

Where Is Poland Heading?

Warsaw's Eastern Policy in the Context of "Polish-Polish War"

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Abstract

The sociopolitical split in Polish society disorients Warsaw's Eastern policy. Poland has historically positioned itself as a missionary in Eastern Europe, but the current internal conflict calls into question the very essence of this mission. On the one hand, Warsaw clearly intends to facilitate the integration of states in the western part of the post-Soviet space into the Western structures. On the other hand, a significant part of Polish society, whose views are represented by the country's leadership, is unhappy about the trends afoot in the United States and Western Europe and sees Poland as a conservative alternative to the Western mainstream. For its part, the liberal part of society is dissatisfied with this standoff and insists that Poland should follow the main social trends of major Western countries. As a result, Poland has found itself facing an identity crisis. Polish society is

divided into two approximately equal parts: conservative and liberal. In a situation like this, it is unclear not only where Poland is heading, but also what ideals it wants the former Soviet republics to match.

Keywords: Poland, law and justice, Polish conservatism, ideological split, post-Soviet space, Giedroyc-Mieroszewski doctrine.

THE ORIGINS OF POLISH MESSIANISM

Poland's ruling party Law and Justice (PiS) has inherited all traditions of Polish conservatism, which possesses some unique features. This ideology is described by one word: "Polishness" (polskość), which in Poland itself is considered untranslatable into any other language. Polishness is a set of unique features inherent in Poland and the Poles, which emerged under the centuries-long influence of complex geographical and historical factors in the nation's development.

The geographical factors include: 1) location in northeastern Europe, where the conditions are much harsher than those of the countries in western and southern Europe, which has molded this people's special courage, resilience, and moral integrity (Leskinen, 2002); 2) the status of the eastern frontier of the Western Christian world, which, on the one hand, makes Poland an eternal periphery of Europe and, on the other hand, missions it to defend Catholicism in the west and proliferate it to the east; and 3) the "geopolitical curse" of a country sandwiched between Germans in the west and Russians in the east, which predetermined the country's uniquely dramatic history, full of wars and expansions as well as repeated losses of statehood (Dmowski, 2017).

In such extreme conditions, the Polish people's system of values, formed over the centuries of struggle with difficulties, has become a guarantee of the nation's revival. Central to this system of values is the Catholic Church and faith (Kaczyński, 2020; Szałamacha, 2009). Poland's tragic history and self-sacrifice to other European countries make the country a moral standard and model. Poland positions itself as "Christ of Europe." This widespread vision illustrates the thesis, quite

common in Polish social thought, that the nation's sacrifices atoned for Europe's sins, just as Christ atoned for the original sin of man. And, just as Christ resurrected on the third day after the execution, Poland will resurrect, too (Lutosławski, 2015).

This attitude to its role in European history explains Poland's ambitions in the international arena. Its mission is not to learn—something that is required from the former socialist countries in Central and Eastern Europe—but to teach, including by virtue of its socialist past. The socialist experience vaccinated Poland against leftist ideas, and now the Poles are obliged to caution Western countries, moving along their own paths to new socialism, against leftism (Szczerski, 2017).

TWO POLANDS

The internal conflict in Poland stems from disagreements over what concept the country should abide by in its development. The proponents of Poland's liberal path of development postulate that it is a European country like all the others and that it should develop in accordance with the general Western trends. The adherents of the conservative concept argue that Poland is unique, it is a model for the contemporary postmodern West, and not the other way round. The dichotomy of the two concepts of Poland's development has been reproduced over many generations of intellectuals. In Polish history, the unity and struggle of these intellectual traditions can be seen in the standoff between Piast and Jagiellonian ideas.

The Piast tradition dates back to the early Middle Ages, the first stage of Polish statehood in the 10th-14th centuries (the royal Piast dynasty). In those days Poland was a standard West Slavic kingdom. In its development, it followed the common pattern of European feudal states and was focused on interaction with German principalities. The emergence of Poland's imperial project resulting from the dynastic union with the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Polish expansion to the east (the Jagiellonian dynasty) was a basically new stage in its development.

The Jagiellonian idea was a super-idea of Poland as a country in the East European Plain vested with the civilizing mission of spreading European culture to the east of its borders. The first and most

ambitious practical implementation of this idea was I Rzeczpospolita, a medieval empire stretching “from sea to sea” and incorporating, in addition to Poland proper, the territories of today’s Belarus, Ukraine, Lithuania, parts of Latvia, Moldova, and Russia. I Rzeczpospolita is the apogee of Poland’s development for some Poles and the cause of its historical catastrophe for others (Labuda, 1989). It is not accidental that reflections on this unique state began during its agony. The Constitution of May 3, 1791, one of the key episodes in the historical policy of modern Poland, was an attempt to save I Rzeczpospolita by turning the empire into a nation-state, where the peoples of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, abolished under the May 3 Constitution, were to be assimilated. This attempt came too late, and the further history of Polish political thought is that of projects to rebuild the state in a format that would have saved it from the catastrophe of its partitioning in the 18th century.

The clash of the two concepts of Poland’s development manifested itself most strikingly in II Rzeczpospolita between World War I and World War II. The Jagiellonian tradition was unmistakably present in the political program of Marshal Józef Piłsudski, the *de facto* ruler of the restored state, who was keen to implement the project of a Poland-led federation of East European peoples, from the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea to the Adriatic (Intermarium), liberated from the “yoke” of Russia. The federation’s perimeter was identical to the borders of I Rzeczpospolita (Piłsudski, 2003; Matveev, 2010).

Piłsudski’s geopolitical doctrine was opposed by Polish nationalism, with politician and publicist Roman Dmowski as its most outspoken proponent. Dmowski blamed Rzeczpospolita’s tragedies on multi-ethnicity, Poland’s expansion beyond its natural boundaries, and the ever-changing border in the east. He understood a stable and successful Poland as a nation-state of Poles with few ethnic minorities and clearly defined borders (Dmowski, 1932).

It is this kind of Poland that was constructed by the anti-Hitler coalition after the end of World War II in 1945 and has existed since then within its current borders. The postwar version of the country is the ideal “Piast” Poland: mono-ethnic, devoid of problem territories in

the east (western Ukraine and Belarus, southeastern Lithuania), and brought closer to Germany with the acquisition of newly incorporated territories where German influence is significant (Silesia, Pomorskie Region). The objective achievements of postwar Poland—both as the Polish People’s Republic (1947-1989) and as the Republic of Poland (1989-present)—are often attributed to its new political and geographical design (Grzymski, 2016).

THE LIGHT THAT FAILED

From the emergence of III Rzeczpospolita in the early 1990s and until just recently, it seemed that the heated public debate about the ways of Poland’s development died down to never resume. A national consensus was reached regarding the main issues of the country’s future, and all systemic political forces agreed to adhere to it. In general, the main vector was formulated as a “return to the West”: transition to a market economy and democratic institutions and integration into NATO and the European Union. On the eastern track, the consensus between Piast and Jagiellonian geopolitics was reached on the platform of the Giedroyc-Mieroszewski doctrine, developed by the Polish political emigration. Poland’s postwar borders are a benefit, while the western borders of the USSR are a disadvantage. The independence of Ukraine, Belarus, and Lithuania is a prerequisite for Poland’s independence. Poland should exert a democratizing influence on them, thus securing itself against the risks associated with direct proximity to Russia by using Warsaw-oriented, but independent territories as “buffer states” (Mieroszewski, 1973).

The resumption of the ideological conflict among the Poles resulted not from failure, but from the success of the development model chosen after the country turned its back on socialism. Poland has been successfully integrated into the supranational structures of the collective West, implanted the institutions of parliamentary democracy on its own soil, and made its economic development a European-level phenomenon. During the global crisis of 2008-2009, Poland’s economy kept growing and reached an EU record of 5% per quarter on the eve of the 2020 crisis (Malgin, 2016).

However, these achievements made Poland not only certain that the chosen path of returning to the West was correct, but also bolder in discussions within the Western community and skeptical about the trends dominating in the West (Krastev, Holmes, 2019). The doctrine of Polish exemplariness in the 21st century received a new impetus in opposition not only to its Eastern rivals, but also to its Western allies. Polish messianism (at least in terms of the desirable) turned out to be directed towards both the East and the West. The modernization theory—the generally accepted view that Poland's success was the result of importing Western practices—was contrasted with a conservative viewpoint: Polish society, by virtue of its historical characteristics, has retained the main features of European modernity, from which postmodern Western Europe had already departed (Kuzniar, 2012) This is precisely what ultimately determined the success of post-socialist Poland.

Poland's rightists targeted their criticism at the European Union and the transformations afoot within Western European societies: multiculturalism, de-Christianization, social atomization, disintegration of the traditional family, and denial of traditional gender roles. The internal dispute with the Polish liberals, who welcome the Western European processes and their transfer to Polish soil in line with the clichéd logic of Westernization as a safeguard of progress, turned out to be a derivative from the latent dispute with Europe. Poland is an intact shard of genuine Europe: it is obliged to fight against the manifestations of Western decay in order to serve as a model for Western allies and, as its resources grow, to be able to reverse the degradation of the collective West (Szczerki, 2017).

The popularity of such ideas grew as the signs of the Western community's loss of strength became increasingly evident. Polish conservatives point to such signs as the EU's geopolitical incapacity, depopulation, failure of the integration policy, social deviations resulting from the cult of the tolerance policy, and growing disillusionment with liberalism and democratic institutions. Poland, which has integrated into the EU, perceives these manifestations of modern Europe's weakness as a challenge. Hence the desire to

become an internal conservative alternative and a fulcrum for the Old World.

JAROSLAW KACZYŃSKI'S POLAND

Stronger self-confidence and skepticism towards processes in the West paved the way for the Jaroslaw Kaczyński-led conservative Law and Justice Party's (PiS) rise to power in 2015. The PiS victory came as a surprise to many, because at that time Kaczyński's party was customarily seen as an eternal opposition. Polish society and many political experts thought there were no chances for it to come to power again simply because it was hopelessly locked inside the boundaries of its "electoral ghetto." The fact that the party had already formed its government once in 2005-2007, and Lech Kaczyński, Jaroslaw's twin brother, was elected Poland's president, was regarded as a political aberration that in no way affected the main trend of the country's sociopolitical development—the liberalization of Polish society—and therefore was quickly eliminated. By the mid-2010s, there had developed a stereotype that exactly a quarter of the Polish electorate invariably voted for Law and Justice, and this number of Kaczyński's supporters spoke for itself. A classic example of this attitude was a speech by Adam Michnik, one of the intellectual leaders of Polish liberalism, editor-in-chief of *Gazeta Wyborcza*, before the 2015 presidential election. Michnik said that the PiS candidate, then President Bronislaw Komorowski, would lose the election only if he, while driving his car drunk, ran down a pregnant nun at a pedestrian crossing. Komorowski, as everybody remembers, lost the election, and PiS candidate Andrzej Duda took over as Poland's president.

Law and Justice's success in the 2015 electoral cycle shocked the liberal segment of Polish society. Each new achievement of Law and Justice came as a surprise, despite the previous ones: Andrzej Duda's position of the frontrunner in the first round of the presidential elections, Duda's victory in the election runoff, and the PiS victory in the parliamentary election with such a comfortable advantage that enabled it to form a one-party government (37%). When for the first time since 1989 there emerged a situation where one political force

grabbed all power in the country, some speculated that it was nothing but a system glitch and PiS, just like after 2005, would not stay in power long. However, in the 2019 parliamentary election, Kaczyński's party improved its own performance, gaining 45%, nearly twice the number of votes cast by its core electorate (Vedernikov, 2019). Andrzej Duda was re-elected in 2020, even though at that time Polish society was already facing the socioeconomic consequences of the coronavirus pandemic. These developments indicate that Poland's anti-liberal turn is a much more serious and lasting phenomenon than the conservatives' opponents initially thought.

Law and Justice has strengthened its position in power owing to the decisive implementation of its program of radical social measures, accompanied by steady economic growth, lower unemployment, and public debt reduction. Economic growth during PiS's rule helped the party gain a firmer foothold and earned its ideology more supporters. Jarosław Kaczyński's program criticizes Poland's post-socialist course as contradictory, indecisive and inconsistent from the standpoint of breaking with the legacy of the Polish People's Republic (without questioning either the market economy or NATO membership). The project of III Rzeczpospolita, according to the doctrine of the Law and Justice party, did not materialize because it had not fully broken away from the legacy of the Polish People's Republic. Without getting rid of the rudiments of old socialism imposed by the East, it cannot resist the corrupting influence of new socialism coming from the West. Therefore, Kaczyński and his team aim to build IV Rzeczpospolita based on conservative Catholic values, the only ones possible for Poland. The political slogan regarding the creation of IV Rzeczpospolita postulates the need for fundamental changes in the system of the Polish state. The very use of this narrative, popular in the conservative discourse, indicates dissatisfaction with Poland's current condition. Contemporary Poland, III Rzeczpospolita, is seen as in no way different from the socialist Polish People's Republic. There is a very strong striving for reorganization and renewal of public life, which will lead to the emergence of a new, better Poland (Szałamacha, 2009).

In practice, the efforts to build IV Rzeczpospolita boil down to an outspokenly illiberal economic and social policy and a “historical counteroffensive” based on the historical memory policy implying decommunization and aiming to label as criminal any deviation from the official point of view on the ideologically significant events in Polish history, and on the symbiosis with the Catholic Church in education and propaganda. PiS owes its growing popularity to the social policies of the governments this party formed, which resulted in firmer support for other components of the conservative course. The so-called people’s projects—programs to support young people and families with children, as well as greater social benefits and a heavier tax pressure on foreign business in Poland (primarily German) as a source for funding this social policy—evoke criticism from PiS’s opponents inside and outside the country who argue it is sheer populism. However, labeling Polish conservatives populist would be premature. Their prime motive is not the desire to woo the masses, but ideology that makes the Kaczyński team take both most popular and most unpopular steps. For example, the appeal for the support of the traditional family and natural reproduction of the Polish nation has generated, on the one hand, the program Family 500+ (a monthly allowance of 500 zlotys per child) favored by all, and, on the other hand, the scandalous policy of a total ban on abortion, which, according to opinion polls, is rejected by a vast majority. For the regime, the positive or negative electoral effects in both cases are of secondary importance: ideology comes first.

“POLISH-POLISH WAR”

Law and Justice’s policies create a split and existential conflict in Polish society. This is not just about struggle for power or disagreements over domestic policies. The clash is between the concept of Poland as a “normal European country,” which the clerics and conservatives are pushing off the main track of historical development back into the dark Middle Ages, and the concept of Poland as a unique phenomenon that needs to be cleared of everything harmful and superficial that the Communists from the East imposed on it in the past and the “leftists” from the West are imposing today.

No compromise between the two concepts is in sight, and this factor aggravates the discord. The conflicting parties are keen to hit each other's fundamental values, thus inflicting the maximum moral damage on their opponents. The severity of the internal conflict is described by the Poles themselves as a "Polish-Polish war," and this phrase has become popular in the domestic political discourse. It characterizes the uncompromising attitude of both sides towards each other and their perception of the opponent as an enemy (Lykoshina, 2015).

This trend manifests itself, above all, in the controversy over abortion, which the ruling conservatives, in accordance with their Christian beliefs, equate to murder and seek to outlaw. The *de facto* ban on abortion in the country (refusal to take into account even an incurable fetal disease, the cause of 98% of legal abortions performed in Poland as a valid reason) has caused massive protests, the strongest since the Solidarity movement's rallies in the 1980s (Karaeva, 2020). At the same time, whereas during the first attempt to ban abortion in 2016 the protests took place mainly in the legal space, the "women's strike" of 2020, when the second attempt was made, is quite remarkable not only because the number of participants grew, but also because it turned out to be far more radical. The 2020-2021 protests were directed not against the government alone, but against the symbols of conservative Catholic Poland—the Church and the priests. In the fall of 2020, feminist movement activists disrupted church services and repeatedly burst into churches with posters "Let's pray for abortion," and the walls of the churches were painted with the sign of a lightning (the protesters' emblem) and offensive graffiti. There were cases of left-wing radicals attacking parishioners with blade weapons, beating priests, and smashing statues of the Virgin (Razumovskiy, 2021).

For the radical opposition, discrediting the Catholic Church in the media has become inseparable from discrediting the authorities. This is done by means of scandals involving pedophile priests and accusations that the Vatican covers up sexual crimes against children. As a result of the flare-up of protests in the fall of 2020, this rather long-standing issue has finally turned into a political instrument. The involvement of the personality of the "Polish pope," John Paul II (whose cult in

modern Poland is comparable to the cult of Vladimir Lenin in the Soviet Union), in a pedophile scandal was used as a tool to discredit the conservative value system. The charges that the “Polish pope” was an accomplice in hushing up the outrage over pedophile priests had a de-sacralization effect as strong as the destruction of the Leninist cult in the late *perestroika* years in the Soviet Union (Zatyka, 2015). For Poland, traditionally the most religious country in the whole of Europe, where 47% of the population attend church services at least once a week, and Catholicism is considered the “bond” that has enabled the Poles to revive the nation and the state, such actions are not just signs of ordinary political struggle. The supporters of conservative ideas see them as attempts to change Poland’s cultural code and deprive the Polish nation of its fundamental values and identity (Balcer et al., 2017).

Neither side boasts numerical superiority over the opponent, which exacerbates the drama of the Polish split. Polish society falls into two approximately equal parts. This circumstance was most clearly seen in the presidential election runoff in 2020, when incumbent President Andrzej Duda received 51% of the votes, and his opponent, Warsaw Mayor Rafal Trzaskowski (of the liberal Civic Coalition), 49%. At the same time, as the conflict deepens, centrism disappears from Polish society. On the one hand, the Civic Coalition (formerly Civic Platform), which has traditionally been a moderate right-liberal party, is drifting towards the anti-clerical agenda of left-wing radicals. On the other hand, the right-wing part of the political spectrum is getting more and more radicalized: the Confederation coalition of extreme right-wing parties increasingly often accuses PiS of being too moderate and inconsistent.

EASTERN POLICY AND INTERMARIUM

The social split in Poland follows the mainstream trends that were observed in the major Western countries in recent years. In terms of depth and scale, it is comparable to the situation in the United States, where society is also split into two approximately equal and steadily radicalizing parts. The ideological split in the West deprives the Polish policy of an external stabilizer. Poland is beginning to be perceived

by the establishment and the politicized part of Western societies in the context of their own internal tensions. The attitude towards it is increasingly formed along the friend-or-foe line. This approach of the Western allies towards Poland reduces the value of its active foreign policy in the post-Soviet space in the interests of the United States and the EU.

Whatever the internal rifts in Poland's political class, there is still an intra-elite consensus on the main aspects of international politics: a strategic alliance with the United States, high activity in the European Union and NATO, a policy of containing Russia, and steps to enhance Poland's influence on the Eastern Partnership countries (Kuzniar, 2012). At the same time, Warsaw is increasingly looking for ideological allies, while stigmatizing opponents. The 45th president of the United States, Donald Trump, was perceived by the conservative Polish leadership primarily as an ideological ally. Many features of his policies were similar or identical to those of Law and Justice (refusal to accommodate migrants, rejection of ecoactivism as a political ideology, and skepticism towards international institutions, especially towards the European Union).

On the other hand, Polish nationalists' traditionally negative attitude towards Germans has received a new value dimension. From the standpoint of Polish conservatives, contemporary Germany, one of the leaders of the liberal world, is a symbol and source of the destructive tendencies that are gaining strength in Europe today (de-Christianization, multiculturalism, and destruction of society through identity politics). For its part, the Polish opposition regards the European Union and Germany as natural allies in the internal political struggle. The Civic Coalition traditionally leans on Berlin, for which PiS has all along labeled it as Germany's agent of influence (Mikhalev, 2018). In relations with the United States, Poland's liberals are close to the Democratic Party. This explains why they were so enthusiastic when they learned the name of the winner in the 2020 presidential election, Joseph Biden, who on the eve of his election, put Poland on the list of "totalitarian regimes" in Eastern Europe, next to Hungary and Belarus.

In an international context like this, Poland, firstly, has virtually no chance of resolving the internal conflict via external mediators, because those countries in the West that might act as go-betweens in Poland's internal conflict are experiencing similar difficulties, and their arbitration will not be neutral and impartial. Secondly, the ideological conflict in the West in general and in Poland in particular is causing a great deal of confusion in Warsaw's Eastern policy. For all ideological camps in the country this policy is confined to one narrative—messianism, but now it becomes unclear what kind of values Poland should teach Ukraine, Belarus, and other former Soviet republics to follow. After joining the EU, Poland championed the European choice among its eastern neighbors, but now it would look strange to try to lead others towards the EU while at the same time denying EU values and criticizing the current model of European integration. An attempt to plant the seeds of opposition in the EU that would serve as Poland's ideological ally against Germany and Brussels will certainly not suit either Brussels or the post-Soviet countries, for they are well aware that Polish assistance of this sort may close the door to the European Union.

In this respect quite illustrative is Poland's policy of soft power in relation to Belarus. Over thirty years, it has built an infrastructure in Belarus for influencing public opinion that ensures the reproduction of a stable 10 to 25-percent share of the citizens adhering to pro-Polish and pro-Western views and drifting towards NATO and the European Union (Nosovich, Petrovskiy, Starikov, 2015). The key feature of the Polish humanitarian impact is the initiative for Belarus's rapprochement not with Poland alone (with the exception of a very narrow segment of Belarusian Poles—the Polish ethnic minority living in the western regions of Belarus), but with the West in general—through Warsaw's mediation. At the same time, as the conflict between the PiS government and the European Union deepens and certain contradictions surface in relations with the United States, the image of Poland as a guide on the way to Europe looks ever more dubious.

Polish media and non-profit organizations traditionally target the liberal audience of large Belarusian cities, and they find it rather hard to explain to Belarusians why Poland's own policies are so conservative.

Poland's internal processes often contradict the arguments in favor of a rapprochement between Belarus and the West, as well as real stories about what life is like in contemporary Western Europe and the United States. It becomes obvious that culturally Poland is not a full-fledged part of the West. The internal processes in Polish society differ from those afoot in societies of major Western countries. Therefore, Poland's ambitions to steer Belarus into the EU and NATO are increasingly bewildering. Currently, Poland can offer opposition-minded Belarusians only a negative agenda: the road to the West as a way to fight the "imperial influence of Russia." The positive agenda is already raising questions as Poland itself actively criticizes the liberal values dominating the West and the current model of European integration. This internal conflict between the desire for EU enlargement and dissatisfaction with it in its current form reduces the effectiveness of Polish influence on Belarusian society.

The sole track on which the value factor does not change Polish geopolitics is Russia. Poland's main political forces view Moscow as a menace to Eastern Europe. The similarity of Russia's domestic policy of the last twenty years with that of Law and Justice (subordination of the government-run media to the ruling elite, pressure on opposition television channels, and obvious similarity of the Family 500+ program with Russia's maternity capital program) is being used by critics inside and outside the country for discrediting the latter as "Putinization of Poland" (Benyumov, 2017). The Polish authorities strongly reject this comparison. No rapprochement between Russia and conservative Poland on a common value basis is possible because the rejection of Russia as an empire that has not repented before its victims is the core of the Polish conservatives' standard set of political clichés. To their mind, the fact that Moscow (as opposed to the West) is guided in its actions by correct ideology merely increases the danger coming from it (Lagovskiy, 2018). Russia, whatever it may look like in the eyes of the Polish elites, will remain the constituent Other for Europe, which must consolidate itself in the face of the common threat coming from the East. Therefore, contemporary Russia's reliance on "sound values" makes things still worse for Europe.

In the recent history of Russian-Polish relations, periods of thaw occurred when leftist and liberal forces were in power in Warsaw. During the rule of the Civic Platform, Poland and Russia achieved partial depoliticization of the memory policy (the Katyn massacre) and a breakthrough in cross-border cooperation (visa-free travel between the Kaliningrad Region and the northeastern provinces of Poland). However, this background by no means turns the Polish globalists into Moscow's allies or friends. The benefits of participation in the containment strategy outweigh the potential gains from a rapprochement with Russia. Also, Warsaw's anti-Russian activities in the post-Soviet space during the Civic Platform's rule were not one iota milder than those of the Law and Justice party. It was under the government of Donald Tusk that Polish-Russian relations plunged into the current crisis (Shishelina, 2013).

Russia's interest in Poland lies mainly in the domain of its eastern policy: a quick look at the research works published in Russia in recent years (Krashennnikova, 2020; Vorotnikov, 2021) is quite telling in this respect. Warsaw's policies concerning Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, and other former Soviet republics manifest blatant hostility towards Moscow and the ongoing centuries-long competition with it for dominance in Eastern Europe. Warsaw believes that the former Soviet republics currently involved in the Eastern Partnership program should be pulled out of the sphere of Russia's geopolitical influence. To achieve this, Poland, acting both on its own behalf and on behalf of the entire Western community, should offer the countries of the post-Soviet space an alternative, including alternative values. This factor illuminates the key strategic problem of Poland's Eastern policy: in Poland itself there is no consensus on what exactly this alternative must be like.

Given the depth of the current split over values in Polish society, and Poland's ideological disputes with other Western countries, it is not clear not only where Poland itself is heading, but also where it is leading the countries located between Russia and the European Union. For Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus, the European choice that Poland offers them is getting unclear. In a situation of the ideological split in the West, it is increasingly difficult for Poland to preach Western values in

the former Soviet republics, because this very set of values is the subject matter of fierce debates both within the entire Western community and, in fact, in Poland itself, too. This situation objectively complicates Warsaw's efforts to reorient the post-Soviet space geopolitically.

As long as Poland acts as an internal critic of fundamental social and political processes in the West, it cannot be considered its plenipotentiary representative in the East. Consequently, if the contradictions between Poland and its Western allies persist, Warsaw will have to enhance its efforts in promoting its alternative of regional geopolitics among Eastern European countries. The Three Seas Initiative (or Intermarium) can be considered a prototype. Currently, it is being coordinated with the United States and proposed to the countries participating in the EU's Eastern Partnership program as a regional complement to their European and transatlantic integration (Goltzov, 2018; Zvyagina, 2018). In the event of Poland's further ideological drift away from the main Western countries, Intermarium may become an alternative to both.

However, at this point, the Three Seas Initiative is not perceived by the former Soviet republics as a full-fledged substitute for the prospects of joining NATO and the European Union. It is also unlikely that in the future they may begin to regard Intermarium as an alternative to integration with Western structures because the project proposed by Poland is a coalition of peripheral Western states and for this reason is hardly attractive to potential participants. Poland's further differentiation from the main part of the Western community—the United States and Western Europe—will reduce its attractiveness for the post-Soviet republics. Oddly enough, Poland's Eastern policy, which is meant to resist Russia's influence in Eastern Europe, will benefit Russia.

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