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How Do External Interdependencies Work? The Example of Geopolitics and Democracy in Poland

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The Background of Political Transformation: The Changing Faces of Globalization

There is no alternative to the development of external interdependencies in the era of globalization. An alternative was even less conceivable when Poland switched from Communism to Western-style capitalism in the course of political transformation that began in 1989. Globalization projects may differ in terms of their institutional and ideological context, but they share common foundations, namely the objectively increasing interdependencies caused by the scientific and technical revolution; particularly apparent in the field of information and communication technologies, the growing openness of economic markets, soaring social expectations of mobility – especially the mobility of human resources – as well as the readiness to coexist with fellow humans that represent diverse cultures. Even in conditions of partial de-globalization – resulting from the protectionist economic policy of governments like the Trump administration – nobody really regards the idea of reversing the globalization trend as realistic or rational. Only those who hoped that globalization – albeit exclusively neoliberal! – would imminently diminish the importance of the nation-state are bitterly disappointed, given that the process merely redefined our understanding of the latter notion.

From the empirical point of view, let us first state that the version of globalization known from the 1980s and the 1990s – based on "the falling costs of transportation and communication, along with a raft of new multilateral free-trade agreements" – becomes a thing of the past, steadily replaced with a new variant founded on "digital technology ... increasingly led by China and other emerging economies," as Susan Lund and Laura Tyson explain (Tyson and Lund, 2018, p. 130,131). This thought will need clari-

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fying because – as history has proven beyond doubt – globalization assumes various forms. The main features of the next metamorphosis are coming not only from the West, but also from the Rest of the world. Niall Ferguson presents six "killer applications:" competition, science, the rule of law, modern medicine, consumerism, and the work ethic, that made the West so prosperous, but now "the days of Western predominance are numbered because the Rest have finally downloaded the six killer apps" (Ferguson, 2011; cover). We must observe new developments, as they will certainly impact the situation of Poland and Central Europe. The current turmoil in trade between the USA and the EU, China, or Canada are a matter of minor importance compared to the tragic events of 1914–1945 that saw two World Wars and the rise of totalitarian regimes. Although nobody wants history to repeat itself, we must reconcile ourselves to the fact that some countries will withdraw from global cooperation. We have witnessed such political maneuvers in the period 1914–1945, when with the wave of de-globalization brought total wars and totalitarian regimes. Let us hope that the present de-globalization wave will be no more durable than the past one.

Since 1989, Poland had – qualitatively – more opportunities to benefit from external interdependences than ever in its history, at least from the mid-seventeenth century. Now, Poland needs to wisely choose from among the few conceivable globalization projects. However, given Poland's developmental backwardness, it must especially lay the necessary foundations that will make the implementation of this project(s) possible. It seems that we meet all the basic conditions to deal with these challenges: Poland has institutions that theoretically guarantee the right geopolitical position (sovereignty), democracy, market economy (democratic market capitalism), the rule of law, civil society, and the new media. These institutions favor the strengthening of contacts with Poland's external environment, namely the neighboring countries, EU member states, and the entire world. From the outside, our progress in terms of various indicators generally appears positive, even if such assessments recently became less favorable. Internally, judgments differ greatly and depend on one's political and ideological orientation, which would be normal had they not exacerbated so much in recent years as to become destructive for everyone involved.

Is Poland Back in the Jagiellonian Era or Does It Remain in the "Valley of Tears?"

The success in economic development proved most remarkable. Poland avoided the consequences of the 2007 financial crisis. In that period, many often referred to Poland as the "green island." Furthermore, according to *The Economist*, Poland found itself

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in a situation that could be likened to the position it occupied in the golden "Jagiellonian era" (*A Golden Opportunity*, 2014). In the political sphere, the society's expectations of liberal democratic capitalism, widespread in the early 1990s, have not exactly been fulfilled. In fact, many observed the opposite. Disappointment with this economic project fueled the rise of the Prawo i Sprawiedliwość party (Law and Order; abbr. PiS) and its electoral victory in 2015–2016 elections. Similar critical attitudes appeared in other countries like the United Kingdom (Brexit) or the USA (Donald Trump's presidency). Poland under PiS strives to overcome the weaknesses of the liberal democratic capitalism, yet its methods undermine the rule of law and the autonomy of the judiciary, which alarms not only the European Commission but also some sections of Polish society.

Since 1989, Poland greatly expanded its development resources but – according to a significant part of the general public – only to a satisfactory degree; that is, not optimally. This assessment may be harsh, but is fair when we account for the numerous institutional failures that pushed any greater success out of the country's reach. Improvement is contingent on two ingredients: on the one hand, competences and will of the elites and, on the other hand, the motivation of ordinary people to engage in both economic and civic activity. As for complaints about the elite, Poles are almost unanimous in their judgment and condemnation of the elites for what some call "desertion" (Kamiński, 2014). The notion finds confirmation in the opinion that Poles hold about politicians; in terms of reputation, the politicians consistently rank last in various opinion polls (Domański, 2009). In 2018, the doings of the "ruling class" ranked first (84% respondents) among "the reasons why you feel ashamed about being Polish." The same survey found that Poles are proud of "Poland's political transformation" (64%), Polish culture (56%), great Poles (40%) ("Z czego są dumni i czego się wstydzą czytelnicy "Wyborczej," 2018: 15). Fairly broad public support for the PiS government during the first three years of its administration proves that the general public does not consider the accusations voiced by the EU and part of the society as strategically important.

In an attempt to see the contexts of these developments, I have decided to examine the geopolitics and democracy. This means reaching into deeper layers of our history and its reverse course since 1989. Let us begin with "paths of dependency" and the possibility to sidestep them. History lives within us; it often proves helpful but sometimes can also be disruptive. A German liberal Ralph Dahrendorf – a keen supporter of Poland and its democratic endeavors – foresaw a possible turn of events at the beginning of the transformation process. Dahrendorf predicted a "valley of tears" that awaited countries that undergo the transformation process. He claimed that, while political changes can be completed within six months, changes to the economic system in six

years, the evolution of public attitudes and behavior will need sixty years, namely two generations (Dahrendorf, 1991). At the moment, we are no further than halfway through this process and, therefore, can assume that what will prove decisive is the emergence of an active civil society, able to face the challenges of today and tomorrow. The socio-cultural factor is the key to the ongoing social change not only according to Dahrendorf but also the economist-historian Douglass C. North. After all, it was mainly through this sphere that the demise of the Communist system in the USSR and elsewhere dissolved (North, 2014, p. 23–47, 153–162).

Poland is the best example that confirms this claim. Within the politics-economy-society triangle, the latter turned out to be of the greatest importance. The events of 1956, 1970, 1980–81, and 1989 proved this fact. The Polish sovereign-nation can be seen as either stubborn or – quite the opposite – very mysterious in accepting or rejecting certain decisions (e.g. martial law has long been recognized as justified, post-communists regained power for a while), but regardless of the facts that we choose to consider, one thing is certain: the ultimate decision-maker has always been the society.

Geopolitics: The Components of the Phenomenon

"Geopolitics is a way of looking and engaging with the world: one that considers the links between power, geography, and knowledge," writes Klaus Dodds (Dodds, 2014, cover). None of the above factors alone can ensure a favorable geopolitical position: neither strength nor geographical location, nor knowledge. Since 1989, Poland has improved in all of these fields, which means that its geopolitical position has clearly strengthened and is now considerably more propitious than it was before 1989; we could even venture the claim that Poland is at its best since the country's loss of independence at the end of the eighteenth century. Let us now discuss each of these factors separately.

First, the potential of Poland's physical location in Europe improved. Over the last two hundred years, Poland's geographical location was considered its curse. Wedged between its too potent neighbors – Germany and Russia – Poland repeatedly fell victim to their aggressive policy. All national uprisings were doomed to failure in the face of the forces that ruled Europe in the aftermath of the 1815 Congress of Vienna. Since 1989, geography has become one of Poland's assets: the country is now firmly anchored in the West through the EU and NATO, which enables it to serve as a link between the East and the West, as well as the North and the South. A scholar from Poznań critically analyzes this change on the basis of Polish contemporary literature in his book *Poruszona mapa* (Czapliński, 2016).

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Second, the strength of Poland's state (power) grows fast. Poland operates according to the principles derived from the most developed regions of the world – the West – namely liberal democracy, capitalist market, and the rule of law. We look up to and learning from the West, despite its recent failures; some of which seem difficult to overcome. Even if Poles often are critical of the West, it remains an attractive point of reference. Our relationships with the West can develop only once we have defined the right balance between our interests and values; and the interests and values of the West. Certain symmetry is necessary however, the scope of our political choices has grown considerably. State authorities must not limit themselves to thinking about the survival of the nation but also deal with the foundations upon which it depends, namely economic stability, political intelligence, and socio-cultural identities. It was probably these matters that Samuel P. Huntington had in mind when he wrote: "*Its simple assumption* that *power is as starting point* for *understanding state behavior* that *does not get one very far. States define their interests* in *terms of power but also* in *terms* of *much else besides*" (Huntington, 1997, p. 30).

Third, in the era of scientific and technological revolution, our knowledge of ourselves and of the world expands at an accelerating pace. On the one hand, this leads to economic successes based on increased effectiveness and, on the other hand, to a wider participation of citizens in the life of local communities and the state. It is not only about the practical competencies and the ability of the elite to formulate strategies, including foreign policy, but also the ability to encourage and manage civic activity. In order to attain these goals, we need the geopolitical imagination of the elite and society, which takes the form of constant learning for a better structure of Poland's relations with its neighbors and the entire world.

Unsurprisingly, there are several qualitatively different ways of linking these three factors or formulas of geopolitical imagination in Poland. They are the product of the constantly changing environment, as well as our own ideas about the position that we wish to occupy within it. Geopolitics is perceived as a relatively rigid structure, even though the world evolves at an increasingly rapid pace. This is conducive to changes in the structures of the world, to reversing its pyramids of wealth, power, and prestige. Including the Polish state or Polish economic and socio-cultural institutions, various agencies tried to transform these structures into new and more advantageous configurations. Following the fall of Communism, success has become more attainable.

Geopolitical Imagination: Four Traditions

I believe that the following approaches to the geopolitical imagination of Poles deserve special attention (Morawski, 2011, p. 334–339).

First: "Poland in a Europe of homelands." This perspective is moderately conservative. It recognizes the advantages of Poland's membership in the EU as a nation-state because it is perceived as the main agency for social change, even if slightly redefined by the European integration processes. This concept is the most popular. It remains an open question whether it is not too modest, and therefore a barrier to innovative search for new ways of solving problems that afflict Poland and other EU countries. This vision allows for economic integration, although its form has yet to be defined. Integration is determined, among others, by competition from the USA, China, Russia, India, and other countries. The following question remains: if any further political integration is to be halted – which is the main idea behind the "Europe of Homelands" – up to which point can further economic or socio-cultural integration be opposed? And what about the political sphere, for example, the idea of creating EU military forces operating alongside NATO?

The above questions are closely linked to this option, which assumes that Poland "already is part of the West," that it represents a valuable and integral part of it, and is not a mere supplement. The problem is that the countries of Western Europe may wish to cooperate more closely in the face of new challenges, such as the new scale of international migration. In short, the EU expects Poland to be more open and respond to external developments rather than run away from them. At the same time, the EU itself was busy trying to overcome the internal crisis and halted many new initiatives. This concept is implemented in Poland through a kind of passive attitude; consequently, Poland and the entire EU get sidetracked in the race for a better tomorrow.

Second: "Poland within a federal Europe." According to this concept, the European Union seeks to strengthen its political integration or even build a sort of a "United States of Europe." Various liberal and leftist forces promote this approach, albeit rather inconsistently. It is met with a strong resistance from those who favor the concept of the "Europe of Homelands," which currently dominates the EU: the liberal conservatives; that is Christian democratic circles in Germany, but also social democrats, whose political clout recently wanes. In fact, it is a concept of a cosmopolitan Europe, in which nation-states no longer occupy the front stage (Beck and Grande, 2009). This concept seemed attractive at the time of Poland's accession to the EU; its attractiveness and popularity faded after the political successes of conservative or extreme-right forces. The latter

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oppose immigration – both wanted and unwanted – and have managed to gain considerable public support; thus, Poles suspended the prospect of strong integration for an indefinite period of time.

Is this a realistic concept? Only a small minority has championed the idea of a united Europe. The continent has been divided and fragmented throughout its history and, thus far, numerous attempts to build a single Europe have failed. Charlemagne was probably the most successful in bringing this project to fruition back in 800, but let us note that in geographical terms, he did not rule over the entire European territory. Many authors regard the idea of Europe that is federal or unified as no more than an illusion whose proponents fail to take into account certain elementary facts about our continent and its inhabitants (Jones, 2003; Judt, 2012). This would be against our nature and our DNA, even if it seems feasible to deepen and strengthen different forms of cooperation, not only economic. A glaring example is the qualitative change in relations between France and Germany, countries that not so long ago waged three ferocious wars against each other (1870–1871, 1914–1918, 1939–1945). Relations between Poland and Germany also underwent a positive metamorphosis after the Second World War, initiated by the actions of the Polish Church.

Third: "Catholic Poland." Definitions of this concept vary. According to some, the idea of the Catholic state of the Polish nation is strongly rooted in its culture, making "Poland what it is." Its partisans are willing to support only those variants of "Europeanness" that are entirely compatible with their definition of "Polishness." Although it is difficult to pinpoint these ideas, its proponents simplified the task by claiming that Christianity is the core of Polishness and Europe. For some, it is Christianity alone, even if up until a few years ago, the Greek culture, Roman law, or traditions of the Enlightenment also appeared in the equation. In most general terms, its proponents most harshly criticize the EU elite for its failure to revere and cultivate the Christian tradition in Western culture. This criticism is sometimes unjust, should we consider that the societies of the EU member states are not uniquely Christian. Therefore, we should not blame Brussels and Strasbourg elites for the secularization of Europe. Some Poles vilify the European elite because the former object to any interference of the European Commission in Polish internal affairs, for instance, the rule of law. It remains to be seen whether the supporters of this concept will go as far as advocating Poland's exit from the EU. Without this postulate, Polish criticism of the EU elite would perfectly fit into the concept of the "Europe of Homelands." The conviction that our presence in Europe does not have to mean Poland's belonging to the EU seems a forward-looking idea.

Fortunately, there is no single concept of "Catholic Poland". On the contrary, when defined differently, it can astound with its sense of mission and pragmatism, even if the idea of anchoring and community remains an important part thereof. Krzysztof Czyżewski expresses the idea most aptly: "The problem is not that people have locked themselves in their hideaways, but that there is no way out of them.... We no longer appreciate minor centers of the world. We have neglected the strength of David, who is to stand up against Goliath, and whose actions are not confined to any abstract categories, but instead take place close to the people. Such centers have a radiating power, as they do not dominate like their large counterparts, they do not demand exclusivity, but only build a sort of connective tissue with other centers of the world.... If we are to create cultures of solidarity, we need a different set of tools than the legacy of many centuries of fight for sovereignty and freedom" (Czyżewski, 2018, p. 29).

Fourth: "Peripheral Poland." That one may perceive our geopolitical position as peripheral or semi-peripheral, which in itself reveals little. In fact, Poland tends to rank near the middle on various international lists. Its 25th–35th position among nearly 200 countries of the world should probably be considered quite enviable. The challenge lies in finding ways to better take advantage of this semi-peripheral position. In particular, given the variety of greatly divergent concepts of leaving the periphery, Poland needs to manage its path towards the set goal and desired results.

In most cases, the literature of non-Western countries associates the peripheries with anger and nationalism (Mishra, 2017). Anger has turned into strategies of modernization and an effective elimination of structural obstacles along the path of rapid development. Poles tend to perceive its underdevelopment as extremely difficult to overcome for one of two reasons: either because Poland still functions within the paradigm of "path dependency" and the past cannot be changed – which emphasizes internal obstacles – or because old or new "powers" still manage to exercise control over the country, which emphasizes external obstacles. Regardless, the issue of limited sovereignty and even references to colonialism are bound to surface in the discussion. The historical challenge was to defy such powers as Russia or Germany. Today, even though we are part of the EU together with Germany, such opinions still sometimes appear. It is different in the case of Russia, as our relations have recently been rather tense. However, there is one broadly accepted global power in Poland: the United States of America. Very rarely does the USA arouse negative reactions in Poland, yet critical assessments appear even in statements made by conservatives who see the world as a chessboard, on which Poland is merely a pawn, still unable to play at a satisfying level, even with America.

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This approach contrasts with the majority of publications that refer to the concept of the periphery, which represent a more balanced view and tend to sketch various paths out of the state of backwardness (Zarycki, 2016). Here, arguments mainly pertain to the economic dependence on external capital, as well as other types of capital. When it comes to economic dependencies, one should avoid the extremes. Jan Czekaj explains this empirically: "The presence of foreign capital in Poland is not the result of the fact that it has chosen our country as a place of expansion and exploitation, but rather the outcome of several decades of globalization." Czekaj emphasizes that when it comes to the share of foreign capital companies in GDP generation (currently 14.7%), Poland ranks sixteenth out of the twenty-eight EU member states, far behind Hungary, the Czech Republic or even Slovakia, Romania, Latvia, and Estonia, but higher than Croatia or Lithuania (Czekaj, 2018, p. A28). Foreign capital is present in Poland just as it is in other countries of the region. Although, it cuts both ways; without foreign capital, it would not have been possible to modernize the Polish economy given the insufficiency of own capital resources. All post-communist member states of the EU seek to attract foreign investments and an inflow of external capital. So does the PiS government, although its voters often complain about this state of affairs and lament the fact that "the EU oppresses us."

Peripherality may also be regarded as an asset. Not necessarily on the basis of the assumption that if we are confined to the periphery, we have to be able to manage this situation. It is quite the opposite, we cope precisely because of the way things are and the burden is not as heavy as it may seem. As Tadeusz Sławek aptly puts it, "It is from right there, from the periphery, that I can see what is coming, what the world brings in my direction. It remains invisible to those in the center formed by a system of mirrors reflecting each other.... Repeat a hundred times a day trite phrases about "getting up from our knees" and "the grandeur of Polish history" and you get a classic model of centralist foreign policy.... Peripherality occupies the front row, a place from which the world looks quite different compared to the phantasm of those in power" (Sławek, 2018, p. 7).

The West Enjoys Public Support but Poland's Ambitions Are Greater

The above descriptions do not exhaust the multitude of visions commonly held by Poles regarding the use of the country's geographical area since 1989. Further observations prove that the perception of geopolitics will forever be characterized by shifts and unsteadiness. Incidentally, it seems beneficial for Poland.

First, replacing the East with the West has been met with strong yet partly conditional social support. People are increasingly aware of the weakness of the West and its inability to tackle the consequences of the crisis that affected it badly in 2007. Participation in joint efforts aimed at overcoming these difficulties will be a proof of our involvement on the international arena.

Second, Poles' expectations of themselves – and thus of the West as well – develop, although there clearly surfaces an important shift. While economy and democracy seemed to prevail in the period following the demise of Communism and the end of the Cold War, national security issues now gain currency. Geo-economics failed to replace geopolitics, which may have lost some of its urgency but remains prominent.

Third, the West is not the only focus of our attention. Although the East remains important, it looks like China has taken the place once occupied by Russia as an attractive economic partner. Relations with Asia, albeit still in their nascent phase, gain momentum. By the same token, the North and the South slowly move towards Poland's field of focus. It is exemplified by the Baltic-Adriatic-Black Sea Initiative – or the Three Seas Initiative – which thus far remained vague, unnecessarily labeled and promoted as an antidote to our cooperation with the West. However, the initiative is an indispensable and commendable element of relations among the states of the region.

Democracy and Capitalism: The Global Experience

Most consider democracy a necessary condition for the development of the market economy. What are the foundations of this concept of democracy? After all, it is an institution emblematic of modern times – even if no more than two centuries old – with a few interruptions in the history of its development, like the rise of totalitarian or autocratic regimes. Generally speaking, our experiences point to the following: capitalism enabled the development of democracy and not the other way around. In other words, democracy is a consequence of capitalism. Arthur Schlesinger Jr. argues that "Democracy is impossible without private ownership, because private property – resources beyond the arbitrary reach of the state – provides the only secure basis for political opposition and intellectual freedom. But the capitalist market is no guarantee of democracy, as Deng Xiaoping, Lee Kuan Yew, Pinochet, Franco, not to mention Hitler and Mussolini, have amply demonstrated. Democracy requires capitalism, but capitalism does not require democracy, at least in a short run" (Schlesinger, 1997, p. 7).

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Capitalism began laying foundations for democracy since the sixteenth century, even if modern democracy is no older than two hundred years. Democracy required the constant growth and enrichment of new classes and social strata which – over time – demanded the representation of their interests and participation in important institutions at the state level: in the parliament, through the rule of law, civil society, the media, and the central bank. This is to say that, in order to function, democracy needs democrats. Historically, the first democrats were representatives of the bourgeoisie, then the middle classes, and finally the growing number of workers.

The history of democracy begins in the late eighteenth century, with two great revolutions: in France and in America. Various forms of trade and agrarian capitalism developed earlier – along with supporting institutions – like banks, even if their history goes back further than the history of capitalism. A legal framework was necessary to protect private property, even if it was not necessarily referred to as democratic order from the very start. The events of the Glorious Revolution in England (1688–1689) resulted in a constitutional monarchy that replaced absolute monarchy (North, 1997) and augured what was to come. Earlier Republican solutions, even if few and far between, also deserve a mention in this context.

Democracy did not materialize at the same time everywhere. In fact, it was quite the opposite. Democracy slowly made its way to the political scene, hampered by a plethora of obstacles or even periods of discontinuation that Samuel P. Huntington compares to sea waves; each flow of democratization was ineluctably followed by an ebb (Huntington, 1997). Ancient Greeks may have practiced democracy, but it was a very particular regime under which only a minority of inhabitants of Athens or other cities actually had a chance of getting their voice heard. Plato and Aristotle were critical of democracy, pointing out that it may lead to populism. Aristotle pinned his hopes on middle classes. It was not until the nineteenth and twentieth century that apprehension, or negative experiences related to democracy, finally faded. Demand for democracy grew among modern nations. Today, we practice democracy universally, albeit with one important reservation. Bernard Crick formulates it as follows: "Democracy is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for good government, and that ideas of the rule of law, and of human rights, and the claims and liberties of groups within society must often limit the will of democratic majorities" (Crick, 2002, cover).

Poland Today: First Democracy, Then Capitalism

Today's Poland exemplifies a deviation from the previously outlined order, that is, the development of capitalism allowing the emergence of democracy. Here, I refer to the Solidarity revolution that paved way for capitalism. It was a mass social movement with around ten million members, who regularly expressed their support for direct democracy or, at least, for the involvement of workers in the management of companies. After 1989, the proponents of this movement rather unexpectedly advocated a systemic reform that was to bring about the market economy and liberal democracy. Under the conditions of state socialism – a form of statism in which power is exercised by the ruling party – workers and Solidarity members demanded access to something that they thought they were capable of managing. They were convinced that they could manage or co-manage state companies, in which they had worked and gained professional experience. This sometimes meant that state ownership should be treated as common property. This idea was rooted not exclusively but mainly in the socialist doctrine.

Members of Solidarity hoped for a system of close direct democracy such as economic self-government, which is not necessarily compatible with the market economy. They were aware of the fact that the statist economy based on the rule of the party had brought about only a series of disasters. However, the Round Table Talks in April 1989 dismissed the idea of direct democracy. Partly democratic parliamentary elections and democratic Senate elections held on June 4, 1989, were a leap into indirect democracy. The first non-communist government of Tadeusz Mazowiecki soon emerged. On January 1, 1990, there began a systemic transformation toward the capitalist market economy and liberal democracy.

Polish capitalism was preceded by a democratic revolution called Solidarity. Why did things take this particular turn? The easiest way to explain this is through reference to geopolitics. The Solidarity elite, together with the reformist post-communist forces, decided to establish this political system because this choice was possible only as a result of the geopolitical defeat of communism by capitalism. In turn, the liberal democracy model and the neoliberal model of the Anglo–Saxon (Thatcher-Reagan) capitalist economy were, at the time, the two main courses in the menu of the triumphant West after the fall of communism. It was a reasonable choice, even if it felt like an arranged marriage. The semblance of a free choice is evident if we consider the program presented by Solidarity during the Oliwa Congress. At that time, Polish elites failed to take into account alternative solutions: the economy of self–government was, after all, very close to the ethos of Solidarity, as was the version of capitalism that appeared most attractive to Solidarity, namely the social-democratic model typical of Scandinavian countries and champio-

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ned by professor Tadeusz Kowalik. Worse still, even the valuable ideas and practices of the social market economy (Germany) were disregarded, although the slogan itself made it to Poland's Constitution of 1997. There also emerged no co-management practices, that is, the real participation of trade unions in economic decisions taken on the enterprise or industry level, common in Germany. Taking the above into account, the claim about the "desertion" – or even betrayal – of Solidarity elites seems not so far-fetched. Here, I refer mainly to the betrayals of subsequent Solidarity trade union leaders.

From Imitating the West to Criticism of Western Solutions

Poland imitated Western models, although not copied them like the Soviet models, imposed during the Communist period. The state did pressure for the implementation of Western models in accordance with the neoliberal ideology, which lacks spontaneous faith in the market and expects the state not only to provide direct support to the market economy but even contribute to the modeling of society as the market society (Mirowski, 2018). Therefore, socio-economic tensions within society and unexpected political conflicts were unavoidable.

This imitation was often criticized (Krasnodębski, 2003). Sometimes rightly, but not when the country develops so-called creative imitation, as the Japanese case have shown in the nineteenth century. According to some scholars, the term "modernization" itself was not particularly felicitous, probably because they considered it unduly permeated with Western models (Lubbe, 2010). What kind of imitation actually remains a subject of contention. Which external solutions should be adopted and why depends solely on the public's will, at least in the long run. Alas, social will proved to waver; this inconsistency translated into state functioning formulas shaped by institutions of representative democracy. These formulas are simultaneously realistic and minimalist (J. Schumpeter). One must not forget that the Great Solidarity of 1980–1981 dreamed about something more, and this dream seems to have been completely forgotten once the transformation began. It is true that, for some time, the so-called workers' ownership was put into place, but this formula was doomed from the start, despite the support of this institution and of similar solutions expressed by John Paul II in the encyclical *Laborem Exercens*, published in the autumn of 1981.

It is true that the political manifestoes of Solidarity formulated in the 1980s were vague, even if ambitious; one could even describe them as populist but in a positive sense of this term. Solidarity's populism defined society as "we" who stood against "them," that is, the authoritarian party in power. It seemed a fair assessment of the situation.

Among the various factions represented by the Solidarity members, the social-democratic movement was the strongest. Other camps included liberals, Christian democrats, and nationalists. These proposals could not become institutional operations for the simple reason of the lack of practical experience of Solidarity members. They were merely dreams, sheer attempts at constructing a new social imagination by Polish industrial workers, the majority of whom were of peasant origin, just like their leader Lech Wałęsa. Their vision and practice turned out to be more effective in the 1980s than the endeavors of nineteenth-century aristocratic insurgents. Industrial workers won their battle, unlike their noble predecessors, whose attempts failed until 1918, when the country finally regained independence following the defeat of Poland's three invaders: Austria, Germany, and Russia.

Although workers' actions proved effective, they ended up losing the final battle against two forces. On the one hand, the surrounding world of neoliberal change brought about by geopolitics and globalization; on the other hand, the nascent mechanisms of democracy and capitalism within the country. Liberal democracy in all of its dimensions – ideas, institutions, people (mentality and political behavior) – had not been extensively questioned until PiS came to power in 2016. It is now apparent that the party tried to undermine certain institutional structures, but the introduction of the PiS's "good change" (the main election slogan of the party) means not so much undermining democracy, but rather infusing it with a new sense that is more suited to the needs of Poland as a nation-state, or even, as some call for, a Christian nation-state. Many argue that the practices of the PiS government erode the very idea of democracy, in particular, liberal democracy which, following the Hungarian model, has already earned the label of illiberal democracy.

The concept of democracy is ambiguous and extensible. The distinction between democracy and socialist (people's) democracy used to be ridiculed; now, it is time for such analogies. As an emblematic concept of modernity, democracy turned out to be quite a chimera. The PiS government dismiss any criticism of their policies, even though evidence abounds with the validity of at least some negative evaluations of their policies. Criticism mainly aims at changes in the separation of powers: the diminishing of the competences of the Constitutional Tribunal and the weakening of the role of the National Council of the Judiciary through submitting it to the will of the Minister of Justice and the Sejm. A large part of the legal community is adamant in claiming that these actions are detrimental to the judiciary, that is, they undermine the rule of law. The European Commission considers such developments to be a threat to the model of liberal democracy. Critics of these changes argue that the methods used by the government attempt at creating party dependency throughout the state apparatus, and that they remind

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of the old communist practices. Such assessments proliferate especially outside of Poland, namely in the influential media like the Brussels *Politico* portal. The American bimonthly *Foreign Affairs* looks at the phenomenon more broadly, in global terms, and asks "Is democracy dying?" It finds confirmation in numerous articles about the trouble with saving democracy in today's world of uncertainty (Inglehart, 2018), the recent mishaps of American democracy (Mead, 2018), and the rise of the authoritarian rule (Mounk and Foa, 2018). Examples from Poland and Hungary illustrate what the road towards "illiberal democracy" looks like in Eastern Europe (Krastev, 2018).

Phases of De-Democratization?

We should wait for the next local and parliamentary elections before we formulate the final judgment, as they will be the ultimate test of what society – which sets the tone for the political life in communist, post-communist, and post-Solidarity Poland – really thinks about PiS's policies; since 2005, only non-post-communist parties have been in power. These elections will prove whether Poles have really given up liberal democracy and replaced it with electoral democracy. I refer here to de-democratization processes and the four phases discussed by Cas Mudde and Cristobal Rovira Kaltwasser: liberal democracy, electoral democracy, competitive authoritarianism, and full–scale authoritarianism (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2017, p. 86–93). Although some claim that Poland has entered the phase of authoritarianism (neoauthoritarianism), in the light of the above definitions, this claim can only be corroborated after the next parliamentary elections.

Therefore, let us wait for the verdict of society affectionately dubbed the "sovereign," as well as the subsequent actions of the political class. Political uncertainty grows. First of all, it is all about a critical evaluation of the political transformation process. It was regarded essentially as our own achievement accomplished in the context of the global tectonic shift of the Eastern plate towards the West. Many see it as "God's arrangements." In any case, it is our own feat, as power has been exercised by the elites representing Solidarity or post-communist forces, even though largely dependent on the Western logic in both economy and security. This direction of change was ordained by the "higher forces;" after all, it was Pope John Paul II – an advocate of the vision of Poland as part of the West – who acted as an intermediary in Poland's attempts at accessing the EU. This is sometimes negated by PiS, as the party combats all traces of communist and post-communist traditions and describes some Poles as representing the "worse sort" or even "non-Poles." This mode of thinking based on exclusion (enemy-friend), derives from the theology of political conservative Carl Schmitt. The moral-political unity is always an illusion, but insistent endeavors at lessening it may undermine the very prin-

ciple of democracy. In the religious and political sphere, such attempts at opposing different social groups take various forms, for instant questioning the validity of Pope Francis's statements about our duty of providing help to the refugees: shall we see in them Jesus Christ himself, as Pope Francis urges us to do?

Second, there are social attitudes towards political elites, repeatedly expressed through the dismissing and enthroning of various governments, representing both Solidarity forces and post-communist traditions; for instance, in 1993, 1995, and 2000. Post-communist forces decidedly left the political scene in 2016. Given that PiS's endeavors to gain support are based mostly on its anti-communist rhetoric, two issues deserve a mention. The first regards a balanced assessment of the martial law by Poles, who still consider this decision to be the "lesser of the two evils and, therefore, believe that its introduction was the "right thing to do." This has been evidenced in subsequent public opinion surveys carried out by CBOS, for instance, twenty and twenty-five years after December 13, 1981. Simultaneously, respondents admit to feelings of fear and insecurity – back then and even now (Wenzel, 2010, p. 33). The second example is the lack of public support for PiS's proposal to degrade generals and other members of the Communist military regime. This public disagreement was echoed in the President's veto who, after all, takes his own popularity from the strong support for his home party, PiS.

Third, there are paradoxes and traps in these current affairs. Let us suppose a return to power of the post-communists, an ambiguous assessment of the martial law or opinion about the degradation of generals and officers are elements of broader phenomena that one may call social traps or secrets of the "sovereign." Despite the illusions of extremely conservative forces, we should expect more decisions of this kind. It is not only about the mutual relations between the elites and society, but about the very content of cultural change, which is a deeper context that affects the events. The cultural change seems beyond the reach of public debate, which is rickety, random, and aimed at an immediate success. Meanwhile, in social life, we face the unintended functions of institutions, institutional responses to questions that no one asked but which plan and organize our life on a quotidian scale yet only account for its out-of-the-ordinary elements.

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Z czego są dumni i czego się wstydzą czytelnicy „Wyborczej", *Gazeta Wyborcza* 16 May: 15.