

DRAFT CHAPTER

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Euroscepticism [case: Poland]

1. Introduction: The history of Poland's EU membership and political debates on European integration.

With the collapse of the Iron Curtain and the commencement of economic and systemic transformation, Central and Eastern European countries, Poland among others, began the process of the “return to Europe” – understood not only as a collection of values, but also as a concrete institutional framework. Since the 90s, accession to the EU structures constituted a strategic goal in Polish foreign policy, which was the only policy area conducted in a consistent way by subsequent governments, regardless of their party affiliation (Terry 2000: 8). As early as in 1990, Poland applied for negotiations in regard to an association agreement with the European Communities, and appointed Jan Kułakowski as its first ambassador to the EEC. The association agreement between Poland and the EEC, signed in 1991, imposed a series of obligations with regard to economic, political and legal systems. (Górska 2006: 170). As a result of these changes and accession negotiations, Poland, together with other countries of the former Soviet communist bloc, signed the Accession Treaty in 2003, thereby fulfilling the idea of a “return to Europe”.

In the Polish public discourse on Europe, one can distinguish a few stages connected with the process of European integration. The first of them, lasting until the accession referendum in 2003, was characterised by the assumption of the “obviousness” of integration as a normal course of events, due to the “return to Europe”. At the same time, it is worth remembering that Poland’s place in Europe was not debated among the general public, but only in certain, relatively limited groups.

Publicization of the discourse and the intensification of public debate on membership only coincided with the date of accession referendum in 2003¹, and therefore resulted in an intense campaign and an increased presence in the media, both by supporters and adversaries of integration.

¹ The accession referendum took place on June 7th – 8th, 2003, with the turnout of 58,85 %, and among these 77,45% voted to support Poland’s EU membership.

In 2004, when membership into the EU became reality, debate on integration became aimless and gave way to the discussion about Poland's place in European structures, as well as further development and shape of the Union. The topics of this debate resulted from subsequent institutional decisions and activities of the Union and gradually became more concrete and detailed. The most heated discussion regarded the voting procedures in the Council of the European Union and allocation of votes to particular member states (from the defence of the Nice system in the name of the slogan "Nice or death!", through attempts to exhort the so-called square root system, to the adoption of a double majority rule and the so-called Ioannina compromise). Other debated problems included the issue of deadlines for lifting the restrictions on land purchases by citizens of other member states, opening up the labour markets to Polish citizens, energy, the EU constitution and its preamble, and the Charter of Fundamental Rights. (Ziółkowski and Jędrzejewska 2009:22-23).

Almost since its very beginning, Polish debate about Poland's place in the European Union referred to the category of "national interest" as the principal issue, since care of national interest is traditionally, a fundamental indicator of Polish patriotism. Curiously enough, this category is adduced by both the adversaries of integration (eurorejects) and euroenthusiasts – nonetheless, each of these groups understands it in a totally different way. This embeddedness in the national community, understood as "we" and being part of the opposition "us" vs. "them", is to some extent a legacy of communism as felt through a deeply rooted feeling of community under threat, and a rejection of the surrounding system. (Ziółkowski and Jędrzejewska 2009:26-27). This discourse is connected with the discourse of "endangered identity", which will be discussed later in this paper.

After the accession, the stirred emotions naturally settled down. The Polish people now regard the presence within EU structures as a natural thing, although there are numerous voices depreciating the role of the EU in modernization of the country, or blaming the EU for all the misfortunes in Polish politics. It is worth noting, that the current division between supporters and objectors of European integration overlaps with the division between beneficiaries and losers in the Polish transformation.

The key fact to understanding Polish euroscepticism is in the strong correlation between domestic and supranational politics. The domestic political arena with its divisions has a

significant impact on the perception of the EU as such, and also on the support for candidates in the elections to the European Parliament – voters tend to cast along the same lines as their national party preferences rather than supranational fractions.

Currently more than 61% of Polish society views Polish membership in the EU positively with a mere 8% being decidedly dissatisfied. At the same time, more than 74% of Polish people believe that presence in the EU is beneficial to the country². In the light of these statistics, and also from the perspective of six years of membership in the European Union, party programmes and political organisations have undergone major evolution – particularly interesting is the change in rhetoric of these actors on the political stage that used to negate the validity of integration and Polish membership in the EU. In their case we can observe the change of rhetoric from one of radically anti-European, to that of scepticism, however, at the same time, accepting the very idea of a united Europe and Polish participation in it. Organisations and political parties (and consequently their followers) which claim that the accession to European structures was a mistake and Polish presence in the EU is detrimental to the state, are now marginal groups. At the same time, it is worth noting, that they are actively participating in on-line debate.

a. Research questions and subsequent hypotheses

According to a conceptual framework developed in “Denouncing European integration: Euroscepticism as polity contestation” paper (Trenz and de Wilde, Recon Working Paper 2009/10), Euroscepticism is understood as a discursive formation in the making and as part of polity contestation. Euroscepticism can be linked to the uncertainty of polity design and difficulties in political communication. In this respect, contesting the European Union and European integration cannot be controlled by a single actor’s strategy or choice, becoming a narrative in which the value of European integration is constantly undermined and disavowed (Trenz and de Wilde 2009).

Euroscepticism, in this meaning becomes a response to the activity of the European Union and its presence in everyday life. In this sense, it should be analysed in connection with the processes of European integration.

² Eurobarometer autumn 2009, more results
http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb72/eb72_fact_pl_en.pdf

Polish criticism of the European Union and the process of integration frequently results from poor knowledge about the functioning of the European Union, but also how it impacts the life of citizens. Thus, it is a result of fixed stereotypes and the play on emotions (i.e. fear of German domination or the disappearance of Polish national identity). Lack of information in this regard only contributes to further consolidation of so-called, “common knowledge”, which is characterised by either a negative or ambivalent attitude to integration.

To sum up, in the case of Polish euroscepticism, a negative assessment of the EU and integration results from not only a lack of trust and a negative attitude towards politics in general, but also a lack of knowledge about the rules of how the EU functions. What is more, as was noted in the conceptual paper, Euroscepticism is expressed through mass media. If we consider on-line media, which we are interested in this project, they constitute a very limited segment of the media market, aimed at a rather limited target group. As will be revealed further on, in the electronic media in question, eurosceptic discourse is a rare phenomenon, as are EU issues in general – and if found there, are almost always in close relation to domestic politics, the perception of which affects the perception of the EU and the idea of integration.

i. Euroscepticism expressed in the on-line debates during the campaigns for the European Parliament elections

On-line debates before the elections to the European Parliament in 2004 and 2009 got off to a late start, not commencing until nearly four weeks before the election. The presence of election-related threads in electronic media initially boiled down to the presentation of candidates, and then, with the election approaching, narrowed down to the assessment of the prospects for particular committees or prospective coalitions in the European Parliament. The on-line platforms under study lacked publicist, and short, synthetic information was predominant. Interestingly enough, debate over political programmes was practically non-existent, and the discussion on the future shape of the European Union was limited to underscoring the division into supporters and adversaries of deepening integration.

In relation to pro-European evaluations?

The main source of knowledge about the EU and European integration for the Poles has so far been the media. At the present time of the dynamically developing electronic media, the key factor becomes not only the ability to find information, but also its absorption and utilisation (Zuba 2006:232).

Those opposing integration, rely their opinions on so-called “common knowledge” and as it was shown in an opinion poll carried out before the accession referendum, 63% of the respondents declared that their opinions are based on “their own considerations”, while 36% on “conversations with acquaintances”, and only 16% on the transmission from politicians, and the remaining 11% on information derived from newspapers (Skotniska-Iliasiewicz 2002:8). A public opinion poll before the referendum revealed that in the choice of candidates, 30% would be guided by their family’s opinion, 19% the Catholic Church’s, and 15% the party’s they supported (CBOS 2003).

These factors indicate that eurosceptic attitudes in Polish society are mainly determined by phenomena occurring on a domestic political arena, and the knowledge of the practical reality of the EU, for instance, the existence of supranational fractions in the European Parliament, is still scant. Correlation between social moods and support for main political institutions (governmental, presidential) and the number of adversaries of integration in Polish society is conspicuous. Therefore, it is worth noting that an affective factor is one of the main components influencing the perception of the European Union and support for further integration (Zuba 2006:233-234).

Correlation with pro-European evaluations is only observable in relation to domestic politics – Civic Platform, and Democratic Left Alliance followers are regarded as euroenthusiasts by nature, thoughtlessly approving of the Union, in contrast to whom opposition is created by “realists” who tend to notice threats, especially with regard to the process of deepening integration.

i. How do the specific targets and dimensions of evaluation found in Eurosceptic evaluations relate to our general *knowledge* about Euroscepticism in your country from the literature? Can you account for any observed differences?

In general, on-line debate about Poland’s membership into the EU and further integration is marked with strong emotions and reflects division lines in the domestic political arena. This applies mainly to comments posted by ordinary Internet users, since information provided by portals in the form of news or articles usually assume descriptive character and hardly ever offer evaluation, and if ever, they adduce to public opinion. Eurosceptic voices might also be to a large extent, a response to the lack of effective distribution of information on integration issues, and accountability in terms of providing sufficient justification of further integration (Trenz and de Wilde 2009).

Euroscepticism in Poland is still analysed mainly from the perspective of eurosceptic parties and organisations, since, as Eurobarometer polls reveal, a great majority of the society is supportive of integration.

Justification of Eurosceptic evaluations.

Euroscepticism can be understood as a particular assessment process of the value of European integration. In the case when knowledge of how the EU functions is lacking, this process can be overridden by emotions and personal feelings rather than considered on its own merits. The majority of evaluations in the gathered material do not contain sufficient explanation of a particular stance, and instead we come across such emotional statements as “European Union makes no sense”³, and “joining the European Union meant acceptance of Germanisation”⁴. The European Union is labelled as “euro-rubbish”⁵, “UE=CCCP”⁶, and “UE=fascism”⁷. Obviously, these are evaluations included in the comments posted below the texts, as the actual articles barely contained any evaluation of European integration whatsoever.

The linkage to issues present in domestic politics is essential, and also, eurosceptic discourse is related to negation of current government activity, which can be noticed in such comments as, “PO (Civic Platform) is doing what Merkel tells them to do”⁸.

Theory

- a. Literature overview of Euroscepticism in Poland
- i. Actors

Political parties and political organizations.

On the Polish political scene, eurorejects and eurosceptics were mostly visible in the years preceding the accession referendum and the signature of the Accession Treaty itself.

Among groups opposing the accession, two main trends were observable; – the first, predominant among farmers, convinced that joining the EU was detrimental to the Polish economy, and agriculture in particular, and the other, which emerged within the Catholic Church and its associate conservative secular circles, for which the accession posed a threat to the Polish national identity and morality (Zuba 2006:444).

On the Polish domestic political scene there was a wide array of political parties opposed to Poland joining Union structures. The largest of them, which co-formed the government in

³ TVN24, 7.06.2009, T1031

⁴ TVN24, 1.06.2009, T1024

⁵ Korwin-Mikke, 7.06.2009, T1039

⁶ Wirtualna Polska, 1.06.2009, T1005

⁷ Wirtualna Polska, 1.06.2009, T1005

⁸ Gazeta.pl, 8.06.2009, T1018

the years 2005 – 2007, were the national – conservative League of Polish Families (Liga Polskich Rodzin/ LPR) and agrarian populist Self-Defence (Samoobrona).

The former, League of Polish Families was formed in 2001, shortly before parliamentary elections, by small parties and associations organized around the ideology of National Democracy, and referred to inter-war tradition. Its youth wing consider themselves as a reactivation of anti-Semitic and xenophobic youth organizations established in late 1920s. The LPR positioned itself as the main party that opposed Polish membership in the EU, and also organised and initiated a series of events, manifestations and conferences in 2002 and 2003, with the aim to persuading Polish people to reject the accession in the referendum (Pankowski and Kornak 2005:159). Shortly before the referendum, the party published its manifesto, the so-called 13 points – argues “Why Poland should not be joining the EU”. As a result of the referendum, in which the majority of Poles supported the accession, the party changed its rhetoric to euroscepticism, denouncing the idea of integration and criticising the so-called “Western civilisation” and its impact on Polish society.

In the 2005 parliamentary elections, the LPR gained nearly 8% of the votes, and became a part of the government until the accelerated elections in 2007. In the 2004 elections to the European Parliament, LPR obtained 15.9% of the votes, and inducted ten deputies into the parliament (Słodkowska 2006). Costs of integration were to be much fewer than LPR predicted and the party neither entered the parliament in 2007, nor gained the European Parliament mandate in 2009. The activity of this party on the Polish political scene is almost inconspicuous, although LPR-affiliated politicians actively participate in devising new projects, i.e. Polish division of Libertas, which will be discussed further on.

Affiliated with the League is the All Polish Youth (Młodzież Wszechpolska), which is, as has been aforementioned, an organisation referring to the rhetoric of the radical right pre-war National Democratic camp. The organisation was very active between 2002 and 2007, but as a consequence of the failure in 2007 election, their activity faded away. All Polish Youth would frequently adduce to anti-Semitic, xenophobic slogans which referred to the tradition of national socialism, provoking storms of protest from public intellectuals, artists and other public figures (Pankowski and Kornak 2005: 159).

Speaking of integration adversaries, one cannot overlook minor organisations and associations, which do not enjoy the same support as political parties, but have always been present in public discourse. What is more, these formations are active in the online realm,

which proves to be the easiest and cheapest way of reaching their potential recipients. This group encompasses almost all formations of the far right family, i.e. National Rebirth of Poland (Narodowe Odrodzenie Polski/NOP), probably the most active ultra-right organisation in Poland. National Rebirth of Poland refers, just like many others, to the tradition of the pre-war right wing in Poland, which gives their postulates not only xenophobic, but also anti-Semitic flavour. NOP is most active in street level action, cooperating with some lighting squads of major football clubs. In the 1990s this organisation declared they were against those political organisations, which are “anti-national”, for example; the European Union and NATO and in a party periodical, suggested that guerrilla methods can be used against NATO troops in Poland (Sitnik: 1994: 11).

An interesting example of anti-European rhetoric can be found in the Real Politics Union (Unia Polityki Realnej/UPR), founded by Janusz Korwin-Mikke, whose blog was one of the most frequently visited political blogs during the election campaign of the European Parliament in 2009. UPR identifies itself as a conservative-liberal party. The founder of the party, Korwin-Mikke, frequently declares that Hitler’s rule was less oppressive in terms of taxation than the current democratic system, and also that the EU is a creation of Jewish masonry (Pankowski and Kornak 2005:163). The party opposes Polish entry to the euro zone and limitation of the country’s sovereignty through the process of further and deeper integration (Bolesław Witczak 2008). The party collapsed in 2009 and its leader set up a new grouping, whose supporters are active in online debates, and Janusz Korwin Mikke, who not only updates his blog regularly, but also uses video blogs. Though marginal, UPR, thanks to its expressive, yet controversial views is a recognized player the Polish political scene.

Another issue was the appearance of a new party-player: Libertas (Polish division of Declan Ganley’s initiative). The Libertas committee included politicians from the right wing parties (LPR - League of Polish Families and others); mainly those who opposed Polish membership in the European Union, and those which were active and visible in the years preceding the referendum regarding accession to the EU and the act of accession itself. After joining the structures of the European Union, those organisations focused on denying further integration, defending “national values and national identity” and rejecting the Lisbon Treaty (Styczyńska 2009:141).

It is worth noting that the multiplicity of parties and political organisations does not translate into dispersion of the electorate. Although the Polish political scene is very much polarised, it is still mainly divided into three fractions. The division lines separate Law and Justice (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość) and Civic Platform (Platforma Obywatelska) - about 30% and 50% of support accordingly. Support for other parties is decreasing; only about 10% of Poles declare their support for left-wing parties (SLD, SdPI) and no more than 4% for the right-wing parties (BPS DGA 2009).

The Media.

The Eurosceptic media includes mainly print media, with the exception of Radio Maryja, which is discussed later on. It is worth mentioning, that in Poland the independent media of eurosceptic character did not form, and most periodicals were associated with political parties and as such served as “party’s press organs”, or closely related to a particular political opinion?, such as Nasz Dziennik. The same holds true for publications other than print – Poland lacks publications independent from political parties, who would influence public opinion (Zuba 2006: 245). An important actor on the Polish political scene is Radio Maryja (Radio Maria), a Catholic – nationalistic broadcasting company, established in 1991 by a Redemptorist congregation. Its charismatic director, Father Tadeusz Rydzyk is well known for his anti-Semitic, nationalistic views. In the period preceding the referendum, the radio station actively supported the view of rejection of the accession treaty and since 2004 the station presents a critical stance towards the EU, and also the condition of Polish membership. The radio supports the Law and Justice party and other minor organisations of national character. The share of Radio Maryja in the market amounts to 2%, and its listeners are mainly older people, thus it is almost non-existent in the online sphere (wirtualnemedi.pl 2009).

Catholic Church.

The attitude of the Catholic Church in Poland to integration and membership in the European Union has not only been diverse with regard to time, but also with regard to Church hierarchy. There are strongly eurosceptic circles. The Church has never spoken about European issues in one voice and its stance has been evolving since 1989. The institutions

expressed their fears of civilizational changes brought about by democratisation and systemic transformation.

Even though the official stance of the Church after 1997 was pro-European, eurosceptic fractions persisted – officially there was no support for Radio Maryja, but part of the clergy still rely on its message in their everyday work (Leszczyńska 2009). Prior to the referendum, some Church circles emphasised that EU accession brings the danger of implanting in Poland so-called „civilization of death”, namely access to abortion and euthanasia. Currently, the Church in Poland stipulates that it does not support certain aspects of EU politics, such as financial aid for in vitro research.

Civil society and public opinion.

Expressing support or opposition towards European integration requires a certain “maturity” of society, which is characterised not only by experience in civic activity, but also by a high level of knowledge about social and political processes. In the case of Poland, one needs to mention a specific “tear” in the public space, which is connected with prolonged opposition between social self-organisation and hostility towards the state. This opposition dates back to the 19th century, during the partitions, when association activity became a tool in national emancipation of Poles. In almost all areas of social activism – whether economic self-help, educational, cultural, or even religious activity – an important factor which centred people’s actions was national identification and the contestation of oppressive, hostile systems. This gap between the state and society, which marked the division between “the alien” and “the familiar” became the basis for development of a peculiar school of civic attitude, identified as organic work for the sake of an ideal, imagined community, but also against or beyond the imposed legal and institutional order. This tendency was augmented by the experience of World War II, during which social activity of Poles was channelled in the structures of the underground state, and later during Soviet domination, when democratic opposition, often referred to as “society of secondary circulation”, was created and developed. According to Wiktor Osiatyński, “civil society of the 1970s mirrored the situation in which it was to operate. It rose not next to the state, but against it – balancing out the biggest ailments of communist system”. The general low level of interest in political matters, and the crisis of civic activity, resulted in weak civic initiatives, both in support of and in opposition to

European integration. Before the accession referendum there were a few initiatives campaigning for voting against the accession, but their potential and reach was very limited (Zuba 2006: 239-240).

Polish public opinion is generally pro-European, and observable effects of the membership in the EU convinced a lot of people who had been opposed to accession previously, to change their minds. This applies mainly to farmers, since they are the biggest beneficiaries of the accession. In a 2009 public opinion survey, which revealed that a majority of the society are content at Poland's presence in EU structures (85%). More than 74% believe the accession contributed to the strengthening of Poland's position in the world, and almost half of the respondents think their material status improved (Szacki 2009).

It needs to be stressed, however, that the knowledge of Polish people about the European Union and its activity, as well as interest in supranational politics is unusually low. This is corroborated by the analysis of on-line debates during the campaign to the European Parliament, when most discussions revolved around domestic politics, even if the discussion was brought up by news about Union politics.

ii. Issues

Eurosceptic attitudes, as well as eurosceptic rhetoric in the Polish dimension, refers mainly to the issue of sovereignty and identity of the state, and also the feeling of threat to the national economy. One of the significant internal barriers to the process of integration between Poland and the EU was deficit of information, and multiple stereotypes were replicated within the tabloid press, with substantial print run. The fear to enter EU structures was often a result of scant knowledge about the functioning of the Union and a simplified interpretation of historical facts. Another significant thing was also the interpretation of rhetoric present in political discourse, since, as scientists note, "Polish people associate the very negotiations with dialogue, concessions and offering something rather than with persistence, cleverness and game" (Grzelak 2000:45-46). Lack of trust in effectiveness of negotiations augmented the characteristic for Polish society's lack of trust in politicians and politics in general.

Arguments against the EU accession can be divided into three main groups: economic (all economic and financial implications of integration), political (related to sovereignty, system and institutions), and last but not least, cultural (related to the issue of cultural, religious and

national identity). I will discuss the abovementioned categories later in this paper and provide some examples. It is also worth noting, that in the case of Poland, all three kinds of arguments are strongly related and linked.

Economy

Social expectations about Poland's accession to the EU play an important role in shaping attitudes towards the Union itself. Before 2004, there were two distinguishable types of attitudes; on the one hand, there were very high economic aspirations connected with integration. It was feared that, "aiming at their fast fulfilment could have lead to rapid disappointment after joining the EU if it had turned out that the new situation did not meet expectations. This would have been especially dangerous, if these aspirations referred to only one aspect of integration – material gain, which is calculable on the one hand, but on the other difficult to get immediately after the accession" (Dolińska 2001:35-36).

On the other hand, there was a total negation of validity of integration connected with the fear of deterioration of the Polish economy, and the situation of farmers in particular. This group was convinced that Polish people would be treated as second class citizens in the first years of membership, and Polish products would not find purchasers on the markets of other member states. There was also concern about Poland becoming a market for the old member states, and the slogans of "40 –million market" appeared in the campaigns of populist Self-Defence (Samobrona), League of Polish Families (LPR) and agrarian Polish People's Party (PSL) (Zuba 2006: 211). The debate about presumptive gain and losses connected with economic dimension of integration and was related to the debate about endangered identity, which is discussed in the following paragraphs. The issue of letting in the foreign capital was a problem on the grounds of economy and national interest – on the one hand there was awareness of possible benefits of gaining new investors; on the other, there was emphasis on the fear of foreign capital buying out Poland and mass bankruptcy of Polish businesses. Researchers underscore, however, that reluctance and aversion towards foreign capital characterises those, who lost as a consequence of economic change in time of transformation (Adamski 1998).

One of the slogans used by eurosceptics in the referendum campaign was, "If you want cheaper bread and petrol, say NO to the Union" and referred to a theory of rapid growth of

prices brought about by accession, which they spread in belief that processes in the EU are uniform, which would cause significant pauperisation of Polish people (Zuba 2006: 213).

Another controversial issue was the entry to the euro zone. The discussion is intensified by the legal situation in Poland, due to which adoption of the euro requires a change to the constitution. In 2008, the government of Donald Tusk undertook the first attempts to address this, which failed with the help of the biggest opposition party, Law and Justice, who does not approve of making a change in the constitution without a nation-wide referendum. The support for the entry of Poland to the euro zone oscillates around 60%, although society is concerted with regard to the pace of the adoption process. Around 37 – 40% of Poles decidedly opposes the change of currency (Więclaw 2010).

Identity

As I have already mentioned, the problem of “endangered Polish identity” is particularly important for the EU adversaries. The cultural and identity dimension of the debate about membership in the EU was one of the most hotly debated and controversial, and it is related to peculiar understanding of patriotism, national community and collective identity of Poles. Eurosceptics expressed their concerns that as a result of European integration, a new (European) kind of identity would emerge and might become an alternative to predominant Polish national identification. These anxieties were reflected in discussion about the loss of Polish cultural identity as a consequence of accession (Mach and Niedźwiedzki 2002:10). This discourse also relies on a specific perception of Europe and ascribing it with certain (stereotypical) features – according to adversaries of integration, Europe is dominating, bureaucratic, colonial, liberal, and secular spheres, which consequently leads to the construction of Polish identity in opposition to these features – Poland becomes a bulwark, guardian of Christian values, morality and “healthy” values. Between 2005 and 2007, when Law and Justice was the ruling party, one could observe the effort made to strengthen national identity linked to evoking fears of “strangers”, and unfamiliar cultural patterns and ideas. A perfect example of this is the debate about the rights of sexual minorities, which in PiS-governed Poland was dominated by a discourse of norms, and moral and religious interdictions, instead of discourse about civic freedoms and liberty (Ziółkowski and Jędrzejewska 2009:29).

To sum up, as Zuba notes, the threat to national identity in eurosceptic argumentation is expressed in two attitudes. The first one refers to a fear of “dissolution” in the European multicultural space, or domination over Polish culture by a culture of bigger, wealthier and more expansive countries. The other dimension refers to Huntington’s theory of a “clash of civilisation” – Polish traditional, which is based on morality, and European, secular, libertarian, morally relative, and the so called “civilisation of death” (Zuba 2006: 194).

Politics

At the time of campaigning before the accession, supporters of Poland’s joining the EU were attacked with such claims that the treaty is a “capitulation”, and Poland is entering the EU on her knees. The list of dangers that accession posed included the loss of sovereignty and “new colonisation”, but also degeneration of habits and morality (Janicki 2009: 4). Similarly to economic argumentation, we have here a double bottom argument, because eurosceptics marry up political aspects with those of culture and identity. The EU is perceived by its critics as an empire, with accession as irreversible, and integration advancing on an everyday basis in the realisation of federation and the “absorption” of nation-states. Another argument on the part of the eurosceptics is the conspicuous deficit of democracy in the EU, which amplifies the “imperial” character of the community. Membership in the Union, especially in the rhetoric of LPR (League of Polish Families), or UPR (Real Political Union), was to weaken the relations between Poland and the USA and undermine Poland’s position in the international arena (Nalewajko 2003: 129).

A separate problem was the attitude towards Germany and the fear of its hegemony, voiced by ultra right-wing parties. This fear in Poland was very strongly embedded in the past and frequently utilised by extreme groupings to fuel the flames of danger, with the argument, that Poland is nothing but a German “colonisation tool, another “Drang nach Osten” (Zuba 2006: 205). Curiously enough, such rhetoric was not alien to the leaders of big parties, PSL (Polish People’s Party) or Jarosław and Lech Kaczyński from PiS (Law and Justice).

iii. Moments

The first electoral campaign to the European Parliament in 2004 brought about a clear division into three groups: definite euroenthusiasts, eurosceptics and radical eurorejects.

Reluctant to the EU parties focused on the two main issues in their opposition – the economy under threat and the aforementioned - endangered identity.

The League of Polish Families, and affiliated with it, the circles of Radio Maria and the National democrats, presented a uniform stance, which consisted of total negation of validity of the integration process. According to the League's circles, Poland can only develop outside of the European Union, which is a "neo-colonial" project, promotes "civilisation of death", and also pushes for a "buyout of the Polish land and annihilation of the Polish *raison d'état*", which would form the foundation for the "fourth partition of Poland". The League received 15, 92% of the votes, which ensured 10 mandates in the European Parliament. Majority of the deputies initially joined fraction Independence and Democracy.

Emphasis on the threat the EU poses to the Polish economy was also at the heart of Self-Defence's rhetoric. In the case of this party there was a set of populist slogans, most of which focused on agriculture – Self-Defence claimed that Poland would become a "selling market" for the European Community, which would drag down unsubsidised agriculture. This party promoted "tough negotiation conditions" with the EU, and also an almost total ban on land purchase by foreigners. Self-Defence received 10, 78% of the votes, which enabled the party to introduce 6 deputies to the European Parliament, who initially remained unaffiliated with any of the parliamentary fractions.

In 2005, the parliamentary election effectuated a certain change in the perception of the EU and Poland's presence in it, but also emphasised a certain interdependency – showing that the bigger the tendency to negate the hitherto road to democracy, the bigger the inclination became to treat the EU in external categories. This way of perceiving reality became the axis promoted by the Law and Justice division into a Poland of "solidarity" and "liberalism" (Cebul 2007: 88). In the light of accession, which had been a fact since 2004, political parties and their circles started to identify themselves in relation to it. Political discourse was dominated by three approaches: the first, promoted by the left wing, boiled down to an emphasis on full membership in EU structures, which entails both obligations and privileges. Another approach, represented by PO (Civic Platform), PSL (Polish People's Party) and PiS (Law and Justice) is a combination of slogans of independence and claims. As Krzysztof Cebul notes, these groupings were characterised by inconsistency, finding its expression in parallel

feeling of the threat of EU domination, and the expectation of aid and benefits of the membership in European structures (Cebul 2009: 168).

In stark contrast stood LPR, which underscored the opposition between Polish national interest and the rules governing the EU. The League maintained its earlier presented position, according to which only the secession from European structures would ensure appropriate economic and social development for Poland.

The division presented here has a somewhat simplified character and within these groups we often come across various, sometimes non uniform stances and declarations. The party of Self-Defence is hard to classify, as its program and programmatic declaration were non uniform – they included a postulate of building a strong nation-state, somehow in opposition to the EU, while on the other hand, and pointed to the necessity of maximising the use of EU funds.

Another opportunity to present their views was the accelerated parliamentary elections in 2007, which brought about a change in attitude towards European issues – and the Union and its structures were given a lot of publicity, which presented, not only slogans, but also more concrete programs and stances. This change was made possible mainly by the crystallisation of alliances on the political scene, which resulted from the project of the “4th Republic of Poland”, authored by Law and Justice. The activity of this party and the members of the coalition (League of Polish Families and Self-Defence), were characterised by anti-European attitudes, and the idea of Poland’s solidarity turned out to be an attempt to dominate various aspects of political and social life (Cebul 2009: 171). The most substantive difference in the content of programs and declarations in the campaign of 2007 consisted in the change of attitude towards the EU. It was the most conspicuous in the materials issued by Civic Platform and the Polish People’s Party, and relied on the rejection of the division into “us” – “them”, emphasising the possibility of shaping and influencing European politics. This change, which reflected social moods, was of crucial importance to the final result of the election. The new composition of the parliament did not encompass (League of Polish Families) or Samoobrona (Self-Defence) (PKW 2007). PiS (Law and Justice), which became the major opposition party, still presents eurosceptic views, supports a

Europe of loosely connected nation-states, decisive articulation of “Polish national interests” and strengthening strategic partnership with the United States.

b. The European Parliament elections of 2009

i. Actors

The campaign before the elections to the European Parliament in 2009 was a logical consequence of the programmatic change in 2007, and the political declarations can be divided into three types: negating the UE and integration, realistic (pragmatic) and euroenthusiastic.⁹

In the elections to the EP, all these types of declarations were represented. Those parties opposed to the EU, were represented by the Polish division of Libertas and Right of the Republic¹⁰ and gained insignificant support of the voters (3, 1% of votes in total). The Libertas candidate from the Warsaw list, Artur Zawisza, when asked about the dangers the EU poses said; “the biggest danger is antidemocratic and the bureaucratic Treaty of Lisbon” (wp.pl 2009).

Eurosceptic PiS (Law and Justice) got the second best result after PO (Civic Platform) (27, 4% of votes), catering to those, who are dissatisfied with the current shape of membership of Poland in the EU, or with the Union itself.

The ruling party, Platforma Obywatelska (Civic Platform) received the best result, gathering 44, and 43% of votes. Euroenthusiastic SLD-UP (Alliance of Democratic Left and Workers Union) received 12,3% of votes.

The turnout was only 24,53%, which is by 3,63% more than in the elections of 2004 (PKW 2009).

⁹ It is worth mentioning at this point, that there are some problems regarding classification and naming of these attitudes, which are present in Polish literature, but more importantly in Polish public discourse. In the literature in English, we often find division into *euroenthusiasts*, *eurosceptics* i *euorejects*, which are used to define attitudes towards European integration, both in old and new member states. (Kopecky and Mudde 2002), or division into hard-eurosceptics and soft-eurosceptics (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008). In Polish academic discourse (Zuba 2006, Malinowski 1999), the term eurosceptic is used to define a person negating integration and the EU as such, but attitudes approving of integration and the EU, but tinged with doubts as to some aspects of integration, are defined as eurorealist.

¹⁰ The list of Libertas committee included members of many parties and groupings: Libertas, League of Polish Families, Polish Social Movement Forward, Polish People’s Party Piast, Party of Regions, one member of Law and Justice, one member of Christian-National Party, one member of Organisation of Polish Nation – Polish Party, while the list of Right of the Republic also included members of Europe of Free Nation-States – Polish Party and one member of League of Polish Families.

The elections did not stir emotions among citizens or the media. The Eurobarometer survey conducted in autumn 2008, revealed that three-quarters of Poles (74%) did not realise in October, when the nearest coming European parliamentary election was (rp.pl 2009).

The media limited themselves to descriptive coverage of electoral lists and prospective alliance in the EP. Some popular Internet platforms created special services devoted to the elections, where they presented the latest news, candidate profiles and their statements. The most popular such service was offered by Onet.pl portal¹¹. Among the eurosceptic media, Radio Maryja remained active, supporting not only PiS (Law and Justice), but also the campaign of Right of the Republic and favourably viewed the creation of Libertas in Poland.

Public TV also criticised the future shape of the Union and favoured politicians representing Libertas, who had belonged to the (League of Polish Families). One should notice that some members of the board in public TV, as well as its president are former activists of either LPR (League of Polish Families) or its youth wing Młodzież Wszechpolska (All Polish Youth). That is why the campaign on public television was totally different than in the commercial ones.

ii. Issues

Since the parliamentary elections in 2007, one can notice a decline in incisive, confrontational rhetoric, which however, does not mean a significant change in worldview the change applied only to the way interests are articulated. Instead of conveying the rhetoric of “derooting”, “buyout of land”, “civilisation of death”, more and more often voiced were postulates of “strengthening nation-states”, „restricting integration in non-economic areas”, or “necessity to strengthen Christian values „in the EU.

During the electoral campaign to the European Parliament in 2009, for the first time we could observe the influence of the Europeanisation processes on Polish political parties. Europeanisation of political parties, as Robert Ladrech notes, is realised on several levels – one of the most important being a change in party programs, namely adaptation of European issues to programs of political groupings, and also a new scope of relations on the supranational level (Ladrech 2002: 396-398). The second level is conspicuous in developing

¹¹ <http://eurowybory.onet.pl/>

cooperation between Polish parties and groupings of similar profiles in other member states. Evolution is also observable in membership to the fractions in the EP. Initially non-inscrits, now Polish MEPs, are members of marginal, yet eurosceptic, political groups - for example, Union for a Europe of the Nations¹² (in 2004-2009 PiS deputies constituted almost half of the members).

Euroscepticism and eurorejection have gained, just like populism some time ago, a certain label used to discredit political opponents. What is more, almost none of the euroreject parties' predictions came true. In this situation, negating the very fact of Polish membership in the EU seems to be political suicide. Thus, these groupings either shifted to euroscepticism, or the level of support for them decreased below the election threshold.

General results of the European parliamentary elections in 2009, revealed a decline in radical anti-European attitudes and an increase in the strength of conservative and eurosceptic parties, as well as fraction of groupings negating the need for federalisation and closer internal integration of the EU to advance economic cooperation of nation-states.

It is difficult to point to particular themes of the campaign in 2009, for they were not well displayed in media discourse. The most frequently discussed issues were entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon and the chances of the creation of a new fraction in the EP by PiS (Law and Justice) and British and Czech conservatives. However, press and on-line news services devoted more attention to domestic issues than to elections to the European Parliament.

It is appropriate to come back at this point not only to the low turnout, but also to the lack of interest in politics on the part of Polish people, and the scant knowledge about it. To these phenomena contributes mediatisation of politics, and the spectacularisation of politics as its direct consequence, which means a shift of the centre of gravity from the content of a political program, to its wrapping. In practice, that means voting for a particular party that is not determined on its own merits (Riedel2008:180).

Another important issue I mentioned earlier is the lack of knowledge about the functioning of the Union's institutions - only 11 % of examined people knew how many seats Poland has

¹² Union for a Europe of the Nations in the term 2009-2014 changed its name to *European Conservatives and Reformists* <http://www.ecrgroup.eu/>

in the European Parliament (rp.pl 2009a). The lack of interest in European politics was also visible in the low turnout, and commentators emphasized that they are “too smart to go to elections”¹³.

Nationalisation of the Union’s politics, i.e. identification of domestic politics with European politics is also well visible. The soundness of such a linkage is confirmed by the very political parties for whom European parliamentary elections are a “litmus test” of support in society. However, voters are tired of the style and effects of politics. In on-line debates, there frequently appeared statements that voting in EP elections would not change anything – this argument has been seen in domestic campaigns and reveals the level of trust society puts in the political elite. What is more, society lacks awareness to the scope of how the European Parliament actually affects their lives.

iii. Moments

The campaign started in early May 2009, but was not visible in the on-line media during the first weeks of May. The campaign in public television started the 13th of May, and interest in the elections increased among the society from 30% in April to 38% by the end of May (rp.pl 2009a).

A series of public institutions, independent associations alike, carried out various actions aimed at encouraging Polish people to vote, but also presented the workings of the European Parliament and its influence on the functioning of member states. One such initiative was Pro-attendance Campaign Poland “The Navel of Europe”. Another, organised by the EP in all member states, was the information campaign aimed at the youngest voters, for whom these elections might be the first ones in their life¹⁴.

c. Data and Method.

a. Websites

¹³ TVN24, 5.06.2009, T1027

¹⁴ More about the action: http://www.europarl.pl/view/pl/Aktualnosci/news/news-2009/news-2009-March/kampania_informacyjna_PE.html;jsessionid=78FA790A4517795F324BC5C6E0D5E465

The selection process of the most popular professional journalism websites and political blogs has been dominated by a lack of such a websites in the Top 100 Alexa ranking. Only a few professional websites were among Top 100, and not a single blog. Two out of three websites are the on-line versions of traditional media – television (TVN24) and newspaper (Gazeta Wyborcza), only wp.pl is a web-only platform. All three belong to large media groups (corporations) that include various media outlets (on-line platforms, newspapers, TV, radio).

Wirtualna Polska (wp.pl) is a very multipronged platform. Topics includes: political news, sensational news, weather, money, sports, email, music and a separate discussion/forum area. News and comments come from news agencies.

Gazeta.pl is a large unaffiliated website and is connected to the Gazeta Wyborcza daily. Although Gazeta.pl also consists of non-political topics such as: sensational news, weather, money, sports, music, email and a separate discussion/forum area, news mainly comes from Gazeta News Agency and PAP (Polish Press Agency). During the EP elections in 2009, it had a broad section on the elections and there are some possibilities for commenting.

TVN24 is a website connected to the private television channel TVN owned by ITI Group. TVN24 is also one of the T.V. channels from that group (others are: TVN, TVN Meteo, TVN Turbo, TVN Style). The website, as well as a television programme are focused on politics, with the website consisting of both Polish and foreign, economic and social news. It has its own news agency, but also cooperates with the others. People are able to add comments by sending text message, or on the website. Some news is also based on the information from the readers.

As there were no political blogs in the PL Top 100 websites on Alexa, blogs were selected on the basis of Onet political blog ranking, on the basis of this ranking Janusz Korwin Mikke's and Janusz Palikot's were selected.

Korwin-Mikke is a former dissident and monarchist, founder of "Najwyższy Czas" (*The Highest Time*), where he has his column. He criticize the European Union as bureaucratic regime, calling the European Union a euro-backwater (*eurozaścianek*) and persuades that the EU is non democratic. Korwin Mikke and his party (UPR) are against Poland joining the eurozone. As a member of the Parliament, in 1991-1993 he postulated a lustration (clearing) process. His controversial opinions are supported only by a marginal number of

voters – he was threefold candidate for president, and voter support decreased from 2,4 % in 1995 to 1, and 4 % in 2005. UPR obtained 1,1 % of votes in the 2009 elections to EP.

Janusz Palikot is an active politician from the PO – ruling party (from 2007) and is considered as a “court jester”. His blogs contain different forms of news, gossip, and theories mainly about opposition, especially PiS (Law and Justice) and the Twin Brothers (Kaczyńscy). Palikot is well known for his “political performances” and controversial actions in the Parliament.

b. **Threads**

As has been mentioned earlier, general interest in the elections was not substantial, thus in turn the volume of information on this topic is insignificant. During the whole period under study, 148 articles were recorded on selected sites. It is worth noting, however, that the on-line platforms under study do not specialise in political news, and if they focus on politics, it is usually restricted to a domestic dimension. The fewest threads were recorded in the initial stage of the study, i.e. since May 18th, and grew in numbers immediately before the elections and shortly afterwards – this tendency is corroborated by observations of the print media.

c. **Amount of messages**

Interesting, is the insignificant number of evaluations in the body of the articles, which means that authors (usually journalists) limited it to a descriptive form, providing the readers with fact and information. I coded 42 messages within 50 threads.

d. **Table of Actors per website in comments and main text**

Both blogs and articles in the on-line platforms have the possibility for interaction between the core communicators and the audience, but giving a voice is not yet popular among Poles. The percentage of Internet users who comment, increased from 20% in 2005, to 37% in 2009 (Pliszka, 2009d), but it is still not common behavior. Main messages I have coded were located as a comment on the main article.

d. **General nature of the debate on-line**

The debate mainly reflected domestic politics, and if there were any threads about the Union’s politics, they were linked to domestic politics. There was a discussion about the

prospects for the future coalition of conservative parties in the European Parliament, but mainly through the prism of the fact that Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (Law and Justice) could have played an important role there. The debate did not analyse the conception of future development and integration of the EU, but it briefly touched upon the Treaty of Lisbon and its signature. Polish society does not have knowledge about what the Treaty of Lisbon is about, and consequently we see further stereotypical images of its role and potential dangers (i.e. calling Lisbon Treaty a “lesbian treaty”¹⁵ which sounds very similar in Polish). Even if the on-line article is about the Civic Platform attitudes towards a stronger and more unified Europe – the comments are about domestic politics and include mainly invectives addressed to the domestic party’s partisans. In one case, the article about the European Parliament election results, had 2297 comments, out of which, none were evaluating the European Union, Europe or European integration¹⁶.

The threads totally negating Poland’s presence in the EU were almost non-existent in the debate (with the exception of Janusz Korwin Mikke’s blog and commentaries to it), yet there were threads regarding the future of the EU and its future shape. Eurosceptics expressed their anxieties about an even greater democracy deficit, the Union’s growing bureaucracy, and deepening integration, which in their view, may lead to blurring of identity of nation-states. Once again, it needs to be remembered, that this debate did not concentrate on the merits, and the comments posted by internauts were emotionally involved and hardly ever contained arguments supporting the presented thesis. This is further augmented by the lack of information, as Polish people do not make a distinction between domestic and European politics. Politicians themselves contribute to this state of affairs – i.e.. on the website of Zbigniew Ziobro, candidate to the European Parliament from the list of PiS (Law and Justice), clicking on the button, “program” led to the program of the party (Lewiński and Kozik 2009).

¹⁵ Wirtualna Polska, 1.06.2009, T1005

¹⁶ Wirtualna Polska, 7.06.2009, T1009

e. **Dimensions of Euroscepticism**

a. **Principle of integration**

It is worth noting that, the principle of integration, and the Union are generally viewed favourably in the Polish society and hardly anyone contests the validity of the very integration.

EU Polity

More evaluation can be found with regard to EU polity – both in terms of level, scope and inclusiveness and there were more evaluations which are negative than positive. Again, there are arguments with no comments, such as, “The EU is a façade organization”¹⁷, and the only valuable idea is that of rejecting a federal model for the sake of “Europe of nation-states”¹⁸. In the blog of Janusz Korwin Mikke and commentaries there, one can find evaluation of the EU as a “social democracy”, and a statement that the EP “has no power”¹⁹

Project

A lot of messages about the project of integration have been found – among which the negative scope seems to be the most salient. Message givers were against further integration, and more pro Europe of Nation, than federalization. That includes fears, which were raised before the 2003 referendum of the loss of independence and national identity, of accepting the so called “civilization of death” and of losing control over crucial economic branches. Some of the citizens identify these threats with the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty (EU polity: level positive, only 4, and 8%, Project of integration: Level negative 31%, scope negative 33%). Commentators agreed with the statement made by Czech Prime Minister Topolánek that the “Lisbon Treaty is already dead”²⁰ and the only solution is an idea of union based on independent states.

Justifications

The most common justification is democracy – people making such comments usually indicate lack of democratic rules: “EU is not democratic”²¹, “in European union ordinary

¹⁷ Gazeta.pl, 1.06.2009, T1015

¹⁸ Wirtualna Polska, 30.05.2009, T1006

¹⁹ Korwin-Mikke, 31.05.2009, T1032

²⁰ Wirtualna Polska, 30.05.2009, T1006

²¹ Gazeta.pl, 1.06.2009, T1015

citizens have no say”²², “European politicians and clerks are only using our money, instead of working for us”²³, “it is only about euro-propaganda, but nothing for the citizens”²⁴, “EU is colonizing Eastern Europe”²⁵.

In the majority of cases, comments are about domestic politics and typical Polish experiences. If one is criticising the European Union, they may be affected by the post-communistic attitude – denying every authority, no matter where it comes from, and even if it is democratic. People are emphasising their lack of trust in politicians – and not attending the European parliament elections is a kind of manifestation: “I won’t vote, as I don’t want them to earn so much money, while I am unemployed”²⁶, “voting is not going to change a thing, they will cheat on us, as they always did”²⁷, “the European Parliament is not democratic and does not represent citizens”²⁸ and pointing out that politicians are only “pulling the wool over our eyes”²⁹. In the case of the village Bieczyno, people didn’t vote at all, explaining it as an act of “revenge” on the local authorities³⁰. Some people argue that “politicians are proving every day that they are not worth our voices”³¹.

Conclusion

The main feature of the Internet is undoubtedly its accessibility and interactivity. It seems to be providing ideal conditions to gain information about politics, but also ideal grounds for debate. It needs to be remembered, that the accessibility of the Internet and the volume of information does have some disadvantages. The first is only the apparent access to information, since access to the Internet is still lower than in other member states³². Another is that it is hard to assess and verify the quality of information on the Internet,

²² Wirtualna Polska, 27.05.2009, T1034

²³ Gazeta.pl, 1.06.2009, T1015

²⁴ Korwinn-Mikke, 31.05.2009, T1032

²⁵ Korwin-Mikke, 31.05.2009, T1032

²⁶ Wirtualna Polska, 21.05.2009, T1001 and Wirtualna Polska, 22.05.2009, T1004

²⁷ Gazeta.pl, 1.06.2009, T1015

²⁸ Wirtualna Polska, 21.05.2009, T1001

²⁹ Gazeta.pl, 1.06.2009, T1015

³⁰ Gazeta.pl, 9.06.2009, T1017

³¹ Wirtualna Polska, 26.05.2009, T1044

³² About 49% of Polish society uses the Internet, majority however use its basic functions, namely email and browsers. See more:<http://www.egospodarka.pl/42640,Internet-w-Polsce-V-VI-2009,1,39,1.html>

which, according to Stanislaw Lem's vision, is a collection of information rubbish, which might add up to information chaos (Mider 2008: 191-192). Undoubtedly, to effectively use Internet resources, one needs knowledge and practice, which Polish internauts are now only building.

Polish on-line debate is very immature and not many of its users follow the rules of etiquette, as the Internet has not yet evolved as a platform for sharing ideas and discussion. The low access to on-line media and the fact that only 37% of Internet users are posting comments is also a reason why not all social groups have a chance to present their opinions.

Eurosceptic attitudes found, that while coding on-line debate, found that the outcomes are generally of disappointment with domestic politics and the transformation itself. Internet forums happen to be an easy way to show frustration and assess without any consequences.

One should notice that almost all the comments did not contain enough information about why the author contested the European Union, or its institutions.

Peculiar for the Polish case is the constant fight between Law and Justice and Civic Platform supporters, and every article about Europe, the European Union or European integration is put in to the domestic politics perspective³³. There is no on-line debate about European matters at all (or not in the most popular, coded media). Even if somebody is making statements about the European Union, they are often very basic, without broad explanation why for example the commentator does not support the Lisbon Treaty ("I don't want the Lisbon Treaty and the United States of Europe"³⁴).

Euroscepticism present in the Polish media debate is a result of confluence of several factors; –lack of knowledge about European integration, a build up of historical bias based on emotions, and also fears of what is unknown and "strange". First and foremost, it is a response to domestic politics and conspicuous social divisions, and consequently it is a counterargument to euroenthusiasts. It is worth remembering, however, that it is not a widespread phenomenon, especially because Poles' interest in politics is insignificant, and reading political blogs is declared by 21% of internauts, which constitutes 10% of society

³³ Gazeta.pl, 7.06.2009, T1020 and Gazeta.pl, 5.06.2009, T1021

³⁴ Wirtualna Polska, 27.05.2009, T1034

(CBOS 2009b). Anonymity of the Internet contributes to radical and emotional opinions, which is even further augmented by the lack of consequences of posting them. Yet, it is a fact that the lack of information about the functioning of the EU and its further integration, causes, and will continue to cause growth in numbers of those biased against, sceptical and distrusting of the European project.

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