Exclusionary Egalitarianism and the New Cold War

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In this essay I argue that a search for the origin of the antiliberal ideology that characterizes the New Cold War leads us back into the communist era—but not to anything remotely resembling Marxism or Leninism.[1] It might seem odd to suggest that the antiliberal politicians of our time (Vladimir Putin, Donald Trump, Viktor Orbán, Jarosław Kaczyński, Robert Fico, Recep Erdoğan, Marine Le Pen, Norbert Hofer, and the like) have much in common with the communists who were ousted almost thirty years ago. Only in Putin's case are there clear connections. Although he is instrumental and inconsistent in his rhetoric, his ties to the old Communist Party of the USSR are direct, and he has never hesitated to draw upon nostalgia for the Soviet era.[2] When selecting groups to support abroad, however, he has tended to pick those with strong *anti*communist bona fides: Fidesz and Jobbik in Hungary, the Front National in France, the Republican Party in the US, and so on. One could interpret this as cynical opportunism, but I believe that we are witnessing something deeper and more dangerous than the geopolitical machinations of Russian spies and hackers. We can see this most clearly in Poland, where Putin's involvement has been minimal even as the broader cause he represents has

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1. The idea that we have entered a New Cold War has been gaining currency among pundits and journalists for the past couple years. I'm not sure whether it will continue to make sense now that both Putin's Russia and Trump's America are on the same side. See Julian Borger, Luke Harding, and Patrick Wintour, "Cold War 2.0: How Russia and the West Reheated a Historic Struggle," *The Guardian*, October 24, 2016, at https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/oct/24/cold-war-20-how-russia-and-the-west-reheated-a-historic-struggle (last accessed May 1, 2017); Simon Tisdall, "The New Cold War: Are We Going Back to the Bad Old Days?" *The Guardian*, November 19, 2014, at https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/nov/19/new-cold-war-back-to-bad-old-days-russia-west-putin-ukraine (last accessed May 1, 2017); Dmitri Trenin, "Welcome to Cold War II," *Foreign Policy*, March 4, 2014, at http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/03/04/welcome-to-cold-war-ii/ (last accessed on May 1, 2017).

2. For some examples of Putin's evocation of the USSR, see Damien Sharkov, "Russia's Putin: I've Always Liked Communist and Socialist Ideas," *Newsweek*, January 25, 2016, at http://www.newsweek.com/russias-putin-says-he-always-liked-communist-socialist-ideas-419289 (last accessed on May 1, 2017). On Putin's relationship to the USSR, see Archie Brown, "Vladimir Putin and the Reaffirmation of Central State Power," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 17, no. 1 (2001): 45–55; Jakub Godzimirski, "Putin and Post-Soviet Identity: Building Blocks and Buzz Words," *Problems of Post-Communism* 55, no. 5 (2008): 14–27. On the broader role of nostalgia among Putin's electoral base, see Neil Munro, "Russia's Persistent Communist Legacy: Nostalgia, Reaction, and Reactionary Expectations," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 22, no. 4 (2006): 289–313; Olena Nikolayenko, "Contextual Effects on Historical Memory: Soviet Nostalgia among Post-Soviet Adolescents," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 41 (2008): 243–59; Stephen White and Ian McAllistar, "Putin and his Supporters," *Europe-Asia Studies* 55, no. 3 (2003): 383–99.

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triumphed. Here we can see most clearly the contours of an ideological tendency that transcends the personality of Putin or the foreign policy of Russia.

In 2015, *Prawo i Sprawiedliwość* (Law and Justice, or PiS) rose to power in Poland and immediately set about transforming the country's constitutional norms. Over the past year they have turned the public radio and TV networks into openly partisan mouthpieces, purged the civil service of those deemed insufficiently loyal, and refused to honor rulings of the constitutional court until they were able to stack it with their supporters. The formal offices of the state have been stripped of real authority, so that the country's president and prime minister are subordinate to the PiS party leader, Jarosław Kaczyński (who holds no official position other than an ordinary member of parliament). The European Union has condemned the Polish government for these actions, but international criticism only strengthens the resolve of PiS loyalists.[3]

Kaczyński would seem to constitute an exception to the patterns of the New Cold War: he has always been vehemently hostile to Russia, and he would never admit that his political vision has anything in common with Putin's. This contrasts with Hungary's Viktor Orbán, who broke with decades of nationalist rhetoric by openly praising Putin and calling Russia a model for a new type of "illiberal democracy."[4] Today Orbán stands alongside people like Marine Le Pen in France, Robert Fico in Slovakia, and Miloš Zeman in the Czech Republic, fighting EU sanctions against Russia and echoing Moscow's foreign policy line.[5] It is hard to imagine Kaczyński doing anything like that.

3. Some good summaries of recent events in Poland, see Remi Adekoya, "Xenophobic, Authoritarian—and Generous on Welfare: How Poland's Right Rules," *The Guardian*, October 25, 2016, at https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/oct/25/poland-right-law-justice-party-europe (last accessed May 1, 2017); Jan Cienski, "Poland's 'Powerholic,'" *Politico*, August 7, 2016, at http://www.politico.eu/article/polands-powerholic-jaroslaw-kaczynski-warsaw-law-and-justice-party-pis/ (last accessed May 1, 2017); Gerhard Gnauck, "The Most Powerful Man in Poland," *Deutsche Welle*, October 25, 2016, at http://www.dw.com/en/the-most-powerful-man-in-poland/a-36151767 (last accessed May 1, 2017); Maciej Kisilowski, "Poland: A Country without a Constitution," *EU Observer*, January 6, 2016, at https://euobserver.com/opinion/136463 (last accessed May 1, 2017); James Traub, "The Party that Wants to Make Poland Great Again," *New York Times Magazine*, November 2, 2016, at https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/06/magazine/the-party-that-wants-to-make-poland-great-again.html?ref=topics&_r=1 (last accessed on May 1, 2017); Jan-Werner Müller, "The Problem with Poland," *New York Review of Books*, February 11, 2016, at http://www.nybooks.com/daily/2016/02/11/kaczynski-eu-problem-with-poland/ (last accessed May 1, 2017). An official report on Poland by the European Commission for Democracy through Law (commonly known as the Venice Commission) can be downloaded at http://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDL-AD(2016)026-e (last accessed May 1, 2017).

4. Zoltan Simon, "Orbán Says He Seeks to End Liberal Democracy in Hungary," *Bloomberg*, July 28, 2014, at https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2014-07-28/orban-says-he-seeks-to-end-liberal-democracy-in-hungary (last accessed May 1, 2017).

5. Paul Hockenos, "Vladimir Putin's Little Helper," *The New Republic*, April 19, 2016, at https://newrepublic.com/article/132778/vladimir-putins-little-helper (last accessed May 1, 2017). On Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico's defense of Putin, see "EU Should Drop Russia Sanctions, Slovak PM Says after Meeting Putin," *Reuters*, August 26, 2016, at http://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-slovakia-idUSKCN1111A1 (last accessed May 1, 2017). On Marine Le Pen's connections with Putin, see Vivienne Walt, "Why France's Marine Le Pen is Doubling Down on Russia's Support," *Time*, January 9, 2017, at http://time.com/4627780/russia-national-front-marine-le-pen-putin./ (last accessed

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Quite the contrary: he continues to say that *increased* US troops are needed in Poland to counteract a looming Russian menace. His defense minister, Antoni Macierewicz, has been devoting significant resources to the development of a "Territorial Defense Army" consisting of part-time soldiers outside the regular military command structure, designed explicitly to resist irregular Russian troops should Putin try to repeat in Poland what he did in eastern Ukraine.[6] Kaczyński, Macierewicz, and their colleagues believe—against all evidence to the contrary—that Putin and former Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk (and perhaps German Chancellor Angela Merkel as well) plotted to assassinate Lech Kaczyński (Jarosław's twin brother), who died in a plane crash in 2010. PiS propaganda depicts that (imaginary) assassination plot as the tip of the iceberg of Polish corruption and treasonous subservience to foreign interests.[7] For his part, Putin treats Poland in general and Kaczyński in particular as enemies, and the Russian propaganda apparatus has alternatively mocked and attacked the PiS government.[8]

But despite all this implacable hostility towards Russia (and vice-versa), Kaczyński remains extremely close with Orbán, and speaks approvingly about Le Pen, Trump, and other pro-Russian politicians. Like them (and like Putin), he longs for a less cohesive and centralized European Union, one transformed into an alliance of fully independent nation-states, with each member retaining autonomy on all significant matters. PiS opposes reforms to strengthen the directly elected European parliament, preferring instead the principle of one-nation-one-vote (or better, one-nation-one-veto) within a loose economic alliance.[9]

Looking eastward, Kaczyński himself has upheld the continuation of Polish support for pro-European and pro-democracy advocates in the former Soviet republics, but this commitment is wavering in the face of opposition

May 1, 2017). On Zeman's relations with both Trump and Putin, see Anthony Faiola, "Meet the pro-Russian, Anti-Muslim European Leader Who Was Just Invited to Trump's White House," *Washington Post*, January 11, 2017, at https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/meet-the-pro-russian-anti-muslim-european-leader-who-was-just-invited-to-trumpswhite-house/2017/01/11/18c14536-d808-11e6-9f9f-5cdb4b7f8dd7_story.html?utm_term=.fde72aecb641 (last accessed May 1, 2017).

6. The actual purpose of this new paramilitary force is unclear, and it has provoked serious fears among the anti-PiS opposition. See "Prywatna armia Macierewicza? Czym będą Wojska Obrony Terytorialnej," *TVN24*, November 26, 2016, at http://www.tvn24.pl/wiadomosci-z-kraju,3/wojsko-macierewicza-mieso-armatnie-czym-beda-wot,695027.html (last accessed May 1, 2017); Daniel Flis, "PO: Macierewicz może użyć Wojska Obrony Terytorialnej przeciwko Polakom," *OKO.press*, November 20, 2016, at https://oko.press/macierewicz-moze-uzyc-wojsk-obrony-terytorialnej-przeciwko-polakom/ (last accessed May 1, 2017).

7. This worldview was captured in the film *Smoleńsk* (Directed by Antoni Krauze. Wasaw, Poland: Kino Świat, 2017, DVD). The movie received horrible reviews, and was generally ignored by moviegoers in Poland (aside from PiS party loyalists).

8. The examples are endless, but to get the tone, see Dmitry Babich, "Warmongering in Warsaw," *RT*, (April 19, 2016): at https://www.rt.com/op-edge/340176-poland-greenlight-eu-russia/ (last accessed May 1, 2017).

9. Kaczyński summarized his views on the EU in an interview last summer: Jacek Nizinkiewicz and Michał Szułdrzyński, "Kaczyński: Nie jestem dyktatorem," *Rzeczpospolita*, July 10, 2016, at http://www.rp.pl/Prawo-i-Sprawiedliwosc/307109958-Kaczynski-Nie-jestem-dyktatorem.html#ap-1 (last accessed May 1, 2017).

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within PiS.[10] The Polish government had long provided aid to the opponents of Belarus's authoritarian leader, Aliaksandar Lukashenka, but recently these relations have taken a 180 degree turn. For example, in December 2016 it was announced that the Polish-sponsored TV station *Bielsat*, which had offered programing in Belarusian that was free from the regime's censors, would be defunded in favor of a Polish-language station aimed at the small Polish minority within Belarus. When the foreign minister was asked what Belarusians could do now to find independent news, he said "they'll learn Polish."[11]

So far, Poland has continued to support Ukraine, and this remains an important exception in the convergence of Polish foreign policy with that of Orbán, Le Pen, and the like.[12] But here, too, the old norms are changing. Central to the PiS movement is what Kaczyński calls *polityka historyczna*, a term which encompasses both "historical politics" and "historical policy." He sees history as inherently political, and he believes that the state should promote a vision of the nation's past aimed at instilling patriotism, a willingness to sacrifice, and (above all) a keen awareness of national martyrology and grievances.[13] One aspect of this has been a renewed focus on the story of the Volyhnia Massacre, when Ukrainian nationalists killed tens of thousands of Poles during WWII. In the summer of 2016, PiS commemorated this tragic event with a parliamentary resolution labeling it an act of "genocide."[14] In trying to balance the government's ongoing foreign policy objectives with the domestic political demands of the PiS base, the government has left everyone

10. On the foreign policy tensions within PiS regarding the lands of the former USSR, see Paweł Kowal, "Kwestia ukraińska jest kluczowa dla Polski," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, December 22, 2016, at http://www.rp.pl/Prawo-i-Sprawiedliwosc/307109958-Kaczynski-Nie-jestem-dyktatorem.html (last accessed May 1, 2017).

11. Paweł Wroński, "Białoruś. Dobry sąsiad mówi po polsku" *Gazeta Wyborcza*, January 8, 2017, at http://wyborcza.pl/7,75968,21216602,bialorus-dobry-sasiad-mowi-po-polsku.html?disableRedirects=true (last accessed may 1, 2017). Some reports suggest that *Bielsat* might survive in some form, though its future remains precarious. Luiza Łuniewska, "Biełsat będzie istniał. Premier daje gwarancje," *WP Wiadomość*, January 5, 2017, at http://wiadomosci.wp.pl/bielsat-bedzie-istnial-premier-daje-gwarancje-6076933552784001a (last accessed May 1, 2017).

12. A summary of the government's policy vis-à-vis Ukraine, which still remains unchanged, can be found in this interview with foreign minister Witold Waszczykowski: "'Państwo leżące za Ukrainą'; Waszczykowski o polityce wschodniej," *TVN24*, January 25, 2016, at http://www.tvn24.pl/wiadomosci-z-kraju,3/waszczykowski-o-polityce-rzadu-pis-wobec-ukrainy,613436.html (last accessed May 2, 2017).

13. For an official definition of *polityka historyczna*, see the website of the Instytut Pamięci Narodowej (Institute for National Remembrance) at https://ipn.gov.pl/pl/publikacje/ksiazki/12481,Pamiec-i-polityka-historyczna.html (last accessed May 2, 2017) The IPN is a statutory government agency whose purpose is to manage communist-era archives and promote the memory of Polish victimization in the 20th century.

14. The director of the recent film *Wołyn* (Poland, 2016), Wojciech Smarzowski, has stated that he did not want his film to contribute to PiS's *polityka historyczna*. That hasn't prevented PiS supporters from appropriating the film for their own purposes. See "Wojciech Smarzowski odmówił przyjęcia nagrody od prezesa TVP Jacka Kurskiego," *Onet film*, October 5, 2016, at http://film.onet.pl/wojciech-smarzowski-odmowil-przyjecia-nagrody-od-prezesa-tvp/40w50h (last accessed May 2, 2017).

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dissatisfied.[15] Not surprisingly, this has led to a decline in Poland's popularity and influence in Ukraine.[16]

Putting all this together, we get a picture of a government that is behaving almost exactly as Putin would wish, with the wavering exception of Kaczyński's Ukrainian policy. As recently as 2014, Poland had been the prime example of the effectiveness and wisdom of the 2004 EU expansion; now the country is being cited as evidence that it would have been better to leave the former Soviet bloc countries on their own.[17] Beyond any doubt, Kaczyński is sincerely hostile to Russia, but it is equally undeniable that PiS rule has helped Putin's broader agenda in Europe, and that domestic politics in Poland and Russia are more closely aligned today than at any time since 1989. On most issues, there is very little space between Kaczyński, Fico, Zeman, Orbán, and Le Pen.

I think we can set aside one possible explanation for this convergence: that Putin is engineering it all. To be sure, there are some reasons to suspect Russian machinations in Poland in recent years, but we must be extremely cautious because the evidence remains thin and circumstantial. There were many reasons why PiS got 38% of the vote during the elections in 2015 (which was enough to gain a parliamentary majority, thanks to the number of parties that failed to reach the 5% minimum). And there were even more reasons why people voted *against* the previous Platforma Obywatelska (Civic Platform, or PO) government, which held power for eight years. Among the events leading to the erosion of PO's authority was a scandal that broke out in 2014 with the publication of secret recordings of private conversations among leading government figures. The revelations emerged under very suspicious circumstances, and while Polish counterintelligence suspected Russian involvement, this was never proven.[18] Journalists have uncovered hints of

15. For a view of this controversy from the perspective of those disappointed with PiS's ongoing friendship with Ukraine, see "Ustawa ws. ludobójstwa na Wołyniu. 'PiS uległo naciskom międzynarodowym'" *Polskie Radio Jedynka*, July 11, 2016, at http://www.polskieradio.pl/7/129/Artykul/1641737,Ustawa-ws-ludobojstwa-na-Wolyniu-PiS-uleglo-naciskom-miedzynarodowym (last accessed May 2, 2017). For a discussion of Ukrainian reactions to PiS rhetoric, see Maciej Zaniewicz, "Będzie gorzej. Jak przetrwać kryzys w relacjach polsko-ukraińskich," *Eastbook*, July 27, 2016, at http://www.eastbook.eu/2016/07/27/bedzie-gorzej-jak-przetrwac-kryzys-w-relacjach-polsko-ukrainskich/ (last accessed May 2, 2017).

16. See Ola Hnatiuk, "Wracam z Polski," *Kultura Liberalna* 42, October 18, 2016, at http://kulturaliberalna.pl/2016/10/18/ola-hnatiuk-polska-ukraina-relacje/ (last accessed May 2, 2017).

17. After briefly receding, we are again seeing old orientalist arguments about the stubborn "backwardness" of eastern Europe, along with claims that Poles and Hungarians are like "problem children" who were never "mature" enough for democracy. A particularly egregious example is Sean Hanley and James Dawson, "Poland isn't a Democracy and it Never Was," *Foreign Policy* (January 3, 2017) at http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/01/03/poland-was-never-as-democratic-as-it-looked-law-and-justice-hungary-orban/ (last accessed May 2, 2017).

18. On the role of the so-called "*afera taśmowa*" (tape affair) in bringing down the previous government, see Wojciech Czuchnowski, "Jak Platforma Obywatelska przegrała z podsłuchami," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, December 29, 2016, at http://wyborcza.pl/7,75968,21176988,jak-podsluchy-demolowaly-platforme-obywatelska.html?disableRedirects=true (last accessed May 2, 2017). On the conspiracy theories about

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ongoing covert Russian operations in Poland, particularly inside the Defense Ministry—though again, the public evidence is inconclusive.[19]

Whether there is truth to any of those suspicions is beside the point. We should resist the temptation to overstate Russia's role or Putin's power. Even in the most unambiguous examples of Russian interventions, they have only managed to turn up the heat slightly under a social, cultural, and political stew that was already at a full boil. Even if Russia was entirely out of the picture, these various antiliberal movements would still constitute a major challenge. More important than specific Russian intelligence operations, I would argue, is the underlying ideological convergence that makes the antiliberal international imaginable in the first place. This coalition is not (at least, not only) a "conservative" or "right wing" phenomenon in the way those terms are understood in the United States. It has in part emerged from the conceptual framework of the old communist parties of eastern Europe, but is now resonating far beyond the region, appealing to a demographic base that challenges our ideological expectations.

To understand the deep historical context of our current political moment, we need to start with the recent scholarship on the immediate post-WWII years in east-central Europe. There is a growing consensus among historians that it is too simplistic to depict the events of the late 1940s solely in terms of Soviet conquest and occupation. Instead, a number of scholars have urged us to think of those years as a time of actual revolution, with autonomous local causes and with a significant local constituency.[20] The wartime destruction and postwar confiscations of nearly all the private capital in Poland, the murder of over 90% of Poland's Jewish citizens in the Holocaust, the removal of nearly everyone claiming German or Ukrainian ethnicity in the postwar ethnic cleansing, and the discrediting of the prewar political elite because of the country's catastrophic 1939 defeat: all this facilitated a reconstruction of economic, political, cultural, and social life beyond the wildest dreams of prewar revolutionaries. The Soviets only needed to step in and sculpt the

Russian involvement, see "Sensacyjny wątek rosyjskich służb specjalnych w aferze podsłuchowej," *Radio Zet*, June 9, 2015, at http://archiwum.radiozet.pl/Wiadomosci/Kraj/Afera-podsluchowa-NOWE-FAKTY.-Tresc-zeznan-jednego-z-kelnerow-00006575 (last accessed May 2, 2017); "W aferę taśmową zamieszane są rosyjskie służby" *Newsweek Polska*, June 9, 2015, at http://www.newsweek.pl/polska/zbigniew-stonoga-afera-tasmowa-zeznania-kelnerow,artykuly,364693,1.html (last accessed May 2, 2017).

19. For a summary of the suspicions regarding the Defense Ministry, see Grzegorz Rzeczkowski, "Sekrety Macierewicza" *Polityka* 42 (2016): 20–23.

20. This argument was made recently by Andrzej Leder, *Prześniona rewolucja: Ćwiczenie z logiki historycznej* (Warsaw, 2014). For a darker version of a similar argument, see Marcin Zaremba, *Wielka Trwoga: Polska 1944–1947: Ludowa reakcja na kryzys* (Kraków: 2012). An earlier endorsement of the use of the term "revolution" for the 1940s in Poland came from Padraic Kenney, *Rebuilding Poland: Workers and Communists, 1945–1950* (Ithaca: 1997). Other examples are Malgorzata Fidelis, *Women, Communism and Industrialization in Postwar Poland* (Cambridge, UK, 2010); Zsuzsa Gille, *From the Cult of Waste to the Trash Heap of History: The Politics of Waste in Socialist and Postsocialist Hungary* (Bloomington: 2007); Katherine Lebow, *Unfinished Utopia: Nowa Huta, Stalinism, and Polish Society, 1949–1956* (Ithaca, 2013). A classic example of the alternative framework emphasizing Soviet conquest can be found in Thomas T. Hammond, ed., *The Anatomy of Communist Takeovers* (New Haven, 1975).

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revolution to their own specifications, and they did so with ruthless determination. But it is important to distinguish the domestic revolutionary dynamics from the political impositions of the Soviets. That foundation wasn't socialist, but something more elemental: it was a revolution of what I call *exclusionary egalitarianism*.[21]

This wasn't the egalitarianism described in the prophecies of Marx or Lenin, and it certainly wasn't the "equality of opportunity" framework advanced by the theorists of liberal capitalism. Nor was it the "egalitarian individualism" that scholars have described for places as diverse as the US and Scandinavia—an ethos that combines a desire for rough equality with a strong sense of individual autonomy.[22] Instead, it was grounded in the moral framework that strives to prevent people from straying too far from communal norms, either by falling into destitution or by rising too far above their neighbors. It was not the egalitarianism of fairness, but of *community,* and it provided a mandate for the social compression needed to maintain strong bonds within a tight social group. Such mandates for rough equality are common enough, but distinguishing the post-WWII ethos (particularly in east-central Europe) was a second component: a politics of exclusionary identity emerging out of the brutality of the war, a heightened sense that the world was divided between "us" and "them." Across all the combatants of WWII, but with particular intensity in the parts of Europe where the occupation was most violent and the conflict most bitter, it became a basic survival mechanism to identify one's enemies and one's friends, and this Manichean worldview survived long after the fighting stopped. The perception of a dualist world of allies and foes was much more important than the debates over whether those categories were defined according to "class" or "nation." In fact, we are as likely to find examples of this thinking among communists as among nationalists. Intellectuals would argue about the specific content of postwar

21. A number of scholars, from different disciplinary perspectives and dealing with many different times and places, have explored the issue of blending strong ideologies of exclusion with egalitarian and redistributive social goals. For example, see David W. Cavers, "Nationalism, Ethnicity, and the Cultural Politics of Identity," *Totem: The University of Western Ontario Journal of Anthropology* 1, no. 1 (1994): 22–31; William Connolly, *Identity/Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox* (Ithaca, 1991); Marianne Gullestad, "Invisible Fences: Egalitarianism, Nationalism, and Racism," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 8, no. 1 (2002): 45–63; Bonnie Honig, *Political Theory and the Displacement of Politics* (Ithaca, 1993); Ibram X. Kendi, *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America* (New York, 2016); Dominic O'Sullivan "Indigeneity, Ethnicity, and the State: Australia, Fiji, and New Zealand," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 20, no. 1 (2014): 26–42; Lin Poyer, "Egalitarianism in the Face of Hierarchy," *Journal of Anthropological Research* 49, no. 2 (1993): 111–33; Thomas Spragens, Jr. *Civic Liberalism: Reflections on Our Democratic Ideals* (Lanham, 1999).

22. For example, see Louis Dumont, *Essays on Individualism: Modern Ideology in Anthropological Perspective* (Chicago, 1986); Thomas Hylland Eriksen, "Being Norwegian in a Shrinking World: Reflections on Norwegian Identity," in Anne Cohen Kiel, ed., *Continuity and Change: Aspects of Modern Norway* (Oslo, 1993): 5–39; Hans Fredrik Dahl, "Those Equal Folk," *Daedalus* 113, no. 1 (1984): 93–108; Richard Reeves, "Saving Horatio Alger: Equality, Opportunity, and the American Dream," *The Brookings Essay*, August 20, 2014, at http://csweb.brookings.edu/content/research/essays/2014/saving-horatio-alger.html (last accessed May 2, 2017).

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identity politics, but what really mattered was the centrality of identity itself. In this context, the words "liberty," "freedom," or "emancipation" did not refer to the individual liberty of liberalism, but the sort of collective freedom that implies walls against "outsiders" and the enforcement of homogeneity "inside."[23]

The role of the USSR, then, was not to force a revolution upon Poland, but to seize the existing social forces and redirect them in a Marxist/Leninist/Stalinist model. This project failed *very* quickly, mainly because a key component of the model was the transformation of human subjectivity into a cosmopolitan *homo sovieticus*. Although Stalin had "nationalized" communism in many ways, the establishment of the Soviet Bloc involved a great deal of pressure to perceive "brotherly" Russo-Polish bonds, as part of a broader socialist identity.[24] Against this backdrop, 1956 appears as the Thermidor to Poland's Revolution, and like the French original, it both brought the worst violence to an end and rolled back some of the radical social transformations of previous years. The rise of Władysław Gomułka as leader of the PZPR (Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza, or Polish United Workers Party) was not really a "liberalizing" thaw. Instead, his reforms marked a withdrawal by the communists from any serious ambition to fundamentally transform Polish culture and society.[25] Even in the late 1940s, as the communists were seizing power in Poland, Gomułka represented a very distinct kind of communism. His slogan then (and later) was the "*Polska Droga*" (Polish Road, or Polish Way), which is often understood to imply that the communists of each particular country should adopt the path to socialism most suited to their context. Actually, his arguments went deeper than mere tactics; he also questioned the assumption that the end-point of socialist development would look the same in each country. His road wasn't called Polish because it ran through Poland, but because it *led* to Poland.

So what really distinguished Gomułka's Poland was an embrace of the exclusionary identity politics of the time, and an abandonment of any lingering remains of the old communist ambitions to create a truly new form of human subjectivity. Without explicitly admitting it, he and his successors didn't really try to create *homo sovieticus*. The Stalinist revolution was supposed to strike deep into the realm of social norms, down to the level of the family and interpersonal relations. That's what Gomułka surrendered, accepting consumerism on the one hand, and nationalism on the other. In the countryside, the abandonment of agricultural collectivization reenshrined the family, organized within traditional peasant villages, as the basic unit of production. Perhaps most important, the state retreated from

23. In this paragraph I am extending ideas I first explored in "Democracy and Discipline in Late Nineteenth-Century Poland," *Journal of Modern History* 71, no. 2 (June 1999): 346–93.

24. On the importance of nationalism for Stalin, see Ron Suny and Terry Martin, eds., *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin* (Oxford, 2001).

25. I made this argument in *Poland in the Modern World: Beyond Martyrdom* (London, 2015), 231–57.

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its efforts to change family or gender norms.[26] The legendary female tractor drivers disappeared, to be replaced by new laws blocking women from jobs deemed too "masculine" or too dangerous for women's health. Funding patterns for childcare relied upon a presumed return to traditional nurturing roles for women (usually grandmothers, who were legally encouraged to retire early). Above all, Gomułka abandoned the idea of creating an internationalist, cosmopolitan, socialist subject. Instead, the PRL became emphatically *national*, even nationalistic (particularly after the rise of Mieczysław Moczar's "patriotic" faction in the late 1960s).[27] After 1956, the red-and-white Polish flag became much more prominent than the red communist flag, and state propaganda intensified the use of the adjective "Polish" before all the old communist slogan words (the *Polish* proletariat, the *Polish* people, and *Polish* communism). The official ideology of the state glorified ethno-national homogeneity, resurrecting old stories about national martyrdom in the struggle for independence. Above all, the party kindled hatred towards foreigners (particularly Germans and Jews).

It is therefore no surprise that some former members of the National Democratic movement (the *Endecja*) participated in the building of the Polish People's Republic in a variety of functions.[28] But most of those on the far right either left the country or withdrew from political life, and the primary reason is crucial: the PZPR's legitimacy was never recognized by the Catholic Church. Gomułka and his successors downplayed many of socialism's goals, but they could never *entirely* abandon the foundational anticlericalism and scientism of the Marxist project. For their part, the Church hierarchy had been demonizing (literally!) socialism for so long that a reversal was inconceivable. Given the importance of Catholicism to 20th century Polish nationalism, Gomułka's National Communism was doomed. This wasn't because Polish nationalism was *essentially* tied to Catholicism, since that had not always been the case.[29] Rather, the problem was more generic: with a hostile Catholic Church, an important ideological transmission belt and an important form of quotidian sociability in Poland remained firmly anti-communist. If Gomułka was

26. Lynne Haney has argued that in Hungary, even domestic violence prevention was significantly weakened after 1956. See her book *Inventing the Needy: Gender and the Politics of Welfare in Hungary* (Berkeley, 2002).

27. On Gomułka's nationalism, see Marcin Zaremba, *Komunizm, legitymizacja, nacjonalizm: Nacjonalistyczna legitymizacja władzy komunistycznej w Polsce* (Warsaw, 2001). For a comparative perspective, see Krzysztof Tyszka, *Nacjonalizm w komunizmie: Ideologia narodowa w Związku Radzieckim i Polsce Ludowej* (Warsaw, 2004). On Moczar, see Krzysztof Lesiakowski, *Mieczysław Moczar "Mietek": Biografia polityczna* (Warsaw, 1998). On the antisemitism that emerged at this time, see Dariusz Stola, *Kampania antysyjonistyczna w Polsce 1967–1968* (Warsaw, 2000).

28. On nationalists and communists in the immediate postwar years, see T. David Curp, *A Clean Sweep? The Politics of Ethnic Cleansing in Western Poland, 1945–1960* (Rochester, 2006); Michael Fleming, *Communism, Nationalism and Ethnicity in Poland, 1944–1950* (London, 2010); Mikołaj Kunicki, *Between the Brown and the Red: Nationalism, Catholicism, and Communism in Twentieth-Century Poland: the Politics of Bolesław Piasecki* (Athens, Ohio, 2012).

29. As I've argued elsewhere, nationalism was not always so central to Polish nationalism, but it had become so by the interwar years (if not even a bit earlier). See Porter-Szucs, *Faith and Fatherland: Modernity, Catholicism, and Poland* (New York, 2011).

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embracing the politics of identity, he was doing so with one hand tied behind his back. Far too many of the rituals of identity and the ceremonial markers of life's passage could never be assimilated into his system. Or to be more specific, the only way to have done so would have been to more fully embrace the Stalinist approach to the reconstruction of individual subjectivity, which Gomułka had otherwise abandoned.

As inexorable as that failure may have been, it does raise a question that rarely gets posed: if the post-WWII Church leadership did not accept communism, just what sort of social, economic, and political system *did* they want to see in Poland? One thing was very clear: they did *not* want Poland to become a liberal capitalist democracy. Although Pius XII seemed to ally the Church with the United States after WWII (particularly with his 1949 excommunication of all those who cooperated with communists), he saw this as an uncomfortable alliance against a common foe.[30] The problem with communism, for most of the Catholic hierarchy, was not that it challenged capitalism and democracy. Quite the contrary: they saw it as the culmination of all the evils unleased by capitalism and democracy. Communism, for them, stood at the very bottom of the slippery slope down which humanity had been descending since the Enlightenment. Only at the Second Vatican Council (1963–1965) did the Church soften its stance on modernity and democracy—but even then, Catholic hostility towards individualism and capitalism remained, particular for traditionalists like Polish Primate Stefan Wyszyński and his successor Józef Glemp. From their perspective, both the communists and the left-liberal or social democratic dissidents were problematic, albeit in different ways.[31] Karol Wojtyła represented a more open stance towards modernity, but after his election to the papacy as John Paul II, his direct influence over the Polish Church was attenuated (even as his symbolic influence expanded to unimaginable heights).

In the 1970s and 1980s, most observers thought that the Catholics and the secular left had reached a rapprochement, maybe even a genuine alliance in the struggle against communism.[32] In hindsight, we can see how fragile and superficial that brief confluence of interests was. When the PZPR was finally

30. On Catholicism, the US, and the Cold War, see Frank J. Coppa, *The Policies and Politics of Pope Pius XII: Between Diplomacy and Morality* (New York, 2011); John T. McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom: A History* (New York, 2003); Patrick H. McNamara, *A Catholic Cold War: Edmund A. Walsh, S. J., and the Politics of American Anticommunism* (New York, 2005).

31. Andrzej Romanowski, "Kościół, lewica, wojna," *Znak* 681 (2012): at http://www.miesiecznik.znak.com.pl/6812011andrzej-romanowskikosciol-lewica-wojna (last accessed May 2, 2017). Piotr Kosicki has argued that there were, in fact, some serious efforts across Europe to start a dialogue between communists and Catholics. Kosicki, *Catholics on the Barricades: Poland, France, and "Revolution," 1939–1956* (New Haven, Forthcoming).

32. The key texts that marked the attempt to establish this alliance were (from the right) Bogdan Cywiński, *Rodowody niepokornych* (Kraków, 1971); and (from the left) Adam Michnik, *Kościół, lewica, dialog* (Paris, 1977). On the role of the Church in the anticommunism of that time, see Jan Kubik, *The Power of Symbols Against the Symbols of Power: The Rise of Solidarity and the Fall of State Socialism in Poland* (University Park, Pennsylvania, 1994).

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overthrown in 1989, the disillusionment among conservative Catholics was immediate and bitter.[33] Instead of the systemic counterrevolution that most priests and bishops had desired, they saw Poland change from one unacceptable regime (communism) to another (liberal capitalist democracy). People outside Poland express bewilderment when PiS supporters insist that nothing significant changed in 1989, that it was all a big conspiracy to allow PZPR functionaries to retain positions of power, or that Lech Wałęsa was a communist agent.[34] From the perspective of those who saw the protagonists in the Cold War as authoritarian communism and liberal democratic capitalism, it is absurd to suggest that 1989 was anything less than an epic triumph. But from the perspective of those who saw communism as the logical consequence of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, all the Poles did was crawl a little bit backwards on that slippery slope to perdition.

1989 was therefore experienced as a failure for two large ideological clusters: the national communists and the Catholic conservatives. The former lost all credibility, and their rhetorical vocabulary was discredited. But large swaths of the PZPR's worldview remained popular: hostility towards foreigners, a commitment to redistributive economic policies, and a longing for social discipline and unity. In other words, exclusionary egalitarianism. All of those issues were central to the disillusioned Catholics as well, who were able to slide right into the spot that had been occupied by the national communists. The only significant difference was that they could add to the PZPR's mix the one key element that the communists never had: the imprimatur of the Church.

It is tempting to describe this as a manifestation of the old bromide about the far left and the far right circling back to each other, under the flexible label of "populism." That word can certainly be useful, particularly when we want to emphasize a general hostility towards "elites." It helps us explain, for example, why Bernie Sanders and Donald Trump rose to popularity at the same time, or why both Geert Wilders and GroenLinks could achieve such strong results in this year's Dutch elections. Grouping together such diverse movements inside the "populist" tent draws our attention to the ways in which growing inequality, the erosion of the welfare state, and the collapse of mid-20th century forms of industrial stability have all coalesced to spark our current crisis. But the concept of "populism" has its limitations, too. The biggest problem is that it risks replacing one binary (left vs. right) with another (liberal vs. populist). That, in turn, could encourage the view that the political struggle of the moment is between the besieged elites and the enraged masses, or between individual liberty and a collectivist mob. I think we need a framework that allows us to approach this problem with a scalpel rather than a scythe, and "populism" strikes me as too capacious for that purpose. The label "exclusionary egalitarianism" is admittedly clunky (three syllables

33. I explain this more fully in *Faith and Fatherland*, 267–71.

34. Perhaps the most infamous recent articulation of this conspiratorial interpretation of Poland's past is Dorota Kania, Jerzy Targalski, and Maciej Marosz, *Resortowe dzieci: Służby* (Warsaw, 2015). For an example of the presentation of the leader of the Solidarity movement as a communist agent, see Sławomir Cenckiewicz, *Wałęsa: Człowiek z teczki* (Poznań, 2013).

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is definitely better than thirteen), but it has the advantage of taking us away from the two-dimensional "ideological spectrum." Instead, I propose a different geometric metaphor: a triangle, with liberal democracy on one vertex, nationalist conservatism on another, and socialism on the third (see figure 1). This alternative shape is helpful because it allows us to envision the shifts that different political movements must make in order to establish alliances or to create new blended ideologies.

In this scheme, the immediate postwar years saw the two major US political parties competing over a tiny bit of space at the liberal tip of the triangle, while the center of gravity in west European politics was somewhere along the line between liberalism and socialism. The upper-right vertex was largely discredited by the horrors of fascism, and while the Vatican still occupied that spot, even Catholicism was changing rapidly. Communism, meanwhile, was firmly lodged on the bottom-right vertex (see figure 2).

The rise of Gomułka's national communism after 1956 did *not* push the PZPR towards liberalism, but upwards along the right-hand edge of the triangle. Meanwhile, the Second Vatican Council dislodged the Church from the very furthest vertex, though that change was harder to see in Poland (see figure 3).

After 1989 the PZPR was gone, leaving a gaping hole in Poland's political landscape. The large majority of the intelligentsia had hoped to create something like an American or west European array of center-left (Unia Wolności [Freedom Union] and perhaps the post-communist Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej [Alliance of the Democratic Left]) and center-right parties

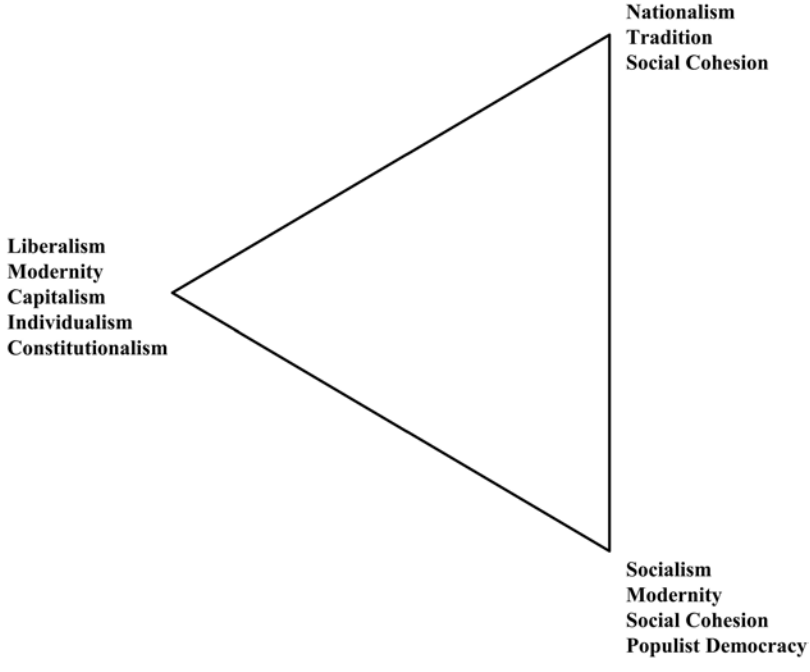


Figure 1. The Ideological Triangle.

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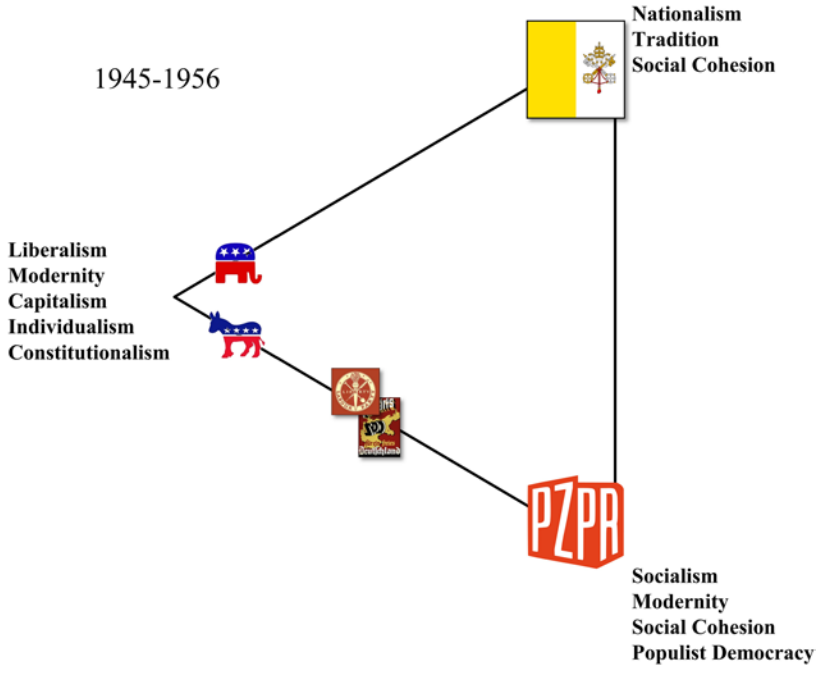


Figure 2. The Ideological Triangle, 1945–1956.

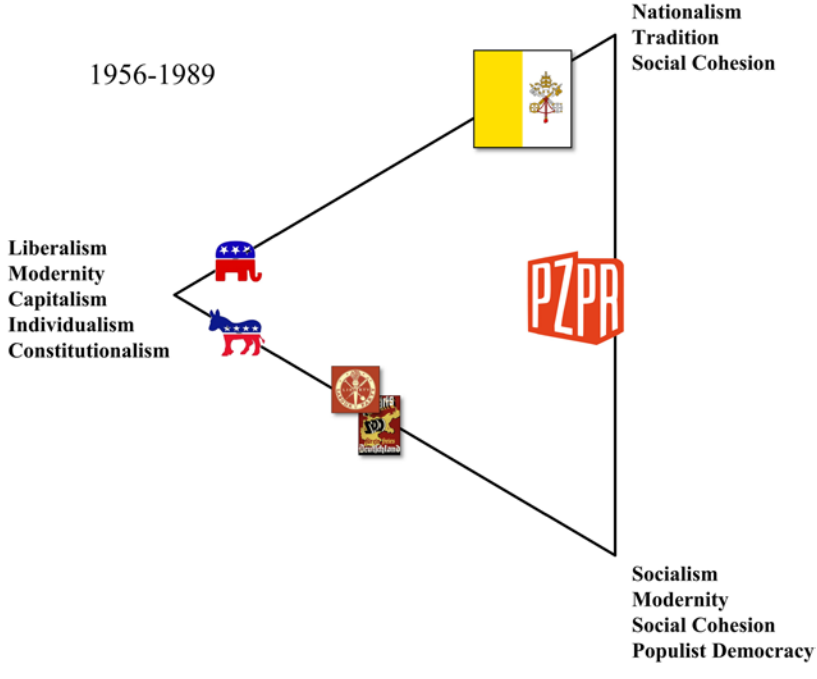


Figure 3. The Ideological Triangle, 1957–1989.

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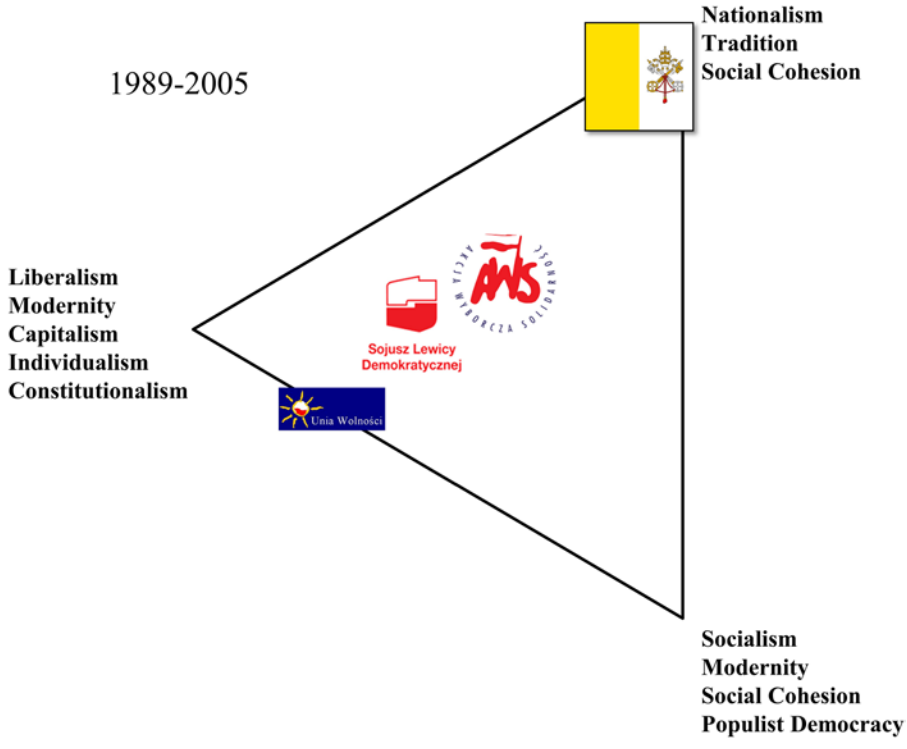


Figure 4. The Ideological Triangle, 1989–2005.

(Akcja Wyborcza Solidarność [Solidarity Electoral Action]), but as David Ost has argued, these efforts left very little space for the indispensable politics of anger and frustration. [35] The most emotional political debates throughout the 1990s circled around cultural issues, with liberals pushing for a more secular state and conservatives hoping to retain a significant place for Catholicism. There was an obvious problem with the resulting picture (see figure 4).

The way in which that gaping hole was filled was by no means preordained. Several political parties on the left tried to establish a foothold near the empty vertex of this triangle, but none have succeeded in establishing a significant and enduring presence. Meanwhile, many believed that increasing prosperity and secularization would cause the upper-right segment of the triangle to gradually lose its significance. The unprecedented growth in the Polish economy, and the fact that more and more Poles were reporting that they were happy with their lives and optimistic about the future, made it seem possible that the future belonged entirely to the liberal side of the triangle (see figure 5).[36]

35. David Ost, *The Defeat of Solidarity: Anger and Politics in Postcommunist Europe* (Ithaca, 2005).

36. GDP figures from: The Conference Board: Trusted Insights for Business Worldwide, at https://www.conference-board.org/data/economydatabase/index.cfm?id=27762 (last accessed May 2, 2017). Attitudes about family well-being assembled from the monthly reports on "nastroje społeczne" (literally "social mood," loosely "public sentiment") prepared by the Centrum Badań Opinii Społecznej (Center for the Study of Social Opinion,

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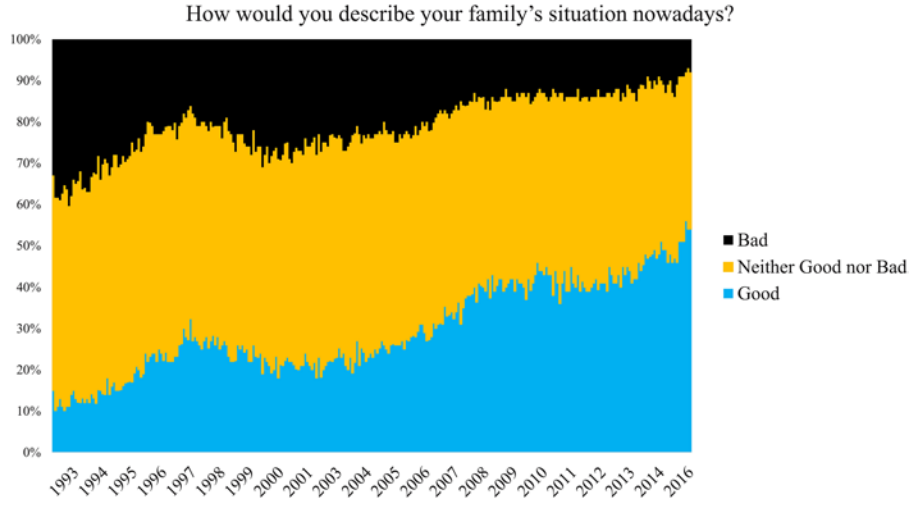


Figure 5. Survey of Well-Being, 1993–2016.

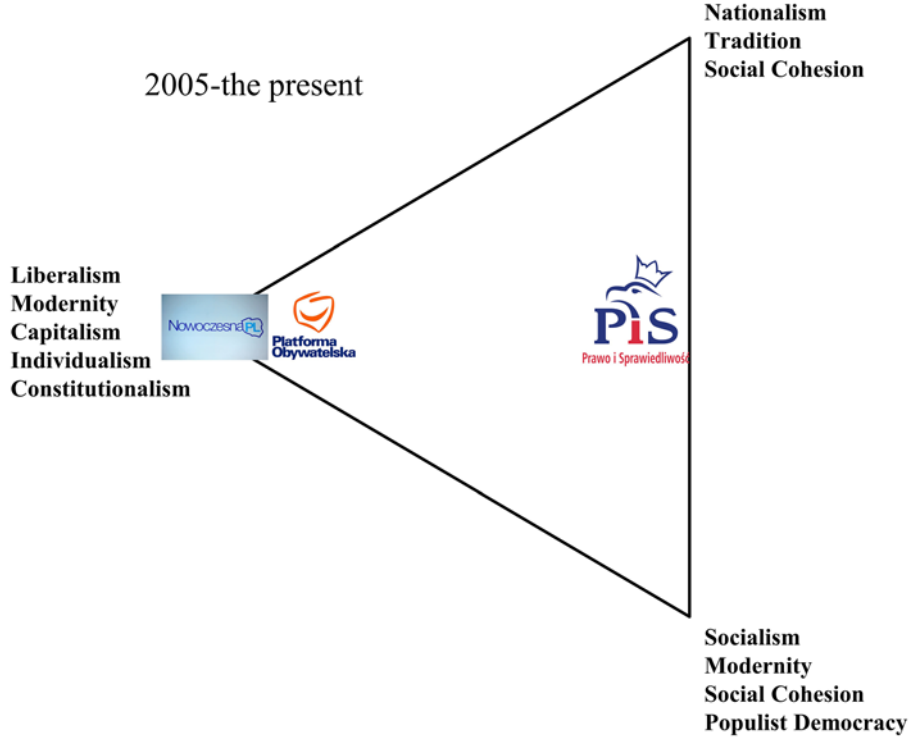


Figure 6. The Ideological Triangle, 2005 to the present.

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What so many of us did not realize was that while traditional Catholic conservatism was in fact in decline, the exclusionary egalitarianism at the foundation for Gomułka's national communism had never gone away. That worldview didn't represent a majority of the population, but with the right concatenation of political forces even a party with support of around a third of the electorate can come to power (as we learned after the 2015 elections). Thus we ended up with today's political landscape (see figure 6).[37]

Although I have located PiS in precisely the spot that the PZPR had occupied, I am *not* arguing that Kaczyński is a communist. Instead, I'm suggesting that by the 1970s and 1980s, the PZPR itself had moved away from earlier forms of Leninism and even Stalinism, towards national communism. *That* was the ideology overthrown in 1989. For anyone who embraced the broad framework of liberal democracy (everyone from social democrats through libertarians to Christian democrats), this was an unambiguous victory. But many in Poland did not want that sort of revolution back in the 1980s. Instead, they longed for a state that would repudiate the whole left vertex of my ideological triangle. They wanted a state that would preserve the PZPR's commitment to social cohesion, cultural homogeneity, and nationalism, but imbue it with a Catholic rather than a leftist vocabulary.

So what we see today is the ideology of exclusionary egalitarianism fortified with the antiliberal rhetoric of Catholicism. The latter component, I would argue, is less important, because when we view this phenomenon comparatively, we see Orthodoxy (in Putin's Russia), evangelical Protestantism (in Trump's USA), and Islam (in Erdogan's Turkey) serving just as well. In the French, Czech, and Scandinavian cases, we can even see these dynamics playing out in highly secularized societies. This is the core of the worldview that links Putin, Kaczyński, Orbán, Zeman, and Fico. Understood broadly as exclusionary egalitarianism (without the direct communist affiliation), this is what we see in Le Pen, Hofer, Wilders, and their ilk in western Europe.[38] It was the core ideology that supported the Soviet Bloc states, far more so than Marxism ever did. It *seemed* to have been defeated in 1989 by constitutional,

CBOS). These reports can be downloaded at http://cbos.pl/PL/publikacje/raporty.php (last accessed May 2, 2017).

37. I have dated this from 2005 (when PiS first took power) rather than 2001 (when PiS was founded). All the talk of a PiS-PO alliance back in 2004–2005 indicates that a great many people still believed that PiS was a reiteration of AWS—that is, a conservative Catholic party that would still fit within the broad framework of a liberal parliamentary democracy. After 2005, it became clear that this was not the case. I have deliberately removed the Church from this final diagram, because I don't perceive a significant Catholic force in Polish politics today that is independent from PiS. The episcopate and most of the clergy have hitched their star to Kaczyński, and henceforth their fates are inextricably linked, for better or worse.

38. The situation in the US is more complicated because Trumpism has been hitched to a Republican Party that remains strongly libertarian. I think Trump's *voters* (at least, the white Midwesterners who were crucial to his victory) are very similar to their European counterparts in their exclusionary egalitarianism, while Trump's *cabinet* (and probably Trump himself) remains closer to traditional Republican libertarianism. This means that Trump will have to walk a tightrope to maintain the support of his base.

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rule-of-law, liberal politics and multiculturalism on the one hand, and free-market "neoliberal" economics on the other. That defeat was an illusion.

Plotting exclusionary egalitarianism on a triangle rather than positioning it along a political spectrum helps us see the history of this ideology more clearly, and understand why the former Soviet Bloc countries are playing a crucial role in its resurgence. But if the history of this worldview is tied to eastern Europe, its present incarnation has no geographical locus. Putin's Russia might have become a symbolic focal point, but it would be a grave error to draw too many parallels between his machinations today, and the position of the USSR in the international communist movement a half century ago. The association of exclusionary egalitarianism with communism during the 20th century's Cold War established a useful quarantine around it in western Europe and North America, but with that gone, we now see all too clearly that the sentiments behind it are (and probably always were) equally potent across the globe.

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