Notes

Introduction


1 G. Verheugen, “Poland’s new golden age.” *Project Syndicate*, 4 November 2014.


6 The official level of unemployment fell from around 13.9 per cent in January to 11.4 per cent in December 2014.


8 “Poland’s new golden age” (special report), *The Economist*, 26 June 2014.


Strictly speaking, the coalition of right-wing parties (Law and Justice with the two junior parties Solidarity Poland and Agreement) won the elections of 2015. The two junior parties had little impact on the course of events during the first term in power (2015–19).

H. Foy and S. Fleming, “Poland’s prime minister accuses EU of making demands with ‘gun to our head.’” *Financial Times*, [www.ft.com/content/ac57409d-20c9-4d65-9a5d-6661277cd9af](http://www.ft.com/content/ac57409d-20c9-4d65-9a5d-6661277cd9af).


Cas Mudde defined the broad term: “populism is an ideology that separates society into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, ‘the pure people’ and ‘the corrupt elite,’ and that holds that politics should be an expression of ‘the general will’ of the people,” see C. Mudde, “Europe’s populist surge.” *Foreign Affairs*, 76:6 (1997), pp. 22–43.
Notes


38 Eatwell and Goodwin, *National Populism*.


Applebaum, *Twilight of Democracy*.


*Ibid*. See also Ther, *Das andere Ende der Geschichte*.


Today, the fear of losing sovereignty is widely shared by the societies of countries that never disappeared from the map entirely (including the UK and France). Even if one considers these fears unfounded, it should be recognised that they are a social fact. Taking this into account, with regard to societies whose countries disappeared from the map completely in the past – one should call it the more dramatic “post-traumatic sovereignty” and the subsequent taming of the collective trauma of repeated loss of sovereignty (I write more about this in Chapter 3).


A. Jarry, *Ubu Roi ou les Polonais*, a play first performed in Paris in 1896.

The threat of losing independence is, in any case, one of the most important tropes of the leader of the ruling party in 2022. See [www.onet.pl/informacje/onetlublin/jaroslaw-Kaczyński-wyciaga-z-szuflady-swojego-ulubione-wroga-analiza/9e00s21,79cf278](http://www.onet.pl/informacje/onetlublin/jaroslaw-Kaczyński-wyciaga-z-szuflady-swojego-ulubione-wroga-analiza/9e00s21,79cf278).


For example, when construction of the Nord Stream gas pipeline between Germany and Russia began, a liberal government minister immediately compared the initiative to the 1939 Hitler–Stalin pact. It was a pact that secretly divided the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (from Finland to Romania) between Berlin and Moscow. For more, see Chapter 3.
This problem of the politics of “nervous sovereignty” can still be approached through the narratives of empires and large states. At present, however, one can look at this phenomenon in a different way: from the perspective of the individuals. One is born and raised in states with different experiences of sovereignty. At the price of some simplification, currently (1) people live in states that have lasted continuously for several centuries, (2) in countries that went through cycles of dramatic events, were divided or shrunk, but never disappeared from the map, but finally, we live in countries, (3) that have completely disappeared from the map in the past, and we fear that this may happen again.

Mudde, “Europe’s populist surge,” p. 25.

See Butterwick, The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

Chapter 1 Breakthrough? The 2015 elections

1 “Kaczyński: Nie będzie odwetu.” Rzeczpospolita, 26 October 2015.
6 J. Kaczyński’s ambiguous statement in a documentary movie, Teresa Torońska. My, oni, ja, directed by M. Zmarz-Koczanowicz (1994). At the time, the statement testified to the politician’s readiness for a certain degree of self-irony, but above all to his enormous political ambitions.
8 Over time, the narrow circle of collaborators was named the Centre Agreement Order, half-jokingly suggesting a medieval knighthood order.
10 Yet, Kaczyński took up a semi-secondary position as deputy prime minister at the moment of governmental coalition tensions in 2020, see: V. Gera, “Kaczyński joins new Polish Cabinet as deputy prime minister.” ABC
Notes


11 Faris and Kaminski, “No. 4. Jarosław Kaczyński.”
12 Ibid.
18 Ibid.
Law and Justice formed a coalition government with a party of peasant populists (Self-Defence) and the anti-EU, Catholic, and ultranationalist League of Polish Families. In the period 2005–7, the prime minister of the first government was Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz, while the second government was led by Jarosław Kaczyński himself. It is worth noting that July 2006 marked the symbolic apogee of the Kaczyński brothers’ power, as Prime Minister Jarosław Kaczyński was sworn in by his twin brother, President Lech Kaczyński. Nonetheless, the two years of the first Law and Justice government was heavily marked by scandals and conflicts between the three coalition parties and their three charismatic leaders. In the end, J. Kaczyński opted for early elections, which he lost. This was a political lesson that he had to learn from for the future. For a complete chronology of the stormy events of 2005–7 in English, see “Polish coalition’s bumps and bruises.” Reuters, 9 July 2007, www.reuters.com/article/us-poland-government-factbox-idUSLo918465320070709.


Officially, it was only in February 2015 that the Marshal of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland, a member of the Civic Platform, issued a decision that the first round of voting in the presidential elections would take place on May 10 this year.


See the part on parliamentary elections in this chapter, page 38.

The right of presidential veto does not extend to the budget laws and the amendments to the Constitution.


Likewise, the Peasant Party (PSL), though full of well-known leaders, put forward an unknown candidate. Again, the same thing happened. First, it was necessary to explain to voters who this politician with the grey hair was. The candidate also sought to attain as much attention as he could, for example by singing and playing an acoustic guitar.

Disclosed content of their conversations shows a deep gap between what was said publicly and privately. Moreover, when Donald Tusk went to Brussels, Civic Platform had no real leader able to deal with “Waitergate,” as a scandal was named. As Komorowski was a candidate supported mainly by Civic Platform, the party’s condition indirectly affected him. So, he was enmeshed in a scandal for which he bore no personal responsibility. See for example: A. Chapman, “Waitergate strikes Warsaw – again.” Foreign Policy, 22 June 2015, https://foreignpolicy.com/2015/06/22/waitergate-strikes-again-polandsikorski.

Wilgocki, “Zaufanie do polityków.”

Later, Komorowski’s staff claimed that the passerby had belonged to the plot outlined by Law and Justice. However, this did not diminish the effect caused by president’s own words. It was only one incident, yet resonant and telling. See for example “Sztab prezydenta Komorowskiego demaskuje ‘chłopca w żółtej bluzie.’” Dziennik Gazeta Prawna, 14 May 2015, www.gazetaprawna.pl/artykuly/871291, po-oskarza-opozycje-o-podstawianie-przechodniakomorowskiemu.html.

Andrzej Duda said to Bronisław Komorowski: “In 2011, at the memorial ceremony for the victims in Jedwabne, you sent a letter that was read out by Tadeusz Mazowiecki. […] In it you included the statement: ‘the nation of the victims was also the perpetrator’. Mr President, what is your policy of defending the good name of Poland if you use a term in your speeches that destroys the real historical memory?” “Polityka historyczna w debacie,” TVP INFO, 18 May 2015, www.tvp.info/20106395/jedwabne-w-debacie-prezydenckiej-tvp. The aforementioned Tadeusz Mazowiecki was the first
post-communist prime minister of Poland between 1989 and 1991. This Catholic politician was an advocate of acknowledging responsibility for the good and bad deeds of compatriots in the past. Duda’s words, although framed as a question, were read as a signal for a possible change in this line of historical policy. On the disputes over Polish–Jewish relations over history, see Chapter 2. As to the reaction of the world press to the presidential debate, see for example: “Poland elects right-wing president who criticized predecessor’s apologies to Jews.” *The Times of Israel*, 25 May 2015, [www.timesofisrael.com/after-exit-poll-polish-president-concedes-defeat-to-rival](http://www.timesofisrael.com/after-exit-poll-polish-president-concedes-defeat-to-rival).

On 13 May 2015 he decided to launch a referendum on the issues that at the presidential palace seemed “up-to-the-minute.” Technically speaking, the referendum didn’t have a chance to take place before the second round and turned out to be an expensive post-campaign memento.


Buckley, “Tusk wins vote of confidence.”


Weakly supporting her, Kaczyński began to impose quite a new interpretation of the event, which is probably best reflected in the title of the cover
publication: “Nobleman and Noblewoman are leaving” with an appropriate photomontage (Tusk left the government with a woman, who was a minister in his government).


For the sake of order, let us add that the Polish People’s Party, a recent robust coalition partner in the Civic Platform government, slipped by a whisker into the Sejm and won a meagre sixteen seats. By tradition, the German minority received one seat.

56 Later, the left wing itself took off not as a party, but as a party coalition – then crossing the election threshold became more difficult (because it grew from 5 per cent to 8 per cent). Finally, the young, dynamic left-wing group “Razem,” which programmatically distinguished itself from the old, post-communist left, did not join this coalition. One popular explanation was also the division on the left.

57 J. Cienski, “Migrants carry ‘parasites and protozoa,’ warns Polish opposition leader.” Politico, 14 October 2015, www.politico.eu/article/migrants-asylum-poland-Kaczyński-election. Mr Kaczyński said as early as 2011 that “Viktor Orbán gave us an example of how we can win” and “The day will come when we will succeed, and we will have Budapest in Warsaw.” See N. Buckley and H. Foy, “Poland’s new government finds a model in Orbán’s Hungary.” Financial Times, 6 January 2016, www.ft.com/content/0a3c7d44-b48e-11e5-8358-9a82b43f6bf.


Notes

Chapter 2 The tsunami of populism


2 In 2015 Gideon Rachman discussed why Poles had voted for change with Tony Barber: “Poland’s shift to the right.” FT World Weekly podcast, 28 October 2015, www.ft.com/content/c93cb79e-15bc-4646-9b9f-35582c1c45ab.


4 The new prime minister herself revealed this in the mass media. The Szydło family found itself on the cover of the right-wing weekly presenting the PM’s son celebrating the holy mass in 2017: “Do Rzeczy.” 29:231, 17–23 July 2017. Eventually, he resigned from his career as a clergyman.

5 M. Kotwas and J. Kubik, “Symbolic thickening of public culture and the rise of right-wing populism in Poland.” East European Politics and Societies, 33:2 (2019): 435–71. Cas Mudde explains populism as a thin ideology as follows: “Though populism is a distinct ideology, it does not possess ‘the same level of intellectual refinement and consistency’ as, for example, socialism or liberalism. Populism is only a ‘thin-centred ideology’, exhibiting ‘a restricted core attached to a narrower range of political concepts’. The core concept of populism is obviously ‘the people’; in a sense, even the concept of ‘the elite’ takes its identity from it (being its opposite, its nemesis). As a thin-centred ideology, populism can be easily combined with very different (thin and full) other ideologies, including communism, ecologism, nationalism or socialism.” C. Mudde, “The populist zeitgeist.” Government and Opposition, 39 (2004), pp. 542–63. Clearly, this is one of many scholar proposals for capturing this political phenomenon. On defining populism as a thin ideology there is a scholarly debate, for example: B. Stanley, “The thin ideology of populism.” Journal of Political Ideologies, 13 (2008), pp. 95–110.


9 Law and Justice critically and thoroughly described by what it calls “Donald Tusk’s system” in the Programme of 2014, which covered the following topics: I. Repair of the state, II. Economy and development, III. Family, IV. Society, V. Poland in Europe and the World (“Law and Justice Programme of 2014”).
Notes

10 “Law and Justice Programme of 2014,” p. 44.
20 As to the scope of the Constitutional Tribunal’s authority, see in particular the Article 188 of The Constitution of the Republic Of Poland of 2nd April, 1997 (as published in Dziennik Ustaw, 78, item 483), www.sejm.gov.pl/prawo/konst/angelski/konse.htm.
21 In March 2015, the activity of the Constitutional Tribunal was assessed positively by two-fifths of the respondents (42 per cent), “hard to say” by 46 per cent, and “wrong” by around one eighth.

For comparison: Two-thirds of respondents (66 per cent) were critical of the activities of deputies, and almost half of them (49 per cent) were critical of the activities of senators. Positive opinions of the functioning of the Sejm were expressed by one-fifth of the respondents (20 per cent) and of the Senate by one fourth (26 per cent). (CBOS. Komunikat z badan nr 42/2015: ocena instytucji publicznych, March 2015.)
Even though, according to the Constitution of 1997, the very same politicians (the parliament) appointed fifteen judges to the Constitutional Tribunal for nine-year terms.

The ruling of the Constitutional Tribunal of 3 December 2015 (sygn. akt K 34/15).

For instance, Julia Przyłębska, President of the Constitutional Tribunal under Law and Justice, recalled the Civic Platform attempt in 2015 and added, “One should speak here about double standards and not engage in a substantive discussion. This is a political fight, the tools of which are relativism, discretion, and legal nihilism. Consequently, it is supposed to lead to anarchy and lawlessness in Poland. External entities are involved in these activities, ranging from other countries and their judicial institutions to the Venice Commission, which gives groundless, non-substantive opinions.” J. Przyłębska, “Nie dam się zastraszyć!” wSieci, 15 September 2018. One should specify that, initially, the Law and Justice government itself invited the Venice Commission to Poland.


For instance president and lawyer Andrzej Duda said about the conflict, “It is a question of who is in charge in Poland: the democratically elected Sejm or the Constitutional Tribunal? MPs, members of the government are accountable to citizens, for example through subsequent elections. Are the members of the Constitutional Tribunal responsible for their decisions? No.” A. Duda, “Wszystko zgodnie z planem” [interview]. wSieci, 23 January 2016.
Notes


30 Many acts of law, including the most important concerning the Constitutional Tribunal, were amended hurriedly over and over, without taking necessary care about legislative standards.


32 Over time such controversial decisions like the near-total abortion ban were not passed by parliament, but by the Constitutional Tribunal. See “Poland enforces controversial near-total abortion ban.” BBC News, 28 January 2021, www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-55838210.

33 One of the most important elements of the new policy was an attempt to put pressure on judges, which clearly undermined the principle of judicial independence. For a detailed calendar of events, see for example: C. Davies, “Hostile takeover: How law and justice captured Poland’s courts” (Report). Freedom House (May 2018), https://freedomhouse.org/report/analytical-brief/2018/hostile-takeover-how-law-and-justice-captured-polands-courts.


38 On 8 April 2020, the Court of Justice of the European Union obliged Poland to suspend the application of national provisions regarding the jurisdiction of the Disciplinary Chamber of the Supreme Court in disciplinary cases against judges. Eventually the government announced the closing of the disciplinary chamber for judges. However, Kaczyński declared that Poland would lay out
plans for an alternative disciplinary system in the future: “Poland notifies EU it is closing disciplinary chamber for judges.” DW, 17 August 2021.


41 In 2020, Kaczyński announced his intention to implement another set of judiciary reforms, this time under the slogan “flattening court structures”; whatever the term might sound like, in practice it is expected to make the judiciary depend more and more on the executive. M. Gałczyńska, “Pięć lat rewolucji PiS w sądownictwie. Co jeszcze przed nami? (ANALIZA).” Onet, 3 January 2021, https://wiadomosci.onet.pl/tylko-w-onec/reformasadownictwa-pis-analiza-magdy-galczynskiej/ofpzh6.


43 Pech, Wachowiec, and Mazur, “Poland’s rule of law breakdown.”


46 Jacek Kurski was particularly famous (or infamous) for his defamatory campaign against Donald Tusk in 2005. Donald Tusk faced accusations that his grandfather collaborated with the Nazis during the Second World War. See also “Polish campaign dredges up the past.” Deutsche Welle, 17 October 2005, www.dw.com/en/polish-campaign-dredges-up-the-past/a-1743707.


Notes


52 Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that Kaczyński publicly declared, for example, his ambition to follow the German public media model: “One public TV programme should belong to the opposition, the other – to the ruling party. This is perhaps the only mechanism that could ensure relative media pluralism in Poland.” J. Kaczyński, *PNM*, s. 112. The later Law and Justice programme of 2014 contains an echo of the same idea of pluralism. See: Program PiS, 2014.


60 Under Law and Justice, the collapse in advertising revenues for public television was caused by a sharp decline in the audience of its main wavelengths (TVP1, TVP2). The subsidies from the state budget helped to maintain financial sustainability. See: E. Rutkowska, “Dobra zmiana dla mediów publicznych to coraz większe pieniądze z budżetu państwa.” *Forsal.pl*, 6 October 2019, https://forsal.pl/artykuly/1433285,dobra-zmiana-dla-mediow-publicznych-to-coraz-wieksze-pieniadze-z-budżetu-panstwa.html.

61 Brian Porter-Szűcs interprets the 2015 turn in Poland in terms of “the triumph of national communism,” a mentality shaped by the People’s Republic of Poland that filled the post-1989 ideological vacuum with nationalism:

62 In Hungarian, the term “szalámitaktika” was used after the Second World War to describe the Hungarian Communist Party tactics of dealing with the opposition in order to gain full power in the country.


74 In 2015, the Polish public was impressed by Law and Justice’s activity in the electronic media. To a large extent, the researchers found, these assessments were exaggerated. See: M. Nowina Konopka, “Czy Andrzej Duda wygrał dzięki internetowi?” Przegląd Politologiczny, 2 (2015), pp. 87–100. However, in seven years, political participation on the internet has significantly weakened, which was addressed by the leader of Law and Justice himself at the end of 2022. “Ladies and gentlemen, it is necessary to be present on the Internet,” Kaczyński appealed to his party’s deputies and councilors. “Kaczyński apeluje do działaczy PiS o aktywność w internecie.” Wirtualne Media, 5 September 2022, www.wirtualnemedia.pl/artykul/jaroslaw-kaczyinski-o-internecie-pudelek-aktywnosc. The politician himself is known for his aversion to new technologies. “Politico” journalists noted with amazement that Kaczyński does not have his own computer, and he only opened a bank account in 2009. Needless to say, he does not maintain his social media. See S. Faris and M. Kaminski, “No. 4. Jarosław Kaczyński. The backbench driver.” Politico, 7 December 2016, www.politico.eu/list/politico-28-class-of-2017-ranking/jaroslaw-Kaczyński.


87 For more, see Chapter 3.


89 H. Foy and P. Spiegel, “David Cameron seeks to win round Central and Eastern Europe to EU deal.” Financial Times, 2 February 2016, www.ft.com/content/8a6771a8-c9c5-11e5-a8ef-ea66e967dd44.

90 Poland did not welcome any welfare restrictions, but a compromise started to be worked out during talks in Warsaw between PMs David Cameron and Beata Szydło. “EU referendum: Cameron hopeful of deal to curb migrants’ benefits.” BBC News, 10 December 2015, www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-35060059. In February 2016, Kaczyński declared that he was “satisfied”
with the plans to reduce in-work benefits for four years and stressed that the measure wouldn’t affect Poles already living in Britain. See “EU referendum: Cameron receives Danish backing for EU deal.” BBC News, 5 February 2016, www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-eu-referendum-35499139.


95 The 1939 Stalin-Hitler pact that saw Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union divide Poland and other countries of the region between them. See H. Foy, “Eastern Europe to confront Berlin over new Russian gas pipeline.” Financial Times, 29 November 2015, www.ft.com/content/eb1ebca8–9514–11e5–ac15–0f7f7945adba.


98 The launch of Nord Stream 2 has been temporarily suspended due to the new crisis in 2021: “Bundesnetzagentur: Certification procedure for Nord Stream 2 suspended.” 16 November 2021, www.bundesnetzagentur.de/SharedDocs/Pressemittelungen/EN/2021/20211116_NOS2.html. The suspension of the opening of the pipeline was not directly influenced by the Law and Justice foreign policy. This happened primarily in the reaction of the US and Germany to Russia’s aggressive policies, and the turning point was, obviously, the outbreak of war in Ukraine in February 2022. Poland’s legal action against the construction of the pipeline has also been unsuccessful. See A. Ptak, “Gazprom wins appeal against huge Nord Stream 2 antitrust fine in Poland.” Notes from Poland, 22 November 2022, https://notesfrompoland.com/2022/11/22/gazprom-wins-appeal-against-huge-nord-stream-2-antitrust-fine-in-poland.
Notes

99 The themes of the secret, six-hour talks have not been disclosed. See "Hungarian PM Orbán held ‘informal’ meeting with Polish party leader." Radio Poland, 7 January 2016, http://archiwum.thenews.pl/1/10/Artykul/235540,Hungarian-PM-Orban-held-informal-meeting-with-Polish-party-leader. Nevertheless, further meetings of leaders quickly took place. On their first ever appearance together in public, see for example H. Foy and N. Buckley, “Orbán and Kaczyński vow ‘cultural counter-revolution’ to reform EU.” Financial Times, 7 September 2016, www.ft.com/content/e825f7f4-74a3-11e6-bf48-b372cdb1043a. The above-mentioned FT journalists noted the more than telling exchange between Orbán and Kaczyński on their political stance towards the EU: “‘There is a saying in Hungary that if you trust somebody, you can steal horses together,’ said Mr Orbán (…). ‘There are a few stables, and one particularly large one called the EU, where we can steal horses with Hungarians!’ a smiling Mr Kaczyński replied.” Ibid.


102 In 2021, the Warsaw summit hosted some of the leading nationalist and far-right figures of several European Union countries: “European populist far-right parties meet in Warsaw.” Deutsche Welle, 5 December 2021, www.dw.com/en/european-populist-far-right-parties-meet-in-warsaw/a-60023500


Notes

108 P. Wroński, “Poland is blocking the arrival of the new US ambassador.” Gazeta Wyborcza, 14 July 2021, https://wyborcza.pl/7,173236,27328163,poland-is-blocking-the-arrival-of-the-new-us-ambassador.html. Journalists have revealed that Poland is suspending the nomination of Marek Brzezinski as US ambassador to Poland. The pretext for the refusal was the alleged legal necessity to renounce Polish citizenship by a candidate. Marek Brzezinski’s father, Zbigniew Brzezinski (1928–2017), who served as the US national security adviser under President Jimmy Carter, was born in Warsaw, Poland. The situation was Kafkaesque, as the new candidate for ambassador declared that he had no Polish citizenship. Although the fact of the stalling of this appointment was undeniable, a representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs diplomatically denied that the suspension of the nomination had taken place. See “Poland’s Foreign Ministry criticised for lack of acceptance of US ambassador candidate.” The First News, 13 July 2021, www.thefirstnews.com/article/polands-foreign-ministry-criticised-for-lack-of-acceptance-of-us-ambassador-candidate-23274.


110 The diplomatic situation was unusual. Polish Prime Minister Beata Szydło opposed Mr Tusk’s candidacy: “He does not have the support of his home country – that’s sufficient reason for him not to be appointed.” At the same time, for instance, British Prime Minister Theresa May was “pleased” that he had been re-elected. Quotations from “Poland fails to stop Donald Tusk EU re-election.” BBC News, 9 March 2017, www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-39222442.


112 For instance, the development of the close relations between Hungary and Russia clearly contrast with the virtual lack of diplomatic ties between Poland under Law and Justice and Moscow. See A. Racz, “Authoritarian ties: The case of Russia and Hungary.” Kennan Institute Blog, 22 October 2021, www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/authoritarian-ties-case-russia-and-hungary. On the other hand, the conflict over Poland’s coal mine expansion closer to the Czech border rose to the level of an international row that Visegrád Group ties did not help either to avoid or to resolve: J. Harper, “Fear and loathing at Poland’s Turow coal mine.” Deutsche Welle, 28 September 2021, www.dw.com/en/fear-and-loathing-at-polands-turow-coal-mine/a-59324808.
It is interesting to see a historical justification of the Three Seas Initiative in which Eastern and Central and Eastern European countries’ history is contrasted with that of Western Europe: “History has dealt these Central and Eastern European nations very different hands, and their cultural and religious backgrounds are similarly diverse. Nevertheless, the stories of all 12 countries have one chapter in common: the Iron Curtain, which split Europe in two and stifled natural development, economic growth, and international unity in the region for half a century. Whereas the nations of Western Europe are linked by roads and railways, power lines, and oil and gas pipelines, countries in Central and Eastern Europe remain comparatively disconnected from one another in terms of modern infrastructure. The deficit is particularly acute along the region’s north-south axis.” “Three Seas Story.” https://3seas.eu/about/threeseastory.

The official website of the “Via Carpatia” project: https://projects.3seas.eu/projects/via-carpatia-submitted-by-poland.


Ibid.

A vision of a global ideological alliance among national populist regimes has been developed in many publications for the right-wing audience,


Chapter 3 True leaders of the nation


Notes

“Population of the UK by country of birth and nationality.” Office for National Statistics, ons.gov.uk.

The demographic alarm was justified, but a certain ambiguity in political struggles can be seen when combined with the high level of registered unemployment (above 10 per cent). Mass emigration within the EU helped the political class to consider unemployment an increasingly self-solving problem, especially since at least some of the Western European countries were recovering from the 2008 crisis. Accordingly and as expected, the rate of unemployment has been declining and in the year 2015 slipped below 10 per cent; nonetheless, the demographic challenge became one of key subjects of the electoral campaigns.

Sociologists have long written about the so-called “second society,” which in Poland still operates in parallel in the economic, political, and cultural fields. In numerous basic matters, citizens maintain a strong cultural code of coping on their own, without seriously relying on the state. See A. Bisko, Polska dla średnio zaawansowanych: współczesna polskość codzienna, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2014, p. 146.


Notes

25 Poland’s complicated pension system relies heavily on contributions earned on an ongoing basis by the work-active generations. To simplify things a bit, it can be said that current pension contributions actually finance the benefits of current pensioners. See “Szokująco niskie przyszłe emerytury. Polacy dostaną tylko jedną czwartą wynagrodzenia.” Business Insider, 2 August 2021, https://businessinsider.com.pl/wiadomosci/szokujaco-niskie-emerytury-nowa-prognoza-zus/ciw3rr.
Notes


28 For discussion of the shock therapy and its long-term consequences, see Chapter 2.


31 Ibid.


35 Probably the best example of that trend would be Mateusz Morawiecki himself. Previously an economic liberal appointed to the Economic Council of Prime Minister Donald Tusk, he later turned to national populism and joined Law and Justice.

See also: R. Adekoya, “Poland’s prime minister is a technocrat banker and a far-right populist at the same time.” *Foreign Policy*, 13 December 2017, https://foreignpolicy.com/2017/12/13/polands-prime-minister-is-a-technocrat-banker-and-a-far-right-populist-at-the-same-time.


The unemployment rate went up in the Covid year 2020 (6.2 per cent in December 2020).

OECD, *Poland Economic Snapshot*.


At least until the introduction of the New Deal Programme in 2022. In the name of greater equality, the government has made fundamental changes to tax and social security laws (the New Deal Programme). It is too early to objectively assess the economic results of the reform. However, harsh criticism has been levied at, among other things, the unprofessional manner in which it was introduced, the lack of pilot programmes and the absence of public consultation. Eventually, Prime Minister Morawiecki publicly admitted that the reform was introduced “badly.” See: W. Papiernik, “Morawiecki krytycznie o Polskim Ładzie.” *Dziennik Gazeta Prawna*, 19 June 2022, [https://gospodarka.dziennik.pl/news/artykuly/8464377,mateusz-morawiecki-polski-lad-podatek-ulga-klasa-srednia-prawo-i-sprawiedliwosc.html](https://gospodarka.dziennik.pl/news/artykuly/8464377,mateusz-morawiecki-polski-lad-podatek-ulga-klasa-srednia-prawo-i-sprawiedliwosc.html). See also M. Makowski, “The Polish deal: How a landmark tax reform has turned into a PR disaster for the government.” *Notes from Poland*, 23 January 2022, [https://notesfrompoland.com/2022/01/23/the-polish-deal-how-a-landmark-tax-reform-has-turned-into-a-pr-disaster-for-the-government](https://notesfrompoland.com/2022/01/23/the-polish-deal-how-a-landmark-tax-reform-has-turned-into-a-pr-disaster-for-the-government).


OECD, *Poland Economic Snapshot*.

Notes

48 In 2021, Poland’s GDP increased sharply by 5.7 per cent in spite of the COVID-19 pandemic. This has been the best result since 2007. See M. Fidziński, “PKB Polski w 2021 r. ostro w górę.” Gazeta Wyborcza, 31 January 2022, https://next.gazeta.pl/next/7,151003,28058525,pkb-polski-w-2021-r-ostro-w-gore-najlepszy-wynik-od-2007-r.html.


57 Law and Justice Programme of 2014.


Notes


65 Burszta et al., Naród w szkole.


71 PAP, “Kaczyński zapowiada aktywną politykę historyczną.”


Notes


78 Therefore, new institutions were created or developed in a new direction; this subject will be discussed in Chapter 2.

79 Various groups of anti-communist and anti-Soviet partisans were most active in the period at the end of and just after the Second World War. However, one can find selected examples of more persistent opponents of Poland’s dependence on the USSR. As is accepted, it wasn’t until 1963 that the last of the so-called “cursed soldiers” (Józef Franczak) was killed in an ambush and decapitated. By way of comparison, perhaps somewhat shocking, it’s worth noting that the same year, 1963, saw the release of The Beatles’ debut album in the UK. Thus, here is how, at the same time, one era was closing and a new one was opening. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that in Estonia the last anti-Soviet partisan (August Sabbe) was killed as late as 1978. As rightly remarked, anti-communist partisanship brings dramatically cinematic stories: “How eastern Europe could outdo Hollywood.” *Politico*, 3 October 2007, www.politico.eu/article/how-eastern-europe-could-outdo-hollywood.


81 Burszta et al., *Naród w szkole*.

82 The Polish National Foundation website (in English), see www.pfn.org.pl.
Notes

83 The Amendment to the Act on the Institute of National Remembrance of 2018.


Chapter 4 Toothless liberals?

1 In particular, the so-called Pegasus affair, the secret invigilation of the opposition leaders that was revealed at the end of 2021 and that might have influenced the outcome of the 2019 electoral campaign. See S. Kirchgaessner, “More Polish opposition figures found to have been targeted by Pegasus spyware.” Guardian, 17 February 2021, www.theguardian.com/world/2022/feb/17/more-polish-opposition-figures-found-to-have-been-targeted-by-pegasus-spyware.


Notes


7 See Chapter 6.


10 “It is a fragmentary proposal, not based on a well-thought-out, comprehensive vision of family support,” commented the left-wing party. See [https://partiarazem.pl/stanowiska/rodzina500plus](https://partiarazem.pl/stanowiska/rodzina500plus).


16 Mateusz Kijowski is a Polish computer scientist, social activist, and, from 2015 to 2017, Chairman of the Committee for the Defence of Democracy. For instance *The Citizens of Poland,* a non-governmental organisation established in 2016, [https://obywatelerp.org](https://obywatelerp.org).


Notes

21 Hanna Suchocka, who owed her prime minister position to a compromise between divided political parties. It is noteworthy for the sake of comparison that Suchocka held her office almost at the same time as the first female French prime minister in history, Édith Cresson (1991–92).

22 After this defeat, Kopacz was quickly relegated to the background of the party, receiving the mandate of an MEP and rarely speaking in domestic politics.


25 Szymon Hołownia’s Poland 2050 political party, founded by a popular TV host as a movement in support of his campaign for the 2020 presidential election.

26 In 1948, the communist party, the Polish United Workers’ Party, was formed and until 1989 hegemonically ruled the People’s Republic of Poland (a state dependent on the USSR). In the thirty years since the fall of communism, the post-communist party has undergone name changes, coalitions, and internal splits. Other leftist parties were formed alongside this party. This requires a simplified picture of the changes: in 1990, the Polish United Workers’ Party ceased to exist and was transformed into a new party (Social Democracy of the Republic of Poland), which swept to power in 1993, then in 1999, into the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD), initially a coalition then transformed into the party. As noted above, as the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD), it held power in Poland again at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The grouping became a part of another party (initially a coalition, then unified) under the name: the New Left (since 2021).


28 Four years earlier, the two parties that make up the United Left – SLD and “Twój Ruch” – had more than 18 per cent of the popular vote and 67 seats in the lower chamber of the Parliament.


32 The new left-wing Spring party founded in 2019 obtained 6.06 per cent of the vote, translated into three seats, only to merge with the “old” left (Democratic Left Alliance) two years later.


34 The Confederation party programme is available online: https://konfederacja.pl/program.

35 The Civic Coalition (134 seats), the Polish People’s Party with coalitionists (thirty), the Democratic Left Alliance with other left-wing parties (forty-nine), and the Confederation of Freedom and Independence (eleven) also entered the lower chamber of the Parliament, and one seat was given to the German minority.


39 Szymon Hołownia is a journalist, politician, and ex-television presenter. See “Szymon Hołownia: Kim jest najnowszy kandydat na kandydata na prezydenta?” Wprost, 8 December 2019. See also endnote 24 above.


41 Małgorzata Maria Kidawa-Błońska, politician and ex-film producer. The remarkable continuity of Poland’s political elite is worth noting here. Kidawa-Błońska is both the great-granddaughter of the President of the

Notes
Notes

Second Republic of Poland Stanisław Wojciechowski (1922–26) and two-time prime minister of the Second Republic of Poland Władysław Grabski (1920; 1923–25).

42 See Chapter 3.
45 See note 32 above.

Chapter 5 The Polish–Jewish relationship debate

Notes


17 See for instance an annual published the Polish Centre for Holocaust Research at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology PAN: Holocaust Studies and Materials. Among notable books on the subject: B. Engelking, Jest taki piękny
Notes


21 See www.tvp.info/20106395/jedwabne-w-debacie-prezydenckiej-tvp.


24 Centre for Public Opinion Research, Research Communication No. 112/2015, “Postrzeganie Żydów i stosunków polsko-żydowskich.”


26 Kaczyński said “Today in Europe we have a major new wave of anti-Semitism – sometimes overt, sometimes discreet, focusing on attacks on the state of Israel. This state is the outpost of our culture in that world, with which we must cooperate. We should strive to bring our ideals closer together. […] We must speak out about what anti-Semitism in any form leads to – including today’s anti-Semitism disguised under the banner of anti-Zionism or targeting Israel.” See “75th anniversary of the burning of the Great Synagogue in Bialystok Speech.” 27 June 2016, http://pis.org.pl/aktualnosci/75-rocznica-spalenia-wielkiej-synagogi-w-bialymstoku.


W . Szymański, “Dziennikarz, który pytał Morawieckiego w Monachium: miałem łzy w oczach.” Deutsche Welle, 20 February 2018, www.dw.com/pl/dziennikarz-kt%C3%B3ry-pyta%C5%82-morawieckiego-w-monachium-mia%C5%82em-%C5%82zy-w-oczach/a-42652550.


W. Szymański, “Dziennikarz, który pytał Morawieckiego w Monachium: miałem łzy w oczach.” Deutsche Welle, 20 February 2018, www.dw.com/pl/dziennikarz-kt%C3%B3ry-pyta%C5%82-morawieckiego-w-monachium-mia%C5%82em-%C5%82zy-w-oczach/a-42652550.


W. Szymański, “Dziennikarz, który pytał Morawieckiego w Monachium: miałem łzy w oczach.” Deutsche Welle, 20 February 2018, www.dw.com/pl/dziennikarz-kt%C3%B3ry-pyta%C5%82-morawieckiego-w-monachium-mia%C5%82em-%C5%82zy-w-oczach/a-42652550.


“Israel rebukes Poland PM for ‘Jewish perpetrators’ remark.”


The brawl also proved the low diplomatic competence of the new Polish authorities. The amendment was passed by the Law and Justice-dominated parliament on the eve of the anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz–Birkenau death camp, celebrated as International Holocaust Remembrance Day.

W. Szymański, “Dziennikarz, który pytał Morawieckiego w Monachium: miałem łzy w oczach.” Deutsche Welle, 20 February 2018, www.dw.com/pl/dziennikarz-kt%C3%B3ry-pyta%C5%82-morawieckiego-w-monachium-mia%C5%82em-%C5%82zy-w-oczach/a-42652550.


308
“The existence of nations does not have to lead to devastating conflicts, though competition between nations is still a feature of the international order, which also had a huge impact on the lives of individuals” (Ibid.).

This allegation later returned, when news circulated around the world of a ruling in which the Warsaw District Court ordered historians to apologise for portraying one of the figures described in their publication as complicit in the deaths of Jews during the occupation. The controversy was about a book published in 2018 by Barbara Engelking and Jan Grabowski, Night without End: The Fate of Jews in Selected Districts of Occupied Poland. For the wider background of the legal dispute, see “Polish appeals court overturns ruling against Holocaust historians.” Guardian, 16 August 2021, www.theguardian.com/world/2021/aug/16/polish-appeals-court-overturns-ruling-against-holocaust-historians. We should also note that the Institute of National Remembrance published a book that argued against the aforementioned authors. See https://ipn.gov.pl/en/news/7057, Correcting-the-Picture-Some-Reflections-on-the-Use-of-Sources-in-quotNight-witho.html.

For instance, the opening of the Ulma Family Museum of Poles saving Jews in the Second World War. The idea to commemorate a family that was killed by the Germans in 1944 for helping their Jewish neighbours dated back to 2007, but the Museum was opened in 2016 with a following message: “The primary goal of the Museum is to show the heroic stance of the Poles who helped the Jews during German occupation, risking their own lives and the lives of their families.” See https://muzeumulmow.pl/en/museum/about-museum.


Notes


49 Ibid.


51 Leszczyński, “Niewiedza Polaków o Zagładzie.”

Chapter 6 The economic transformation debate


3 For instance, Leszek Balcerowicz’s 2004 monetary policy as Poland’s central bank governor has been described as “a huge success.” See “The Balcerowicz effect.” The Economist, 29 January 2004.

4 In 1989, inflation reached almost 640 per cent. Foreign debt was around 64.8 per cent of GDP according to the Central Statistical Office.


6 As a colourful example of criticism of Balcerowicz’s plan, it is worth recalling that one of the first populist politicians of the Third Republic, Andrzej Lepper, regularly intoned the phrase “Balcerowicz must leave” from the parliamentary rostrum – in a way reminiscent of Cato the Elder’s “Ceterum censeo Carthaginem delendam esse.” For more, see M. Kącki, Leperiađa, Wołowiec: Wydawnictwo Czarne, 2013.
Notes


11 For example, Communist Party members had many economic privileges, including access to separate shops that in the public imagination rose to a quasi-mythical dimension.


14 Ibid.

15 According to Piątkowski, these included in particular the more socially orientated “strategy for Poland” of 1994–97, the pre-EU-accession reforms of 1999–2003, and perhaps reforms launched to deal with the global crisis of 2008–14.

16 According to Eurostat, in the years 2005–12, inequalities decreased, not increased. The data were vibrantly commented on in the Polish press – before the Law and Justice takeover in 2015. See M. Żurawik, “Bogaci i biedni bliżej siebie. Maleją rozwarstwienia w dochodach Polaków.” Gazeta Wyborcza, 5 February 2014. See also J. Tyrowicz, “Nie nękać bogatych?” Kultura Liberalna, 17 December 2013, http://kulturaliberalna.pl/2013/12/17/nie-nekac-bogatyh. Some economists questioned these optimistic data, claiming that the applied measure of inequality (the so-called Gini coefficient) is not adequate to Polish realities. For example, Michał Brzeziński recommended consulting the Central Statistical Office’s more reliable data (“Household budgets”). However, even accepting this correction, the conclusions turn out to be similar: the stratification of Poles’ incomes did not change before 2014. See M. Brzeziński, “Nierówności w Polsce nie maleją!” Gazeta Wyborcza, 20 February 2014. For more comprehensive and comparative research on inequalities in Poland and in the world at that time, see H. Domański, Sprawiedliwe nierówności zarobków w odczuciu społecznym, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Scholar, 2013.
Notes

20 Król, “Byliśmy głupi.”
22 Karol Modzelewski, a communist in his youth, then a revisionist, and finally a famous oppositionist in People’s Poland, was expelled from the Communist Party as early as 1964. In his autobiography, he not only described childhood under communism and the period of his dissident activity but also and above all presented the bitter recapitulation of the first quarter of a century of Polish freedom. See K. Modzelewski, Zajeździmy kobyłę historii. Wyznania poobijanego jeźdźca, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Iskry, 2013.
23 Ibid.
24 Ibid.
25 It appeared slightly before the celebration of the quarter-century of the Third Polish Republic, but it was widely referred to in the discussions of 2014. See W. Kieżun, Patologia transformacji, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Poltext 2013.
26 Ibid., p. 122.
27 Ibid., pp. 222–3.
28 Ibid., p. 122.
30 Ost, Defeat of Solidarity.
31 Balcerowicz was not alone in his sentiment about the 1989–91 past. See in this vein, for example, a story about the biographies of Polish businessmen during the transformation period: J. Cieński, Start-up Poland: The People Who Transformed an Economy, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2017.
33 Centre for Public Opinion Research [CBOS], Report No. 31/2014, “Poles about the free market economy.”
Chapter 7 The never-ending de-communisation debate


2 Critics of the institution underlined that the frontline between research, criminal law, and politics was, euphemistically speaking, too blurred. See also www.tygodnikpowszechny.pl/bilans-cwierciewiecza-28636.

3 “PiS zapowiada radykalne zmiany. ‘Musimy skończyć z postkomunizmem!’” *Onet News*, 4 July 2016, www.youtube.com/watch?v=15zqshbU1zM.


5 From this perspective, the internal pressure for de-communisation is treated as a part of the larger process of de-Russification, a counterreaction to the Russian politics of domination in the region.

Notes


8 Jan Kucharzewski (1876–1952), Polish politician and historian.

9 The demarcation of the country’s drastically new borders after the Second World War and leaving Poland in the USSR’s sphere of influence was seen in Poland as a “betrayal of the West” during the Yalta conference (1945) and afterwards. As Timothy Garton Ash wrote about it in the 1980s, “Yalta for the Poles means that, after their army had been the first to resist Hitler, after Britain had gone to war in defence of Poland’s independence and Polish servicemen had fought courageously in defence of Britain, after some six million of their compatriots (one in every five citizens of the pre-war Polish Republic) had died in the war – after all this, their country was delivered up by their Western allies, Britain and America, into the famously tender care of ‘Uncle Joe’ Stalin.” T. Garton Ash, The Polish Revolution: Solidarity, New Haven – London: Yale University Press, 2002, p. 3. Recently, another British author was reminded of this post-Yalta resentment in Poland: “The import of Stalin’s victory at Yalta was to leave Poland in thrall. The bitterness it created endured for decades. When I arrived to live in Warsaw in 1986 I found it a byword for acrimonious betrayal. ‘Yalta’ would be spat out as if it were a swearword.” M. Sixsmith, The War of Nerves: Inside the Cold War Mind, London: Profile Books – Wellcome Collection, 2022, pp. 39–40.


12 Obviously, the exception to this narrative was the Law and Justice’s short and turbulent rule of 2005–7.

13 General Wojciech Jaruzelski (1923–2014) and General Czesław Kiszczak (1925–2015) were responsible for the military coup in 1981.

Notes


19 P. Śpiewak, “Polskie spory ideowe i nasze rozmowy o pamięci” in J. Wawrzyniak et al. (eds), Polska po 20 latach wolności, Warsaw: WUW, 2011, p. 506.

20 See for instance the justification of the presidential draft of a new law on the Supreme Court of 2021: www.prezydent.pl.

21 M. Morawiecki said, “The judiciary system was not reformed to such a degree as I would have wished before. I expected much more. There’s a resistance there supported by misunderstanding of our true intentions from Brussels, which has created an inadequate environment for this necessary judiciary reform to happen in full.” Newsweek, 6 September 21, www.newsweek.com/exclusive-polish-prime-minister-morawiecki-threats-posed-russia-china-big-tech-1598823.

22 Act of 18 October 2006 on the disclosure of information on state security authorities’ documents from 1944–90 along with their contents, Journal of Laws of 2006, No. 218, item 1592.

23 For more on the legal background, see A. Wójcik, “Reckoning with the communist past in Poland thirty years after the regime change in the light of the European Convention on Human Rights.” Polish Yearbook of International Law, 39 (2021), pp. 135–57.


26 G. Skąpska, “Społeczne aspekty skutecznej komunikacji o prawie i jego stosowaniu” in B. Godlewka-Michalak (ed.), Media i sądy pro bono et malo. Wzajemne relacje w służbie demokratycznego państwa prawa – materiały


29 In the first quarter of a century of the Third Polish Republic, an unequivocal answer was not found even to such a simple question as whether former oppositionists were entitled to compensation for the period of hiding from the militia and secret services after the imposition of martial law. After all, the oppositionists could not officially work at that time. It was of measurable importance, e.g. for the level of retirement benefits. A few months before Law and Justice came to power – in December 2014 – it was possible to learn, for example, about the court verdict in the case of Andrzej Michałowski, an important member of the Pomeranian “Solidarity,” who in the 1980s spent a year and a half in prison for opposition activities and was in hiding for more than four years. The court of first instance refused to award Michałowski the compensation, providing a bizarre justification that the oppositionist … “hid of his own free will.” The Court of Appeals disagreed with the judgement of the court of first instance. K. Włodkowska, “Jakbym dostał w twarz.” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 24–6 December 2014.


31 Bernhard and Kubik, *Twenty Years after Communism*, pp. 60–84. Among the newest research works on the Round Table Talks in Poland, see *Psychologia Okrągłego Stołu*, A. Friszke et al. (eds), Sopot: Smak Słowa, 2019.


Notes


42 In the justification of the decision, it was explained that “it is ethically and morally unacceptable to distinguish persons jointly responsible for the lack of an independent judiciary by commemorating them together with the First Presidents of the Supreme Court of the independent Republic of Poland.” See interview with Professor Kamil Zaradkiewicz, www.wsiecprawdy.pl/siekniektorzy-pierwi-prezesa-sn-zasluzuja-napotepienie-pnews-4381.html.


46 Ibid.

47 Journal of Laws 2016, item 744: https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=wdu20160000744. The law has not only sparked political controversy, but has also set off another wave of tedious administrative and legal
Notes

According to the press, pensions have been reduced for nearly 40,000 people, including 8,000 widows and children, receiving survivor’s pensions for deceased members of the uniformed services. The “de-sensitisation” cases found their way to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. For more see https://wyborcza.biz/biznes/7,147880,27121393,w-pis-przerazenie-ze-bedzie-musial-wyplacac-odszkodowanie-za.html.

From the period 22 July 1944 to 31 July 1990.


Part III A fractured identity

1 “They were all shot: Russia accused of war crimes as Bucha reveals horror of invasion.” Guardian, 3 April 2022, www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/03/they-were-all-shot-russia-accused-of-war-crimes-as-bucha-reveals-horror-of-invasion.


Notes


5. Even prominent Russian intellectuals, for instance the émigré writer Vladimir Sorokin, admit their error of judgment: www.ft.com/content/1f4bd315-7753-4e7a-be4e-0ea7e31522b9.

6. “Germany is struggling to give shape to a new foreign policy.” *Financial Times*, 26 June 2022, www.ft.com/content/o42dd1c2-89ef-4ab7-b2df-79c880bb68a0.


13. S. Plokhy, “Putin’s imperialist narrative is being crushed.” *Financial Times*, 15 June 2022, www.ft.com/content/05bdabc8-e027-4600-a20e-aaad1d6c2f2d.


Notes


17 Evidence of waning Euro-enthusiasm was provided by the lost referenda in France and the Netherlands on the so-called European Constitution. See B. Stefanowa, “The ‘no’ vote in the French and Dutch referenda on the EU constitution: A spillover of consequences for the wider Europe.” *American Political Science Association* 39:2 (2006), pp. 251–5.

18 One meeting point for political Eurosceptics from Western and Eastern Europe whose importance should not be understated was the European Parliament. There, sovereigns from Eastern Europe watched with growing curiosity the various manifestations of national populism in France, the UK, and elsewhere. As it was put by Professor Robert Tombs, for instance. See R. Tombs, *This Sovereign Isle: Britain In and Out of Europe*, London: Penguin Books, 2021.


Chapter 8 Sources of post-traumatic sovereignty


5 “The bodies of Bucha have set a difficult test for the west.” *Guardian*, 4 April 2022, www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/04/the-bodies-of-bucha-have-set-a-difficult-test-for-the-west-ukraine.


Notes


9 K. Kallas, “There is a certain naivety towards Russia.” Financial Times, 18 February 2022, www.ft.com/content/098ba985-1284-46c6-9abe-f626fa9e47f0.


13 From the massacre of the civilian population of Warsaw in 1794 to the Soviet execution of Polish officers at Katyn in 1940.


17 In comparison, the Christianisation of Bohemia is associated with the year 884 and the Christianisation of the Kievan Rus dates from 988.


19 Ibid.
24 It was only with time that painters and draftsmen, poets and novelists began to look for artistic representations of what had happened. Attempts were made to depict the “Laying of the Fatherland’s Tomb,” the “Tomb of the Fatherland,” and so on in paintings, prints, and drawings. Sometimes more ambitious plans were undertaken. For example, in 1798 an aristocrat decided to build a Polish “Temple of Remembrance” on the model of the ruins of the temple of Vesta in Tivoli near Rome, obviously in memory of the lost state. Blanning, *Frederick the Great*, p. 296.
25 When various forms of limited statehood were liquidated, such as the Duchy of Warsaw, which was de facto dependent on Napoleon.
26 To this day, Polish historiography writes about the fourth partition of Poland, which resulted from the Hitler-Stalin pact.
29 S. Plokhy, “Serhii Plokhy: Putin’s imperialist narrative ‘is being crushed.’” *Financial Times*, 1 July 2022, www.ft.com/content/05bdabc8-e027-4600-a20e-aaad1d6c2f2d.
30 Remembered with melancholy by some, denounced by others as leading to the undoing of the state. As time went on, opinions on the Commonwealth’s past were more rather than less divided.
33 To use a loose comparison, it is Catholicism with a sensibility and modes of expression more Irish than, for example, French.
36 Stretching back to the personal union of the First Republic with Saxony and the reign of August II the Strong, who died in Warsaw in 1733. In Britain, it is more or less the reign of Queen Anne and the Hanoverian dynasty (George I of Great Britain). In France, it is the time of the decline of Louis XIV and the beginning of the Regency.


41 Ibid.


43 Bisko, Polska dla średnio zaawansowanych, p. 146.


45 Professor Michał Seweryński in the debate: https://bip.brpo.gov.pl/pl/content/RPO-w-Senacie-o-stanie-praw-i-wolnosci-w-2020.

46 An interesting example of this can be seen in the evolution of the position of Radosław Sikorski, who, after graduating from Oxford University, was a minister in Jarosław Kaczyński’s government (2006) and later in Donald Tusk’s government (from 2007). Intellectually, he initially expressed an interest in British Euroscepticism as a source of inspiration for Poland, only to eventually switch to an unequivocally pro-European stance precisely because of the Polish raison d’état. A selection of Sikorski’s journalism, interviews, and speeches from the 1980s to the present: R. Sikorski, Wokopie, w redakcji, w ministerstwie, Kraków: EEPS – Wydawnictwo Znak, 2022.

47 Obviously, as the months passed, also anti-Western statements by politicians emerged. For instance:

“I believe that the threat to our sovereignty from the West is greater than from the East,” said Professor Zdzisław Krasnodębski, a Law and Justice MEP. M. Wojtczuk, “Europoseł PiS: Zachód jest większym zagrożeniem
Notes


Chapter 9 Beyond the occupation mentality


2 “Lessons from Poland, the other developed country curtailing abortion rights.” The Washington Post, 12 June 2022, www.washingtonpost.com/history/2022/06/12/poland-abortion-rights-history.


6 To add to the real background of the tragic death of the pregnant woman in the hospital, it is worth mentioning that, after one year, the new law has resulted in a 90 per cent drop in abortions performed. And we are talking about a decrease from a small number of around 1,000 abortions to around 100. See “Number of legal abortions falls 90% in Poland’s first year of near-total ban.” Notes from Poland, 30 July 2022. As noted, support for Law and Justice remained relatively
Notes


7 It is worth noting that any simple regional analogies, for example, comparisons with other Visegrád Group countries, turn out to be highly misleading here. For example, while Victor Orbán publicly manifests his attachment to Christianity, the same cannot be said for the neighbouring Czechs (and their governments), who display one of the highest levels of secularisation in the world.

8 P. Conradi, “Poles turn away from Church.” The Times, 14 March 2021.


12 The Duke of Poland, Mieszko I (c. 930–992), and his court converted from previous local cults to the Christian religion, thus entering the cultural realm of Western Christianity. Yet, the Christianisation of the people was a long-term process, along with the people’s rebellions and attempts to return to the old beliefs (in particular violent in the 1030s). See J. Lukowski and H. Zawadzki, A Concise History of Poland, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006,


14 Stefan Wyszyński (1901–81), a Polish prelate of the Catholic Church. Cardinal Wyszyński was imprisoned and put under house arrest by the communist authorities between 1953 and 1956.

15 In order to contact opposition circles, the communist authorities used the intermediary of the Catholic Church. See: K. Trembicka, Okrągły Stół w Polsce. Studium o porozumieniu politycznym, Lublin: UMCS, 2003, p. 92–117.
Notes

17 One of the most important writers of the Polish language, Adam Mickiewicz (1798–1855), coined the phrase “Poland, the Christ of nations.” In this interpretation, the new messiah for the world was to be Poland, which by way of suffering is to redeem the sin of tyrants and liberate all enslaved nations. It is worth mentioning that to this day Mickiewicz’s works belong to the canon of school reading for young Poles.
19 While “very many Christians both Protestant and Catholic found it too easy to fall into complicity with Nazism,” that was not really the case in Poland, where many priests perished at the Germans’ hands. Moreover, “very explicit reports from Polish church leaders about Nazi outrages against the population of occupied Poland […] left the Vatican uncomfortably wrestling with the problem of how best to make a public response.” D. MacCulloch, A History of Christianity. The First Three Thousand Years, London, Penguin Books, 2010, pp. 944–5
20 Even after the collapse of the communism, his photographs hung in ordinary Polish homes in towns and villages as if he were the real head of the nation.
23 Catholic Austria was the exception among the states that divided the former Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth between them. There, the power of the state over the provinces weakened over time; under more autonomous conditions, Catholic Poles enjoyed greater freedoms.
24 Blanning, Frederick The Great, p. 296.
27 One of the pioneering achievements of the Polish Enlightenment was the establishment of the secular Commission of National Education (1773–94), the prototype of later ministries of education. See for example: N. Davies, God’s Playground: A History of Poland, Volume 1: The Origins to 1795, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.
Notes

28 The author wrote that this statements of the representative of the Catholic clergy on the marriage law project sounded as if they were uttered by “a representative of an outsider power, residing in our country but a stranger, speaking in the tone of a ruler.” See T. Boy-Żeleński, “Nasi okupanci.” Wiadomości Literackie, 13 December 1931.


30 The Church’s contribution to Polish customs, culture, and science may be controversial nowadays, but it undoubtedly took place on an enormous scale. See introductory remarks in R. Butterwick, The Polish Revolution and the Catholic Church, 1788–1792: A Political History, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

31 In 1925, the state signed a concordat, which the Church generally welcomed. It is worth noting, however, that three demands of the Catholic clergy were not met: (1) the Roman Catholic religion was not recognised as the state religion, (2) Catholic marriage legislation was not introduced, and (3) the principle of a confessional school was not adopted.

32 To give an example of one opinion: “All the vices through which Poland collapsed were revived in political life,” noted Czesław Znamierowski, a prominent scholar, in the 1930s. Many similar quotations could be adduced. See C. Znamierowski, Elita, ustrój, demokracja, Warsaw: Aletheia, 2001.


35 These words were noted by a priest, Bronisław Żongołłowicz, who was an MP on the list of Józef Piłsudski’s Non-Partisan Bloc for Cooperation with the Government and Deputy Minister of Religious Denominations and Public Enlightenment for several years. In Żongołłowicz’s diaries, the dilemma of how to behave between the interests of the Polish state and those of the Catholic Church recurs every now and then. In specific cases, it turned out that the interests of the state and the Church diverged. In 1932, Żongołłowicz is supposed to have said in a conversation with Prime Minister Aleksander Prystor, “The position of the Government making concessions to the clergy does not contribute to peaceful coexistence between the State and the Church, and – this seems a paradox – as the concessions are made, the relationship deteriorates, turning into an active struggle between the clergy
and the Government, into a constant intensified aggressive effort on the part of the clergy to replace the Government in the State by taking secular authority into its hands. A normal relationship is established when there is equal aggressiveness and balance of power on both sides.” See B. Żongołłowicz, Dzienniki 1930–1936, Warsaw: Przegląd Wschodni – Retro-Art, 2004.

36 More to the point: found bones of a king, Aleksander Jagiellończyk, who died in 1506. Press report on the discovery of the monarch’s bones: M. Limanowski, “Szczątki Aleksandra Jagiellończyka w Katedrze Wileńskiej.” Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny, 26 November 1931, p. 2. Perhaps it should be added that Vilnius was within the borders of the Second Republic. The capital of prewar Lithuania was Kaunas.


38 Tazbir, Polska na zakrętach dziejów, p. 147.

39 “Kościół w liczbach.” Polityka, 6 October 2010. This does not, obviously, change the fact that in the 1980s the clergy continued to be invigilated and persecuted, and pressured into cooperating with the communist secret services. In 1984, for example, Poland was shocked by the news that the special services had committed the particularly brutal murder of one of the priests, Jerzy Popiełuszko.


42 CBOS, BS/170/2013.

43 CBOS, NR 48/2015.


J. Kaczyński - 9781526155887

Downloaded from manchesterhive.com at 12/29/2023 01:57:54AM via free access
Notes


The Centre for Public Opinion Research Report Number 144/2016 [“What abortion law Poles expect?”].

“In the new constitution (...) the politicians of the Free State offered the church extraordinary opportunity. Irish values would be shaped by the church's views on gender, the economy, trade union-employer relations, education, health, media, freedom of thought, sexual health, and appropriate literature. As clerical influence grew, only a handful of spheres within the state would remain independent of clerical power.” Gribben, The Rise and Fall of Christian Ireland, p. 182.

On the one hand, we can speak of the clericalisation of public life as one of the elements of de-communisation.


For example, the textbook’s author negatively assesses the changes in morals in the West since the 1960s, praises heterosexual marriage, negatively assesses IVF children, etc. See P. Kozanecki and P. Czernich, “Przeczytaliśmy cały podręcznik do HiT. Obszerna lista czarnych charakteryów.” Onet, 27 June 2022, https://wiadomosci.onet.pl/tylko-w-oneic/przeczytaliśmy-calkowiciepodrecznik-do-hit-obszerona-lista-czarnych-carakteryow/dz8heq0.


By way of comparison, in 1990, 50.3 per cent of Catholics attended Sunday Mass; in 2013, the percentage dropped to 39.1. See “Młodzi odchodzą od Kościoła. ’Kiedyś to był margines.’” Wirtualna Polska, 13 February 2022,
Notes


75 “Kościół katolicki w Polsce.”


Chapter 10 Post-traumatic sovereignty strikes back

1 “Poland’s prime minister accuses EU of making demands with ‘gun to our head.’” Financial Times, 24 October 2021. See also “Poland warns EU against starting ‘third world war’ in row over justice reforms.” The Times, 25 October 2021. What is particularly noteworthy today is that the prime minister metaphorically used the language of war just before the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the outbreak of a real war.


Notes


5 The author went on to clarify what he had in mind: “Polish law is to be completely subordinated to European law, which means outright incapacitation of the Constitutional Tribunal, the Supreme Court, the Supreme Administrative Court, and, as a result, common courts, should they wish to rule on the basis of the Polish constitution and laws adopted in Poland.” See S. Janecki, “Wiele wskazuje na to, że realizowany jest plan rozbioru Polski. We współczesnej wersji, bez rozbioru terytorium.” wPolityce.pl, 31 July 2021, https://wpolityce.pl/polityka/560766-wiele-wskazuje-na-to-ze-realizowany-jest-rozbior-polski.


7 Only by remembering the collective trauma of the partitions from the 18th to the twentieth century can one understand the seriousness of some political accusations made in internal Polish politics. For example, according to Kaczyński, the actions of the current political opposition served Russian and German interests. Whether these allegations are serious or wholly imaginary, in Poland this is an accusation of national treason that could lead to the collapse of the state. See “Prezes PiS: działania obecnej opozycji służyły rosyjskim i niemieckim interesom. Celem były awanse jednego człowieka – w skali europejskiej.” PAP, 15 September 2022, www.pap.pl/aktualnosci/news%2C1425924%2Cprezes-pis-dzialania-obecnej-opozycji-sluzyly-rosyjskim-i-niemieckim.

8 This also shows some historical continuity in Poland, though a negative one: a continuity of disruptions. After all, the recurrence of state disasters is embedded in the collective identity.

9 “I believe that the threat to our sovereignty from the West is greater than from the East. This is paradoxical. Of course, Russia is brutal, Russia can declare war on us. But the Poles know, in a spiritual or psychological sense, how to deal with such a danger. Putin does not divide us; he unites us. The EU, on the other hand, uses other means. Rather incentives, money, soft power, certainly attractiveness.” See “Europoseł PiS
Notes


15 “Polexit: 3 reasons why Poland will quit the EU and 3 why it won’t.” POLITICO, 30 November 2022.


17 “REPORT: Putin Offered Poland’s Prime Minister The Chance To Join Forces And Partition Ukraine.” Business Insider, 21 October 2014.


19 This does not change the fact that historical analogies are used completely instrumentally. E.g. in September 2022, Kaczyński criticised that the opposition leader’s policy would lead to the partition of Ukraine. See “Jarosław Kaczyński uderza w Tuska i mówi o ‘propozycji rozbioru Ukrainy’. Nie zabrakło też Smoleńska.” Gazeta.pl, 21 September 2022, https://wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/wiadomosci/7,114884,28939042,jaroslaw-kaczyński-uderza-w-tuska-i-mowi-o-propozycji-rozbioru.html.


23 Kaczyński added “Those who created the European Union certainly had the best of intentions, but they appealed to Christian ideas, and it did not occur to them that the Union would be a vehicle for leftist ideology. I repeat, not left-wing, but leftist.” See “‘Koniec tego dobrego, wykazaliśmy maksimum..."
Notes


Possibly the most telling was the cover slogan of one of the pro-government weeklies from 2020: “The Union must be told: Enough! Polexit – we have the right to talk about it.” Found in Do Rzeczy Weekly, 23–9 November 2020. See also “Polska jest przeciwna federalizacji UE. Stanisław Janecki o zaostrzeniu polityki rządu.” PolskieRadio24.pl, 10 August 2022, https://polskieradio24.pl/130/5153/artkul/3017725,polska-jest-przeciwna-federalizacji-ue-stanislaw-janecki-o-zaostrzeniu-polityki-razdu.


A direct reference to the experience dating back to the nineteenth century and the history of a nation without a state, can be found in the Law and Justice programme of 2014: “For us Poles, however, our own state has another meaning – for 123 years there was no sovereign Polish state. We could not decide our own fate. This is the reason why we regard the Polish state as a value of the highest importance, and any undermining of its sovereignty, or even of its existence, as unacceptable and disastrous for the nation and a threat to Polishness in the present and historical dimension. For the state, irrespective of the manner in which it came into being, is today the expression and defender of national interests.” Indeed, from the reference to the partitions of Poland in the eighteenth century, there was a smooth transition to the following statements about the twenty-first century: “Our state, our freedom, the democratic and solidarity order cannot be treated in isolation, abstracted from international relations, which are dominated, at least in Europe, by globalisation and the open society.” The programme of the Law and Justice Party was thus “updating old software” by referring to contemporary political concepts and problems.
Notes


33 In the same line of argument, Prime Minister Morawiecki pointed out that the safety valve that protects the EU from the tyranny of the majority is the principle of unanimity. See “Morawiecki krytykuje UE i porównuje Lecha Kaczyńskiego do Kasandry.” Business Insider, 8 August 2022, https://businessinsider.com.pl/wiadomosci/morawiecki-krytykuje-ue-i-porownuje-lecha-Kaczyńskiego-do-kasandry/08kyesd.

34 “Everything will be different: How the pandemic is changing EU economic governance.” Delors Centre, 11 February 2021.


36 Paruch, Realizm i wartości, p. 343.


38 In regard to ensuring the security of the state, the Law and Justice Party does not propose anything new, but only plays with fire in the name of partisan interests and J. Kaczyński’s whims. Donald Tusk is mobilising his Liberal voters with the following words: “We are closer than we think to the real turn of history. Poland may be isolated, NATO may fail, the European Union may disintegrate.” From Applebaum and Tusk, Wybór, pp. 11–28. “If Poland will no longer be a democratic country […], why should the United States protect such an undemocratic Poland?” Tusk rhetorically asks compatriots who read through the prism of post-traumatic sovereignty. Ibid., p. 21.

Notes


42 Smolar, “The half-empty glass.” See also Balcer et al., *In a Clinch*.


44 Smolar, “The half-empty glass.”

Chapter 11 A kidnapped West in the European Union


5 A supranational, Western-present institution such as the Catholic Church obviously interpreted this state of affairs differently. The possibility of moral change modelled on the West, in particular, was objectionable. See more above in Chapter 9.


8 T. Haughton, “Vladimír Mečiar and his role in the 1994–1998 Slovak coalition government.” *Europe-Asia Studies*, 54:8 (2002), pp. 1319–38. It is no exaggeration to say that Mečiar was the forerunner of the programme of national populism in power and of the style of governments of Orbán (since 2010) and Kaczyński (since 2015). Illiberal tendencies in politics, stigmatisation of minorities for political purposes, ultra-nationalist rhetoric in times of elections, etc. – all of this was tested to some extent in Slovakia in the 1990s. An important difference, though, is that in Hungary and Poland, the turn toward national populism in power took place after these countries had already joined NATO and the EU.
In 2004, the European Union was enlarged with the accession of ten countries, predominantly from the former Eastern Bloc: the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia, plus Malta and Cyprus.

Supporters of Poland’s membership of the European Union have always been in an overwhelming majority (from 74 per cent supporters in 1994 to a staggering 92 per cent in 2022, with the lowest level – still high – at 53 per cent in 2001). See www.cbos.pl/PL/trendy/trendy.php?trend_parametr=stosunek_do_integracji_UE.

Although the division between anti-communists and post-communists was declining in importance for citizens, it was still rhetorically useful for politicians. See Chapter 6.

It is worth remembering that in Poland, initially the Civic Platform and the Law and Justice party formed an alliance to wrest power from the post-communist party. Gradually, the first party turned out to be increasingly liberal and pro-European, while the second party turned out to be conservative and more and more Euro-sceptical. There was therefore a flow of politicians and supporters back and forth between the parties.

"Nigel Farage resigns as Ukip leader after ‘achieving political ambition’ of Brexit." Guardian, 4 July 2016.

More precisely, Poland’s Casimir the Great, Bohemia’s John of Luxembourg, and Hungary’s Charles of Anjou in 1335 and 1338 or 1339.


The Commonwealth lost its independence in international politics in the first half of the eighteenth century. In the period 1795–1918, various forms of Polish statehood appeared and disappeared, but never with real independence. Citizens became subjects of as many as three states: Prussia, Russia, and Austria (and temporarily also Napoleonic France). Bohemia and Slovakia were in the orbit of the Habsburg Monarchy. So was Hungary, whose position in the dual monarchy was independent, but whose foreign policy was conducted through the court in Vienna. Bohemia, Slovakia, Hungary, and parts of southern Poland (Kraków and Lvov) were in the orbit of the Habsburg Monarchy until 1918.

Notes


29 “Raport: po pandemii 15 proc. lekarzy zamierza odejść z rynku pracy.” *Puls Medycyny*, 22 October 2022.


31 “Polish, Czech governments sign deal on contested mine.” *Deutsche Welle*, 4 February 2022.

32 “Czech, Polish leaders reach deal to end Turow mine dispute.” *Reuters*, 3 February 2022.


35 Orbán invited Vladimir Putin to a state visit in the aftermath of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, which borders on Hungary. Budapest recently negotiated an $11.2 billion deal for Russia to refurbish and expand Hungary’s nuclear power plant, and Orbán has complained that EU sanctions against Russia


Moreover, at that time the Czech republic’s Foreign Minister, Jan Hamáček, appealed to European Union and NATO allies: “We would obviously ask for solidarity and I have asked my colleagues also to consider expelling other Russian officials that operate on their territory.” See J. Lopatka and R. Muller, “Czechs urge allies to expel Russian intelligence officers in act of solidarity.” Reuters, 20 April 2021; A. Roth and D. Sabbagh, “Russia expels 20 Czech diplomats in tit-for-tat response.” Guardian, 19 April 2021. For a better understanding of the political background of this case, see also, for example: M. Gniadkowski and M. Wasiuta, “Russian attacks in the Czech Republic: domestic context, implications, perspectives (Analysis).” Centre for Eastern Studies, 20 April 2021, www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analises/2021–04–20/russian-attacks-czech-republic-domestic-context-implications.

In later months, new facts about Czech-Russian relations began to emerge, see S. Mortkowitz, “Czech police probe minister's planned Moscow trip amid reports of suspect deal.” Politico, 6 May 2021.


Ibid.

“Visegrad defense meeting called off over Russia split.” Politico, 29 March 2022.

“Thousands gather at ‘Czech Republic First’ rally over energy crisis.” Guardian, 4 September 2022.

“Most Slovaks want Russia to win Ukraine war.” Euractiv, 15 September 2022. See also “Słowacja: strategiczne dylematy po rosyjskiej inwazji na Ukrainę.” Ośrodek Studiów Wschodnich, 10 May 2022.

“Orbán wygrał i pomaga Putinowi, a PiS wzdraża się wyrzec jedynego sojusznika w Unii Europejskiej.” OKO.press, 8 April 2022.

Notes

46 An interesting opinion on the current political background of Hungary’s stance on the Ukraine war: W. Nattrass, “Hungary’s ‘pro-Russia’ stance was inevitable.” *Politico*, 15 September 2022.

47 Ups and downs on the road to liberal democracy are possible, as the example of Slovakia in the years 2019–20 has illustrated. See “Liberal lawyer Caputova wins election to become Slovakia’s first female president” *Reuters*, 30 March 2019. P. Hockenos, “The end of Eastern Europe’s great liberal hope.” *Foreign Affairs*, 1 March 2020.

48 “EU split on visa ban for Russians.” *Deutsche Welle*, 29 August 2022.

49 Finland’s prime minister, Sanna Marin: “It’s not right that at the same time as Russia is waging a … brutal war of aggression in Europe, Russians can … travel in Europe, be tourists.” See “Finland and Estonia urge EU to stop issuing tourist visas to Russians.” *Financial Times*, 9 August 2022. “Stop issuing tourist visas to Russians.” Kaja Kallas, Estonia’s prime minister, wrote on Twitter on 9 August 2022. “Visiting Europe is a privilege, not a human right. Air travel from Russia is shut down. It means while Schengen countries issue visas, neighbours to Russia carry the burden (Finland, Estonia, Latvia – sole access points).” Romania’s Foreign Minister, Bogdan Aurescu, says the European Union should place a ban on Russian tourists and accept only dissidents and people on humanitarian grounds. See “‘Tourism is not a fundamental right’: Romanian minister backs EU ban on Russian tourists.” *RadioFreeEurope Radio Liberty*, 30 August 2022.

50 “Finland and Estonia urge EU to stop issuing tourist visas to Russians.” *Financial Times*, 9 August 2022.

51 C. de Gruyter, “The war in Ukraine is emancipating Central and Eastern Europe.” *Foreign Affairs*, 9 August 2022.

Conclusion


Notes


7 At this point I would like to add a personal note. In March 2022, I travelled on an international train with refugees from Ukraine. More precisely, with female refugees, for almost all the passengers were women. The train was packed. It was impossible to squeeze through the corridor. Tickets and documents were not checked. In the face of war, the COVID-19 pandemic was forgotten altogether. A few hours in the unbelievable squeeze was like a living hell. Two women passed a small child to each other from time to time to at least take a breather. The confused looks of the uprooted elderly women were distressing. In an instant, they had lost everything: no familiar corner in their old age, no pension earned over the years. They knew no foreign languages and relied entirely on younger people, who managed to communicate in Polish or English. At the German–Polish border, the train stopped. It was impossible for German officers to get inside the carriage. Again, neither passports, nor tickets, nor vaccination certificates were checked. The officers wandered helplessly around the platform for almost an hour, not knowing what to do with a train full of unfortunate women with small children. In the end, the train was let through without any controls. See: J. Kuisz and K. Wigura, “Escape with the Berlin-Warsaw Express: The Train of Women” (orig.: “Flucht mit dem Berlin-Warschau-Express: Der Zug der Frauen”). TAZ, 26 March 2022, https://taz.de/Flucht-mit-dem-Berlin-Warschau-Express!/5841206.

8 There is considerable inaccuracy in the data on the number of Ukrainian refugees in Poland, due to the scale of migration and its rapid changes. As to the data as of the end of 2022, see R. Minder and B. Erling, “Ukraine and Poland forge ‘special relationship’ as war brings neighbours closer.” Financial Times, 23 December 2022.


“There’s no such thing as a solid and forever good relationship between nations,” said Professor Karolina Wigura, the Polish sociologist and an expert on reconciliation between nations in Central and Eastern Europe. “But at least we can say that in terms of a grassroots reconciliation between the people of Poland and Ukraine, we’re now in a very good place.” Quoted in Minder and Erling, “Ukraine and Poland forge ‘special relationship.’”


It is noteworthy that the question whether the political centre of gravity is shifting to the East began to be asked for the first time in European public debate. See, for example: S. Kauffman, “War in Ukraine has shaken the EU’s power dynamics.” Financial Times, 30 August 2022, www.ft.com/content/2206a011-8769-4205-a5d1-f98492cb7b3b. J. Rupnik, “L’Europe de l’Est à l’heure atlantique.” Telos, 27 February 2023, www.telos-eu.com/fr/politique-francaise-et-internationale/leurope-de-lest-a-lheure-atlantique.html.


At the beginning of 2023, Poles are most afraid of rising prices and inflation (75 per cent) and of a destruction of the state by the ruling camp (56 per cent). See I. Kacprzak, “Badanie: Mocny lęk Polaków przed wojną i uchodźcami.” Rzeczpospolita, 20 February 2023, www.rp.pl/spoleczenstwo/art3798681-badanie-mocny-lek-polakow-przed-wojna-i-uchodzczami-dowalki-stanelaby-jedna-piata-badanych.
“This is a result of the huge tension associated with the war, which translates into the decision to have an offspring,” explains one expert. Quote from: Izabela Kacprzak, “Badanie: Mocny lęk Polaków przed wojną i uchodźcami.” Rzeczpospolita, 20 February 2023, www rp.pl/spoleczenstwo/art37986811-badanie-mocny-lek-polakow-przed-wojna-i-uchodzczami-dowalki-stanelaby-jedna-piata-badanych.

Ibid.


In February 2022, a record 78 per cent of Poles surveyed declared that they were afraid of war. See Z. Dąbrowska and M. Kozubal, “Sondaż: Strach ma twarz Putina. Polacy mają obawy przed wojną.” Rzeczpospolita, 27 February 2022, www rp.pl/spoleczenstwo/art35768421-sondaz-strach-ma-twarz-putina-polacy-maja-obawy-przed-wojna.


I had the opportunity to witness this at the New York Times’s “Athens Democracy Forum.” In the course of the debates, it became clear that some recent defenders of freedom in the region are now inclined to adhere to the logic of spheres of influence. For example, Professor Jeffrey Sachs of Columbia University believes that NATO contributed to the outbreak of
war. In the course of the panel discussion, I found that I had to argue sharply against this position and defend the regional point of view. Of course, Sachs is not alone in asking whether we provoked Russia. Nevertheless, in his case it is all the more significant, because it was he who introduced liberal reforms after the fall of communism in Poland and other countries. Thus, people in the region have reason to believe that he contributed to their dream of escaping the trap of history, of being able to determine the fate of their countries for the first time in three centuries. For more see R. Cohen, “A time of unease and challenge for democracy.” *New York Times*, 6 October 2022, [www.nytimes.com/2022/10/06/world/democracy-challenges.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/06/world/democracy-challenges.html).


The following comments are partly included in the article I have co-written and published here: J. Kuisz and K. Wigura, “America thinks the war is about Ukraine. Russia’s neighbors disagree.” *New York Times*, 25 March 2022, [www.nytimes.com/2022/03/25/opinion/nato-russia-poland-europe.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/25/opinion/nato-russia-poland-europe.html).

For instance, the Ukrainian writer Oksana Zabuzhko believes that “Russia will not become a democracy until it falls apart. That’s because Russia is not really a nation-state but the same premodern multiethnic empire living on geographic expansion and resource looting as 300 years ago – and is thus doomed to reproduce, again and again, under whatever ideological cover, the same prison-ward-like political structure that alone keeps it together. One intellectual holdover from the imperialistic nineteenth century is the idea that preserving the Russian empire would be less catastrophic, in terms of humanitarian consequences, than recognising the right to life of dozens of peoples whose lot under Moscow’s rule was never anything other than dogged survival, under the threat of extinction. This prejudice helped the empire to survive twice in the twentieth century, in 1921 and in 1991. It is high time to rethink it.” O. Zabuzhko, “The problem with Russia is Russia.” *New York Times*, 20 February 2023, [www.nytimes.com/2023/02/20/opinion/russia-ukraine-war.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2023/02/20/opinion/russia-ukraine-war.html).


Notes


37 President Andrzej Duda urged President Joe Biden “to reaffirm in very strong terms that the US stands unreservedly behind Nato's Article 5, the collective defence clause treating any attack on a member state as an attack against all” Quoted in R. Khalaf, R. Minder, and H. Foy, “Poland calls for Nato security guarantees to postwar Ukraine.” Financial Times, 19 February 2023, www.ft.com/content/860aa934-209b-4c17-a47d-178f285dc1e7,