



Euroscepticism in the time of war: the cases of Hungary and Poland reconsidered

Edited by
Dániel Mikecz

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EUROSCEPTICISM IN THE TIME OF WAR: THE CASES OF HUNGARY AND POLAND RECONSIDERED

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EDITOR'S NOTE

At the end of 2020, when the World and Europe tried to combat the coronavirus and looked for solutions to avoid a healthcare and economic crisis, the populist regimes in Hungary and Poland hindered joint actions of the European Union. Both countries threatened to veto the recovery fund at the end of 2020 if the rule of law mechanism of the budget came into force. They also lobbied not to include the term "gender equality" in a declaration on social cohesion in the EU. Furthermore, the Hungarian government hindered three times to issue a statement and introduce measures against China for restricting political rights in Hong Kong. These examples demonstrated that populist right-wing regimes can paralyze the decision-making and common stance in the EU, while the same populist forces were blaming the community for being a lame duck. The Hungarian and Polish populist right-wing regimes also framed European integration as identity loss of an imagined Christian Europe. At that time, it seemed that if the new Euroscepticism remained unchallenged, it could seriously hinder European integration.

Nevertheless, the war in the Ukraine changed the unity of the populist regimes in Hungary and Poland in the early months of 2022. While Poland is a proponent of sanctions against Russia ever since the outbreak of the war, Hungary opposes the unity of the European Union in this matter. In fact, the Hungarian government even launched a national consultation, that is a directed, top-down organized and

politically biased questioning of citizens about the EU's economic sanctions against Russia. The war in the Ukraine will definitely change European politics, yet it is unclear yet how it will exactly affect the content and opportunities of euroscepticism.

This volume aims to reflect upon the recent developments in Europe and tries to understand how the war in the Ukraine changed euroscepticism. While the international and European perception of the Polish PiS government changed due to the Polish government's engagement towards the Ukrainian independence and the Polish people's strong solidarity, Renata Gravina points out in her paper, that the language of the PiS remained the same, as it still assumes a 'conspire' against the Polish state and nation. This ideology of victimism and external threat from the European Union can be detected in the education policy of the Polish PiS government. As the chapter of Daria Hejwosz-Gromkowska demonstrates, the ruling party has more and more direct influence on the content of education. This cultural hegemonic struggle is a typical feature of populist regimes. Tirso Virgos and Sergio Marin compared the Polish PiS and Hungarian Fidesz party in terms of their relations with European institutions. In their chapter, the authors outline three distinct scenarios of the Russian-Ukrainian war's impact on Europe and right wing populism in the European Union.

Chapter 1

Euroscepticism and the War in Ukraine through the Perspective of Polish PiS's Populist Language

Renata Gravina:

Introduction

We should have listened to the voices within our Union, in Poland, in the Baltic countries and throughout Central and Eastern Europe. They had been telling us for years that Putin would not stop¹. In her recent State of the Union address, the President of the European Commission summarized the point on which, since last February 24, Europe was sympathetic; to give an impression of solid and firm reaction to the territorial attack perpetrated by the Russian military force on Ukraine. Yet, even on this point, the common European reaction quickly gave way to individual political considerations.

¹ U. von der Leyen (2022), 'State of the Union Address', 14 September, European Commission, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/ov/speech_22_5493/

Although in general unanimous in their condemnation of the Russian special operation² in Ukraine the reasons for the different European countries' reaction to the Russian military attack is due to historical, geographical, political, economic grounds. As pointed out in a Krastev and Leonard's study, there is a dualism between peace and justice advocates. Countries are divided amidst those who believe that any attempt should be made to end the war as soon as possible, even if it involves the territorial cession of a part of Ukraine. Opposed to these, are proponents of punishing Russia who intend, conversely, to restore Ukrainian territory. PiS's Poland is among the lawmen's³; it would like, at the same time, to increase military aid, condemn and permanently crush the Russian presence in the international context, forming an international anti-Russian military katechon (restrainer) under the umbrella of NATO.

Poland borders Ukraine, and for Polish the war has been (and it's still) a much more immediate experience, not least with more than three million Ukrainians taking refuge in the country⁴.

As pointed out in a Krastev and Leonard's study, there is a dualism between peace and justice advocates.

² For the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation (2022) Spetsialnaya voyennaya operatsiya, <https://z.mil.ru/>

³ I. Krastev, and M. Leonard (2022), 'Peace Versus Justice: the Coming European Split Over the War in Ukraine', European Council on Foreign Relations, June. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep42175>

⁴ M. Smith (2022), 'The war in Ukraine: the View From Poland', YouGov, 8 August, <https://yougov.co.uk/topics/international/articles-reports/2022/08/08/war-ukraine-view-poland>

The needs of a boundary protection and the cope within the arrival of a large wave of refugees from Ukraine generated a short-term and then structured response to the humanitarian need of Ukrainian asylum-seekers. Nonetheless, for the governing majority party Prawo i Sprawiedliwość the consequences of the conflict have also fueled Polish national unity in spite of Russia and the States of the original core of the Union (particularly Germany). In short, the Russian-Ukrainian conflict has rekindled the iconic hopes of the Jagiellonian regional power; a hope in Poland as the pivotal center of a reconstruction of the lung of the other Europe, as opposed to the hard core represented by Western Europe⁵. PiS party declare to be concerned about representing a means of sovereign defense and a privileged relationship with people⁶. However, through the occasion of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict it has also revitalized Polish old regional interest as leader of the area. An hegemonic Polish claim is exploited by the nationalist and conservative PiS'propaganda for which (as it was envisaged in the Polish foreign affairs portal a number of years ago): 'Poland's shaping of EU Eastern policy is to some extent a transplantation of the Jagiellonian idea into the 21st century. The implementation of this idea must be supported by a series of activities. Currently, thanks to the Partnership project, the Community is looking at that part of Europe with our eyes. If Poland succeeds in definitively creating the eastern dimension of the EU, perhaps in the near future we will regain the position that Jagiellonian Poland⁷ had on the international stage⁸.

⁵ A. Podlaska (2022), 'Jarosław Kaczyński, as Fr. Popieluszko. And the Opposition, Led by Tusk, Acts on Foreign Orders', 8 August, <https://www.newsweek.pl/polska/polityka/lider-pis-jaroslaw-kaczynski-udzielil-wywiadu-tygodnikowi-sieci/92nzxlw>

⁶A. Yatsyk (2020), 'Biopolitical Populism in Poland: The Case of PiS', *Populism*, 3 (2), 148-164. <https://doi.org/10.1163/25888072-BJA10015>

⁷W. Konarski (2019), 'Jagiellonian idea – why Kiev is Mistrustful, and Moscow is Against?', 2 February, Vistula University, Warsaw.

⁸J. Wojas, (2009), 'The Jagellonian Idea in the 21st Century', 6 June, psz, <https://psz.pl/122-opinie/idea-jagiellonska-w-xxi-wiek>

The prosecution of a Russo-Ukrainian War and a consequently weak Ukraine provided Poland with a unique opportunity in favor of a Central European expansionism, hopefully Polish-driven, under the false guise of safeguarding countries aspiring to join the European community. The necessity of the war has apparently strengthened the European community and international defense around protecting, welcoming, and defending Ukrainian refugees and identifying a common enemy. Nevertheless, previous threats posed by Polish government to the system of European law as well as attacks on the authority of European institutions in the name of safeguarding the independence of Polish national identity have not disappeared⁹. Indeed, it can be argued that in the name of Poland's demonstration of authority and effectiveness, PiS's national, strategic and anti-systemic attacks can only increase¹⁰.

Polish Reaction in the Aftermath of February 24, 2022

Since 11 June 2017, a Visa-free regime was established between EU and Ukraine, including Poland. From June 2017, a considerable and facilitated flow of Ukrainians working in Poland. Polish citizens had the opportunity to accept an enlarged Ukrainian presence in their country, and establish a permanent friendly relationships with them¹¹.

⁹ The dispute over the rule of law is far from over, despite the release of Next Generation EU funds in return for the Polish government's commitment to review the disputed reform of the judiciary.

¹⁰President of the Republic Duda, while reaffirming the Atlantic Alliance, responded sharply to questions about the danger to the preservation of civil rights in Poland by emphasising the legitimacy of Polish government action. A. Duda (2022), 'Poland President Andrzej Duda on Russia's War in Ukraine', PBS News Hour, 21 September, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7vrxC5Addi8>

¹¹As evidence of the large economic contribution of Ukrainian workers to Polish growth, the Central Bank of Poland estimated that around half a point of GDP in 2020 was due to the Ukrainian contribution. See P. Strzelecki, J. Growiec and R. Wszyński (2020), 'The contribution of immigration from Ukraine to economic growth in Poland' NBP Working Paper, 322. [ihttps://www.nbp.pl/publikacje/materialy_i_studia/322_en.pdf](https://www.nbp.pl/publikacje/materialy_i_studia/322_en.pdf)

Unfortunately, the Russo-Ukrainian war has made the facilitated flow situation explosive by leading to a continuous and unpredictable stream of people intending to stay temporarily or permanently in Poland.

Poland's fear faced with the war has been related to borders and security. On one side, there has been a concrete awe of an extension of the conflict within Polish borders. On the other hand, there has been a migratory emergency due to the humanitarian exodus of Ukrainian civilians, not unlike the level experienced at the time of World War II. Polish civil society reacted with strong and organized empathy in all civilian environments to assimilate the rapid and continuing wave of people (especially women and minors) from the borders. A good part of the solidarity initiatives toward Ukrainian refugees can be attributed directly to Polish citizens, either by action of individuals, or at the level of nongovernmental organizations. Nonetheless, Polish authorities led by the majority PiS party have been, then, able to structure and coordinate welcoming efforts. War dynamics has helped reverse the previous image of Poland affecting the southern States of the European Union as indifferent to the migration emergency. Indeed, in the uncertainty dictated by the insecurity on the boundaries, the ability of Polish rapid response in the face of the Russian-Ukrainian war boosted Poland's international standing on security issues. The huge flux of refugees coming from the neighboring country has made Warsaw the leading host in the face of the humanitarian crisis¹², and thus changed the international perception of the Polish. In shaping the EU response to the crisis in Ukraine, Poland shifted from a problematic element to an

¹² The Act on Aid for Ukrainian Citizens specifies in detail the principles of legalising the residence of Ukrainian citizens who entered the territory of the Republic of Poland directly from the territory of Ukraine in connection with the acts of war taking place in that country. E. Ociepa-Kicińska, and M. Gorzaczyńska-Koczkodaj (2022), 'Forms of Aid Provided to Refugees of the 2022 Russia–Ukraine War: The Case of Poland', Res. Public, 19 (12), 7085. <https://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/19/12/7085>

influential voice¹³. The Polish's intervention in favor of Ukraine was immediately used by the PiS party as if this was a corollary of Poland's right-wing Law and Justice slogan 'Own stream' not the 'mainstream. Polish pride before the international community revitalized PiS claims' of dealing with its regional interests that are now at the center of the geopolitical shift in European and international (NATO) security and strategic alliances¹⁴. In this sense, the strategic position of Poland is somehow used by PiS's supporters to raise the bar of their own demands both internally (the non-interference of the Union in sovereign affairs) and internationally (the recognition of Poland as a leader in the area).

PiS' Poland as the Pride of the Other Europe

The Polish humanitarian effort in resolving the Ukrainian exodus was accompanied, above all, by a strong will to retaliate in tandem with Ukraine against Russia. The Ukrainian-Polish anti-Russian alliance has the common historical significance of a response to the Russian and later Soviet imperial presence in Polish and Ukrainian territories¹⁵. But, it also has (this with respect to Poland) the taste of a resumption of economic and cultural centrality as a substitute of the Russian Federation vis-à-vis the European economy. Poland's right-wing (PiS) party took office in autumn 2015 with a

¹³The Polish government has put in place a full-fledged program under the hashtag #pomagamukrainie <https://pomagamukrainie.gov.pl/>. T. Drinóczy, and A. Bień-Kacała, (2021) *Illiberal Constitutionalism in Poland and Hungary: The Deterioration of Democracy, Misuse of Human Rights and Abuse of the Rule of Law* (London: Routledge).

¹⁴J. Kaczyński (2022), 'Kaczynski in Karpacz Sharply About the Germans. He Also Explains Why he Supported EU entry, Despite Cultural Issues', *Business Insider Polska*, 7 September, <https://businessinsider.com.pl/wiadomosci/kaczynski-w-karpaczu-ostro-o-niemcach-tlumaczy-tez-dlaczego-poparl-wejscie-do-ue/00yqqw9>

¹⁵See T. Stryjek and J. Konieczna-Sałamatın, (eds) (2021), *The Politics of Memory in Poland and Ukraine: From Reconciliation to De-Conciliation* (London: Routledge); A. Portnov (2020), 'Poland and Ukraine: Entangled Histories, Asymmetric Memories', *Essays of the Forum Transregionale Studien*, 7. <https://doi.org/10.25360/01-2020-0001>

commitment to reorientate the country's foreign policy and adopt, as it saw it, a more robust and assertive approach to advancing the country's national interests within the EU. According to the PiS's neo-populist interpretation, Poland embodies a different Europe (the other Europe) of values linked to a conservative and traditional catholic idea. Likewise, PiS reaffirms Poland's membership in a domestic economic system, partly alternative to the European Union one¹⁶. In the post 24 February Polish era a PiS's strategic reshaping was particularly evident for example at the Carpathian forum held between last 6 and 8 September. In it, the PiS's party chairman was clear in stating Polish autarky of values: 'we preceded our accession to the EU with a parliamentary resolution on cultural sovereignty, forgotten by a very strong part of the political class. We support it and treat any interference in this sphere as a violation of the law'¹⁷.

With regard to the political-economic aspect of the other Europe, as Polish President Andrzej Duda listed a year ago¹⁸ the three important levels of Central European cooperation, not only of regional significance, but also significant in the European, Atlantic and global dimensions are: the Visegrad Group (V4) which, since 1991, has included Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary. The Visegrad Group is conceived as one of the most important activating factors of regional cooperation in Central Europe and agreement on European issues. To the first, Duda added The Bucharest Group of Nine (B9) which, since 2015, includes Poland, Romania, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Hungary, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Bulgaria, and is

¹⁶The Russian-Ukrainian war revived the other Europe in three ways: firstly, it highlighted the weakness conferred by a lack of union and thus political cohesion in the European Union; secondly, it shifted the energy economy toward alternative sources to the Russian monopoly; thirdly, it revived an alternative value and competitive system in Central Europe.

¹⁷J. Kaczyński (2022), *Business Insider Polska*, cit.

¹⁸A. Duda, (2021), 'Central Europe as a Community of Shared Aspirations', *Wszystko Co Najważniejsze*, 26, 29 January, <https://wszystkoconajwazniejsze.pl/andrzej-duda-stredni-evropa-jako-spolocenstvi-aspirace/>

largely a response to Russia's aggressive policy. Lastly, Duda cited the Three Seas Group, launched in 2015 by Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Lithuania, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. The Three Seas Group's goal is a joint investment in infrastructure.

The Polish era of the Russian-Ukrainian war amounts to three watchwords: security, economic autonomy and a parallel political perspective in the shadow of Europe and under the umbrella of NATO. The whole national and regional propaganda structure that PiS' s Poland is building highlights how the only real change that is looming in the post 24 February Polish era is towards greater regionalisation and political, geostrategic and economic action, alternative to the European Union.

The Russo-Ukrainian war and the anti-Russian axis are, indeed, shifting the strategic axis of Central Europe in favor of Poland. Not surprisingly, in another speech held in September 2022 President Duda ruled that: 'the memory of Russian action in the Central and Eastern European region is fresh and 'Russia still wants to hold power over all of Central and Eastern Europe'. 'A free Poland, a free Ukraine and all the other independent States will never accept this', because for them it is a 'matter of life and death'. It is a question of 'preserving identity and survival', 'of future, security and prosperity'.¹⁹

Ukrainian-Polish Legacy: From Competition to Anti-Russian Alliance

The privileged relationship between Poland and Ukraine, is of course not only attributable to the proximity of the borders, but represents the evolution of a conflictual history that has alternated between competition

¹⁹A. Duda, (2022), 'Russian Imperialism at War with Central and Eastern Europe', *Wszystko Co Najważniejsze*, 16 September, <https://wszystkocojaznajwazniejsze.pl/andrzejj-duda-russian-imperialism-at-war-with-central-and-eastern-europe/>

and alliance in an anti-Russian function. In order to understand the geographical-political, cultural and economic reasons for the current Polish sensitivity to the Ukrainian drama, it seems useful to retrace some brief hints of the historical legacy between Ukrainian and Polish peoples²⁰. In the modern age most of the territory of present-day Ukraine was divided according to boundaries that changed over time between: the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, which merged into the Polish-Lithuanian Confederation, Muscovy, and the Crimean Khanate, a vassal of Ottoman Empire²¹. In the contemporary age, the Polish and Ukrainian national projects represented two competing political legitimacies²²: one based on historical borders and civilization²³, and the other based on the ethnographic composition of the population²⁴. In particular through the 19th century, Polish political discourse tended to perceive any Ruthenian/Ukrainian identity that would not integrate into the Polish nation as Russian or Habsburg intrigue²⁵. Even almost throughout the twentieth century era of nationalism, it appeared that Poles and Ukrainians could

²⁰Indeed, it must be taken into account both the heritage of the Polish Lithuanian Kingdom and the history of the entire evolution of Central and Eastern Europe between modern and contemporary times.

²¹A. Gieysztor (1996), 'The West and the East in the Jagellonian Commonwealth', *European Review*, 4, (1), 25-33.

²²A. Portnov (2020), 'Poland and Ukraine', cit.

²³The Polish national project was considered to be "noble" (*szlachecki*). The Polish project referred to the territorial boundaries and political achievements of the early-modern Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (often equated with Poland). See A. Zamojski (2009), *Poland: a History* (New York: Herper Press).

²⁴Ukrainian was considered to be "peasant" (*muzhyts'ky*). The Ukrainian project celebrated the Cossack tradition as an embodiment of personal freedom and anti-Polish resistance. G. Grabowicz (1981), 'Three Perspectives on the Cossack Past: Gogol', Ševčenko, Kuliš', *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, 5 (2), 171–194.

²⁵Ukrainian history from Mykhailo Hrushevsky on also severely criticized Polish claims to *Rzeczpospolita*'s historical borders and Polish paternalistic attitudes to the Ukrainians.

never be equal partners and brothers²⁶. A new course in the history of Polish-Ukrainian relations was inaugurated with the publication (since the 1950s) of Jerzy Giedroyc's journal *Kultura*. *Kultura* began a slow reinterpretation of Polish-Ukrainian borders since completely reversed the Polish and Ukrainian two-dimensional historical conflict²⁷. Giedroyc's idea was to coordinate Poles and Ukrainians respective freedom fights and achieve good neighborly relations. The real political triumph of *Kultura* exploded only in the 1990s²⁸, when the division between Ukrainians and Poles in the formulation of different national identities reached a form of balance because of the USSR's collapse and the explosive success of self-determination in an anti-Russian sense. From the turning point of the 1990s both nationalist-populist and liberal Polish took *Kultura*'s 'revisionist' historiographical canon. The image of post-socialist Poland as Ukraine's advocate in the EU were intellectually projected from the past, turning the story of the early-modern Rzeczpospolita into a common Polish-Belarusian – Lithuanian -Ukrainian experience of success in democracy and tolerance. The new conciliatory era was repeatedly confirmed on all official occasions and by numerous proofs of

Giedroyc's idea was to coordinate Poles and Ukrainians respective freedom fights and achieve good neighborly relations.

²⁶In particular the violent clashes and ethnic cleansings during the Second World War and the first postwar years were seen as the ultimate proof of such an attitude.

²⁷Published from 1947 to 2000 by Instytut Literacki (the Literary Institute), initially in Rome and then in Paris. *Kultura*,

<https://web.archive.org/web/20101218092249/http://kulturaparyska.onet.pl/>

²⁸Initially and for a long time, this thesis was ignored by politicians.

rapprochement²⁹. Poland played a leading role in the collapse of the Soviet empire, not least because it was the first – in December 1991 – to recognize the independence of Ukraine. On the other hand, the Polish-Ukrainian dialogue is regarded as one of the post-Soviet achievements for both foreign policies. Even though Polish-Ukrainian capitals have achieved what the border regions find hard to accept, Poles and Ukrainians shared the desire for reconciliation over mutual war crimes³⁰. The reconciliation and the will to get rid of the Soviet legacy and the totalitarian system represent a recent but common Polish and Ukrainian people legacy³¹. However, in reality the Polish-Ukrainian relationship is distorted by the different perspectives of Ukrainian and Polish nationalism. In the case of PiS, the continuous renewal of the anti-Russian alliance is mainly functional to its own domestic and international power relations and used as a tool to feed a certain narrative that began after the party's emergence in 2015³².

Polish Populism and (New) Nowomowa in the Face of EU

An emeritus scholar of the populist formula, Ernesto Laclau, names populist logic ‘the articulatory practice between democratic demands around the nodal point of the people, the construction that serves as a point of reference, that keeps all the social demands together’³³. Applied to the present-day Poland, Polishness is conceived as a construction that links in a chain of equivalence traditionalist demands and the antagonistic division of

²⁹ T. Snyder (2003), *The Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569-1999* (New Haven: Yale University Press).

³⁰ O. Tadeusz (2003), *Trud Niepodległości. Ukraina na przelomie tysiącleci* (Kraków: Instytut Studiów Strategicznych).

³¹ T. Zhurzhenko (2007), ‘The Geopolitics of Memory’, 10 May, <https://www.eurozine.com/the-geopolitics-of-memory/>.

³² R. Legutko, (2016), *The Demon in Democracy. Totalitarian Temptations in Free Societies*. (New York and London: Encounter Books).

³³ E. Laclau, (2005a), *On Populist Reason* (London, New York: Verso).

³⁴ E. Laclau and C. Mouffe, (1985), *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso).

the social into a neo-traditionalist and a liberal camp³⁴. According to some sociologists, political scientists and former members of the Polish political class, in Poland it has been formed as a strange hybrid of a conservative politics using the coercive techniques of socialism and a trans-liberal economy that has encapsulated the worst of globalization. Political and economical liberalism in the post-Soviet era has involuted into an individualist conservatism that made a distorted and chaotic use of a number of elements belonging to the socialist guard³⁵. A form of resistance to neoliberalism was poorly constructed around both certain keywords of real socialism and the deliberate structuring of social malaise that coincided with Poland's 2004 entry into the European Union and the subsequent crises experienced by the Union as a political project³⁶. Polish populists, according to Geremek, have added the exclusionary feelings of a part of society that feels cut off from the benefits of economic transformation³⁷. This revolt was inherited by PiS, which conveyed the state of malaise of Polish society by radicalizing it, inducing Poland to a sleeve vision and pushing it towards an anti-system attitude.

The current configuration of Polish populism, emblemized by the rhetoric of PiS, is a hybrid of socialist legacy-rejection and liberal assumption-refuse³⁸. For the semiologist Głowiński the Kaczyński twins manipulated political communication viewing the state as the owner of the truth and forged a kind of new national-populist neo-language (*nowomowa*)³⁹.

³⁵T. Kleine-Brockhoff, (2020), 'Misinterpreting 1989: Populism and Liberal Overreach', *Horizons: Journal of International Relations and Sustainable Development*, 15, 166–75; R. Legutko, (2016), *The Demon in Democracy. Totalitarian Temptations in Free Societies*. (New York and London: Encounter Books).

³⁶D. Harvey (2005), *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University), p. 85.

³⁷See Wystąpienia, Fundacja Geremka, <https://geremek.pl/profesor/dzialalnosc/ksiazki/>

³⁸B. Stanley (2016), 'Confrontation by default and confrontation by design: strategic and institutional responses to Poland's populist coalition government', *Democratization*, 23 (2), 263–282.

³⁹M. Głowiński (2006), 'Dramat Języka' (The Language Drama), *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 24 November, 2006.

Głowinski worked for years on the linguistic monopoly of communist propaganda (*nowomowa*) in Poland. Communist original neo-language misrepresented reality, opposing the general common meanings. The character of the communist *nowomowa* was forged by the imposition of a clear sign of value implying strong and thus polarizing evaluations by a synthesis of pragmatic and ritual elements⁴⁰. According to Głowinski, PiS language, which defines itself as totally at odds with communism and its rhetoric of lies, appears, nonetheless, as a stunning repetition of the communist *nowomowa*⁴¹. Indeed, the PiS party's national-populist neolanguage⁴² seems to resurrect precisely the semantic mechanisms of real socialism, as it uses the same socialist rhetorical strategies, meaning and tools able of monopolizing public communication. PiS's neolanguage consists of three main elements: 1) a consistently dichotomous worldview that arrogates to itself the monopoly of the good of the homeland (the leaders self-describe themselves as personification of the good) threatened by any kind of possible corruption and the EU attempts on sovereign Poland; 2) thus, the idea of a permanent plethora of enemies stigmatized negatively and permanently by propaganda; 3) consequently, a conspiratorial view of the world as an unceasing struggle against those who conspire uninterruptedly against the nation, the state and the church. PiS's main enemies are institutions as a system opposed to Poland's own national identity. The Manichaeic dichotomy distinguishes, for example, between (1) the pursuit of Polish national and sovereign welfare (Polish regional strategy) and the dispersal of power led by the European Union. The identification of the enemy (2) is structured both domestically and internationally and covers all those (non-conservative exponents) who, at various levels (local,

⁴⁰ i.e. by the use of imposed and reiterated poetic devices at various levels.

⁴¹ Inspired by George Orwell's studies about totalitarianism, *nowomowa* aimed at imposing a specific value system on its citizens.

⁴² F. Melito (2021), 'Finding the Roots of Neo-Traditionalist Populism in Poland : "Cultural Displacement" and European Integration', *New Perspectives*, 29 (1), 23–44. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/2336825X20954756>

regional, European, international) do not adhere to the national PiS's way. With regard to the conspiracy element (3), all those (the Eastern States of the Union, and in particular, Germany) who disturb (przeszkadzać)⁴³ the glorious development of national Polish politics, are considered as enemies of the people. The peculiar path (szczególny sposób) claimed by Poland⁴⁴ in relation to the European Union and within the history of Central and Eastern Europe justifies both Polish domestic and international policy. (New) nowomowa, as an alternative narrative constructed by PiS as a defensive architecture against secular EU attacks does not seem to have diminished during the Russian-Ukrainian war; on the contrary, the version of a self-determined and strategically pivotal Poland has only exponentially increased the claims of PiS propaganda. With PiS, since 2015, it began the 'conservative revolution', centered on the defense of the Christian family, the nation and of resentment at continued liberal hegemony⁴⁵ to the cry of good social change⁴⁶ and Polish economic order⁴⁷. Law and Justice capitalized on the narrative of "Poland in ruins" (in contrast to Civic Platform's electoral slogans of "green island" and "Poland under construction"), focusing on subjective negative perceptions of public life and the unfulfilled expectations of some groups. At the same time the narrative omitted facts about improving the socioeconomic indicators and proposed alternative explanations of reality in a post-truth fashion. Law and Justice promised to rolled back in example the retirement age reform,

⁴³ Disturbance is particularly evident in the topics of the rule of law and the so-called perfecting of media freedom.

⁴⁴ S. Wróbel (2011), 'Mourning Populism. The Case of Poland'. *Polish Sociological Review*, 176, 437–56.

⁴⁵ S. Shields (2012), 'Opposing Neoliberalism? Poland's renewed populism and post-communist transition', *Third World Quarterly*, 33 (2), 267.

⁴⁶ Stanley, B. (2016), 'Confrontation by Default and Confrontation by Design: Strategic and Institutional Responses to Poland's Populist Coalition Government', *Democratization*, 23 (2), 263–282.

⁴⁷ O. Bault (2022), "'Polish Order" economic programme brings disorder and could cost PiS', *Visegrad Post*, 15 January, <https://visegradpost.com/en/2022/01/15/polish-order-economic-programme-brings-disorder-and-could-cost-pis-dearly/>

expanded family benefits under the Programme Family 500+, and to built apartments on state-owned land violating European budget rules. The same happened with Next Generation Eu Polish plan⁴⁸. The social and economic effectiveness of PiS's monopolized Poland appears blurred, however the single-minded rhetoric and populist sleeves and the continuous accentuation on the boundaries of Polish national, constitutional and legal sovereignty appear increasingly legitimized by the expansion of Poland's strategy in the post-24 February Europe⁴⁹.

Conclusion

Polish PiS's politics in the post-24 February period did not change its anti-establishment and anti-European sentiment. Poland's customs and economic projects and relations with Europe are now interpreted in a position of strength, especially in the light of Poland's reliable policy towards the Ukrainian humanitarian emergency and the Russian attack on Ukrainian territories in general. What appears worrying is that the war has emboldened Polish populist dichotomous politics to such an extent that it feels legitimized to continue exacerbating populist propaganda both in terms of internal sovereignty and as an international leader, a primus inter pares in the Central European area. PiS's Poland assumed such a prominent political and strategic position in regional policy towards Ukraine with particular vehemence, even revitalizing the Jagiellonian regional idea as a Polish cultural, economic, political, customs project at the center of an alternative idea of Europe to that of the West.

Such a political and propagandistic set-up in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war, which shows no sign of ending, is bound to cause social

⁴⁸ M. Hodun (2022), 'National Recovery Plan: Game of Cat and Mouse', 4liberty.eu, 8 July, <https://4liberty.eu/national-recovery-plan-game-of-cat-and-mouse/>.

⁴⁹ President Duda recently pushed back against EU eu demands. A. Duda (2022), 'Duda Pushes Back Against Eu Demands', Market News, 7 November, <https://marketnews.com/duda-pushes-back-against-eu-demands>

discontent to explode and possibly increase social radicalisation with the new wave of global economic crisis that awaits all countries inside and outside the eurozone. In this sense, the Russian-Ukrainian war has perhaps further deepened the rift with the Union, which has never before appeared ultimately disunited and contradictory.

PiS's insidious language represents a dangerous counter-norm that erodes the certainties of the minimal liberal system and undermines the universality of democracy. Adam Michnik, one of the leading exponents of the secular left of Polish dissent⁵⁰ said the Polish government is in the hands of irresponsible, unpredictable and incompetent people whose policy, although is not directly pro-Russian, it is undoubtedly anti-European⁵¹. Polish populism is now defined as an ideology at the service of the pursuit and conquest of power for its own sake. Indeed, the chameleon-like PiS party's attitude: modulate itself according to domestic and international economic strategies; discredits Polish institutions and EU structures, and lives below and outside the limits of the rule of law⁵². The effectiveness of the government's populist propaganda is, however, mainly linked to its own self-referentiality, but the war itself is reactivating the liberal chord against illiberal governments, as the Russian dissent also demonstrates.⁵³

⁵⁰ And a crucial figure during the European 1968' revolution.

⁵¹ A. Michnik (2022), Putin's Successor Will be Forced to End the War, *Novaja Gazeta Evropa*, 18 October, <https://novyagazeta.eu/articles/2022/10/18/preemnik-putina-budet-vynuzhden-prekratit-voinu>

⁵² According to the Polish media, the rulings of the European Court of Justice requiring the Polish authorities to withdraw judicial 'reforms' that could undermine its independence will not be implemented. See '25 Lat Obowiazywania Konstytucji RP' (2022), *Państwo i Prawo*, 10, <https://www.wolterskluwer.com/pl-pl/news/panstwo-i-prawo-10-2022>

⁵³ Just near Warsaw, a Russian constituent congress was held for a liberal Russia that could lead the community into the post-Putin era. See 'Gontsy russkoy revolyutsii' (2022), *Novaya Gazeta Evropa*, 10 November <https://novyagazeta.eu/articles/2022/11/10/gontsy-russkoi-revoliutsii>

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