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## THE RHETORIC OF THE “MARCH OF INDEPENDENCE” IN POLAND (2010-2017) AS THE ANSWER FOR THE POLICY OF MULTICULTURALISM IN EU AND THE REFUGEE CRISIS

### ABSTRACT

In 2010, Polish far-right nationalist groups hit upon the idea of establishing one common nationwide march to celebrate National Independence Day in Poland. Since then, the participants have manifested their attachment to Polish tradition, and their anti-multicultural attitude. Much of the debate about multiculturalism and the emergence of conflictual and socially divisive ethnic groupings has addressed ethical concerns. In contrast, this paper focuses on the semiotic and structural level of the problem.

**Key words:** March of Independence, nationalism, refugees, values, patriotism

After Poland's accession to the European Union in May 2004 new laws on national, ethnic and linguistic minorities were accepted and put into practice.<sup>1</sup> However, current Polish multiculturalism is different from that of multi-ethnic or immigrant societies such as the UK. Indeed, multiculturalism in contemporary Poland can be seen as a historical phenomenon, one linked to the long-lasting 'folklorisation' of diversity. For instance, although 'multicultural' festivals are organised in cities, towns and in borderland regions, all of them refer to past 'multi-ethnic' or religiously diversified life. Tolerance is evoked as an old Polish historical tradition. The historical Commonwealth of Poland and Lithuania (1385-1795) was in itself diverse linguistically, ethnically and religiously, and it also welcomed various ethnic and religious minorities, especially Jews. When the republic was reborn in 1918, after 123 years of partitions, religious and ethnic minorities still comprised almost one-third of the population. However, today, "tolerance and multiculturalism" serve as a myth that legitimises current politics rather than actual administrative and political practice.<sup>2</sup> After World War II, due to the Holocaust and shifting borders the demographic landscape of Poland has been transformed. Moreover, the 'population exchanges' with the defeated Germany and the victorious Soviet Union drastically reduced the number of ethnic minorities in Poland and played a major role in the creation of the modern Polish state and nationality.<sup>3</sup> Post-war Poland has been perhaps the most culturally homogenous society in the whole of Europe<sup>4</sup> and is one of the least diversified societies on the globe. Walter Connor reported in 1971 that among 138 countries taken into account, only 12 (9.1%) could be considered 'national', Poland included.<sup>5</sup>

In the process of the post-1989 democratic changes ethnic and religious minorities (while not numerous) in Poland were given the right to form associations and express their opinions. Besides the internal will to democratize the political order, integration with the EU and its institutions also pushed policy makers to accept liberal laws concerning religious freedoms, as well as ethnic and national minorities. Nevertheless, this does not mean that liberal and tolerant practices have been accepted by the society as a whole and integrated into daily practices. Following the collapse of the communist system in the country, far-right ideology re-emerged. The revival of the radical right parties and movements in Europe has been one of the most striking and disturbing features of European politics in the 1990s (e.g. in Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece, former

<sup>1</sup> <<http://mniejszosci.narodowe.mswia.gov.pl/mne/prawo/ustawa-o-mniejszosciac/6492,Ustawa-o-mniejszosciach-narodowych-i-etnicznych-oraz-o-jezyku-regionalnym.html>>, 2 April 2017.

<sup>2</sup> M. Buchowski, K. Chlewińska, *Tolerance of Cultural Diversity in Poland and its Limitations*, WP5: New Knowledge on Tolerance and Cultural Diversity in Europe D5.1 Comprehensive Country Reports, ACCEPT PLURALISM 7<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme Project 2012, European University Institute, Florence, p. 11.

<sup>3</sup> N. Davies, *God's Playground. A History of Poland, Vol. 2: 1795 to the Present*, Oxford 1981, p. 11.

<sup>4</sup> See: N. Davies, "Poland's Multicultural Heritage", *Acta Slavica Iaponica*, vol. 4 (1986), p. 79; also at <<http://eprints.lib.hokudai.ac.jp/dspace/bitstream/2115/7953/1/KJ00000034106.pdf>>, 30 April 2016.

<sup>5</sup> W. Connor, *Ethnonationalism: A Quest for Understanding*, Princeton 1994, p. 96.

Yugoslavia and Russia).<sup>6</sup> In 1995, an Anti-Defamation League report estimated the number of extreme right skinheads in Poland at 2,000, the fifth-highest number after Germany, Hungary, the Czech Republic and the United States.<sup>7</sup> Some new right-wing parties and movements today, usually called 'populist' instead of 'fascist,' are pushing against the new liberal order, usually called 'neoliberal,' seeking to use the state to pursue economic policies beneficial to those that have lost out due to neoliberalism. As David Ost points out, nowhere is this tendency truer than in Poland: *The Law and Justice Party (PiS) emerged in explicit opposition to the liberalism of the first post-communist decade, calling instead for a revival of "traditional values" and a "strong state" to enforce them.*<sup>8</sup> During its first governmental tenure from 2005 to 2007, PiS<sup>9</sup> chiefly objected to political liberalism, making it a party firmly on the political right: *It lamented the fate of workers who had been abandoned by post-communist neoliberal economic policies, but contended that workers were hurting because of the identity of the new leaders, rather than because of the nature of the new capitalist system. If, said PiS, Poland had real Polish leaders and real Polish capitalists following real Polish values like banning abortion, lustrating former communists, and distributing a piece of state property to all citizens, that would somehow make workers' conditions better.*<sup>10</sup>

In the eight years from 2007 to 2015 when it was out of power, PiS changed. These, of course, were the years of economic crisis. Never having adopted the Euro, Poland did not suffer as much from the outbreak of the debt crisis in 2008. Nevertheless, at the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, Poland had become the EU's leader in part-time, insecure contracts. Years of liberalized labor contracts and stagnant wages had induced the majority of the Polish youth population to work in Britain and Ireland, making capitalism unpopular.<sup>11</sup> A decade after 1989, the capitalist honeymoon had worn off. A new generation, which had never been on any honeymoon, began looking for answers to reject the officially approved neoliberal culture.<sup>12</sup> Far right ideologies, speaking of the "betrayal

<sup>6</sup> R. Ferguson, L. Cheles, M. Vaughan (eds.), *The Far Right in Western and Eastern Europe*, Longman 1995.

<sup>7</sup> I. Sual et al., *The Skinhead International: A Worldwide Survey of Neo-Nazi Skinheads*, New York 1995, p. 1.

<sup>8</sup> D. Ost, *The Radical Right in Poland*, chapter 5, in S. P. Ramet (ed.), *The Radical Right in Central and Eastern Europe Since 1989*, Penn State 1999, p. 114.

<sup>9</sup> PiS was founded in 2001 by the Kaczyński twins Jarosław and Lech, bringing together right-wing activists from a previous coalition that was just breaking apart. It initially set itself up as a law-and-order party committed to removing former communist officials from public and economic life (thus its name). But it always claimed that such policies were the way to help workers suffering from post-communist capitalism.

<sup>10</sup> D. Ost, *The Radical Right...*

<sup>11</sup> G. Meardi, *Social Failures of EU Enlargement: A Case of Workers Voting with Their Feet*, London 2013.

<sup>12</sup> Officially approved neoliberal culture was best personified by former President of Poland Bronisław Komorowski, who famously responded to a question about how someone earning 2,000 zlotys a month could rent an apartment by saying the person should *find another job, take out a loan*. This comment made during his 2015 reelection campaign was a key turning point that led to his defeat and the success of PiS.

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Meanwhile, Poland’s rising standard of living has made the country more attractive for immigrants, especially from Ukraine. This gives the opportunity to observe Polish people’s reactions to multiculturalism seen as a strategy/policy of managing cultural diversity. The lens focusing on the attitudes to this issue is the changing rhetoric of the National Independence Day celebrations in Poland.

## POLISH NATIONALISM ON THE RISE – ‘MARCH OF INDEPENDENCE’ HERALDING THE CHANGES

In 2010, the Polish far-right nationalist groups hit upon the idea of establishing one common nationwide march to celebrate the National Independence Day in Poland. The holiday has been officially celebrated since 1919 to commemorate the anniversary of the restoration of Poland’s sovereignty in the aftermath of the First World War. The national holiday was constituted in 1937. The celebration had not been solemnized for long before Poland fell under the occupation of Germany and Soviet Russia in 1939. After the Second World War, the communist authorities of the People’s Republic removed Independence Day from the calendar and disallowed it. The celebration was restored in the late 1980s.

Starting in 2007, unofficial ‘Marches of Independence’ were held at the same time (11 November) in different Polish cities, but on a much smaller scale. The march in 2010 in Warsaw was a co-initiative of several different nationalist movements which decided to join forces. The main initiators of the marches were members of All-Polish Youth (Polish: *Młodzież Wszechpolska*) and the rapidly growing National Radical Camp (Polish: *Obóz Narodowo Radykalny*, abbreviated to ONR). The ONR considers itself an ideological descendant of a Polish far-right political movement formed in 1934 and sharing the same name.<sup>13</sup> In interwar Poland the ONR – influenced by the

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<sup>13</sup> The ONR was created on the insistence of former members of the Camp of Great Poland (*Obóz Wielkiej Polski*) political organization of National Democracy in interwar Poland (founded in 1926) to unite Polish right-wing organizations. During the Nazis’ occupation of Poland, many of the former ONR activists belonged to National Armed Forces resistance groups. Some former supporters, on the other hand, actively collaborated with German Nazis, seeing Jews, not Germans, as the main threat to Poland.

ideas of Italian fascism<sup>14</sup> – favored aggressive action against minorities, especially the Jews.<sup>15</sup> After World War II, the communist authorities branded ONR members enemies of the state and forced them into exile. In 2012, ONR was restored and since then has cooperated with the National Movement electoral alliance. Another organization which actively takes part in the marches of independence is the National Rebirth of Poland (Polish: *Narodowe Odrodzenie Polski*), abbreviated to NOP, a national-revolutionary political party registered in 1989.<sup>16</sup> The NOP's members creed includes *moral order and Christian standards of living, promoting family life, objection to racial and cultural diversity and opposition to materialism which takes the forms of Freemasonry, Liberalism, Nihilism, Capitalism, Marxism, Imperialism and Anarchism*.<sup>17</sup> The NOP has been deemed an anti-Semitic organization by a number of government bodies and academic institutions worldwide such as the United States Department of State<sup>18</sup> and the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI). To gain media attention the NOP often runs shock-value campaigns. In 2007, the NOP disseminated a poster with the slogan *Fascism? We are worse!* According to The Stephen Roth Institute for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism and Racism, the NOP promotes violent forms of neo-fascism and antisemitism.<sup>19</sup> According to the magazine *The Warsaw Voice*, the manifesto of the National Revival of Poland, which contains a sentence stating that *Jews will be removed from Poland, and their possessions will be confiscated*, is taken directly from Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf*. On April 14, 2007, in Kraków, anti-Semitic slogans were shouted, and fascist-like gestures were made by participants in an NOP demonstration.

Another main group currently playing a major role in the National Movement and actively taking part in the March of Independence is the All-Polish Youth (Polish: *Młodzież Wszechpolska*). Its agenda declares that its aim is to raise Polish youth in a Catholic and patriotic spirit and to oppose doctrines promoting liberalism, tolerance, and relativism.<sup>20</sup> In recent years, All-Polish Youth have been widely condemned as homophobic by various organizations, including Amnesty International in 2006.<sup>21</sup>

Since 2012, the 'March of Independence' has been organized by a registered association (The Association of the Independence March). Moreover, in 2012 the march evolved into one of the biggest events of Independence Day in Poland on November 11. On the official website of the 'March of Independence' one can find this

<sup>14</sup> M. Marszał, *Włoski faszyzm w polskiej myśli politycznej i prawnej, 1922-1939*, Wrocław 2007, p. 32.

<sup>15</sup> J. Fishman, *Studies on Polish Jewry, 1919-1939*, Yivo Institute for Jewish Research, 1974.

<sup>16</sup> National Rebirth of Poland was founded in 1981 as a nationalist discussion group for young people. *Revolutionary and Dissident Movements of the World*, Berkeley 2004, p. 409.

<sup>17</sup> <<http://en.nop.org.pl/third-position-10-point-declaration>>, 2 April 2017.

<sup>18</sup> *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2006*, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, at <<https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78832.htm>>, 2 April 2017.

<sup>19</sup> <<https://www.tau.ac.il/Anti-Semitism/asw2006/poland.htm>>, 2 April 2017.

<sup>20</sup> The official website of *Młodzież Wszechpolska* at <<http://mw.org.pl/about/deklaracja-ideowa/>>, 1 November 2017.

<sup>21</sup> Amnesty International Report, Poland 2006, at <<http://www.refworld.org/docid/447ff7b511.html>>, 2 April 2017.

straightforward reference to the struggle of generations: *We would like to show that the blood of many millions of Polish people throughout the centuries, who only wanted their children and grandchildren to be able to speak Polish and be proud of who they are, was not spilled for nothing.*<sup>22</sup> In 2013, the annual march was performed under the slogan 'The New Generation is coming!'. Representatives of nationalist movements from other European countries claimed to take part in the elections to the European Parliament. During the event, one significant act of vandalism was the burning of the Rainbow Arch in Warsaw, an artistic construction in the form of a giant rainbow made of artificial flowers by Polish artist Julita Wójcik. The installation was supposed to evoke positive feelings related to the rainbow, such as beauty, peace and hope, and was intended to be a universal, apolitical symbol, free from any particular or social meanings.<sup>23</sup> However, far-right nationalist and Catholic groups identified the rainbow with the symbol of the LGBT movement. The installation was damaged five times, including the arson committed during marches on Polish Independence Day on 11 November 2013.<sup>24</sup> Another target for Polish nationalists was the Russian embassy. They threw flares at the building, setting the embassy's entry box on fire.<sup>25</sup> Cars were trashed, and Molotov cocktails flew in the air. The police used pepper gas and rubber bullets to disperse the protesters. The unofficial march was declared illegal by the authorities and the city.<sup>26</sup> The participants in the march responded that the riots were actually initiated by their opponents.<sup>27</sup> Similar violent incidents took place in 2014.

Every year, diverse groups and individuals of all social backgrounds including war veterans, various far-right nationalist groups, students, workers, politicians, families, and groups of football fans take part in the Independence Day commemorations. Why are football fans so active in this field? The main reason is that PiS first directed its attentions to the marginalized precariat when it began to mobilize legions of rowdy football fan clubs.<sup>28</sup> In Poland, in 2010 and 2011, a series of violent clashes between football clubs led the Civic Platform government to decide to crack down. Some stadiums were temporarily closed, and club members found themselves threatened with criminal

<sup>22</sup> The official website of the March of Independence at <<https://marszniepodleglosci.pl/english/>>, 13 June 2017.

<sup>23</sup> <<http://culture.pl/pl/dzielo/julita-wojcik-tecza>>, 2 April 2017.

<sup>24</sup> <<http://foreignpolicy.com/2013/11/12/why-polands-right-wing-thugs-keep-burning-rainbows/>>, 2 April 2017.

<sup>25</sup> The act of vandalism aimed at the Russian embassy reflects the fact that anti-Russian sentiment has deep-seated roots in Poland, going back centuries – well beyond the Soviet dominance of the Cold War. Russia is blamed for many Polish woes, with conspiracy theorists even accusing the Russian government of orchestrating the plane crash that killed Polish President Lech Kaczynski and 95 other members of the political establishment.

<sup>26</sup> <<http://www.tvn24.pl/wiadomosci-z-kraju,3/zdelegalizowany-marsz-niepodleglosci-dotarl-do-mety,370560.html>>, 2 April 2017.

<sup>27</sup> <<http://eugeniuszsendecki.neon24.pl/post/101548,marek-chrapan-odkrywa-tajemnice-nieudanej-prowokacji-na-marszu-niepodleglosci>>, 12 November 2013.

<sup>28</sup> D. Ost, *The Radical Right...*, p. 123.

charges. PiS reached out to the clubs, calling them true representatives of the people, unfairly targeted by treacherous liberals. Extremist behavior was legitimized as righteous anger. This strategy won PiS many votes from football club members, although they split those votes with the upstart anti-systemic party Kukiz '15, led by the former rock star Paweł Kukiz, on whose electoral lists explicit National Movement fascists were present. Starting in 2011, football fan clubs have joined with the National Movement, All-Polish Youth, and the National-Radical Camp to stage marches in Warsaw each Independence Day. Some of the participants manifest not only their attachment to Polish tradition, but also an anti-globalist, anti-liberal and anti-multicultural attitude.

### THE TURN IN POLAND'S REFUGEE POLICY AND THE POLES' RESPONSE TO THE REFUGEE CRISIS

In 2015, some of the protesters in the March of Independence marched shouting the slogan 'Poland for the Polish'. There was also a strong anti-Islamic and anti-refugee streak to these commemorations. The participants carried banners depicting images of the Prophet Mohammad with the words 'not welcome'. Other banners read: 'Terrorism, Islam, Sharia Law? No, thanks', 'Stop Islamisation', and 'Poland free of Islam'. Some of the phrases emphasized the importance of religion: 'To be a Pole, to be Catholic is a privilege and honor', while some of them openly defended Polish customs, threatened by Islamic regulation: 'We prefer pork cutlets to Mohammad. Traditional Polish dinner after the Sunday church service', and glorifying Polish culinary traditions. Many carried the national white-and-red flag while others held banners depicting a *falanga*, a far-right symbol dating to the 1930s.

A banner carried at the March of Independence in 2015



Source: <<https://warszawa.onet.pl/transparenty-na-marszu-niepodleglosci-w-warszawie/zmpern#slajd-1>>, 2 April 2017.



The declarations and defensive attitude expressed during the demonstration in 2015 were an immediate response to the socio-political situation. In September 2015, the pro-EU Polish government led by Civic Platform (PO) agreed to accept 6,800 refugees fleeing Syria and Eritrea. The Prime Minister at the time Ewa Kopacz called the crisis a *test of decency* for Poland after it had been helped by richer countries in previous years.<sup>29</sup> This decision created a fierce debate dividing Polish society. However, these declared numbers decreased rapidly two months later, when the right-wing Law and Justice party won the parliamentary election.<sup>30</sup> Poland's new government that was sworn in on 16 November 2015 immediately took a hard line on the migrant crisis. In January 2016, the new Polish Prime Minister, Beata Szydło, told a press conference *We would like to make use of the right to choose which groups of refugees are to be sent to Poland*.<sup>31</sup> She has referred to the EU refugee quota deal as 'blackmail' and declared that the Polish government could not accept giving in to political correctness by accepting quotas being imposed on Poland. Instead, Szydło declared the priority for her was the security of Polish citizens and announced that up to 400 refugees would be relocated to Poland in 2016 as part of the previous government's commitment.<sup>32</sup> The Law and Justice leader, Jarosław Kaczyński, said his party favoured allocating money to support refugee camps and warned that migrants would end up imposing their way of life on Poles. He responded to EU demands by saying: *Do you really want us to become guests in our own home? Poles don't want it and neither does Law and Justice*.<sup>33</sup>

The rhetoric displayed at the March of Independence in November 2015 heralded the anti-multiculturalist attitude: some demonstrators burned a European Union flag, and expressed the anti-EU theme with a banner with the phrase '*EU macht frei*' in German ('The EU will set you free'), a reference to the slogan over the gates at Auschwitz. The conclusion seems clear: multiculturalism is a policy which the EU wants to impose on Poland. A poll conducted in 2015 by the Polish Research Centre found that 63% of Polish citizens opposed taking in refugees from the Middle East and North Africa,<sup>34</sup> while 53% opposed taking any refugees.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, to the question: *Do you think that taking in the refugees from the Middle East and North Africa could increase the danger of terrorist attacks?* 80% of Poles questioned responded 'yes'. However, Polish people were

<sup>29</sup> P. Skolimowski, *Poland Faces 'Blackmail' on Migrants, Probable Premier Says*, at <<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-09-16/poland-faces-blackmail-on-migrants-probable-next-premier-says>>, 1 May 2016.

<sup>30</sup> Founded 14 years ago.

<sup>31</sup> *Poland to Accept No More than 400 Refugees This Year*, Radio Poland, at: <<http://www.thenews.pl/1/1/9/Artykul/236276,Poland-to-accept-no-more-than-400-refugees-this-year#sthash.d7sJF34d.dpuf>>, 1 May 2016.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. This new government policy was also influenced by the terrorist attack in Paris on 13 November 2015.

<sup>33</sup> P. Skolimowski, *Poland Faces 'Blackmail'...*

<sup>34</sup> In 2015.

<sup>35</sup> *Stosunek do uchodźców w kontekście kryzysu migracyjnego w Europie*, CBOS, "Komunikat z Badań", no. 122/2015, Warszawa, at <[http://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2015/K\\_122\\_15.PDF](http://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2015/K_122_15.PDF)>, 1 May 2016.



half as sceptical about accepting immigrants from Ukraine (61% displayed a welcoming approach to Ukrainians). In addition, 37% of Poles agreed that Poland could give temporary shelter to asylum seekers, while only 4% would allow them to settle in Poland (regardless of the origin of the immigrants). The World Values Survey conducted in Poland in 2012 found that Poles were not particularly averse to having immigrants or people of different races as neighbours.<sup>36</sup> However, asked specifically about Muslims, the Polish response was not always as welcoming. In the 2014 European Social Survey, 34.3 % of Poles said that no Muslims should be allowed to come to Poland.

## POLAND'S MESSIANIC COMPLEX – NEW EDITION

In 2015, the protesters taking part in the March of Independence marched shouting the slogan 'Poland for the Polish'. When did the concept of an exclusively 'Polish Poland' originate? The modern Polish nationalism that arose as a movement in the late 18th and early 19th centuries was the consequence of Polish statelessness.<sup>37</sup> The creation of an exclusively 'Polish Poland' was the vision of the radical right wing of politics united in the old National Democratic movement co-founded in 1893 by Polish politician Roman Dmowski, National Democracy.<sup>38</sup> Dmowski believed that only a Polish-speaking Roman Catholic could be a good Pole. His thinking marginalized other minorities, and he was vocally anti-Semitic.<sup>39</sup> This nationalist's vision, which can be summed up in the slogans of 'One Nation, One Faith, One Republic, One Culture' was conceived at the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>40</sup> Dmowski, called *the father of Polish nationalism*,<sup>41</sup> remains the prototype of Polish right-wing nationalism. Since 2010, his portrait has been carried every year in the Independence March. Dmowski's popularity shows that contemporary Polish nationalism is much different from Romantic nationalism. The only remaining romantic feature is in its messianic undertones. Although young people wearing T-shirts with the national eagle no longer call their country the 'Christ of Nations', they call their homeland 'Poland the Bastion of Europe', the leading slogan of the March of Independence in 2016.

<sup>36</sup> <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSOnline.jsp>>, 1 March 2017.

<sup>37</sup> N. Davies, *God's Playground: A History of Poland, Volume I: The Origins to 1795 (Revised Edition)*, Columbia 2005, p. 9.

<sup>38</sup> Polish: *Narodowa Demokracja*, also known from its abbreviation ND as "*Endecja*".

<sup>39</sup> R. Michael, P. Rosen, *Dictionary of Antisemitism: From the Earliest Times to the Present*, Lanham 2007, p. 70.

<sup>40</sup> It was very different from the original political idea of Polish state created by the first Polish King of Poland Bolesław I the Brave (967-1025). The oldest use of the name 'Poland' was recorded on coins minted by the King who called himself the PRINCEPS POLONIE. The chosen name was a political declaration: it refers to the reign over a defined territory, not over an ethnically defined group of people. Bolesław I the Brave did not call himself the King of the Poles, but the king of *Polonie*/Poland. This is a concept of monarchy connected with the concept of a political homeland inhabited by peoples of different ethnicities.

<sup>41</sup> J. Páll Árnason, N. Doyle, *Domains and Divisions of European History*, Liverpool 2010, p. 93.

At the head of the demonstration was a group re-creating the Winged Hussars, the cavalry in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth between the 16th and 18th centuries. This group in historical costumes openly referred to the Battle of Vienna, which took place near Vienna on 12 September 1683 after the imperial city had been besieged by the army of the Ottoman Empire. The battle was fought under the command of King John III Sobieski against the Ottomans and their vassal states. The battle marked the first time the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the Holy Roman Empire had cooperated militarily against the Ottomans, and it is often seen as a turning point in history, after which *the Ottoman Turks ceased to be a menace to the Christian world*.<sup>42</sup>

The banner carried at the March of Independence in 2015.

The slogan reads: "Lost sheep – welcome to hell"



The slogan 'Poland the Bastion of Europe' echoes an idea which can be traced back to the late Middle Ages, when Poland fought against Tartars, Turks and Russians in the defense of Christian Western civilization. In 2015, the concept of Poland as *Antemurale Christianitatis* – 'Bulwark of Christianity' – was revived in the context of Muslim terrorism. One of the banners carried in the March of Independence displayed the slogan 'Lost sheep – welcome to hell!' accompanied by the date of the Battle of Vienna, the name King John III Sobieski and symbols depicting a ban on mosques and Islam. Moreover, both in 2015 and 2016, the demonstrators at the March of Independence were chanting the slogans 'We don't want Muslims here' and 'Today refugees, tomorrow terrorists!' In 2016, on the same day, over 1,000 people – mainly members of anarchist organizations – gathered in Warsaw to protest against xenophobia, put emphasis on gay rights, and equality politics. They held banners reading 'Together against

<sup>42</sup> W. Leitsch, *1683: The Siege of Vienna*, at <<http://www.historytoday.com/walter-leitsch/1683-siege-vienna>>, 2 November 2017.

racism' and 'Say no to nationalism'. Watching the rival marches, it is evident that 11 November, which was aimed at uniting Polish society, now also polarizes it as diverse groups have different ideas as to how this holiday should be celebrated.

## MUSLIM REFUGEES – THE TROJAN HORSE

Vocally anti-Muslim and racist slogans were demonstrated in November 2017 when 60,000 participants gathered for the March of Independence, making it one of the biggest gatherings of far-right activists in Europe in recent years.<sup>43</sup> Demonstrators with their faces covered chanted 'Pure Poland, white Poland!', 'White Europe of brotherly nations', and 'Refugees get out!' Speakers encouraged attendees to stand against liberals and to defend Christian values. A banner hung over Poniatowski Bridge by football fans depicted Islam as a Trojan horse standing at the gate of a fortress named Europe. The entrance to the fortress is guarded by only one man with a Polish flag. In *The Iliad* the dangerous contents of the wooden horse were a secret to the inhabitants of Troy. Here, the horse openly reveals its contents: inside is a male figure with Middle Eastern physical features. The man is holding a small banner declaring 'I'm a refugee' and is equipped with a ticking bomb. As well, to avoid misunderstanding and make the picture even more obvious, on the front of the horse we can see the word 'Islam' and its symbol, the star and crescent. The slogan below reads: 'Europe wake up!' To make the banner clear to people from abroad as well, all the comments were written in English.

Anthony D. Smith points out the importance of myth in the process of nation making, and in the perpetuation of a nation. He defines the concept of the 'nation' as *a named human population occupying a historic territory and sharing common myths and memories, a public culture, and common laws and customs for all members*.<sup>44</sup> Jean-Pierre Sironneau states that the elements crucial for the process of nation building: race/ethnicity, language, religion, shared history and territory are not enough, as there needs to exist a mythical narrative to act as a cohesive agent.<sup>45</sup> The key point of the mythical narrative in the March of Independence's discourse is the structure of the world. In its rhetoric we can identify three basic types of people: first at the 'top', we have the estranged members of the Brussels elite; in the middle, 'the people', the Poles – those of the nationally cohesive community of Poland; finally, we have the economic migrants mingled with the refugees of war coming from the Middle East and Africa. This tripartite division can be found in Greek myths, where we have three essential groups or types of people. First are the cruel and tyrannical Gods, estranged from the rest of the humanity. In Polish discourse, this is the EU elite and those citizens of Poland who are political rivals of the

<sup>43</sup> M. Taylor, "White Europe": 60 000 Nationalists March on Poland's Independence Day, at <[https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/nov/12/white-europe-60000-nationalists-march-on-polands-independence-day?CMP=Share\\_AndroidApp\\_Facebook](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/nov/12/white-europe-60000-nationalists-march-on-polands-independence-day?CMP=Share_AndroidApp_Facebook)>, 5 November 2017.

<sup>44</sup> A. D. Smith, *Chosen Peoples*, New York 2003, p. 24.

<sup>45</sup> Jean-Pierre Sironneau, *IRIS*, Centre de recherche sur l'imaginaire – Université de Grenoble III, 1995, Numéro 15, directrice de publication Danièle Chauvin, Jean-Pierre Sironneau, p. 42.

right. The second group is the hero's community which stands between the corruption on one end and savagery on the other. These are the 'real Poles.' The third group is the uncivilized enemy of the civilized folk. This group belongs to the foreign world that will not accept 'our' values. According to the banners carried at the March of Independence, the corrupt EU elites would make a pact with the immigrants, a deal which would hurt the Poles (the heroes of the mythical narrative). Greek myth was used as the building material for writing the proto-national epics *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*. In the Polish discourse displayed on Independence Day is a straightforward reference to the wooden horse from *The Iliad* – one of the banners read: 'Muslim refugees – the Trojan horse of terrorism for Europe'. On the website "Polonia Christiana24.pl" which defines itself as the 'right side of the Internet', we can read an article by Tomasz Korczyński, "The Trojan horse and the blind of Europe". Korczyński diagnoses the conquest of Europe directed by ISIS, blaming the Germans as *the contemporary Trojans worshiping the idol of political correctness*.<sup>46</sup> In 2017, this allusion was also made by Prime Minister of Hungary Viktor Orbán, saying that migrants, many of whom are Muslims, are a threat to Europe's Christian identity and culture: *The people that come to us don't want to live according to our culture and customs but according to their own – at European standards of living*.<sup>47</sup>

The banner displayed during the March of Independence in November 2017 in Warsaw



Source: <<https://wsieci24.pl/arabscy-kibice-przygotowali-odpowiedz-transparenty-marszu-niepodleglosci-chcieli-nas-zawstydzic-zapomnieli-o-kilku-faktach-zdjecie/>>, 12 December 2017.

<sup>46</sup> T. Korczyński, *Koń trojański i ślepy z Europy*, at <<http://www.pch24.pl/kon-trojanski-i-slepy-z-europy,381111,i.html>>, 12 September 2015.

<sup>47</sup> P. Gorondi, "Hungary's Leader Calls Migration 'Trojan Horse' of Terrorism", *Associated Press*, 7 March 2017, at <<http://www.businessinsider.com/ap-hungarys-leader-calls-migration-trojan-horse-of-terrorism-2017-3?IR=T>>, 2 July 2017.

## THE RISE OF 'YOUTH NATIONALISM' IN THE POLISH AND EUROPEAN CONTEXTS

The role of the youth in the illiberal turn in Poland is remarkable, since young voters were crucial in the 2015 elections. What is causing them to mobilize so strongly in the name of nationalism and Eurosceptic discourse? According to some scholars, to a large extent, this is the result of the state's 'politics of history' of the past decade.<sup>48</sup> The Polish state is promoting a historical narrative and commemorations: new museums devoted to the history of Poland attract visitors all year round. The state-based Institute of National Remembrance (IPN) tasked initially with investigating historical crimes against the nation, has become a crucial instrument in the state 'politics of memory'. Since Law & Justice won, the government aims to educate the country's youth in a 'correct and patriotic' fashion which includes emphasizing the victimization of the Polish nation.

Tom Junes<sup>49</sup> calls the rise of nationalism among the Polish youth a phenomenon of 'consuming patriotism' that has replaced historical consciousness: *We are witnessing a process in which patriotic-historical symbolism has meshed with youth pop culture*<sup>50</sup>. In his opinion, the shallow patriotism expressed by slogans in the Independence marches, in fact, mirrors football fans' behavior. Other journalists who interviewed people taking part in the Independence March have found their notion of patriotism to be very superficial (question: *Who is a patriot?*; answer: *Well, it is a guy who ... believes in something*).<sup>51</sup> The documentary movie by Mariusz Pilis "The rebel of stadiums" (2013) presents an opposite point of view. Pilis attempts to prove that the soccer fans are not just troublemakers and aggressive hooligans, as they have been depicted in Polish media since the late 90s. He presents the image of soccer fans as genuine patriots. They take care of the forgotten graves of Polish soldiers and help war veterans in need.

While not everyone the March of Independence is a far-right activist or fascist, it is undoubtedly becoming more significant and is acting as a magnet for far-right groups around the world. Interestingly, this new form of Polish patriotism and anti-multicultural attitude is not restricted to Polish citizens. On the English version of the official website of the Independence March, participants from abroad are invited to take part in it: *All organizations and individuals from Europe and the world who share common values are*

<sup>48</sup> T. Junes, "The Rise of 'Youth Nationalism' in Poland", *Krytyka Polityczna & European Alternatives*, 12 August 2016, at <<http://politicalcritique.org/cee/poland/2016/the-rise-of-youth-nationalism-in-poland/>>, 2 July 2017.

<sup>49</sup> Tom Junes is post-doctoral researcher and a member of the Human and Social Studies Foundation in Sofia. He is the author of *Student Politics in Communist Poland: Generations of Consent and Dissent* (Lanham 2015).

<sup>50</sup> T. Junes, "The Rise of 'Young Nationalism' in Poland", *Krytyka Polityczna & European Alternatives*, 12 August 2016, at <http://politicalcritique.org/cee/poland/2016/the-rise-of-youth-nationalism-in-poland/>, 2 November 2016.

<sup>51</sup> <<http://www.newsweek.pl/polska/legia-warszawa-kibice-patriotyzm-historia-kibice-legii,artykuly,383131,1.html>>, 2 April 2016.

welcome to join us. Any banners and flags that you wish to bring need to be shown before to the organizers of the March.<sup>52</sup> This invitation shows that what really matters in this manifestation is actually not ethnicity, but shared values. It also shows that for Polish people sharing values – especially the value of national pride – is more important than any particular nationality in itself. In 2011, more than 20 thousand arrived to join the March of Independence, including Hungarians, Swedes,<sup>53</sup> Serbians and others. Thus, for the first time, the march became the major event it is today, with hundreds of thousands of participants. In 2017, at the invitation of the Polish National Movement came members of national parties from Scandinavia, and the members of Democracia Nacional Party from Spain. Among the far-right leaders attending the march were the former English Defence League leader Stephen Lennon, better known as Tommy Robinson; László Toroczkai, the mayor of the Hungarian city of Asotthalom and the founder of the radical group HVIM; and Roberto Fiore, an Italian politician and leader of the Italian party Forza Nuova, which has been defined as a *nazi-fascist formation* by two verdicts of the Court of Cassation,<sup>54</sup> while Fiore himself has self-identified as a fascist.<sup>55</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The ‘rediscovery’ of ethnicity over the last decade in Europe has been accompanied by a shift in the system of values. According to research by political scientists Roland Inglehart and Christian Welzel based on the World Values Survey, cultural values that vary between societies can be divided into two predominant dimensions: traditional versus secular-rational values, and survival against self-expression values.<sup>56</sup> Traditional values emphasize the importance of religion, national pride, and family values. Secular-rational principles have the opposite preferences to the traditional. The Polish nationalistic organizations obviously underline the importance of the traditional and manifest solidarity with the groups from abroad which also cherish the same morality. In its Eurosceptical attitude and skepticism towards multiculturalism, Poland is not the only one: similar tendencies can be seen in France, Austria, Germany

<sup>52</sup> <<https://marszniepodleglosci.pl/english/>>, 28 March 2017.

<sup>53</sup> M. Banaś, “Anti-immigrant sentiments in Scandinavian countries”, in M. Vereva (ed.), *Anti-immigrant Sentiments, Actions, and Policies: The North American Region and the European Union = Sentimientos, acciones y políticas antiinmigrantes: América del Norte y la Unión Europea*, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM): Centro de Investigaciones sobre América del Norte (CISAN), Mexico 2012, pp. 405-425.

<sup>54</sup> <[http://milano.repubblica.it/cronaca/2017/01/06/news/fascismo\\_milano\\_manifestazione\\_forza\\_nuova-155504394/?ref=search](http://milano.repubblica.it/cronaca/2017/01/06/news/fascismo_milano_manifestazione_forza_nuova-155504394/?ref=search)>, 2 November 2017.

<sup>55</sup> D. Pallister, “Neo-fascist Clear to Resume Charity Role”, *The Guardian*, 6 August, 1999. Mr Fiore told the *Guardian* he was *pleased the Charity Commission has found there has been nothing illegal*. He said he was quite happy to be described as a fascist, but he denied that Saint George promoted anti-Semitic literature.

<sup>56</sup> R. Inglehart, Ch. Welzel, “Changing Mass Priorities: The Link between Modernization and Democracy”, *Perspectives on Politics*, vol. 8, no. 2 (June 2010), pp. 551-567.



and Hungary.<sup>57</sup> The Polish reaction to the negative influence of global capitalism can thus be seen as a product of transition into the post-industrial era, and can be articulated not only in national, but also at least in continental terms. Despite the differences between these processes in other European countries the roots seem to be the same: the renaissance of a mythical narrative crucial for the process of nation building, stratification of the society according to myth, and enthusiasm for tradition and source-searching. However, sometimes Poles demonstrating anti-multiculturalist attitudes are not so strict in their actions, which contradicts the official declarations. Both in 2015 and in 2016 participants of the March of Independence expressed a vocally hostile position towards potential newcomers from the Middle East, but at the same time journalists reported a mass consumption of kebab. On November 11, the owners of kebab shops did very good business hosting large groups of people holding Polish flags and ordering kebab.<sup>58</sup>

The adoption of the term 'multiculturalism' has occurred in a situation where there is increasing international concern about the limitations of existing policies to address changing patterns of inter-ethnic relations. Recognition does not, however, ensure uniformity in usage. In 1996, Christine Inglis distinguished three major levels of usage as a means of bringing some clarity into the debate over the relevance of 'multiculturalism' to policy development in multi-ethnic societies.<sup>59</sup> According to Inglis, three inter-related, but nevertheless distinctive, referents of 'multiculturalism' which can be distinguished in public debate are: the demographic-descriptive, the ideological-normative and the programmatic-political. Demographic-descriptive usage occurs where 'multicultural' is used to refer to the existence of ethnically or racially diverse segments in the population of a society or state. In programmatic-political usage 'multiculturalism' refers to specific types of programs and policy initiatives designed to respond to ethnic diversity, and it also can include negative responses. The ideological-normative usage of multiculturalism constitutes a slogan and model for political action based on sociological theorizing and ethical-philosophical consideration about the place of those with culturally distinct identities in contemporary society.<sup>60</sup> The usage which can be found in Poland is the programmatic-political one. After it emerged that a Tunisian living in France was responsible for the terror attack in Nice in July 2016, the Interior minister of Poland Mariusz Blaszczak said it was the result of years of multiculturalism, political correctness and mass migration. Blasting Western Europe's response to terror – holding marches and drawing pictures of flowers – as ineffective, Blaszczak said governments should protect their citizens.<sup>61</sup> Speaking about France, which has seen over a dozen

<sup>57</sup> Ch. Schori Liang, *Europe for the Europeans: The Foreign and Security Policy of the Populist*, Aldershot 2007.

<sup>58</sup> M. Langer, *Rekordowa sprzedaż kebabów podczas Marszu Niepodległości. Jednak nie wolą „kotleta od Mahometa”*, at <<http://natemat.pl/161657,rekordowe-wyniki-sprzedazy-kebabow-po-prawicowym-marszu-niepodleglosci>>, 4 November 2017.

<sup>59</sup> Ch. Inglis, *Multiculturalism: A Policy Response to Diversity*, Paris 1996, p. 15.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> V. Hale, *Poland: Multiculturalism, Immigration, Political Correctness Responsible for Nice Attacks*, at <<https://www.infowars.com/poland-multiculturalism-immigration-political-correctness-responsible-for-nice-attacks/>>, 5 November 2017.

Islamist terror attacks in less than two years, the minister said that by rejecting mass migration his government hopes to avoid the mistakes made by many Western governments. In 2017, while speaking to Polish Radio about the European refugee crisis, Błaszczak stated that Christianity is the best concept of integration ever invented, and that thanks to Christianity there were leaders like *Charles the Hammer who stopped the Muslim invasion of Europe in VIII century*.<sup>62</sup> He called right-wing marches to mark Poland's independence day a *beautiful sight*.<sup>63</sup>

Many different concerns – such as security, Catholic identity, and European economic disparities – are guiding the Polish public's declining support for refugees, particularly those from the Middle East and Africa. The driving forces behind anti-immigrant sentiment in Poland are hardly unique. The amalgamation of security fears due to concerns about crime and terrorism, economic fears about the distribution of public resources, anti-EU sentiment resulting from a sense that supranational bodies are eroding national sovereignty, have been seen across the European continent (e.g. in the success of the Freedom Party of Austria). While these causes of public anxiety are not unique to Poland, the case of anti-refugee sentiment in Poland clearly demonstrates how these factors can overlap and intersect. Despite the calls by Pope Francis to help refugees, the Roman Catholic Church, traditionally an important player in Poland, has not helped to soften the attitudes of the Polish public. Moreover, after the shift in the Polish government's position, the governments of the Visegrad Group are in even closer alignment in their rejection of the EU's common refugee policy than before.

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<sup>62</sup> Błaszczak o uchodźcach. "Karol Młot w VIII wieku zatrzymał nawałę muzułmańską", TVN, 13 June 2017, at <<https://www.tvn24.pl/wiadomosci-z-kraju,3/blaszczak-o-uchodzcach-karol-mlot-zatrzymal-nawale-muzulmanska,748547.html>>, 5 January 2018.

<sup>63</sup> M. Taylor, "White Europe...".

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