu. Mitologia panowania* (Warsaw: W.A.B., 2020).

[47] Counting from the first Cossack uprising against the Commonwealth (1591–93).

[48] Olga Onuch, *Mapping Mass Mobilization. Understanding Revolutionary Moments in Argentina and Ukraine* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

[49] Mykola Riabchuk, '"Two Ukraines" Reconsidered: The End of Ukrainian Ambivalence?', *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 15: 1, 2015, pp. 138–56, https://doi.org/10.1111/sena.12120.

● Uncovering politics of history leads firstly through an analysis of discourses and interests, and only secondly through an analysis of accompanying values and emotions.[50]

● Historical memory is shaped by historical policy:

'[h]istorical memory' is a form of collective or cultural memory which claims the status of tradition (which, of course, is in itself invented and constructed). Historical memory is a relatively stable set of interrelated collective ideas about a group's past, purposefully designed through a politics of history.[51]

● Politics of history is a tool for exercising power:

[p]olitical, cultural, ethnic, and other social groups use historical politics in their struggle for power as well as for the control and redistribution of symbolic capital. Historical politics is an instrument of mobilization for various social groups for the sake of their homogeneity and loyalty, and is a tool of ideological and political control.[52]

What are the strengths of Kasianov's explanation of the Polish--Ukrainian conflict? He accurately identifies the actors of the Polish--Ukrainian historical reconciliation process, in the first instance those who represent the liberal intelligentsia circles and some hierarchs from Christian Churches of both countries, and Pope John Paul II, adhere to a civic conception of the nation, and observe the principle of *we forgive and ask for forgiveness* taken from the Polish--German historical reconciliation. In 2003 they achieved limited success as initiators and co-organizers of the first joint anniversary commemorations alongside the authorities of both states. He also demonstrates how, over the following years, these circles in Poland and Ukraine lost their influence on public opinion in favor of actors calling for a general change in memory policy.[53] The latter consolidated their influence during the rule of Law and Justice, which pandered to the expectations of borderland organizations affiliated with nationalists. Conservatives, idealizing the First and Second Polish Republics and the Polish underground of the Second World War, do not accept an image of Polish history in which Poles are not exclusively heroes and victims, but also perpetrators.[54] In contrast, in Ukraine, the state's idealizing politics of history was headed in the

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[50] Kasianov, *Memory Crash*, p. VII.
[51] Ibid., p. 17.
[52] Ibid., p. 18.
[53] Ibid., pp. 319–49.
[54] This is reflected in the activities of the INR during its administration's two terms in 2016–21 and from 2021 onwards.

latter part of his term by President Viktor Yushchenko (2007–10) and the appointees of President Petro Poroshenko (2014–19); individuals far removed from conservatism, yet resembling Polish conservatives in their unwillingness to attribute responsibility for crimes to their own side in the conflict.[55]

Kasianov's analysis nearly exhausts the possibilities of explaining the Polish-Ukrainian conflict afforded by a critical analysis of actors' discourse and interests. His explanation of the Polish-Ukrainian memory conflict bears important findings. He recognizes fundamental changes in Ukrainian collective memory resulting from the conflict with Russia that has been growing since 2014. In explaining their sources, he gives priority to the impact of the Ukrainian nationalist memory discourse on public opinion and the support for this discourse by state authorities. Therefore, he follows a different path than the authors who see the sources of these changes in the shift of Ukrainian collective memory from the post-colonial to the anti-colonial phase with regard to the role played by Russia in Ukraine's past, and which took place following Russia's aggression on Ukraine.[56] However, what is important here, is not how he interprets the sources of these changes, but the fact that he does not notice that they also affected Ukraine's relations with Poland in such a way that Ukrainian historians and the public also critically reviewed past Polish-Ukrainian relations, highlighting instances of Polish domination and exploitation.

Valuable is Kasianov's critique of the UPA's image distorted by Ukrainian nationalists, which misleads both Ukrainian public opinion and poisons Ukraine's relations with Poland. His call for the Ukrainian intelligentsia to undertake a critique of this image is also crucial. However, the merits of his explanation do not override the fact that he did not identify the main source of the majority population's surprising combination of an orientation towards the values underlying European integration with the recognition of ultranationalist Stepan Bandera and the UPA as national heroes.[57]

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[55] This was reflected in the activities of Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance under Volodymyr Viatrovych's leadership in 2014–19.

[56] See Barbara Törnquist-Plewa and Yuliya Yurchuk, 'Memory Politics in Contemporary Ukraine: Reflections from the Postcolonial Perspective', *Memory Studies* 12: 6, 2017, https://doi.org/10.1177/1750698017727806; Serhy Yekelchyk, *Writing the Nation: The Ukrainian Historical Profession in Independent Ukraine and the Diaspora* (Stuttgart: Verlag, 2022).

[57] 'The Tenth National Survey: Ideological Markers of the War', Reĭtynh, 27 April 2022, https://ratinggroup.ua/en/research/ukraine/desyatyy_obschenacionalnyy_opros_ideologicheskie_markery_voyny_27_aprelya_2022.html.

Said source is the need to experience collective pride, lying at the heart of national sentiment.[58] In contemporary Ukraine's case, which has been experiencing war and wrongdoings since 2014, this need is realized by adhering to a historical image of a nation unblemished by crimes. Kasianov is correct in that misguided are those in Ukraine who uphold an unsullied image of the UPA, but he portrays this too one-sidedly by saying that this stance is imposed on public opinion by the nationalist faction.

In turn, Oleksandr Grytsenko,[59] formulating his own analysis of the politics of memory in Ukraine, proposed an approach both bottom-up and top-down, based on the following assumptions:

● The study of the politics of memory should be conducted primarily by analyzing the actions of actors: both acts of cooperation and the three types of conflicts—of interests, values, and identities——between them.[60]

● Historical memory is a system operating within the framework of a culture of memory (*Erinnerungskultur*) as defined by Jan Assmann,[61] meaning society's inherent stock of patterns and beliefs that allows it to maintain its identity and remains a source of revival for its way of life following crises and struggles against threats.[62] Grytsenko's approach differs from Kasianov's in how he relates Assmann's concept to Ukraine. Ukrainianness in Grytsenko's formulation turns out to have a long history, to be something changeable but continuous, and taking different forms largely harkening to previous ones. In Kasianov's case, however, Ukrainianness is formulated as something appearing and disappearing throughout history, with most of its characteristics constructed and re-constructed each time.

● Politics of memory is a form of symbolic politics, as well as being a social policy pursued by the authorities. It remains essential to the functioning of a political community. It is conducted by the state, and by other actors who articulate social needs. To study it, Grytsenko used the *public policy process* model.[63] This policy can take on a redistributive aspect equalizing the representations of social

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[58] Antonina Kłoskowska, *National Cultures at the Grass-Root Level* (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2001), pp. 41–68.

[59] He passed away prematurely in 2020.

[60] Oleksandr Grytsenko, *Prezydenty i pamiat': Polityka pamiati prezydentiv Ukraïny (1994–2014). Pidgrunttia, poslannia, realizaciia, rezul'taty* (Kyïv: K.I.S., 2017), p. 33.

[61] Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* (München: Verlag C.H.Beck, 1992).

[62] Grytsenko, *Prezydenty i pamiat'*, pp. 13–15.

[63] Ibid., pp. 11, 25, 32.

groups in the historical narrative, redressing remaining injustices.[64] Its omission by the state may have consequences in the form of social conflicts more serious than those it provokes itself erupting.[65]

How does Grytsenko's explanation of the Polish-Ukrainian memory conflict's origins differ from Kasianov's? Grytsenko saw Ukraine's politics of memory, validated by the intelligentsia and pursued by the state since the Orange Revolution, as expressing the expectations of a rapidly growing section of Ukrainian society. He pointed out the errors and inconsistencies of those pursuing this kind of politics, nevertheless interpreting it as responding to the challenge of building state subjectivity and to the Ukrainian nation's social need for recognition by other nations.[66]

Grytsenko, in comparison to Kasianov, underscored, firstly, Ukraine's stakes for exiting Russia's sphere of influence and joining Western integrational organizations in the explanation of the Polish-Ukrainian memory conflict's origin. Consequently, he saw the Ukrainian state's policy of memory as legitimately directed at defending itself against Russia's policy of memory offensive, directed at defaming the Ukrainian independence movement in all its forms.

Secondly, Grytsenko noted that Poland pursued a policy of *releasing the energy of pain* toward Ukraine between 2016 and 2018, being met with a like response. He drew this term from one conception of the state's politics of memory submitted to President Duda, wherein its Polish author argued the pressing need to redress sentiments of justice of descendants of the UPA's Polish victims. The fruits of this policy, according to Grytsenko, were the aforementioned two antagonizing decisions of the Polish parliament against Ukraine in 2016 and 2018. In response to Poland's establishment in 2016 of a day of remembrance for victims of the genocide committed by 'Ukrainian nationalists', a group of Ukrainian intellectuals and politicians called on the Ukrainian parliament to establish a three-day holiday in honor of Ukrainian victims of the repressions of Eastern Galicians by the Polish authorities in 1930 (the so-called Pacification), and the 'genocide' committed by the Polish underground in 1942–44 against Ukrainians in Kholm region and Volhynia, and also the deportations in Operation Vistula in 1947. However, the Verkhovna Rada did not

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[64] Ibid., pp. 27, 31.
[65] Ibid., p. 33.
[66] Grytsenko, *Politics of Memory in Ukrainian-Polish Relations*, pp. 36–52.

answer this call to action (to Grytsenko's satisfaction).[67] Thereby, Grytsenko's analysis of both sides' activities considered, on an equal level with actors' interests, also collective emotions and values.

Thirdly, Grytsenko identified the sources of the Polish-Ukrainian conflict by comparing the features of both countries' *Erinnerungskultur*, where he accurately emphasized their similarities. He portrayed them as national cultures affected by the collective trauma of occupations, occupiers' crimes, the 20th-century struggle for survival, and these events' squashing by communist governments, all of which gave their historical narratives an eminently heroic character and 'made it difficult for those sharing the heroic narratives to admit that some of these heroic fighters and victims of oppression had also committed atrocities against other people'.[68] Yet, Grytsenko's explanation of the Polish-Ukrainian conflict's origins remained nonetheless incomplete. Contrary to Kasianov, he did not fully appreciate the influence of nationalist actors on the growing popularity of the UPA's one-sided image within Ukraine.[69] While Kasianov overestimated the importance of Ukrainian actors propagating the UPA cult in triggering the Polish-Ukrainian conflict, Grytsenko underestimated it.

POLAND'S POLITICS OF MEMORY AND ORIGINS OF THE POLISH-UKRAINIAN CONFLICT — THE THEORY OF *MNEMONIC MORAL CAPITAL*

The assumptions of both Kasianov and Grytsenko are partly normative in nature. This also describes Michał Łuczewski's assumptions.[70]

Although he only deals with Poland out of the two countries analyzed here, his theory sheds important light on the transformations taking place in Ukrainian society and the sources of memory conflicts the likes of the Polish-Ukrainian one. He leans on the assumptions that:

● Politics of history researchers should consider the content, messaging, and community-building aspects of narratives about the past.

● National identity is constantly being reconstructed. Of the three areas constituting Benedict Anderson's[71] depiction of 18th- and 19th-

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[67] Ibid., p. 44.
[68] Ibid., p. 38.
[69] Ibid., p. 43.
[70] Łuczewski, *Kapitał moralny*.
[71] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).

-century nations' ideas of themselves (space, culture, and the past), contemporary states place the greatest emphasis on the last: '[e]arly states colonized and nationalized space, and modern states colonize and nationalize time, conquering the past as distant countries were once conquered'.[72]

● States participate in memory games whereby they compete for *status*, which consists of dignity—the self-recognition of a nation's members as worthy, and *prestige*—the recognition afforded a nation by other nations.[73]

● Historical memory is, again following Assmann, a system that ensures continuity of a society's existence, while politics of history is 'the practice of memory actors who, through memory media, acquire the community's mnemonic moral capital'.[74]

● 'Moral capital is the stock of moral stories that confer moral status, that is, dignity and prestige, on a community [by it] leaving the sphere of perpetrators and entering the sphere of heroes and victims. Mnemonic moral capital, then, is a particular subtype of moral capital that draws these stories from the real or imagined past'.[75]

Łuczewski distinguishes between three types of stories that give meaning to states' historical policies in Central and Eastern Europe and differ in their use of mnemonic moral capital's resources: *resourcement*, *conversion*, and *ethos.*

The case of *resourcement* is represented by Poland. According to Łuczewski, in the first several years following 1989, the state and participants in the public debate developed two *regressive narratives* concerning the Second World War: those of *victims* and those of *perpetrators*. These bestowed the Polish nation, including the underground participants fighting the Third Reich and USSR, the characteristics first of victims of occupying forces' terror, and second of killers of representatives of national minorities—Jews and Ukrainians. In opposition to this, *resourcement* took the form of a *progressive victim narrative*. It tells the story of how, in the period since 1989, the Polish nation has turned from the present evil (freshly defunct communism) to the past good (the achievements of Poles up to 1939 and their heroic bearing in the Second World War) so as to realize that good in the future. Accordingly, the 21st-century state

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[72] Łuczewski, *Kapitał moralny*, p. 25.
[73] Ibid., pp. 23–24.
[74] Ibid., p. 84.
[75] Ibid., p. 85.

symbolically brought the victims of the 1939–89 period back to life in its politics of history, so that it could show contemporaries how to transform evil into good. The authorities employed the narrative's *heroic form*, rejecting the *traumatic*, given that per the latter, the victims would not have also played the role of heroes, but would have instead served as a warning against repeating evil.[76]

Conversion as a case in Łuczewski's formulation is represented by Germany. From the late 1960s to the 1990s, the authorities and participants in the public debate in Germany developed a *regressive narrative of perpetrators*, emphasizing the responsibility of the entire German people for the crimes of the Third Reich. However, since the turn of the 20th century, there has been a shift in the politics of history towards a *progressive victim narrative*, in this case in the *traumatic form*. As per the *conversion*-type account, the German nation is moving from past evil (Nazism) to future good through *dissociation from the past*. The creators of this account have shifted the focus from atrocities' perpetrators to the victims: Jews, representatives of other exterminated peoples and social categories, and Germans (oppositionists and expellees).[77]

Finally, the case of *ethos* is represented by Russia. This type of narrative is characterized by the fact that the subject (the nation) remains unchanged, while the context in which it is immersed does, hence its characterization through a *progressive stable narrative*. In the case at hand, this narrative has portrayed Russians within the frame of the Soviet nation until 1991 and continues to depict them contemporarily as a distinct nation that steadfastly persists. Per this narrative, Russians have never succumbed to unfavorable contextual shifts, as otherwise they would have suffered deconstruction.[78] Contemporary Russia, in upholding the *ethos*-type narrative, continues not acknowledging that it was a perpetrator in the past. It abides by Russia's exclusive role as a victim and Europe's savior in the Second World War.

Łuczewski also outlines the impact of states' employment of *mnemonic moral capital* vis-à-vis each other and international opinion. He argues that Germany achieved high *status* thanks to *conversion*. Russia, too, through its renewal of *ethos*-type accounts, rebuilt the high *status* by 2014 which had been undermined in the 1990s crisis.

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[76] Ibid., pp. 42, 118, 124.
[77] Ibid., pp. 42, 118, 124–25, 187–88.
[78] Ibid., pp. 43, 118, 309–10.

In his analysis, therefore, Poland appears as a state that has chosen a *resourcement*-type account in the 21st century largely in response to the politics of history of its two stronger neighbors. Without this shift, Poland would have suffered diminished *status*, forced to accept its self-image as a country complicit in atrocities committed by other states fighting on its territory during the Second World War. Moreover, without *resourcement*, Łuczewski suggests, the Poles would have missed the opportunity to reconstruct their national identity and renew themselves as a *moral subject*.

I believe that Łuczewski's theory does not apply equally to all Central and Eastern European states. When it comes to relations between democratic states that feel secure and cooperate with one another. He:

• Overestimates the importance of *mnemonic moral capital* for *status*-building.

• Does not recognize that states wrestling with each other over *prestige* can generate damaging conflicts between themselves. This is precisely what has taken place in Polish-Ukrainian relations over the last 20 years.

SOURCES AND STAKES OF THE POLISH-UKRAINIAN MEMORY CONFLICT

Still, Łuczewski's theory does explain a significant amount about the shifts Ukrainian society is undergoing, the Russian-Ukrainian memory conflict, and Ukraine's posture towards Poland's attempt to impose its own interpretation of the past. He demonstrates what Kasianov underestimates, and what Grytsenko only touches upon superficially, namely, the need for *dignity*, for people to experience collective pride in belonging to a nation with historical achievements and a sense of continuity with previous generations, along with the need for *prestige*. These are strong in countries that, until 1991, enjoyed virtually no *prestige* in the international arena, subsequently ranking mid in this respect. Satisfying their needs is positively linked to social cohesion and building an effective state. These needs are nourished in Ukraine by a growing, now decidedly majority, section of society. Today, the challenge of *status* construction aided by *mnemonic moral capital* undoubtedly concerns states in a revolutionary situation bearing the hallmarks of the post-colonial condition.

The thesis that Łuczewski's approach explains the origins of Ukraine's politics of memory is supported by the results of research into its society. At issue is one phenomenon, observed as early as 2018, coined *the hunger of history* by Tomasz Stryjek and Joanna Konieczna-Sałamatin. Comparing survey results from Ukrainian and Polish society in terms of the level of interest in one's country, region, and family history, how far back respondents' memory of their families' fates reaches, beliefs around important historical events that affected kin, the utilization of sources of knowledge about the past (like school, works of fiction, conversations with relatives), and lastly the frequency of visits to sites of memory, shows that all these indicators are significantly higher in Ukraine than in Poland, sometimes even twice fold.[79] These results are all the more surprising given that the level of sophistication of the state *historical culture infrastructure* in Ukraine is considerably lower than in Poland (in the number of museums, monuments, historical films, professionals disseminating images of the past, and national remembrance institutes' scope of activity). Furthermore, both countries differ in the extent and pace of this infrastructure's development after 1989, in Poland developing steadily and progressively, in Ukraine being sustained but parallel to a much deeper exchange of meanings given to symbols in the process of decommunization and, more recently, de-Russification. This disparity, complemented by yet another to Ukraine's disadvantage, namely in the number of references and responses to the past within public debate (more broadly, in the number of representations of the past in the media), the 2018 study's authors captured through a metaphor about the degree of *immersion in the past* of each country's culture. This turned out to be significantly deeper in Poland than in Ukraine.[80]

The *hunger of history* is an expression of Ukrainians' aspirations to root themselves in the past in response to feelings of low *prestige*, revolution, and war, and is satisfied largely outside the state's *historical culture infrastructure*.[81] There is no doubt that it concerns

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[79] It is not known whether the beliefs and activities cited were so common, but respondents giving such answers shows what normative beliefs they hold. For the full report of this research in Polish and Ukrainian and an abridged report in English, see Joanna Konieczna-Sałamatin, Tomasz Stryjek and Natalia Otrishchenko, *Wydarzenia. Ludzie. Historia. Raport z badań sondażowych o pamięci współczesnych Polaków i Ukraińców* (Warszawa: ISP PAN and Collegium Civitas, 2018), pp. 19–36, 71–74, https://Wydarzenia_Ludzie_Historia_2018.pdf

[80] Stryjek and Konieczna-Sałamatin, eds, *The Politics of Memory in Poland and Ukraine*.

[81] Ukrainians were mostly of low opinion about the value of this infrastructure and declared that they seek knowledge about the past outside it. Konieczna-Sałamatin, Stryjek and Otrishchenko, *Wydarzenia*, p. 30.

national history. This is evidenced by Ukrainians understanding history primarily as monumental events, that is, ones encompassing the entire country and characterized by struggle and sacrifice. While defining history similarly, Poles are inclined to believe that it 'ended' as early as 1981 (martial law). Nor do they report a sense of deficit in its representation within the public space. Ukrainians, in turn, are convinced that history trudges on and will only 'come to an end' with the cessation of the war that began in 2014.[82]

Applying the theory of *mnemonic moral capital* to the origins of the Polish-Ukrainian memory conflict deepens Grytsenko's explanation through the prism of a clash between two similar *Erinnerungskulturen*. Firstly, it allows one to see that in the 21st century, though somewhat behind Poland, Ukraine has also moved towards *resourcement*-type accounts. In the 1990s, Ukraine was dominated by a *progressive victim narrative* in the *traumatic form*. Per this narrative, the victims were all of Ukraine's inhabitants, both ethnic Ukrainians and national minorities (among them also Poles), while the perpetrators were not its inhabitants, but the totalitarian systems of the USSR and Third Reich. A *progressive victim narrative* in the *heroic form* already functioned then, referring to the Ukrainian independence movements of the 20th century, though, especially in areas concerning the UPA, without state support. Ukraine entered a memory conflict with Poland in the 21st century, having acquired the conviction that though Poland does not question either victim narrative—and even sympathizes with them by emphasizing the commonality of both peoples' fates in their struggle against the Soviet and Nazi totalitarianism—it still tries to impose on Ukraine a *regressive perpetrator narrative* regarding the UPA's role in Volhynia. Poland's transition to *resourcement* led to its competition for *prestige* not only with Germany and Russia but also with Ukraine. In Ukraine, the transition to *resourcement* was initiated by President Yushchenko, who gave the *progressive victim narrative in the traumatic form* specifically national characteristics (the state's categorization of the Great Famine as a crime of genocide against the Ukrainian people) and elevated the *progressive victim narrative in heroic form* to an official position, incorporating the UPA.

Secondly, Łuczewski's theory helps us see that defining the *stakes* in the struggle for *status* within both countries' politics of memory took place during the first Law and Justice governments in Poland

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[82] Ibid., p. 24.

(2005–07) and Yushchenko's second tenure in Ukraine (2007–10). Ukraine's stake is promoting an international image of a heroic UPA that did not develop a plan of systematic crimes in Volhynia, but rather simply failed to contain the Ukrainian peasantry's bloody retaliation for centuries of poverty and humiliation. Poland's stake is maintaining the image of the AK as a mass formation that first fought the Third Reich for five long years as part of the anti-Hitler coalition, and then opposed the USSR, getting destroyed in its attempt to halt Soviet expansion in Central Europe. This image gives the Polish underground resistance movement the leading position among Europe's Second World War combatants, as the formation that uncompromisingly struggled against the two totalitarianisms throughout. When Ukrainian actors point out that the UPA resisted the USSR longer than the AK and post-AK underground, not only the UPA, but also the AK committed crimes against civilians, and that Ukrainian armed resistance in 1945–50 enjoyed broader public support, this is interpreted by the guardians of Polish *moral capital* as a challenge to Poland's *prestige*.

Łuczewski's theory, in turn, is insufficient for demonstrating the role played by Poland in triggering the memory conflict. Moreover, it can even be used to substantiate Poland's policy of antagonizing its neighbors, contrary to its author's intentions. He exaggerates the adverse consequences for Poland of her two greatest neighbors' strategies around politics of history: *conversion* in Germany, and *ethos* in Russia. I argue that Poland was in a different position from Ukraine and was not forced to make any special effort to defend its *prestige*. Already by 1989, it held high *status* thanks to the heritage of the First Commonwealth, the rebirth of the Second Republic, and being the Third Reich's first victim and a consistent participant in the anti--Hitler coalition. Until Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, Poland had no reason to feel threatened; on the contrary, its international security guarantees were solidifying. It had sufficient *moral capital* to maintain the previous level of *prestige* in the era of globalization. The acceptance by a section of the intelligentsia and ruling authorities in 2001 of Polish responsibility for the 1941 pogrom against Jews in Jedwabne introduced to Poland a *perpetrator narrative*, though this ultimately did not dominate the state's politics of memory. What's more, this admission may have further enhanced Poland's *prestige*, while allowing the authorities to consolidate *dignity* through a balanced development of a *progressive victim narrative* in both *traumatic* and *heroic forms.*

However, in 2015–23, the nurturing of only the latter of these narratives by the right-wing government was followed by a *backlash* on the issue of responsibility for Polish pogroms against Jews[83] and crimes against Ukrainians. The authorities put to Ukraine its obligation to accept responsibility for UPA crimes because, among other things, they wanted to compensate for the damage to the Polish nation's *dignity* and *prestige* supposedly resulting from the authorities and political elite's acceptance of responsibility for the Jedwabne pogrom. Motivated by a sense of loss, the government increasingly argued that the UPA, inspired by national hatred and the blueprints of Nazi extermination policy, had committed planned genocide against Poles. This stance gained the support of a large segment of public opinion in the struggle for *prestige* with Ukraine through exploiting nostalgia for the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth's Eastern Borderlands. This nostalgia was spurred by the general image of Polish history within the state's politics of memory remaining idealized throughout the period after 1989.

FINAL REMARKS

I treat the approaches explaining the sources of memory conflicts in Central and Eastern Europe of Kasianov, Grytsenko, and Łuczewski as complementary. Only their blending results in a complete picture of participants' motives in such memory conflicts as the Polish--Ukrainian one. As weaker aspects of Kasianov's approach, I consider his underestimation of the role of bottom-up actors other than nationalists and the one-sided interpretation of actors' motives behind their activities. The weaker aspect of Grytsenko's approach was his underestimating the influence on social beliefs of the state and top--down actors.

The strength of Łuczewski's approach is that it demonstrates the moral dimension of national community and circumstantiates the reconstructive and subjectificatory consequences of historical narratives that raise a given country's *dignity* and *prestige*. Nevertheless, returning to the weaker points of Łuczewski's approach, I will point out that states' politics of memory should not promote narratives of only one type. This is only justifiable under special

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[83] Piotr Forecki, *Po Jedwabnem: Anatomia pamięci funkcjonalnej* (Warsaw: Instytut Badań Literackich PAN, 2018).

circumstances and only temporarily. Of the states covered by this article, only Ukraine has been and still is in a position to conduct such a policy. *Conversion* in Germany reinforced the *progressive victim narrative in the traumatic form* and raised its *prestige*, but did not aim to marginalize other narratives, including the *perpetrator* one. Russia, on the contrary, stayed with the *ethos*-type narrative while marginalizing any taking on the *traumatic form*, even eliminating the perpetrator-underscoring narrative, though by doing so—especially since 24 February 2022—suffered a fundamental loss of *prestige* in Western public opinion.

I believe that both states located between Germany and Russia have at least two reasons to balance the narratives in the *heroic* and *traumatic forms,* and to ensure that room for the *perpetrator* narrative also remains in the public space. Firstly, whether they like it now or not, their actual historical experience in the 1939–89 era gives plenty of examples of victims, heroes, and perpetrators (even if the latter mostly acted in the service of foreign states). Secondly, Łuczewski is correct in that they do not possess strong alternative forms of *capital* (like Germany, Russia, and Western powers); hence *prestige* based on *mnemonic moral capital* holds more value. The Western public is interested in them from this angle. It will never accept paying tribute to collaborators of the Third Reich. An expression of this took place during the President Zelensky's visit to Canadian parliament in 2023, which caused a scandal. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has sincerely apologized for the applause that MPs and members of the government expressed for the veteran of the 14th Waffen-SS Galizien Division, presented to them as a hero fighting for the independence of Ukraine in 1944–45.[84] Such a stance of the Western public will sooner or later result in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe committing to a pluralistic, non-unifying model of narratives recounting the national history.

In the end, Kasianov is correct that, since Russia's 2022 invasion, it has become irrelevant inside Ukraine who fostered the UPA's unilaterally positive image and who opposed it.[85] War unites people from different sides of the ideological barricades and leads to new

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[84] Chloe Kim, 'Justin Trudeau Apologises after Nazi Veteran Honoured in Parliament', BBC News, 27 September 2023, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-66943005.

[85] Georgiy Kasianov, 'Nationalist Memory Narratives and the Politics of History in Ukraine since the 1990s', *Nationalities Papers* 52: 6, 2023, https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2023.10.

sources of *moral capital* emerging in society's defensive stances. Considering this, the political utility of the *mnemonic moral capital* of the Second World War will recede into the background.

But mass crimes against civilians, even those committed more than eighty years ago, cannot remain in the realm of moral ambiguity. In 2024, the likelihood is growing that EU public opinion may have an impact on the final assessment of the UPA by the Ukrainian state. The new, center-left government in Poland, unlike the previous right-wing one, can count on the understanding of European public opinion when it indicates that Ukraine has failed to provide a dignified burial to the victims of the crimes in Volhynia and Eastern Galicia. There are reasons to believe that its goal is not to elevate the moral capital of Poland's memory above its neighbors, but to finally disarm the mine that conflictual history has laid under contemporary relations between Poland and Ukraine.

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