



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-wieku>

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 przetomie 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 Kaczynski 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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Chapter 2

Beyond the European Union?

From Euroenthusiasm to Euroscepticism of educational policy in Poland – selected issues

Daria Hejwosz-Gromkowska:

Since the Law and Justice (PiS) took power in 2015, a shift toward populism and Euroscepticism has been made. The growing evidence suggests that democracy and rules of law may be threatened, as well as some of the governing party politicians questioning our place in the European Union. A dramatic change also has been made in the education system and educational policy. Unreasonable and non-evidence-based reform of the educational system, followed by the changes in national curricula, sent a message from the ruling party's politicians that the changes would introduce a nationalistic, subordinated, and closed-minded model of the citizen. Students and children – are regarded through the lens of conservatism and

ultra-conservatism – as sinful creatures who are needed to be fixed through the educational system. Moreover, they are regarded as an illusory picture of a nation as a hope of renewal. The ruling class will achieve this by treating education and the educational system as instrumental change tools.

While in most educational systems, policymakers and practitioners incorporate global and sustainable education issues in the national curricula to educate caring, ethical, and responsible world citizens, Poland tends to over-strengthen its national identity and preserve the Pole-Catholic myth⁵⁴. There is growing evidence that national curricula and textbooks are influenced by the dominant ideology of the ruling party⁵⁵ (Kopińska, 2022). In such circumstances, Euroscepticism may flourish.

The aim of the paper is to reconstruct the educational policy towards the European Union under the Law and Justice governing. In order to achieve this aim, I made an analysis of the reformed curriculum and compared it with the old one, introduced by the former government under the Civic Platform.

The aim of the paper is to reconstruct the educational policy towards the European Union under the Law and Justice governing

⁵⁴ Historically, the stereotype of the Pole-Catholic refers to the nostalgic interpretation of Polish national identity in the 19. century, when – in the absence of clearly defined territorial boundaries – it constituted symbolic and moral grounds for the idea of homeland and political sovereignty

⁵⁵ V. Kopińska (2022), 'Towards an exclusive community? Political shift and changes to the school core curricula in Poland: a discourse analysis', *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 54(4), 520-535, DOI: 10.1080/00220272.2021.1995051

The roots of Euroenthusiasm and Euroscepticism

The concepts of Europe and Europeanism are beyond the physical boundaries, spotted only on a map. Europeanism exceeds the political and social mindset; it also provides a way of thinking about Europe, the Europeans, their identity, culture, and homogeneity, which is paradoxically constituted based on heterogeneity (“unity in diversity”). Some people may perceive Europe as an exclusive club that has fulfilled the promises of freedom, unity, democracy, tolerance, well-being, and safety. Still, for others – Europe has become the denial of these values⁵⁶. The latter orientation was very vivid in British society, and it is reflected not only in the words of politicians but also in the mood of the nation, which has been expressed in Brexit.

In turn, Euro enthusiasm among Poles has been rising, and they enjoy the privilege of being part of the EU. The polls from the last decade indicate that the Polish people are proud to be Europeans in terms of citizenship and identity. Just after 1989, 80,5% of the respondents favored joining EEC⁵⁷. The willingness to join the EU was high and expressed in the referendum of 2003 when 77% of the citizens voted in favor. This trend continued within the next years – in 2009, the percentage of supporters of the EU increased by 21 points, while the rate of EU opponents decreased by 20 points⁵⁸. The support for the EU remains high, and it seems to be the highest in all EU. For instance, 70% of Polish respondents

⁵⁶ D. Hejwosz-Gromkowska (2016), ‘The ways of thinking about European education – between Euroenthusiasm and Euroscepticism – the experiences from the United Kingdom and Poland’, in B. Maszner-Przybylska, M. Musiał-Karg, T. Brańka (eds.), *Double reunification through the European Union’s Education Policy* (Poznań: Uniwersytet im. Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu), p. 91.

⁵⁷ B. Roguska (2004), ‘Opinie o polityce zagranicznej Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej’, http://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2004/K_075_04.PDF (accessed 14.10.2022)

⁵⁸ B. Roguska (2009), ‘Bilans pięciu lat członkostwa Polski w Unii Europejskiej’, http://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2009/K_064_09.PDF (accessed 14.10.2022)

argue that being a member of the EU is a good thing, and 87% see the benefits of being a member of the EU⁵⁹.

Moreover, Polish citizens feel part of the European community. Up to 70% of the Polish respondents admitted they felt EU citizens. These results may be explained in the following way; firstly, the Poles notice that they are the beneficiaries of the EU financial programs. They see that most of the investments in Poland are supported by EU funds. The educational and informational projects and campaigns also play a vital role in creating positive attitudes toward the EU. Thus, the European Union is present in the daily experience of almost every Pole. Secondly, the Polish nation had a huge inferiority complex and the EU citizenship gave them access to the European community and did away with the complexes – we are not only the Poles, but we are also the Europeans as well⁶⁰.

Very optimistic data come also from a recent study (2022) carried out by the Polish NGO Projekt: Polska. According to the study, 85% of young people support European Union⁶¹.

For the time being the polls suggest very optimistic attitudes toward the EU among Polish people compared with other countries. In this line, the ruling party – trying to avoid loss of the electorate – pretends to be in favor of the EU. The Law and Justice politicians assure – using slogans – that we are a big European nation, part of the West and we have to deal

⁵⁹Parlamerter 2018, Eurobarometr 90.1, Eurobarometr: 87% Polaków docenia korzyści z członkostwa w UE | Najnowsze informacje | Parlament Europejski Biuro w Polsce (europa.eu), (accessed 14.10.2022)

⁶⁰ Eurobarometr (2012), 'Europejczycy na dwa lata przed wyborami europejskim w 2014 r.', 774,

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/pdf/eurobarometre/2012/election_2012/eb77_4_ee2014_syn_these_analytique_pl.pdf, (accessed 12.01.2015).

⁶¹M. Hodun. K. Mączka, M. Milewicz (2022), 'Młoda Polska w Europie – czy na pewno?', Raport-badanie-postaw-młodych-wobec-UE PP FWG.pdf - Dysk Google, (accessed 14.10.2022).

with our own policy. However, there are open and hidden allusions among Law and Justice politicians, which suggest Euroscepticism. Hence, the question should we worry about crawling or real Euroscepticism? It must be noticed then, that Euroscepticism is a broad concept, simply put it is understood as opposed to EU integration. Paul Taggart and Aleks Szczerbiak distinguish two types of Euroscepticism: hard and soft. The first one is just a rejection of the whole idea of EU integration, while the second accepts the integration, cooperation, or enlargement but denies the current configuration and selected policies toward member states of the EU⁶².

Since Law and Justice took power in 2015 rule of law become in danger (e.g. refusal to publish the judgment of the Constitutional Tribunal of 9 March 2016, against the law personal changes in the Constitutional Tribunal, the new media act, and many others) and resulted in the possibility of cutting and suspension the EU funds. The removal of the EU flags from the press rooms was not only a symbolic action but also a warning one. One of the Law and Justice politicians (now one of the judges of the Constitutional Tribunal) called the EU flag and the UE itself – ‘a rag’. Her statement didn’t meet with any reactions from the representatives of the ruling party, which may indicate that they support this kind of statement.

Marcin Piechocki suggests that so far the basic direction of foreign affairs concerning membership in NATO and the EU hasn’t raised serious concerns among the leading political parties in Poland. Although some of the solutions were criticized, membership in the EU has never been questioned. International cooperation has shifted from an alliance with

⁶¹A. Szczerbiak, P. Taggart (2003), ‘Theorising Party-Based Euroscepticism: Problems of Definition, Measurement and Causality’, SEI Working Paper, No. 69, p. 4–22.

⁶²M. Piechocki (2016), ‘Aluzyjny eurosceptycyzm w debatach prezydenckich w 2015 roku’, *Rocznik Integracji Europejskiej*, No 10, p. 312.

Germany, our close neighbor to building a closer partnership with the US and the UK⁶³. Euroscepticism is also expressed in the explicit objection toward joining the Eurozone or transforming the EU into a federation. For instance president Andrzej Duda and Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki openly indicate the advantages of being a member of the EU, however, suggesting at the same time, that the EU is a prohibitor of national interests, e.g. climate change and energy policy, migration policy, Istanbul Convention, rule of law conditionally regulation, etc. In other words, soft Euroscepticism reveals not only at the communication level but also in the political actions and decisions.

The populism and Euroscepticism in western countries are the answer to the economy, migration, and energy crisis in Europe. Piechocki suggests that the roots of Polish Euroscepticism are anchored in the national identity understood in the terms of sovereignty. In other words “sovereignty Euroscepticism” is expressed by those who are not against being a member of the EU but they opposed against interference with the home policy⁶⁴.

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⁶³A. Szczerbiak, P. Taggart (2003), ‘Theorising Party-Based Euroscepticism: Problems of Definition, Measurement and Causality’, SEI Working Paper, No. 69, p. 4–22.

⁶⁴M. Piechocki (2016), ‘Aluzyjny eurosceptycyzm w debatach prezydenckich w 2015 roku’, *Rocznik Integracji Europejskiej*, No 10, p. 312.

The Law and Justice party speaks to those who are afraid of losing sovereignty, national identity, or Polishness expressed in tradition and religion. Probably, most of them declare to be in the EU but they are more prone to believe in scary stories plotted by the Eurosceptical language in order not to lose their safe, mythical harbor, lost too many times in the past – the fatherland. The ‘sovereignty in danger’ is a keyword of the Eurosceptic narratives and this danger is migration and climate change policy and also the Euro currency. However, the lack of a charismatic leader so far has not developed a strong movement or a party that could gain broad support.

The reformed school system – between a nationalistic approach and a progressive one

The recent reform of the Polish educational system was introduced to schools on the 1st of September 2017. The reform was criticized mostly for the too-fast proceeding of the legislative process without enough time for public consultations. In fact, the educational system in Poland has been the subject of many reforms since 1989, however, it was the second wide-ranging reform after 1999.

The incomprehensible and non-evidence-based change brought back the pre-1999 school structure. The lower secondary schools (gymnasium) were disbanded and the elementary school was extended from 6 to 8 years⁶⁵.

The majority gained in the 2015 elections allowed Law and Justice to introduce the reform without any political compromises. Despite the huge criticism from different social groups and institutions, including civic actions such as petitions, demonstrations, and even strikes, the Ministry had been assuring the citizens that the reform is necessary and it won't bring any side effects for students, teachers, and parents. Some of the

⁶⁵The reform of 1999 introduced two tiers system of secondary education: lower secondary schools (gymnasium) and upper secondary schools.



opponents accused the ruling party of introducing to the school system national-oriented narratives, which may result in the education of close-minded, nationalistic, and chauvinistic citizens. Although, the new Education Act as well as the new National Curriculum is more national-oriented, which stands in line with the conservative ideology, the close reading of these documents is not so alarming. However, some of the new statements may be an example of soft Euroscepticism. For instance, the previous Education Act included a statement about the dissemination of ecological and environmental knowledge among the youth. The policymakers removed the aforementioned statement from the reformed Act and replaced it with the notion of sustainable development. Ecological and environmental issues are part of the contested policy of Eurosceptical representatives in the EU. As I noticed earlier, according to the ruling party in Poland, climate change policy and energy policy are

“schools should be a venue where all students can develop themselves according to their interests and gifts and where they are preparing for civic engagement and social participation”

the inhibitors of the development of national interests and may threaten national sovereignty. Sustainable development is a broader and up-to-date category and of course, it includes environmental issues, but it hides the contested by the Law and Justice categories.

It must be noticed that new – important aspects for future generations – were added to the Act, for instance, schools should be a venue where all students can develop themselves according to their interests and gifts and where they are preparing for civic engagement and social participation. This statement suggests that school should be a place for strengthening democracy and civic society, which fortunately denies the anti-democratic attitudes of the ruling party. Moreover, the reformed Education Act doesn't include statements that strictly refer to the nationalistic vision of education.

A more conservative and nationalistic approach can be found in a new National Curriculum (2017). The main goal of education in elementary school is to introduce students to the world of values, such as sacrifice, cooperation, solidarity, altruism, patriotism, and respect for tradition, which stands in line with the conservative approach. In these circumstances, the school became the venue of cultural transmission of the ruling class, making the citizens follow their ideology.

However, if we take a look at the order of the main competencies enlisted in the national curriculum, we will find out that the statement referring to civic competencies is located in the last place.

The policymakers of the reformed educational system perceive school as an ideological state apparatus that will transmit particular values and prepare prospective citizens to be competitive and innovative in the job market and economy, which (paradoxically) stands in line with the neoliberal approach. It must be noticed that the axiological system and entrepreneurship come to the fore in the aforementioned key documents, while the civic competencies are in a further position. The vision of the school stands also in line with the meritocratic idea, in which the school system should offer equal chances based on individual talents⁶⁶.

The national-oriented approach (patriotism) can be easily found in the primary educational goals of the elementary school. The role of the school is to develop patriotic attitudes and respect for tradition as well as build a solid national identity. Polish identity comes to the fore in the National Curriculum, while European, local or regional identity is not mentioned in the primary goals of elementary education. The development of European identity or European citizenship is omitted in this part of the document. We need to remember that in today's world young people can express their national identity as well as European or global one at the same time⁶⁷.

Perhaps the lack of reference to the European dimension in part with the general purposes sustains the national vision of education. The nationalistic view can be found in the National Curriculum for history at the elementary level. The growing evidence suggests that school history

⁶⁶R. Dorczak (2019), *Wokół reformy edukacji z 2017 roku – Krytyczna Analiza Dyskursu*, (Kraków: Uniwersytet Jagielloński).

⁶⁷J.A. Banks (2008), 'Diversity and citizenship education in global times', in: J. Arthur, I. Davies, C. Hahn eds., *Education for Citizenship and Democracy*, (London: Sage).

textbooks play a fundamental role in political socialization, developing a sense of nationhood and building national identity⁶⁸. The emphasis on national history in school curricula and the number of hours is put under the conservative governments (e.g., strengthening national history in the English schools under Michael Gove reform).

The national-oriented approach in the reformed curriculum is nothing new. If we compare previous National Curricula for history education, then we can observe that national history and reference to the Polish nation have always come to the fore. However, the difference stems from the emphasis on the axiological dimension with the national values. For instance, the previous National Curriculum for history education at the elementary level doesn't include the reference to "preservation of national dignity and pride". Moreover, in the reformed curriculum, the values such as critical thinking, tolerance, identity, and culture are listed at the end. Such an order suggests the leading role of the nation, state, and its symbols in history education.

The national-oriented approach can also be found in the National Curriculum for geography education. Geography together with history is perceived by the policymakers as a leading subject for developing patriotic attitudes. Robert Doczak suggests that national ideology is expressed in many places in the National Curriculum as the "feeling of proud to be Polish"⁶⁹. The author also indicates that the development of identity and

⁶⁸ *Comparative and International Education*, 37(3), 291–306.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/03057920701330164>; J. Zajda (2009), 'Teachers and the Politics of History School Textbooks', in: L. J. Saha, A. G. Dworkin eds., *International Handbook of Research on Teachers and Teaching*, (New York: Springer), p. 373-387; D. Hejwosz-Gromkowska (2013), 'Citizenship education and history. Setting the scene', in: I. Chmura-Rutkowska, E. Głowacka-Sobiech, I. Skórzyńska eds., *Historia ludzi. Historia dla ludzi. Krytyczny wymiar edukacji historycznej*, (Kraków: Impuls), p. 25-47.

⁶⁹R. Dorczak (2019), *Wokół reformy edukacji z 2017 roku – Krytyczna Analiza Dyskursu*, (Kraków: Uniwersytet Jagielloński), p. 57.

community is possible – according to policymakers – only within the border of the nation and excludes the European community as well as the human community. Such an approach confirms a strictly national-oriented approach where schools as a state and ideological apparatus reproduce the interests of the dominant and political group. Despite the national-oriented model of education envisioned in the general aims of education, the statements that stand in line with the current demands toward education can also be found, such as the development of civic competencies, respect for others, and responsibility for environmental issues.

Robert Dorczak suggests that two discourses are mixed in the reformed National Curriculum. One discourse includes civic, democratic, and enterprising orientation, while the second is axiological, national, and state-oriented⁷⁰. The question remains open whether it is possible to reach divergent goals. Perhaps, the eclectic National Curriculum is a result of locating the second discourse in the existing one.

Is there room for Euroscepticism in the newly reformed school system in Poland?

As I indicated above the reformed Education Act and National Curriculum for general education include two divergent discourses. One presents the desired civic, democratic, open, and enterprising model of education, while the second one is national-oriented. There is nothing wrong with the idea of developing national identity and promoting patriotism. The most important thing is a balance between a national-oriented approach and cultural diversity. If this balance is not kept, the national-oriented approach can turn into chauvinistic and xenophobic nationalism, which not only excludes “the others” but also stigmatize them.

The National Curriculum for civic education (Wiedza o społeczeństwie) for elementary and secondary school assures that the prospective students

⁷⁰ Ibid.

will acquire knowledge about the democratic system and civic society. However, what came to the fore is the issue of the European Union. In the reformed school system, some of the content of the curriculum has been shifted from lower secondary education (third stage of education, gymnasium) to secondary education. Prior to the reform, there was more content about the EU in the National Curriculum at the third stage of education. Today, students from elementary school have civic education in the last grade and the content about the EU has been reduced. If they go to secondary schools they can choose between two levels: general and extended. Those who will not attend secondary schools will have less knowledge about the EU, according to the reformed curriculum.

It is worth noticing, however, that some aims have barely been changed from the old curriculum. In the previous version of the curriculum for civic education, there was a statement that a student 'justify that one can be the Pole, European, and a member of the worldwide community at the same time'⁷¹, while in the new one there is referring to the reconciliation of the identity, i.e. 'student will be able to justify that different identity (regional, national/ethnic, state/civic, European) can be reconciled'⁷². Fortunately, the policymakers perceive that contemporary identities can be supplementary to each other and one identity doesn't exclude the other. This statement stands in line with the open, civic, and democratic discourse of reformed legal acts.

More warning data can be found in the comparison of the content concerning the issues of the EU. Firstly, the reformed national curriculum

⁷¹Podstawa programowa z komentarzami Tom 4 (2015), Edukacja historyczna i obywatelska w szkole podstawowej, gimnazjum i liceum historia i społeczeństwo, historia, wiedza o społeczeństwie, podstawy przedsiębiorczości, ekonomia w praktyce, wychowanie do życia w rodzinie, etyka, filozofia, 2015, ORE, MEN_TOM_4.indd (ore.edu.pl) [accessed 17.05.2015], p. 87.

⁷²Podstawa programowa kształcenia ogólnego – Wiedza o Społeczeństwie (2022), podstawa-programowa-kształcenia-ogolnego-z-komentarzem.-szkola-podstawowa-wos.pdf (ore.edu.pl) [14.10.2022], p. 20.

for civic education lacks two major points referring to the European Union, which can be found in the table below. Secondly, the content about the EU is included in the point of 'International Affairs' and the issues of the EU are visibly reduced at the elementary level. The broad version of the point "European Integration" can only be found at the extended level of civic education in upper secondary school. The differences between the old and new national curriculum for civic education referring to the issues of the European Union can be found in the table below:

Old National Curriculum for Civic Education 2015	New National Curriculum for Civic Education 2017
<p>19. Relations of Poland with other states. A student:</p> <p>1) presents the most important directions of polish international policy (the relationships with the EU member states and the United States)</p>	Lack of this statement
<p>20. European Integration. A student</p> <p>1) presents goals and stages of the European integration (Rome Treaties, Maastricht, Nicaea, Lisbon Treaties)</p> <p>2) explains the main tasks of the most important European Union institutions (European Council, Council of the European Union, European Parliament, European Commission)</p> <p>3) explains how the principles of solidarity and subsidiarity are implemented in the European Union</p> <p>4) explains where the funds come from in the EU budget and how they are allocated</p> <p>5) indicates the member states of the EU on the map and presents its own opinion about the future integration and enlargement</p>	Lack of this point
<p>21. Poland in the European Union. A student</p> <p>1) presents rights and duties of holding the EU citizenship</p> <p>2) searches for information about using EU funds by Polish citizens, enterprises, and institutions</p> <p>3) formulates and justifies own opinion about the advantages of membership in the European Union, referring the examples from its own surroundings and country</p>	Lack of this point

Old National Curriculum for Civic Education 2015	New National Curriculum for Civic Education 2017
	<p>XII. International Affairs</p> <p>2) lists the goals of the activity of the European Union; finds the information about a political resume of the Fathers of Europe and also the citizens holding the important position in the European Union</p> <p>3) presents the basic benefits of Poland’s membership in the European Union for employees and travelers; finds information about using the EU funds in its local community and region</p> <p>4) presents the activity of Poland in the United Nations, European Union, and North Atlantic Treaty Organisation</p>
Secondary schools – basic level	
	<p>VII. Contemporary international relationships. A student</p> <p>4) presents the ethnic conflicts within the member states of the European Union; locate them, explains the causes and consequences</p> <p>8) lists the actual primary legal acts of the European Union; locates the membership states; presents the fundamental areas and principles of actions of the European Union</p> <p>9) presents the most important European Union institutions: Commission, Council, Parliament, Council of Europe, and Court of Justice of the European Union</p> <p>10) presents rights of the citizen of the European Union; considers the benefits and costs (bolded by D.H-G) of membership of the Republic of Poland in the European Union</p>

The policymakers assured that there would not be a reduction of the content in the reformed school system, while some of the problem areas were shifted from lower secondary schools (*gymnasium*) to secondary schools. If we take a look at the table we can find that some of the content is repeated and some is missing, e.g. the future of Europe or the

idea of the European Union (solidarity and subsidiarity). It may be interesting that in the reformed curriculum there is no mention of the duties of the EU citizen which suggest that the Law and Justice party gives priority to rights and forgets about duties, while the Civic Platform performed a more republican vision including both rights and duties of the EU citizens. Perhaps the policymakers perceive European Union citizenship only in the privileged dimension, forgetting about duties. It seems to stand in line with the home policy towards refugees when the Polish government did not feel obliged to help in the migration crisis.

In secondary school at the basic level students will also get knowledge not only about the benefits of being a member of the EU but also about costs. The latter is a new keyword in the curriculum. The Civic Platform's euroenthusiasm was expressed mostly through the benefits of the EU funds and the narratives were standing in line with the pre-accession language. Students should also develop critical thinking toward the EU policies as they do toward national ones. If there is no room for a critical discussion of the EU's key directions, there is a danger of growing Euroscepticism. It must be noticed that the word: 'costs', is always connected with money or with the price that is needed to pay. However, the aforementioned word is a distinguishing feature between Civic Platform's blind euro enthusiasm and allusive Euroscepticism of Law and Justice. The crux of the matter is how the policymakers understand costs whether in the category of loss or the category of investments.

In the reformed curriculum, the policymakers have limited the benefits of Poland's membership to two categories: employees and travelers. While in the previous curriculum there was a reference to a broader category such as 'Polish citizens, enterprises, and institutions'. It is not clear why the new curriculum limited beneficiaries to employees and travelers. It seems that the EU is mainly perceived through the prism of money, the possibility of employment, and free traveling (no passport and/or visa).

There is some evident change in the curriculum for civic education in elementary school, such as removing two important points: “European integration” and “Poland in the European Union”, and including them into one point “International Affairs”. The content about European Union was divided and covered at two different levels of schooling. However, it seems that almost all the issues about the EU in the old curriculum can be found in the new one, except the future enlargement of the EU and the rule of subsidiarity and solidarity.

In the next part of the paper, I would like to present some of the findings of the textbook analysis for civic education. As an example, I will use the textbook issues by the leading publishing house of the school textbook in Poland *Nowa Era*⁷³. The school textbooks have usually mirrored the national curriculum. In Poland, school textbooks are allowed to use under the regulation of the competent Minister of Education. The analysis of the textbook for the last grade of elementary school delivers some interesting findings.

Firstly, there are two subchapters that correspond to the old national curriculum: “European Union” and “Poland in the European Union”. These subchapters are included in “International Affairs” which stands in line with the new curriculum. It is a very interesting and surprising case because the old textbook (2015) for the gymnasium located the issues of the EU in one subchapter titled: “European Integration”. The new textbook delivers more content about the EU than the previous one, despite the content reduction of the curriculum. Moreover, the number of pages covering the EU also increases from 6 in the old textbook to 9 in the new one. The question is, how is it possible to have more content in the reformed textbook when the curriculum requires less? Perhaps we could understand such actions as a protest against national policy and the

⁷³A. Anagnostopulu (2022), ‘Kto zarabia na podręcznikach? Lider rynku jest jeden’, Business Insider, Podręczniki szkolne 2021/2022. Jest jeden lider na rynku (business-insider.com.pl), [accessed: 14.10.2022]

defendant against crawling and allusive Euroscepticism at the level of the hidden curriculum.

Secondly, according to the national curriculum students are expected to know the political resume of Polish citizens who hold an important position within the EU. It is quite surprising that one of the two mentioned figures is Donald Tusk, who was the president of the European Council from 2014–2019. In the iconography at the bottom of the page, there is a picture of Tusk and a short political resume. The Law and Justice representatives criticize the former President of EC and Polish Prime Minister and the leader of Civic Platform. The range of criticism differs between politicians, but most of them accuse him of servitude towards Germany or even betrayal. For instance, Jarosław Kaczyński the leader of Law and Justice, said in an interview for a conservative journal, that Donald Tusk ‘carries out the foreign order’, which means that he supports the German policy⁷⁴. The second mentioned figure is the member of the European Commission Janusz Wojciechowski from Law and Justice.

Thirdly, the conflict and the compromise were exposed in the part discussing the decision-making process in the UE. In the old textbook, there is no such reference while in the new one can read ‘Problems and conflicts are an inseparable element of the cooperation between the member states. This is because, on the EU forum, countries strive to pursue their own interests, which do not have to be in line with the interests of the other member states. Compromise decision-making process serves to alleviate these contradictions’ (bolded by the authors of the textbook, p.192). I would not perceive these statements as Eurosceptical but as real ones. Despite the mention of conflicts in the EU, the authors bolded the word compromise as a key solution in the decision-making process. It is worth noticing that no example of such contradictions is given.

⁷⁴ Wywiad z Kaczyńskim. "Nasi wrogowie chcieli Polski prymitywnej, a to buduje Tusk" - WP Wiadomości, [accessed 14.10.2022]

Fourthly, the authors gave the example of the 'costs' (despite it is not required in the national curriculum) of the free movement of people. They suggest that many highly-skilled workers have emigrated to other EU countries, which results in a lack of workers in many areas including the health sector. This fragment is also new, however, it cannot be perceived in terms of Euroscepticism. It rather indicates the change of the narratives from Euroenthusiasm to Eurorealism in the analyzed textbook. More information is given about the use of euro funds, and how they improve the lives of Polish citizens.

Fifthly, the allusive Euroscepticism can be found in the students' tasks. In the group, they are asked to discuss the causes of Brexit, how the decision was made in the UK and what will happen when other countries leave the EU. The discussion of leaving the EU among thirteens/fourteens learners without a broader context of the policy and specifics of UK society may lead to simplification of the Brexit process. In that case, Brexit can be reduced only to perceiving the EU as a fragile institution and thinking that if one country did it, why not the others? This kind of discussion without solid knowledge about British society and the history of integration with the UK sows only doubts among the youth. This task stands in line with the Eurosceptical approach. One may hope that teachers will not carry out this kind of debate without solid research on the subject in question.

The analysis of the textbook for civic education for elementary school reveals the discursive battle about what is taught about the EU. On the one hand, the authors extended the content about the EU and divided it into two important subchapters, presenting Donald Tusk as an important person in the EU, while on the other they put inexplicable discussion among the youth about Brexit. I get the impression that such an eclectic approach stands in line with the vision of national education, where two divergent discourses meet: nationalistic and civic, democratic and neoliberal. Perhaps there is one more explanation – a compromise. If the textbook is going to be approved, it must also include contested issues

about the EU. However, the content of the textbook may also suggest that exposing the issues about the EU is a form of resistance towards Eurosceptical policy. What will be learned and how in the classroom depend mostly on the teacher's attitudes and their narratives about the EU.

I was intrigued by the problem of the "costs" listed in the national curriculum for secondary school at the basic track. No mention of the costs can be found in the textbook issued by the 'Nowa Era' publishing house (2022). One can find a table with the benefits of being an EU member for different groups of people, instead. The tasks for students, including listing the benefits only, seem to fit into the Euroenthusiastic approach. Again, the policy of the publishing house seems to be a form of resistance.

Euroscepticism in the national curriculum for civic education is not vivid, yet. The character of Euroscepticism is soft and allusive. The nation-state and the national symbols come to the fore in the vision of national education. However, the national-oriented discourse conflicts with the civic, democratic, open, and neoliberal approaches. The same pattern can be found in the textbooks. On the one hand, the analyzed textbook for elementary education doesn't contest the EU, contrary it brings quite an optimistic image in the terms of benefits, while on the other sows doubts among the youth with

What will be learned and how in the classroom depend mostly on the teacher's attitudes and their narratives about the EU.



Brexit discussion. For the time being there is little worry about Euroscepticism in educational documents. However, change can be found. The ruling party has a hard nut to crack, they are not able to impose Euroscepticism in the Euroenthusiastic school system. However, there is a danger of a shortage of teachers. What is taught in schools depends on them. And if there is a shortage of teachers there will be an empty space to fill with Euroscepticism and other hostilities.

For the time being Euroscepticism doesn't threaten the classroom, more disturbing signals come from the Minister of Education whose attitude is visibly Eurosceptical. For instance, he delivered an opening lecture of the Academic Year 2022 at one of the Polish universities, titled: 'Poland and illegal actions of some bodies of the EU'. During his speech, he was trying to prove that the suspension of EU funds is an illegal action. His rhetoric blames the EU for the limitation of the development of the school system and higher education system⁷⁵. A few weeks before he also blamed the EU for not supporting Poland in educating the refugees from Ukraine. During his speech at XXXI Economic Forum in Karpacz, he suggested that 'we are

⁷⁵ Czarnek krytykuje Unię Europejską. Minister Edukacji w Lublinie | naTemat.pl, [accessed 14.10.2022]



paying for the maintenance costs of every Ukrainian child in every school. Today it is 900 million zlotys. We did not receive a single zloty from the EU⁷⁶. This rhetoric is very dangerous. In the dramatic situation of war in Ukraine which clashes with the shortage and overburdened teachers in the school system, the teachers, parents, and students can buy this rhetoric and blame the EU for the lack of support. However, the government hasn't prepared a good strategy to deal with the refugees in the school system and also did not assure support for teachers, who are forced to deal with new, dramatic, and unprecedented problems of war trauma children. The incompetent policy of the Ministry of Education is explained by the illegal action of the EU. Fortunately, the current Minister of Education lost his credibility among teachers and parents and support in society. Over 63% of the respondents don't approve of the changes that he introduced to the school system⁷⁷. It does not change the fact, however, that persistent anti-EU rhetoric may fall on fertile ground in the current crisis, and there will be those who will believe that the collapse is caused by the 'illegal' EU activity.

⁷⁶Czarnek: 900 mln zł na ukraińskie dzieci. Ani złotówki z UE (wpolityce.pl), [accessed 14.10.2022]

⁷⁷Sondaż. Zaledwie niespełna 7 proc. Polaków docenia reformy Czarńka - rp.pl [accessed 14.10.2022]

Conclusions

Euroscepticism is like dripping water hollowing out a stone. The politicians and policymakers reveal an attitude of assuring that the idea of the EU is good until it doesn't clash with national (their/ruling party) interests. Similar contradictions can be found in the school system. As I noticed earlier there are two divergent discourses in the legal documents: democratic, civic, open, neoliberal, and national. Of course, these two discourses can be reconciled and can be in balance. The national curriculum reform did not bring a dramatic change in the content of the European Union. However, the dripping water hollowing out a stone can be found. On the one hand, the curriculum and the textbooks don't present the EU as a contested issue, contrary, it is perceived in terms of benefits. On the other hand, the discussion of Brexit among students of elementary education or introducing the word 'costs' of the EU without giving a broader meaning, seems to be the dripping water. The curriculum introduced by Civic Platform in 2015 was more Euroenthusiastic. However, to avoid Euroscepticism students should receive knowledge and develop critical thinking. They should be able to discuss the contested policies in the EU. The blind and uncritical Euroenthusiasm can turn into Euroscepticism.

It is important, then, to discuss different perspectives concerning the current issues of the EU with the students. It is also vital to deliver divergent standpoints on the contested problems. The EU decision-making process is complex and often reveals the contradictions between the EU interests and national policies. It allows discussing not only the issues about the EU itself but also about the political process. If students are not given the whole knowledge, they may seek information from non-normative sources, e.g., the internet, where there is a lot of misinformation and manipulation. Having solid knowledge allows them to be critical thinkers and to understand the complexity of the EU policy and decision-making process. Without this knowledge, they are more prone to listen to Eurosceptical politicians who usually offer simplified answers. It is also very important to

discuss the role of Eurosceptical parties in the EU. Instead of scaring them, it is worth emphasizing that the EU is a democratic body with room for debate and political improvement.

That's why it is also important to educate open-minded and critical-thinking teachers because they are the crucial factor of resistance against any indoctrination.

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Chapter 3

In the shadow of war: the diverging trajectories of PiS and Fidesz vis-à-vis European institutions

**Tirso Virgos and
Sergio Marin:**

Introduction: The state of affairs before the war

Ever since the global financial crisis that started in 2008, and perhaps also due to the European Union (EU)'s *Big Bang* enlargement of 2004, subregional blocs within the Union gained in importance. From the Franco-German alliance to northern hawkish members, passing by southern European countries or the Visegrád 4 (hereinafter V4). This last bloc, which consists of Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary, became particularly famous in the second half of the decade, during the aftermath of the sovereign debt crisis, for its outlier positions in essentially all the most significant political debates in the EU of the decade, from migration to energy policy passing by values.

During the 2015 massive influx of asylum-seekers, V4 countries point-blank refused to host any migrants within their territories, and their staunch stance and leadership in the anti-migration camp led to the virtual abandonment of the Dublin regulation, to the creation of Fortress Europe, and to legally dubious agreements with third countries, most notably of all with Turkey, signed as a statement and not an agreement by all member states and not the EU so as to avoid legality control by the European Court of Justice.

As regards values, the governments in Hungary and Poland have been among the most outspoken actors against what they call a globalist and uniform view of the rule of law, while profiting from all the EU cash inflow making them some of the highest net receivers of EU funds. When the debate arose on linking EU funds to transparency and legality control, so as to prevent corruption, during the immediate aftermath to the Covid-19 pandemic, Polish and Hungarian leaders and administration officials were the measure's highest detractors and, indeed, Hungary blocked the whole EU recovery plan for a while on those grounds. During this time, both Hungary and Poland eroded their national institutions at home, from the judicial branch to civil society organizations, passing by all levels of governance. They also vouched to protect each other against any concerted EU effort to subject them to Article 7 proceedings.

Poland and Hungary, the two loudest actors within the V4, even blocked the EU's joint energy transition efforts to fulfill global environmental commitments enshrined into law in the Paris Agreement of 2015, the former due to its comparative advantage on domestic coal, and the latter due to its chosen dependence on cheap Russian gas and Russian-owned nuclear energy. Getting the two countries on board to the EU Green Deal was no easy feat.

Fast-forward to 2022, and the situation could not be more different. The Czech Republic and Slovakia, which already felt uncomfortable with their association to the Polish-Hungarian pair, have in effect left the V4 in

practical terms and now seek Central and Northern EU member states as their natural allies. All the while, Poland and Hungary have parted ways and now find themselves at opposite ends of the EU ideological spectrum as regards Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine. While Poland, a traditional Russia hawk, is now leading pro-Ukraine voices within the EU and leading by example in military and humanitarian help given to Ukraine, including the hosting of millions of Ukrainians within Poland, Hungary has largely lagged behind, doing the bare minimum, negotiating sanction opt-outs, and toeing a line that at times has largely followed official Russian discourse. In effect, Poland and Hungary, respectively led by PiS and Fidesz, exemplify now the two extremes of EU policy towards Ukraine.

This paper will attempt to analyze the historical, social, and political reasons behind PiS and Fidesz' diverging approaches towards Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the effects that this diverging approach has had in their standing and position within EU governance bodies and public discourse, and the implications for the future of the Visegrád 4 regional bloc and EU governance in general. Our working hypothesis is that the past debates mentioned above (migration, rule of law, energy policy, etc.) will lose importance to a new factor, that of a government's stance *against* Russia. In other words, that administrations controlled by the likes of PiS or Fratelli d'Italia will enjoy higher acceptance in EU institutions and Brussels than the likes of Fidesz due to the former's pro-Ukrainian and anti-Russian stances in both words and deeds.

In order to do so, we will first provide some theoretical framework to place our hypotheses. The next two chapters will provide an overview of events in Poland and Hungary and how their respective governments have positioned themselves in light of said events, adding the potential explanations for this. Afterwards, we analyze the implications of these changes, and we hypothesize that the stance towards Russia is the key issue in regards to EU governance, as demonstrated by the victory, and certain praise, of Georgia

Meloni (Mudde, 2022). Finally, by way of conclusion, our analysis will be wrapped up and potential future scenarios will be provided.

What do scholars say about this?

Before the war, many realists (Mearsheimer, 2014; Mearsheimer, 2022; Waltz, 2022) framed the growing Russian aggressiveness in terms of the threat posed by NATO, given its expansion to the East of Europe, “pushing” against the boundaries of Russia and forcing it to defend its interests against a hostile alliance. Putin’s speech on the 21st of February, barely three days before the invasion (Kremlin, 2022), however, did not follow the key tenets of realism. Instead, it denied the very existence of Ukraine as a sovereign country, arguing that it was a part of Russia (A myth well extended across Russia’s public sphere, see Galeotti, 2021 or Favereau, 2021) that it should not have split from Russia.

It is obvious that any social phenomenon is multicausal. We could argue about the reasons behind Putin’s actions, from a rational actor perspective (Smith and Dawson, 2022) to an invasion purely based on nationalist motives (Dugin, 1997; Tharoor, 2022). However, in this article we are not dwelling on the motivation behind the re-start of the war, but on the different trajectories followed by Poland and Hungary when answering to it, as well as the EU as a whole.

“...in this article we are not dwelling on the motivation behind the re-start of the war, but on the different trajectories followed by Poland and Hungary when answering to it, as well as the EU as a whole.”

We believe that the EU answer has been framed by political realism. It is true that they have asserted the need to cooperate within institutional channels, as well as respect a rules-based world order in their response (Way, 2022), but the intra and extra-bloc actions speak about a different course. For instance, the EU has started renegotiating energy agreements with countries that would not pass the litmus test to be a democracy and has sought to integrate forces such as the radical right Fratelli d'Italia (Doná, 2022) as completely normal ruling forces in one of the key states of the EU. The goal, it seems, is to defeat Russia and defend Ukrainian democracy, even if that requires cooperating with states that would have been deemed as not democratic barely months before the invasion.

Given that theoretical framework, we will analyze the cases of Poland and Hungary in regards to the war in Ukraine, as well as how the EU attitude has shifted, or not, towards them as a result of this realistic interpretation of the current conflict. As we have seen in the introduction, both Poland and Hungary had conservative governments which clearly sponsored TAN values in the GAL-TAN axis (Hooghe, Marks, Wilson, 2002), and both answered differently to the war and to EU cooperation. We hope to provide a roadmap of what has happened, as well as a tool for the future of these two countries, as well as others which could follow their steps, within the Union.

Poland, from pariah to key ally: redefining EU values?

In 2015, the Law and Justice party (PiS) won the parliamentary elections in Poland, regaining their position as the lead party 8 years after losing against Donald Tusk's Civic Platform. That election would mark, according to some authors (Kuisz and Wigura, 2022), the end of the so called "New Jagellonian age", which started at the end of the Cold War and saw the transformation of the country into a liberal democracy, and the start of an era of more isolationism and conflict with the European Union.

The PiS had campaigned in favor of a “repolitization” of Polish society (Bill and Stanley, 2020), arguing that the country had moved from democratic pluralism towards a monistic technocracy, where liberalism was the only game in town and excluded other conceptions of how politics should be conducted. As Sánchez-Cuenca would argue in regards to the EU (Sánchez-Cuenca, 2017), the PiS stated that dissent was “constrained”, allowing only to express a certain set of opinions which were politically correct, and forcing “real Poles” to not feel welcome in their own country (Krzyzanowski, 2020)

As it was expected, the party also campaigned against immigration, LGBTBI rights and with a more confrontational stance towards the EU. Despite never overtly speaking about a possibility of leaving the Union, as it would happen with the United Kingdom in the following year (Kelemen, 2016), there were clear signs of a eurosceptic position and mistrust towards the very idea of European values cemented around liberalism. Instead, the PiS rode the wave of populist movements that shook the continent in 2016 (Müller, 2017) and got closer to the Hungarian model of Orban and Fidesz, reinforcing their ties with the Visegrad group (Kelemen, 2016).

This turn would be complete with one of the first big reforms that the PiS government tried to complete: the reform of the judiciary system, which will be discussed in the third section. This would entail a dispute with the EU, with voices against and in favor (Karolewski and Benedikter, 2016; Sadurski, 2018) of using article 7 of the Treaties against a country which had breached them, given the problems with the rule of law in the country. The situation reached a standstill, with the Polish government defying the EU and the latter trying to make an example of a government which was the exact opposite of what the Commission considered the European values were.

However, that all would change on the 24th February of 2022. On that very day Russian troops crossed the Ukrainian border to invade the country

and not only take the areas traditionally reclaimed by Russia (Donetsk and Luhansk), but also to take the capital, Kyiv, and force the surrender of the country. Kaczynski, leader of the PiS, and the party, had never considered Putin as a friend, which caused some tensions with Orban (Kelemen, 2016), and various polls showed that 80% of Polish citizens were scared of a possible Russian invasion. The situation in Warsaw was not the same as in Budapest, and as the reality of a war in Ukraine started to dawn across the European Union, the role of Poland would change immediately.

First weeks of battle

A poll by Zymetria in April showed that 84 percent of Poles were afraid of having the war spilling into their territory. At the same time, millions of Ukrainians were crossing the borders to reach the safety of their neighboring country. 1,7 had arrived in Poland by the second week of March (Dempsey, 2022), and by August more than 4 million had already crossed the border. This influx of refugees was sensibly higher than the one coming from Syria less than a decade ago.

And, in contrast to the actions of the Polish governments at the time, both by Civic Platform and PiS (Cienski, 2017), the current government of Mateusz Morawiecki has worked to provide shelter and resources to the refugees arriving to the country (Kuisz and Wigura, 2022). At the same time, while 75% of the Poles declared that they did not want to host Syrian refugees, the civil society responded to the arrival of Ukrainians with a mobilization that surpassed expectations, pushing the government to be more ambitious with the help provided to those fleeing the war.

At the same time, Poland became one of the most vocal critics of Putin and stalwart defender of Ukraine. Kaczynski, alongside Morawiecki and the PMs of the Czech Republic and Slovenia were amongst the first leaders to visit Kyiv during the first weeks of the war. It also started sending military

equipment to Ukraine, with more than 2 billion dollars spent in helping their neighboring country (Kuisz and Wigura, 2022), and becoming a key hub for the delivery of help from other members of NATO. As it had happened in 2004, during the Orange Revolution, Poland had become again a key piece of the EU and NATO effort in the region (Dempsey, 2022).

The values of the EU

PiS, as we have argued before, campaigned on the basis of the recovery of a “pluralistic” democracy, instead of a liberal technocracy or “hegemony” (Dawson and Hanley, 2016). They also vowed to empower groups that felt excluded from the post-1989 consensus in the country, with some success amongst poorer voters (Bill and Stanley, 2020), which saw the arrival of PiS and their reformulation of the welfare state as a way of improving their situation.

However, while a conservative program such as the one outlined before is perfectly acceptable by a liberal democratic standard (borrowing the idea of an overlapping consensus from Rawls, 2005, for instance), PiS also tried to change the “liberal technocratic” model through a series of reforms of the Constitutional Court first (Kelemen, 2016), and the judiciary power later. This included an attempt at creating a new disciplinary chamber, politically controlled by the ruling party, and seizing control of the National Council of the Judiciary, a formerly independent body which appoints new judges (Pech and Kelemen, 2020).

This battle for the rule of law in Poland has been fought since 2016, with numerous appeals to the European Court of Justice by the Polish judges and threats of sanctions by the EU. In fact, after the activation of article 7 of the Treaty by the Commission, the ECJ ruled that the money for the national recovery fund created in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic

“it seems obvious that the war in Ukraine is going to be one of the defining moments in the future of the Union”

could be conditional on respecting the Rule of Law in the country. However, recently, there has been an agreement between the Commission and the Polish government to unlock the funds, up to 34,5 billion euros in grants and loans, with some minimal reforms to their former plan of judiciary reform (Steen, 2022)

This has triggered a conversation regarding the values of the EU: it seems obvious that the war in Ukraine is going to be one of the defining moments in the future of the Union. Poland is giving invaluable assistance to the Ukrainians and has been a loyal ally throughout the conflict, distancing itself from Orban and taking a clear stance against Russia. However, this does not mean that the Polish government has stopped with its plans to subvert the rule of law in the country and move towards a more illiberal democracy (Iwaniuk, 2022).

The current polls show that the PiS would get a majority in the next election...but with only 40% of the votes, which would not be enough to obtain an absolute majority (Kuisz and Wigura, 2022). This could lead to further intensification of their socio-nationalist program, in order to attract greater segments of voters, while increasing their support for Ukraine, given the anti-Putinism which is prevalent amongst young voters (Higgins, 2022). With huge needs for money, a rising inflation (Steen, 2022) and the war at their door, it is very plausible that PiS will continue

playing the same game that has served them well in the last months. This would mean a progressive erosion of liberal mechanisms in their democratic process, reducing the uncertainty before elections that is key in any fair process (Przeworski et al. 1996) while counting with the EU support in order to stop Russia.

Hungary, *bête noire* or useful fool in EU foreign policy?

Ever since Orbán regained office in 2010, he has shaken up Hungarian foreign policy (Visnovitz and Jenne, 2021) and his approach to Brussels has been one of contempt – but has kept funding his populist and illiberal measures with a large inflow of EU funds (Kelemen, 2020). As mentioned in the introduction, the most famous stand-off of all occurred in the middle of the decade over asylum seeker quotas, inscribed in the Hungarian government’s notoriously anti-immigration position. However, this has not been the only one at all, and the Russian invasion of Ukraine of 2022 is no exception to this.

While Poland has arguably led EU efforts in support of Ukraine, Hungary’s stance on the Russian invasion of Ukraine has been more erratic, with moments in which it has displayed full loyalty to EU positions, and others where it has essentially paralysed any EU progress on it. While Orbán ultimately has control over the Fidesz establishment, he is not the only actor within it, and those below him within Fidesz’ senior architecture have competing priorities and views on Russia and Ukraine. For instance, Péter Szijjártó, who has served as Hungary’s foreign affairs minister for a few years now, is understood by some to be more pro-Kremlin than other members of the cabinet.

The claims may be considered to be dubious. However, it is clear that Putin awarded Russia’s Order of Friendship to Szijjártó in November 2021 (Hungary Today, 2021), when problems over Russian gas supplies to Europe were already underway. It is also fact that according to Kremlin news

agency TASS (2022) Szijjártó agreed with Parliament speaker László Kövér when the latter claimed Zelensky has mental problems, and it is no less true that Szijjártó posed for a picture with Russian foreign minister Lavrov in the summer of 2022 and did not stand up to any of the latter's claims regarding Ukraine during their common press conference. Let us see how events have played out since the war started.

A timeline of events: from collusion with Russia to a display of EU unity and back again

Already before war started, Hungary seemed to take its own path, playing down American intelligence on Russia's intentions in Ukraine and playing the friendly relations card with the Kremlin (Szabó and Panyi, 2022). Prime Minister Orbán himself visited Moscow in January 2022 in a trip that has been considered a fiasco due to several factors, from surrendering his DNA material to the Russian authorities through a Kremlin-imposed draconian Covid-19 protocol, to the perceived humiliation in treatment on published footage, passing by the few material results the trip brought about (Hopkins, 2022).

Therefore, it is of no surprise that Budapest's initial reaction on 24 February 2022 was one of shock (Szabó and Panyi, 2022). It displayed a striking amount of loyalty to EU positions, supporting the first rounds of sanctions without amending so much as a comma. While this was in clear contrast to past - and future - policy, there were reservations: not only has Hungary not expelled a single Russian diplomat, there are now in fact more than at the beginning of the war. Not only that, the foreign ministry summoned the Russian ambassador to Hungary to explain that Hungary would in fact be supporting EU sanctions against Putin after all (Hungary Today, 2022).

Indeed, EU sanctions against Russia were supported unconditionally before it came to oil and gas, for they did not affect Hungary in any way, not even

the ban on Russian coal. Nevertheless, Hungary refused early on to provide any form of military aid to Ukraine or to even let military aid of NATO allies to cross Hungarian territory on its way to Ukraine. While this measure was partially relaxed later on to allow for some transit, this was limited in scope too (Kolen, 2022). The official justification was that the Hungarian government did not want to risk the well-being of Transcarpathian Hungarians (Ukrainian nationals), whose region has so far been spared direct conflict in the war (Kolen, 2022).

All this happened against the backdrop of an important domestic development: the April 2022 parliamentary election, whose campaign coincided neatly with the beginning of the war. While a united opposition ran on a pro-European, pro-Ukraine ticket, Fidesz chose a confrontational path depicting Brussels and EU institutions as Hungary's antagonist. Much to everybody's surprise, starting with Orbán himself, he renewed his mandate by the largest ever margin – a margin so high that it cannot be solely explained by electoral irregularities and fraud, experts say (Pawlak and Than, 2022).

This claim is backed up by the fact that, while Orbán won his biggest mandate in the parliamentary election, he lost a referendum on LGBTQ+ education in schools held the same day.

“while Orbán won his biggest mandate in the parliamentary election, he lost a referendum on LGBTQ+ education in schools held the same day”

“this victory provided Orbán with the electoral legitimacy he needed to change course and, indeed, after the election his stance on Russia’s invasion of Ukraine toughened against Brussels”

Needless to say, this victory provided Orbán with the electoral legitimacy he needed to change course and, indeed, after the election his stance on Russia’s invasion of Ukraine toughened against Brussels, emboldened by popular support. A few weeks after Orbán’s victory, the EU started negotiating the sixth package of sanctions against the Russian Federation, aiming to sanction oil and gas. Gas was quickly put off the table (arguably not only Hungary’s fault), and Hungary managed to carve itself an opt out on the oil sanctions, as Orbán threatened to veto them otherwise (Abnett, Strupczewski and Melander, 2022). Szijjártó traveled to Moscow in July to negotiate the purchase of more gas directly with Lavrov (Fazekas, 2022), curiously only a few days after having sold a similar amount of gas to Serbia (Brückner, 2022), and Orbán was the only Western leader to attend Gorbachov’s funeral in Moscow in September (Bencharif, 2022).

Moreover, there have been other minor ways in which Fidesz has shown its connivance with the Kremlin’s agenda. Two examples are noteworthy: the next to no reaction shown when it was proved that Russia hacked the Hungarian administration’s IT equipment (Panyi, 2022), and the way in which officialist media, mostly government mouthpieces under the KESMA umbrella, have covered the war, openly taking sides with Putin and reproducing Russian officialist points of view (Zoldi and Erdelyi, 2022),

to the point of calling Kherson “Russian territory” after Putin announced Russia’s unilateral annexation of said city (Origo, 2022).

There are reports that Hungarian officials privately side with Russia (Szabó and Panyi, 2022), and what has been very public is the stand-off between Orbán and Zelensky, as well as between their respective governments, which led to the eventual dismissal of Ukraine’s ambassador to Hungary (Mandiner, 2022), arguably over her bad relations with Hungarian officials. Evidently, this occurred against the backdrop of already deteriorated relations between the two countries before the war over the rights of the Hungarian minority in Transcarpathia (Ukraine), whom the Fidesz establishment argues are not well treated or whose language and cultural rights are not sufficiently protected by the Ukrainian government. This debate falls out of the scope of this chapter, but what is clear is that Hungarian Ukrainians, who gained the right to Hungarian – and thus EU – citizenship after Orbán modified the nationality law in 2012, vote overwhelmingly for Fidesz in Hungarian elections (Renczes, 2022). Whether this is out of gratitude for opening the EU’s doors, ideological agreement with Fidesz’ agenda, or simply vote buying, of which there have been many allegations in recent elections, is unclear.

Despite Orbán’s attempts at keeping relations with Moscow normal, so as to ensure normality in the flow of Russian gas, oil, and nuclear expertise into the country, upon which most of Hungary’s energy needs depend, Hungarian energy supplies have been heavily impacted by the aftermath of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. While Putin claimed in February that Hungary paid only a fifth of the market price for Russian gas imports (Portfolio, 2022), it was revealed two days after the election that this claim was unfounded (Lehoczki, 2022). This has forced Orbán to break a campaign promise and discontinue *rezsicsökkentés*, a popular subsidy to electricity and gas prices via a regulated price scheme (Weiler, 2022). Hungarian families, already facing the EU’s highest food inflation rate (Molnár, 2022) and a difficult economic recovery after the pandemic due

to the government's refusal to hand out aid to those in need unlike in much of the Western world, are seeing their energy bills increase by as much as 600 per cent.

Other elements of Orbán's domestic culture war, like a crackdown on school teachers or his ongoing homophobic rhetoric, has heated the domestic political debate to unknown levels (Reuters, 2022). While opinion polls still show Orbán enjoys a healthy approval rate, disapproval rates are also at historic heights. This is before true winter cold kicks in and gas for heating (or the money to pay for it) is lacking in millions of Hungarian households, most of which lack the savings muscle that Western Europeans will be able to use this winter. Now that Russia has cut all gas supplies to Europe and that Nord Stream 1 and 2 are not operational, we must wonder what Orbán's strategy will be when it comes to securing gas supplies, whether he will opt for Russian gas through Turkey and Serbia, or LNG through EU ports.

Recent events like the covering of billboards across the country with posters depicting EU sanctions against Russia as bombs falling on Hungarian territory (Előd, 2022), a move which cost billions of forints and which was explicitly deplored and condemned by the European Commission (Tidey, 2022), or Orbán's recent declarations in Berlin after a tense encounter with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz (Chazan and Marton, 2022), or even his Twitter activity, in which he even refused to name Russia as Hungary's aggressor after the 1956 revolution (Orbán, 2022), do not seem compatible with Orbán giving up Russian gas and seeking to import American LNG through Croatian ports.

Orbán in Europe - the odd one out?

Orbán's continued reticence to support EU sanctions against Russia ever since his election victory in April, from obtaining an opt-out of oil sanctions to vetoing gas sanctions, or his recent anti-sanction billboard

campaign domestically, has had consequences on his standing abroad. This is true both for other governments and for civil society. To name but two examples, Orbán was booed by crowds in Prague when he attended the European Political Community's first meeting in early autumn (Benics, 2022), and several anti-Orbán demonstrations have been organized in Warsaw to draw attention to his apparent collusion of interests with Putin.

At the EU level, the chosen strategy has been a balanced one: on the one hand, institutions have called out on Orbán's words and actions whenever they have been perceived too divergent from official EU positions or too close to official Kremlin ones, on the other hand, a lifeline has always been left open for constructive negotiations on all topics, including rule of law conditionality and the payment of recovery and other EU funds, for fear that withholding said funds out of rule of law concerns could backfire and cause a deeper rapprochement between Hungary and Russia and/or between Hungary and China.

While Putin and Lavrov have publicly praised Hungary as a friend of Russia, and Zelensky singled out Orbán in his speech when claiming the EU was not doing enough to help Ukraine, EU member states have been surprisingly quiet on Orbán, with the exception of Polish Prime Minister Morawiecki who confirmed in the

“... a lifeline has always been left open for constructive negotiations on all topics, including rule of law conditionality and the payment of recovery and other EU funds, ...”

“a Meloni victory could embolden Orbán’s anti-EU stances at the European Council level”

summer that Hungary’s and Poland’s paths had diverged and that the PiS-Fidesz alliance was no longer one (RP, 2022) – before announcing a return to mutual cooperation in the autumn (Czuchnowski, 2022), in line with Varga and Buzogány’s (2021) arguments that the creation of an illiberal foreign policy network matters beyond geopolitics.

It is worth noting that Orbán’s woes go beyond Europe. Relations with America are not in a good place at the moment: Orbán keeps praising Trump and lambasting Biden in public, and the US embassy recently published a video debunking Fidesz’ claims on the US, the EU, and Russia (US Embassy Budapest, 2022). To add insult to injury, in a not so subtle message to Orbán and his anti-LGBTQ+ policy, Biden recently appointed a gay man with a husband and two kids as new US ambassador to Hungary.

Of course, this is not to say that he has no allies. For instance, Orbán and Meloni have close relations, and there was wide speculation that a Meloni victory could embolden Orbán’s anti-EU stances at the European Council level. Nevertheless, Meloni’s renewed commitment to aiding Ukraine, including a personal promise to Ukrainian President Zelensky, and her choice of Brussels and EU institutions for her first trip abroad as Prime Minister, point that Meloni’s positions will be closer to

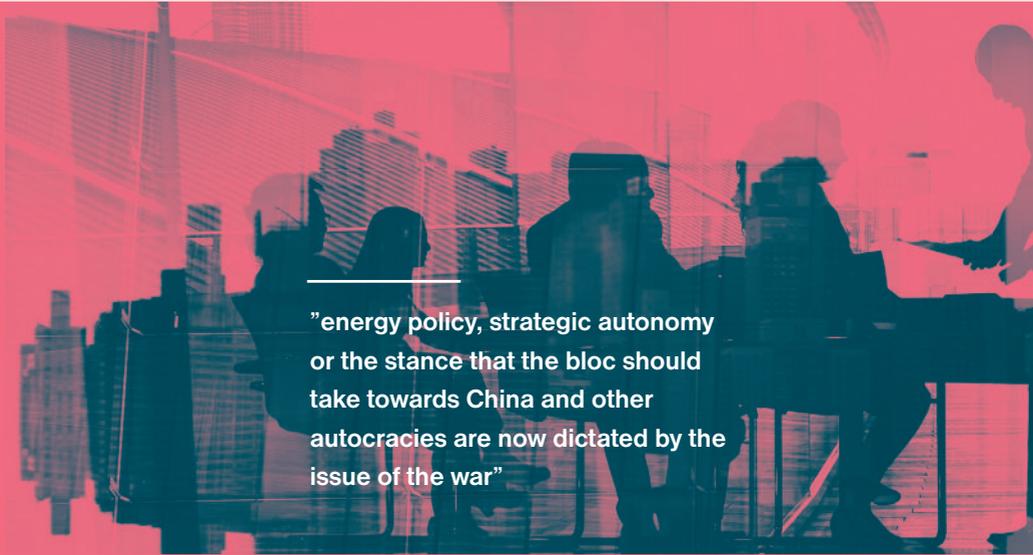
Morawiecki's than to Orbán's. At the time of writing, however, it is too soon to tell.

A reconfiguration of the EU political axis?

Before we move forward with our analysis, it is worth noting that even though we are focusing on Poland and Hungary and contrasting their current attitudes in light of their past anti-Brussels alliance, the Russian invasion of Ukraine has affected other alliances and blocs within the EU. Germany's doubling down on its failed *Wandel durch Handel* strategy, mistake it seems to be willing to commit with China now that they have finally steered course on Russia after the sabotage of Nord Stream 1, made the EU's largest country a clear laggard when it came to sending aid to Ukraine, particularly military one.

After insisting for months on continuing business as usual in gas imports from Russia, Germany then scrambled to find alternative energy sources when it became clear that Russian gas was no longer an option on the table. This led Scholz to find new allies in Spain, Portugal, and Italy, and drove a rift through Franco-German relations due to Macron's opposition to the MidCat gas pipeline. France, Spain, and Portugal then agreed on a new sea pipeline called BarMar that should address Germany's concerns too, but the Paris-Berlin axis is still going through a low point. Spain and Italy, traditional allies, have become competitors of sorts as they are the only two countries that, to differing degrees, can supply northern Europe with Algerian gas. It is unclear how Meloni's reactionary government will interact with Spain's progressive one. Other countries, like Sweden or Bulgaria, have had government crises due to their country's response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine that have resulted in general elections and the rise to power of more conservative forces.

At the same time, the EU as a whole has seen the realignment of its whole public debate around a single issue: the war in Russia. Debates around



”energy policy, strategic autonomy or the stance that the bloc should take towards China and other autocracies are now dictated by the issue of the war”

energy policy, strategic autonomy or the stance that the bloc should take towards China and other autocracies are now dictated by the issue of the war. While it seems logical, given the danger of collapse in the eastern border of the Union, as well as the assertion of Russian power over a country fighting for what the EU has described as its values, it also opens the door to the normalization of certain behaviors in the name of winning the war, that could make the rifts mentioned above irrelevant in years to come.

For instance, the EU has swiftly accepted the triumph of Giorgia Meloni in Italy. Although her party, Fratelli D’Italia, is placed in the extreme right, having previously been associated with the MSI and other fascist groups (Puleo and Piccolino, 2022), she received warm welcomes from leaders such as Ursula Von der Leyen and Emmanuel Macron. This means that both the president of the EU Commission and the leader of one of the most important states in the union, whose campaign was heavily based on the idea of stopping the extreme right (Perotunno and Guaspi, 2020) have embraced the idea of the leader of one of these parties governing Italy. While Meloni started a process, similar to the one conducted by the RN (Puleo and Piccolino, 2022) of “de-diabolisation” of her party by



moderating its messages and counting with people from centrist parties to be part of her formation, FDI still ranks high in many categories associated with the extreme right, such as TAN values, LGBTQI+ rights or immigration (Jolly et al. 2022), hardly compatible with the goals and values of the EU.

Long gone are the days when parties such as the FPÖ were considered as pariahs, with actions taken by the whole Union to avoid their participation in a government. The arrival of Meloni is just another step in the process of normalization of the radical right (Krause, Cohen and Abou-Chadi, 2022), with similar parties having had governing responsibilities in countries such as Austria and supporting governments in the Netherlands or Sweden. The effect of the Great Recession in the growth

“The arrival of Meloni is just another step in the process of normalization of the radical right”

of anti-establishment formations (Hobolt and Tilley, 2018) has found a catalyst in the war in Ukraine and the realigning of political conversation. With all governments looking to the war in the East, the Union faces a dangerous reckoning if it sees in the defense of Ukraine the only European value worth fighting for.

In this context, and given the shake-up that Russia's invasion of Ukraine has brought to EU politics, it cannot be conceived that a different treatment would be reserved to Hungary and Poland, despite their history in the rule of law domain, than to other EU member states. Already before Putin's deranged decision to invade Ukraine, the European Commission and the member states were treading with caution and early measures (the rule of law annual assessments and reports and the discussions over rule of law conditionality for EU recovery funds) could be labeled as unambitious at best. In this context of normalization of the far right and the temporary transformation of "EU values" into something that is proved by one's stance on Ukraine and Russia, it is hard to see how PiS and Fidesz could not benefit from this.

For Poland, the case is easy, because they have taken the "right" side and lead the pro-Ukraine side both in word and deed, both military and humanitarian. For Hungary, the case is a bit harder. On the one hand, Orbán's rhetoric is certainly a lot less anti-Russia than anybody else's within the European Union, and his administration keeps trying – to date, in spite of all war crimes allegations and proofs surfacing against Putin – to keep relations as friendly as possible with the Kremlin. On the other hand, however, there are no EU sanctions that have failed only due to Orbán's veto – whenever he has said no, other member states have also said no. And while Hungary has certainly not provided great military or humanitarian help to Ukraine, other much wealthier EU member states have arguably provided less both in absolute and relative terms.

It is thus safe to argue that we are seeing a resurgence of Orbán's "peacock

dance” (see Csaky (2018) for a definition of the concept), in which he balances all forces to make nobody too unhappy at the cost of not fully siding on either side. The problem is that, in an event as high-stakes as Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, he will ultimately need to pick a side, precipitated by either side’s victory or by an aggravation of the situation. And, at that point, he is sure to lose all political capital gained with the side he does not pick. Given the high risks involved for the Hungarian population in terms of basic needs such as energy supply and infrastructure funds, this will not be an easy “dance”.

“unlikely that the V4 will consolidate into a fully fledged political entity within the EU like the Benelux”

Going back to the V4, it is clear that the Czech Republic and Slovakia have been absent from our analysis for a good reason - they have not taken part in this debate. They too, like Poland, have taken the “right” side, but unlike Poland, there are few noteworthy events to signal in those two countries in terms of fundamental rights practices. It is thus unlikely that the V4 will consolidate into a fully fledged political entity within the EU like the Benelux, as both the domestic contexts and foreign policy of its four members are too divergent to make it work. Nevertheless, neither the geography nor the history of these countries has changed, so they are bound to cooperate on areas where it is in their mutual interest to do so, as Morawiecki’s rapprochement to Orbán despite the latter’s evolving views on Ukraine shows.

Conclusion: three possible scenarios for the future

Russia's invasion of Ukraine is a major event for the European Union and its security, and the EU and its member states must deal with it as such. Had EU countries not opened its borders unconditionally to refugees fleeing from the war, and had the EU and America not decided to supply Ukraine with military aid to help steer the course of the war, the outlook today would be a lot different than it is, and there is no doubt that such an outlook would be worse for the EU in both humanitarian and military terms. Therefore, it is safe to say that making this issue an EU policy priority and placing it at the top of all decisions made and negotiations carried out is a righteous thing inasmuch as it is existential to the EU's future and survival.

Nevertheless, past debates on EU values, the rule of law, and democratic standards are still of relevance. Hungary's Orbán may be perceived as a bigger threat to the EU now than Poland's Morawiecki or Italy's Meloni because of the latter's anti-Kremlin stances, but the truth is that all three pose a similar danger to the Union in terms of its political survival and flourishing with their views on judicial independence, supranational decision-making, or diversity, openness, and pluralism. By focusing all efforts on helping Ukraine win the war, we may well find ourselves in a situation in which, by the time that happens, new threats have emerged at home that, while not as brutal or violent, may be equally poisonous to the EU's survival the way we conceive it today.

While we are aware that a negotiated settlement is an option that might extract concessions from both Russia and Ukraine, and that a military-only victory from either of the two parties is unlikely at this point in time, ultimately the Russo-Ukrainian conflict will end with the arguments of one of the two sides prevailing over the other one. For the purposes of the three scenarios we imagine for a hopefully prompt settlement and ending of this war, this is what we mean by "victory".

Scenario #1: Russia wins the war and/or extracts significant concessions from Ukraine

This would, obviously, be the most nightmarish scenario for the EU. With Ukraine defeated and Putin presenting its “special operation” as a success, his authoritarianism and the sponsorship of traditional values could be vindicated by other radical right parties in the Union. Countries such as Hungary would be emboldened to battle the institutions at every single level, and parties such as RN or Vox could get a boost in future elections, threatening with a spread of governments with influence of the far right. It would be a time for reckoning and soul searching in the Union, with the Commission having to deal with all kinds of problems. Would it be possible to accommodate radical right parties in governments without sacrificing core European values? How would this result impact the perception of the EU power in the world? And what would it mean for the hopes or plans of certain states to join in the future? A vindication of “Orbánism” could create a potential cascade of difficult decisions that would threaten if not the existence of the Union, at least its continuation as something more than a single market.

Scenario #2: Ukraine wins the war and/or extracts significant concessions from Russia, partly thanks to European and American aid. However, both Europe and North America face increasing illiberal pressures at home and must make concessions to a reactionary agenda that blames excessive globalism for the war.

In this scenario, values that were considered “core”, and part of a liberal interpretation of what was the EU are sacrificed in an attempt to win the war. Victory comes at an enormous cost, as the “Polish theses” are accepted. Funds are given despite violations of the rule of law or attempts to turn liberal democracies into something more “illiberal” or “traditional”, in line with TAN values.

The resulting Union continues to exist, but it is different from the one we see today and the one that the main ideological families imagined. A sort of new “Fortress Europe”, which looks to expand into the East, but is wary of a deepening of the shared ties or the possibility of multicultural societies. Realism becomes the political norm both for the EU institutions and for the governments, and despite a growing hard power and the continuous existence of the so-called Brussels’ effect (Bradford, 2020) in certain sectors, the soft power and appeal of the Union are reduced as a result of its ideological transformation.

Scenario #3: Ukraine wins the war and/or extracts significant concessions from Russia, partly thanks to European and American aid. Europe is emboldened in the fact that liberalism won the war and Ukraine, as well as Moldova, Georgia, and the Western Balkans, follow an EU integration path.

In this scenario, values are not sacrificed, but rather they are co-opted into the national agendas of the abovementioned countries, all peripheral to the European Union at the moment, and this forces EU member states to ‘practice what they preach.’

This scenario is the unlikeliest because of several reasons. Firstly, it is unlikely that, once the war is over and countries stop operating in crisis mode, governments in EU member states governed by the far right do not try to establish their own foreign policy network, in line with Varga and Buzogány’s (2021) arguments. Though possible, it is very unlikely that administrations like Morawiecki’s or Meloni’s will stay as “pro-European” as they are perceived to be now if there is no impending threat of the same caliber as the one we face today. Secondly, this scenario would still invite a larger reckoning over the rule of law in which candidate countries like Ukraine or Moldova would have to prove a commitment to liberal democracy and a credible system that respects plurality, fundamental rights, and the rule of law, that has not been asked from countries like Hungary or Poland in over a decade.

Finally, the EU remains at its core a club of states with national interests to defend. Even in the unlikely scenario that national administrations in Poland and Hungary changed, there are other member states that could torpedo the values-first approach this scenario prones because that would place their domestic social, political, and economic interests at stake. The proof of this is no more and no less than our current predicament and where we are today.

Whichever one of these three we end up seeing, it is clear that the European Union as we know it today is in grave danger, and all political actors who adhere to the principles of liberal democracy and fundamental rights should be doing their utmost to defend those values and their vision of a common Europe, not only in Ukraine, but here at home too.

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List of abstracts

**Renata Gravina:
Euroscepticism and
the War in Ukraine
Through the
Perspective of Polish
PiS's Populist
Language**

The war unleashed by Russia in Ukraine seems to have changed Poland's attitude towards the European Union; yet, the paper sets out to prove otherwise. With respect to the Poland-EU relaxing narrative coinciding with the beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, Polish government's appeared temporarily amended in connection with national internal security's need over Ukraine. But the Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (PiS) party's politics and its peculiar neo-populist language only came to an apparent halt. Indeed, the difficult harmony between democracy, the principles of the European Union and the Polish national unceasing struggle against those who 'conspire versus Polish nation, state, and church', remains as relevant as ever. The distorted government's relationship with the European Union, over and above maximizing the anti-Russian defense policy in Ukraine, seems to have gone so far as to ratify the old Polish Jagiellonian idea. Poland's current geographical and geo-historical interests intend to expand Polish strategic capability in Central and Eastern Europe. PiS party's populist and nationalistic attitude capitalised on the war through the false proximity to Polish real needs and it is dangerously hammering to erode state institutions.

**Daria Hejwosz-Gromkowska:
Beyond the European Union? From Euroenthusiasm to Euroscepticism of educational policy in Poland – selected issues**

Since the Law and Justice (PiS) took power in 2015 a dramatic shift toward populism and Euroscepticism has been made. The growing evidence suggests that democracy and rules of law may be threatened as well as some of the governing party politicians questioning our place in the European Union. One of the first and contested reforms made by the Law and Justice was the educational one. The main aim of the paper is to reconstruct the educational policy towards the European Union under the Law and Justice governing. The following problems will be analyzed and discussed: changes in the political discourse and policy toward the European Union; reformed Education Act, national curriculum, and selected textbooks. The paper also includes a comparison between reformed educational documents and the previous ones introduced by Civic Platform. I would like to find out what kind of changes to the narratives of the curricula and textbooks has been made. There is growing evidence that both national curricula and textbooks are under the influence of the dominant ideology of the ruling party (Kopińska, 2022).

**Tirso Virgos and Sergio Marin:
In the shadow of war: the diverging trajectories of PiS and Fidesz vis-à-vis European institutions**

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has triggered a series of processes of political and economic change in the EU, from the energy market to the need for more strategic autonomy or increases in defense spending – as well as, of course, important effects on the demand and supply-side through rising inflation. In this chapter we want to take a look at one of these processes: the progressive normalization of the Polish governing party PiS as an acceptable political force to EU elites, despite its clear illiberal tendencies and its continued violations of the rule of law, while Fidesz remains a pariah for the vast majority of the European establishment due to its less than shy contempt for Zelensky and low-key support of Putin. We analyze the attitude of each of these parties, and their leaders, towards Ukraine and Russia, as well as the comments, policies and reactions by other governments and European institutions, to see if the Russian invasion and the sense of danger in the European Union is leading towards a growing normalization of parties such as PiS (or FdI in Italy) insofar as they coincide in one key policy aspect with the EU institutions, that is to say, unwavering support of Ukraine's war effort and total condemnation of the Russian leadership, as well as the dangers this poses to the Visegrád caucus within the EU and the Union as a whole.

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