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*Consensus Over Political Divisions:  
Polish Input in the Debate  
on Multiculturalism and Immigration  
to the European Union*

**Abstract:** Multiculturalism as an ideology holds that Western societies ought to become mosaics of races, ethnicities and religions. At least from the mid-1980s, multiculturalism has set out the contents and limits of public debate and policy on immigration in Western democracies. That ideological supremacy has been effectively questioned only by the public reactions to the 2015 EU immigration crisis. Political rhetoric on immigration has changed more than actual policy. Meanwhile, in Poland, its deep political divisions notwithstanding, the mainstream elites of power and opinion have remained quite uniformly sceptical about the generally lax Western approach toward immigration, both regarding its ideological underpinnings and resulting policies. The scope of the Polish debate on immigration seems also much less constrained by the strictures of political correctness than has been the case in the West. The present article documents that transpolitical consensus, tracing its roots back to the historical experience specific to Poland and Central Europe.

**Keywords:** multiculturalism, immigration, migration policy, Poland, European Union.

The 2015 immigration crisis has challenged the long-standing consensus of Western European elites of opinion, politics and money affirming multiculturalism and, thus, welcoming immigration. As an ideology, hitherto guiding government policy, multiculturalism prescribed a mosaic of cultures, religions and races as the proper model of Western democratic society. It assumed that the demographic aging of all Western developed nations left no alternative but acceptance of massive immigration from beyond. And it promised important

benefits. A diverse societal make-up, more befitting of the globalized world, was to help boost economic growth in the West and—by doing away with cultural and ethnic homogeneity—help ensure social tranquillity and international peace. Such homogeneity was held in contempt as the root cause of conflicts and wars. As far as immigration policy was concerned, the previous “melting pot” model of immigrant assimilation to the dominant culture was out, and the mosaic was in [Ciechański 2021: 182-187].

As the massive influx of immigrants from the Middle East and North Africa radicalized the public in 2015, mainstream Western European politicians made some tactical concessions (e.g., by rhetorically admitting that multiculturalism had failed), while, by and large, refusing to reverse the permissive course toward immigration. They also unswervingly followed the precepts of political correctness in that regard and denounced those few opinion leaders who dared directly challenge the assumptions and the logic of the said ideology. Meanwhile, the Polish national debate on multiculturalism and, more broadly, on non-European immigration has produced a transpolitical consensus, quite different from that prevailing in the West. The present article aims to show that:

- (1) Their otherwise deep political divisions notwithstanding, the views of the members of Polish mainstream elites of opinion and politics on multiculturalism and immigration have been converging around an immigration policy “doctrine”, which could be reconstructed from Jarosław Kaczyński’s September 16, 2015, Sejm speech on how Poland ought to have reacted to the then EU immigration crisis.
- (2) On its merits, the Polish consensus is: (a) conservative, insofar as it values ethnic and cultural cohesion of the nation, privileges the rights and interests of its members over the aspirations and rights of the immigrants, (b) pragmatic, insofar as it argues for a selective non-European immigration policy serving the economic needs of the nation and mindful of its limited acculturation capacity, and (c) restrictive, insofar as it acquiesces with effective controls on the influx of immigrants.
- (3) In its form, the Polish public discussion which produced that consensus has been free from the many taboos hamstringing similar debates in the West. That, in turn, is attributed mainly to the unique historical experience of Poland, and more broadly, of Central Europe, in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The method applied is qualitative analysis of the content of public pronouncements and/or publications of prominent Polish figures prior to or in the context of the 2015 EU immigration crisis, as well as the 2021 immigration crisis on the Polish-Balarusian border, manufactured by the Balarusian regime of Alexander Lukashenka, and the 2022 massive influx into Poland of Ukrainian refugees—victims of Russia’s aggression against their country. Such analysis suffers from the bias of self-selection (as only some prominent politicians/public opinion leaders expressed themselves on the matter at hand) as well as randomness (as the utterances examined are not comparably comprehensive and/or specific). The spectrum of opinions considered was intentionally reduced to what in Poland represents the political mainstream. Thus, views of the systematically pro-immigrant left and anti-immigrant right have been left out. Despite those weaknesses, the opinions considered allow the overall mainstream approach in Poland to multiculturalism and immigration to be reconstructed. Public pronouncements on the subject matter by the following individuals have been documented and analysed here:

Ludwik Dorn, sociologist, deputy prime minister and minister of home affairs and administration in the Law and Justice Party (*Prawo i Sprawiedliwość*—PiS) government, 2005-7, once nicknamed “The Third Twin” of Jarosław and Lech Kaczyński; in the 2015 Sejm elections, he ran on the Citizens’ Platform Party (*Platforma Obywatelska*—PO) ticket

Waldemar Hoff, law professor at The Koźmiński Academy in Warsaw

Jarosław Kaczyński, president of PiS

Roman Kuźniar, professor of political science at Warsaw University, 2012-15, international relations advisor to Poland’s President Bronisław Komorowski

Grzegorz Lindenberg, doctor of sociology, former journalist of *Gazeta Wyborcza* (a prominent Polish liberal-left newspaper), and one its co-founders

Andrzej Lubowski, financial and banking specialist, prominent political commentator

Adam Michnik, editor-in-chief of *Gazeta Wyborcza*

Piotr Nowak, professor of philosophy at the Białystok University

Janusz Piechociński, former president of the Polish People's Party (*Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe*—PSL), 2012-15 deputy prime minister and minister of the economy in the PO-PSL coalition government

Jan Rokita, public intellectual, independent political commentator, PO prime minister candidate in the would-be 2005 PO-PiS coalition government

Tomasz Siemoniak, 2011-15 minister of national defence, 2014-15 deputy prime minister in the PO-PSL coalition government

Radosław Sikorski, 2005-7 minister of national defence in the PiS government; 2007-15 and, since 2023 in the Citizens' Coalition government of Donald Tusk

Donald Tusk, president of PO, 2007-14 Poland's prime minister, 2014-2019 and since 2023, again prime minister

Jarosław Kaczyński's speech in the Sejm on the EU immigration crisis on September 16, 2015, is used as the "standard" by which to measure convergence of opinion and the substance of the consensus in question. In that speech, Kaczyński, then the leader of the opposition, laid out an alternative policy to that of the West toward multiculturalism and immigration. When it comes to multiculturalism as an ideology and the resulting government policy, the views expressed will be judged in reference to the definition offered above.

### **Poland's historical experience and openness of public debate on multiculturalism and immigration**

The historical experience of lack of own sovereign statehood and of multiethnicity of territories considered national has immunized the Poles, as well as the nations of Central Europe in general, against utopias and social engineering, as well as their instruments: government censorship on the one hand and Orwellian "newspeak" on the other [Bibó 1946/2012: 53; Kundera 1984; Krastev 2017: 38-59]. In the absence of their own state, and later, under Communist

atheism, church and religion often served as loci of national identity and rampart of resistance against Communist-imposed internationalism. Thus, Western secularization and laicization have fallen in Poland and the rest of Central Europe on much less fertile ground. Nationalism has not been equated with aggressive imperialism. Instead, it is called “patriotism”, justifying national self-preservation and resistance to foreign domination. Furthermore, that part of Europe was saved from the Western anti-capitalist and counterculture rebellion of 1968, which launched the New Left’s “march through institutions” [Radziejewski 2020: 3-6]. Central Europe does not suffer from the Western post-colonial sense of guilt either. Thus, multiculturalism as a form of “post-colonial expiation”, justifying a permissive approach towards non-European immigration, and as an ideology affirming a multicultural, multiracial and multireligious mosaic as the desired and proper model of society, could never hold much allure in the hearts and minds of people in, at long last, nationally homogenous, post-Communist Poland. While politically correct speech has begun to take hold in some “progressive” circles, it has not yet succeeded in restricting public debate. Certainly not in Poland, where in public opinion polls, support for the Left consistently oscillates around 10%. Consequently, Poland is still a place where open debate on the realities of immigration and multiculturalism is possible. The long-established dogmas (e.g., on the “inevitability” of non-European immigration, on the “immanent superiority” of ethnic and cultural diversity over homogeneity, and on “tolerance” supposedly requiring affirmation of any diversity) may be openly challenged without any fear of public opprobrium. Taboos do not apply either. For instance, in Poland, a practical approach favouring selective immigration, more welcoming to those with higher social integration potential, would not be labelled as racist, as was the case in Germany when Thilo Sarrazin was forced to resign from the Bundesbank Executive Board and publicly ostracized, or in France where Michel Houellebecq was castigated for his novel *Submission*.

### **The 2015 EU immigration crisis: a revision of the immigration-multiculturalism paradigm?**

The 2015 immigration crisis, during which around 1.2 million illegal immigrants (3 to 4 times more than in 2014) entered the EU through Libya and the Balkans, marked a turning point in the Western European approach toward immigration from outside Europe. Under the pressure of events, on September 5, 2015, Germany unilaterally suspended application of the EU Dublin Regulation 604/2013 (which was supposed to prevent abuse of the asylum system) and began—for the next

six months—admitting immigrants without any controls prescribed therein.<sup>1</sup> That decision not only divided the country but caused a crisis within the EU [Alexander 2017]. Chancellor Angela Merkel then moved to force a “European solution”, a relocation scheme, whereby EU Member States would be mandated to accept quotas of immigrants (presenting themselves as refugees) let into the EU by Greece and Italy and invited by her own government [Alexander 2017: 101-114].

Central European EU Member States opposed mandatory relocation. In August 2015, Hungary, Bulgaria, Croatia, and Macedonia [an EU candidate country], had erected razor wire barriers on their southern borders, thus effectively closing the so-called “Balkan Route”. On September 22, 2015, during his visit to Bavaria, Hungarian Prime Minister, Viktor Orbán, reminded his hosts that the barbed wire on the Hungarian border was also protecting their country and called upon Germany not to resort to “cultural imperialism” [Werkhäuser 2015; Alexander 2017: 56]. If the Western EU Member States wish to admit immigrants from outside of Europe, if they want to build multicultural societies, let them do it in their own countries, without, however, imposing such policies on others.

Nevertheless, under the so-called “European solution”, on September 9, 2015, the European Commission proposed mandatory relocation quotas [European Commission 2015]. It was expected that Poland would accept around 9,000 immigrants. Initially, the four Visegrád Countries, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia, rejected the Commission proposal. Subsequently, however, Poland broke ranks with its Visegrád partners, and the Government of Ewa Kopacz agreed to accept 5,082 “refugees” relocated from Greece and Italy.<sup>2</sup> It was not the size of a particular relocation quota which was significant in the Commission proposal, but the precedent of mandatory relocation. Once introduced, it could then allow the quotas to be increased as the influx of illegal immigrants might

<sup>1</sup> In January 2016 vice president of the European Commission, Frans Timmermans, stated (based on Frontex data) that over 60% were economic immigrants, who had no right to get asylum status in the EU [Worley 2016].

<sup>2</sup> Based on Council Decision (EU) 2015/1601 (2015) Poland was supposed to admit 3,881 refugees relocated from Greece and 1,201 from Italy, i.e., the total of 5,082 refugees. On the basis of the so-called 1st relocation plan provided for in Resolution 11131/15 [2015] on relocating from Greece and Italy 40,000 persons in clear need of international protection, Poland agreed to admit 1,100 refugees relocated from Greece and Italy. It follows that, under both plans, Poland agreed to take in 6,182 refugees (not economic immigrants, but genuine refugees).

require, thus liberating European politicians from the need to do something to contain illegal immigration itself.

September 16, 2015, saw the critical debate in the Polish Sejm on the EU immigration crisis. The then leader of the opposition, Jarosław Kaczyński, delivered a speech ending it with a series of dramatic questions directed at the government benches: “Do you want us not to be hosts in our own country? Do you really want that? Then, I say to you, let there be no doubt: the Poles do not want that, nor does the Law and Justice Party!” [Kaczyński 2015]

Setting aside his harsh political rhetoric, in his speech, Kaczyński laid down a policy paradigm toward multiculturalism and immigration, alternative to that still predominant in the West, which could be summed up as follows:

- The good of their own citizens should be the paramount moral duty of politicians
- Europe has no moral obligation to admit anybody who wishes to settle in it for its generous welfare provisions and high standard of living
- Decisions about admitting millions of immigrants must not be taken without consent of European citizens
- Colonization of Europe by a fundamentally different civilization ought to be halted
- Refugees must be clearly distinguished from economic immigrants
- Refugees ought to be helped in a way safe to those helping them (i.e., supported financially in refugee centres and other locations close to their home countries)

Kaczyński warned that what was at stake was not a technical problem of relocating across the EU whatever number of the incomers, but a fundamental problem of the model of society. There are countries in the EU which cherish their cultural cohesion and have the right to do so. Kaczyński and Orban thus publicly rejected the traditional permissive immigration policy of the “Old Europe”.

The European Commission mandatory relocation scheme was never implemented. Apart from its rejection by the Visegrád countries, including Poland, where, in the meantime, Kaczyński’s party took over the reins of power, the immigrants themselves never wished to be relocated (choosing to stay in those EU countries with generous welfare provisions and large immigrant communities). Meanwhile,

subsequent European summits agreed that uncontrolled influx of non-European immigration should be prevented, that most of those non-European immigrants who get to the EU are economic migrants, not refugees. Even in the case of *bona fide* refugees, the preferred approach should be to offer them safety close to their home countries. Therefore, African countries were offered financial incentives to readmit their own citizens, turned away by the EU for not qualifying as refugees. The need to combat immigrant smugglers was finally recognized, together with a resolve not to admit immigrants without identity documents which would allow verification of their claims to refugee status [House of Lords 2016].<sup>3</sup> The practice was so prevalent that, for instance, Åsa Romson, a Swedish deputy prime minister from the Greens, “broke into tears” when announcing her government’s decision not to tolerate such practices any more [The Guardian 2015].

A series of terrorist attacks in Paris in November of 2015 claiming the lives of 130 persons, which were organized, *inter alia*, by “refugees” just admitted into the EU, assaults on women at the 2015 New Year’s Eve events in Cologne, perpetrated mostly by illegal immigrants, and similar public disorders in other EU Member States, finally made politicians act, as they were afraid of further radicalization of the electorate (e.g., manifested by numerous attacks on refugee centres) [Alexander 2017: 39, 42]. The 2015 chapter of EU immigrant crisis ended with the conclusion of the March 18, 2016, EU-Turkey agreement, which effectively stopped the smuggling of immigrants from that country to Greece. The EU agreement with the Turkish prime minister Recep Erdoğan was negotiated by German chancellor Angela Merkel. In exchange for a 6-billion-euro subsidy to help offset the cost of holding immigrants and a number of other concessions, the EU secured Turkey’s cooperation. Real refugees were to be voluntarily relocated into EU Member States.

### **Polish voices in the debate on multiculturalism**

Until the 2015 crisis, European policy toward immigration had rested on two basic assumptions: that multiculturalism had no alternative as a policy toward immigrants and the native population and, consequently, as the model of society, and that, due to Europe’s demographic crisis, immigration from outside of Europe was necessary to address the otherwise massive labour shortages. Polish debate remained oblivious to those “truths”.

<sup>3</sup> EU naval “Operation Sophia” in the Mediterranean, which was nominally to combat the trafficking of persons to Europe, quickly became a magnet attracting illegal immigration, as it was remarkably successful in rescuing the immigrants while being completely ineffective in fighting the smugglers.

Five years before the outbreak of the EU immigration crisis, Adam Michnik [2010] replied to a question on the need to keep Europe open to immigration:

“One thing is my confession of faith as a democrat and humanist, while quite another my conviction that some volume of water will not sink the boat but some other will. We are witnessing political successes of anti-immigrant parties in Western Europe. In Holland, historically an exemplary case of a multicultural and tolerant state, that boat has been overloaded and now purely racist parties are playing a significant role in its politics. I would therefore counsel caution in admitting immigrants”.

Similar to Michnik in spirit, albeit much more direct about the dangers of unbridled multiculturalism, during the 2015 immigration crisis was professor Piotr Nowak and—in its aftermath—former prominent politician of PO’s conservative wing, Jan Rokita. Piotr Nowak [2015] was alarmed that Muslims were in danger of pogroms in Europe:

“If I do not want Mohammedans in Europe, if I react with horror to their presence in the Old Continent, it is because I fear for their plight; not out of fear of them but for them. History likes to repeat itself, not at all as farce. [...]

The carnage will come when the Mohammedans, from somewhat abstract and exotic backgrounds, turn into ubiquitous, obtrusive others, with their bekishes, earlocks, vernacular, and foreign tongue. And when European inhabitants become convinced that those unwanted incomers constitute a real threat to them, the hitherto dormant demons will wake up.

[...]

When faced with radical otherness, phenomena like tolerance, human rights, inherent human dignity, will be regarded as laughable”.

Rokita [2017b] agreed with Nowak and further explained that “...Europe experiences decomposition of its racial cohesion”:

“The presence of Muslims in Europe has become problematic, precisely because they are Muslims! It is not about religion, social morals, or any such thing, but about a complex of problems related to their racial distinctness. This is a fact which, as a matter of political realism, has to be acknowledged.

[...]

The ever-expanding number of groups [Poland has been luckily spared of that], entirely alienated, as those wretched immigrants indeed are, roaming around the continent causing growing contempt, remind us often enough of the ineffably brilliant Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism* descriptions of the root causes of the Holocaust.

[...]

And, we also have ... a racial conflict! Racial! Somebody should start writing about it. It does not matter whether the Arabs are a race or not. The reaction toward massive presence ... of alienated immigrants is a racial reaction of the white man in Europe!"<sup>4</sup>

Nowak and Rokita identified those responsible for fomenting racial tensions in Western Europe. By no means are they ordinary Europeans, but those—as Nowak would call them—"philanthropists" who have invited into Europe immigrants from faraway areas in terms of culture and civilization, and in numbers which may never allow for their integration.

The cleft between commonsensical pragmatism (as called for by Michnik), mindful of the limits of Europe's integration capacity of immigrants from foreign civilizations, and the official policy of multiculturalism long upheld and affirmed by Western European elites of money, opinion and power, and shielded from public criticism by the rigors of political correctness, had existed long before the 2015 immigration crisis. Piotr Nowak [2015] observed:

"The autochthons know full well that all those justifications of openness to and acquiescence with the otherness are nonsense. Where does that criminal lack of will by European politicians come from—they wonder—who really could have come up with so many ways by which to help the Mohammedans solve problems in their own countries? Why is the fiasco of assimilation of the third generation of Muslim immigrants, from which European jihadists derive, altogether disregarded?"<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Jan Rokita [2017a] directly and approvingly referred to Professor Nowak's essay also during a public discussion.

<sup>5</sup> Piotr Nowak, op. cit. According to Nowak those "justifications of openness" are: political correctness, ideology of multiculturalism, hope for a demographic renewal of aging Europe, and the fact that Generation '68 is in power, with their sense of guilt for colonialism and of shame for the Christian domination of Europe.

If Michnik suggested an immigration slowdown and more energetic integration policy, Rokita and Nowak feared that such pragmatic correction may no longer be viable. All of them, however, seem to agree that the previous policy by Western European countries toward immigration was a failure.

Professor Roman Kuźniar [2018] pointed out to yet another problem: the negative geostrategic consequences for the West of its excessive multiculturalization. First, in his view, these result from a “civilizational counterstrike” precipitated by Western-style globalization.

“It materialized through rapidly growing migration from the former colonies to metropolitan as well as other Western countries. That great migration wave has brought about a populist-nationalist reaction. To problems—not at all imaginary—with social cohesion and cultural security”.

Second, Kuźniar held, that:

“the demoralized, disavowing its own identity and incapable of strategic action West”, has been—*inter alia*—produced by a “destructive proliferation of rules”, as “the liberal tilt in the area of human rights, toward multiplication of individual and group rights, privileges and claims, was not accompanied by corresponding obligations, including due regard for the need of social and cultural cohesion. Furthermore, ... liberalism broke away from its ethical and cultural underpinnings—the roots of its erstwhile immense success.”

Professor Waldemar Hoff [2015] believed that Poland should not repeat other countries’ mistakes. Poland’s cultural cohesion, which had been achieved at great cost, ought to be preserved:

“We have succeeded in avoiding the redistribution of costs of other countries’ colonialism and the mistakes of German and French social policies. On top of that, we have got a free lesson in regulatory impact assessment, namely, that the policy of importing cheap labour has produced exorbitant [financial] costs together with social conflicts; Poland has been spared all of that. What saved us was our late contact with that distorted vision of human rights, which rendered European nations defenceless in the face of ethnic cataclysms...”. [35]

Hoff puts the European supporters of open borders into three categories, each of them—in his view—being open to criticism: (1) those who are well-meaning but blind to the long-term consequences of immigration, as the immigrants themselves do not share their values; (2) those who are averse to Christianity and religion as such, as secularism is not an Islamic value; (3) those who believe in the demise of the nation-state, “as conflicts over culture and religion reinforce national consciousness and have already turned Europe into a powder keg” [35].

Therefore, “it is by no means xenophobic to ask whether we wish that for Poland. Rather, it is a rescue call for a culture based on respect for human rights” [35].

Immigrants from Africa and the Middle East have their own dignity. They ought to be helped, prudently. Hoff concludes:

“Poles also have their dignity, which is offended by smearing the opponents of immigration and spreading panic about inevitable social conflicts”. [Should non-European immigration into Poland be allowed] “it would require pussyfooting for generations around otherness, not reducible to mere culinary customs, but getting into the heart of basic values, such as admissibility of female genital circumcision, status of women in relation to men, polygamy, and minority rights” [35].

The Polish debate questioned the “inevitability” of massive importation of cheap labour into Europe, which brought upon Western Europe the predicament of multiculturalism. Grzegorz Lindenberg [2019] had followed, as it were, in the footsteps of Thilo Sarrazin in Germany, and based his argument on the analysis of statistical data. He juxtaposed the demographic potential of Africa, low levels of qualifications of its inhabitants and their high migration aspirations with growing life expectancy and extended psychophysical aptitude of the European population, the progress in the development of artificial intelligence and automation of simple jobs (i.e., those usually worked by low-qualified immigrants) to conclude that the current projections of high immigration needs of Europe are false:

**“Contrary to the doggedly repeated projections, Europe will not require the labour force of millions of unqualified immigrants.** Her economic and social needs will clash with the desires of millions dreaming of a better and safer life. Yet, their arrival here will neither provide prosperity nor security for them or the European societies. Quite the

opposite, it will rather become a source of more or less violent conflicts”.  
[13-14]<sup>6</sup>

Parenthetically, a similar point was earlier made by Andrzej Lubowski [2010], who pointed out to the persistently higher unemployment rates in Europe as compared to the US. Had Europe really suffered from acute labour shortages, that trend should have been reverse. For Lindenberg to allow massive influx into Europe of low-qualified, culturally foreign immigrants, mostly young men, who will never find a steady job and, as a consequence, will not be capable of even economic integration, would have to exacerbate social tensions between the majority and the unintegrated minority, political radicalization, social alienation, etc. In his “catastrophic scenario” Lindenberg [2019] asks: “Are open conflicts between the majority and minority groups possible? Is emigration from Europe to non-European countries in search of peaceful life possible?” [106].

That those are rhetorical questions is proved by the radicalism of proposed solutions. On the one hand, he suggests selective developmental assistance to African countries to force them to break out from the vicious circle of corruption and incompetence, and on the other—blocking illegal immigration [including by swift deportations], very selective legal immigration policy, and drastic restrictions on the right of family reunification and the right to asylum [111-124].

### **Polish reactions to the 2015 immigration crisis and the refugee crises of 2021 and 2022**

To begin with the main protagonists of Poland’s political divide, the approach towards the 2015 immigration crisis by Donald Tusk—since December 2019 leader of the PO-led liberal opposition, is virtually identical with that announced in his September 2015 speech, referred to above, by Jarosław Kaczyński—since 2016 leader of the ruling government coalition under PiS. When the 2015 immigration crisis broke out, Tusk was serving as President of the European Council. He kept a journal in which he meticulously documented his views and actions on the matter [Tusk, 2019]. The journal, entitled *Szczerze (Frankly Speaking)*—if anti-Kaczyński rants are set aside—abundantly documents their concordance of diagnosis, strategy and solutions in regard to that crisis.

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<sup>6</sup> Boldfaced in the original.

As President of the European Council, Tusk found himself at the epicentre of political reactions toward the crisis at the EU level. From the beginning, Tusk disagreed on critical points with the then German Chancellor Angela Merkel and the then President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker. He was against Merkel's *Willkommenskultur*, i.e., open border policy, and Juncker's idea of mandatory relocation of immigrants across EU Member States. He thought that Central European EU members had been right in their rejection of the Commission relocation plan as well as in their resolve to defend EU's external border from the uncontrolled influx of immigrants. Tusk was quick to grasp that open borders within the EU (the Schengen area) are only sustainable when the EU-24 external borders are kept tight [51-265]. With great relief, he immediately noted the hatching of a new pan-EU immigration consensus [105].<sup>7</sup> His June 22, 2018, entry reads: "The growing number of European capitals openly state that survivors rescued in the Mediterranean Sea should not be brought to Europe but send back to those ports on the African shore which they had set out from" [267].

Notably, Tusk never called those survivors "refugees", as he is well aware that the overwhelming majority of them were economic migrants. Of the June 25, 2015, European Council Tusk wrote:

"The resistance [toward relocation] of states from our region [i.e., Central Europe] is too big [to be ignored]. And it is supported by strong arguments. All along, I keep emphasizing the issue of external border protection. Permanent relocation without border control will only increase the flow of illegal immigrants—I am trying to explain. No immigration policy is possible without effective control of the border. Having to know how to stop the wave of hundreds of thousands of immigrants is the precondition of being able to help real refugees, entitled to political asylum, counting in thousands but not in hundreds of thousand" [74].

On September 16, 2015, Kaczyński delivered his Sejm speech defining EU's axiological divide over immigration, while, on September 20, Tusk offered his critique of the German open-border policy on moral grounds:

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<sup>7</sup> With relief, because, for instance, his November 22, 2015, entry reads: "Truth be told, unfortunately, the message from key European capitals as well as from the Commission still is: let them in. How to change that?" [105].

“There are no other topics but migration. As the Germans, in their self-congratulatory mood, instruct Europe on openness and hospitality, it is becoming all the more evident that noble intentions and moral motives may not necessarily resolve the problem. Max Weber with his ethics of responsibility smirks” [88].

Tusk agreed with Kaczyński that the Germans caused the crisis by unilaterally opening their borders. Reactions to his November 9, 2015, Berlin *Europa Rede* Tusk summarizes as follows:

“My stern remarks about the need to reestablish the external border ... and that Germany ought to do their fair share in that regard, have been received rather coldly. The ‘Wir schaffen das’ or ‘we’ll take care of that’ mood still dominates” [101].

Earlier, to Chancellor Merkel’s remark that “the migration wave is too big to be stopped”, Tusk was to retort “that it is precisely the opposite: that wave is too big not to be stopped” [101].

Tusk agreed with Kaczyński that the immigrants need to be helped close to their areas of origin and not brought to Europe, which could not absorb “dozens of millions” of culturally different potential economic migrants. On September 23, 2015, Tusk writes:

“Three conclusions present themselves: external borders of the Union must be reestablished immediately, aid to Africa and such countries as Jordan or Turkey must be increased radically, relocation of refugees who already are in the EU and have reasons to claim asylum, must be arranged. Consciousness grew that we are facing a civilizational problem for many years to come” [93].

Tusk also agreed with Kaczyński on the nature of that civilizational problem. Namely, that excessive influx of culturally foreign migrants endangers the cultural identity of Europe, which in and of itself is worth preserving. After a stressful October 6, 2015, migration session of the European Parliament, Tusk underscores in his journal the intrinsic value of European culture, in the context of migration challenges exacerbated by the fact that the Continent lacks a natural border. He recalls a text by Father Janusz Pasierb comparing Europe to a medieval cathedral: “Our limits are set out by our culture. Europe

is like the Notre Dame, ‘never completed, inherited by and assigned to every generation as their toughest lesson, full of particularities, next to unlikeness, yet always somehow singular—in spite of the walls and [barbed] wires of our century” [95].

Tusk confides the dilemma he was torn apart by on November 13, 2015: “To watch the France-Germany soccer match..., or to finish reading Houellebecq’s *Submission*, that is my question”.

The book “...came out right on the day of the Charlie Hebdo attack, a coincidence pure but ghastly. Houellebecq wrote ... on the downfall of France, secularized and unbelieving, yet helplessly succumbing to Islam. France deprived, devoid of principle and purpose. ... I choose the reading” [103].

At his January 2016 briefing for the European Parliament on the European Council decisions on migration, Tusk said: “We must remain realist, believing in our values and our strengths. I refer them to Arnold Toynbee who held that civilizations do not get killed, they commit suicide” [116].

When saying that, Tusk must have known about the then widely discussed book by Thilo Sarrazin [2010] on Germany’s self-liquidation. In his journal, Tusk admits having consulted with Ivan Krastev, quoted here above [Tusk 2019: 249]. On the occasion of his visit to Montenegro, Tusk reflected: “In today’s politics the issue of dignity and the need to be respected are exceptionally important, and questions of identity assume new significance. Fukuyama would have a lot to think about” [138].

Like Kaczyński, Tusk understood that migrations from the Middle East and Africa, continuously augmenting the already present in Europe, culturally unintegrated, large Muslim communities, increased the threat of terrorism. The discussion of migration dominated the just concluded European Council—Tusk noted on October 16, 2015:

“Generally, all Member States expect Greece to at least begin to register the immigrants arriving from Turkey. It is critical for EU’s internal security. The migration wave from Turkey may bring in terrorists. Nobody controls that, no one knows who is coming to us” [97].

After the March 22, 2016, Muslim terrorist attacks on the Brussels airport and on a subway station in the vicinity of the European Council building, Tusk rhetorically asked:

“Has a new kind of religious war already descended upon us, is Islam condemned to radicalism, and if so, what will the life look like a couple of years from now, say in Brussels, where already today every third inhabitant is a Muslim?” [128].

Tusk agrees with Kaczyński that liberalism in its current form has failed the Europeans as it does not express and defend their interests. In his October 24, 2015, Europe Day speech to Dutch liberals, Tusk opined: “If liberal values have come to mean abdication of the duty to defend the territory and ensure security of our citizens, then we have lost already” [99]<sup>8</sup>.

To avoid that defeat, in his letter of invitation to the September 2016 Bratislava summit of European leaders, he laid out his own immigration policy doctrine. It was also his “tough rebuke” of “the Commission’s scheming to use the [immigration] crisis to expand its power over the nation states”. Tusk wrote that Brexit constituted:

“...a desperate attempt to answer the questions that millions of Europeans ask themselves daily, questions about the very essence of politics. Questions about the guarantees of security of the citizens and their territory, questions about the protection of their interests, cultural heritage and way of life....

People in Europe want to know if the political elites are capable of restoring control over events and processes which overwhelm, disorientate, and sometimes terrify them. Today many people, not only in the UK, think that being part of the European Union stands in the way of stability and security. People quite rightly expect their leaders to protect the space they live in and ensure their security. If the belief that we have abandoned this responsibility is further strengthened, they will start looking for alternatives. And they will find them. History has taught us that this can lead to a massive turn away from freedom and the other fundamental values that the European Union is founded upon. It is therefore crucial to restore the balance between the need for freedom

<sup>8</sup> The official version of that speech is radically less rhetorical [Tusk 2015].

and security, and between the need for openness and protection. In this context, the effective control of our external borders comes first, and has both a practical and a symbolic dimension. ... Instead, all too often [our citizens] heard politically correct statements that Europe cannot become a fortress, that it must remain open [160] for all. *Quickly did they understand that moral slogans were supposed to serve as alibi for otherwise helpless governments*<sup>9</sup>.

Further in his letter, Tusk called for decisiveness in the fight of terrorism. He warned against accelerating EU integration at the cost of “national capitals”, as “it would only increase a sense of fear and confusion” [160].

Furthermore, even Radosław Sikorski, his harsh political opponent today, agreed with Kaczyński on a critical immigration policy issue, i.e., that immigrants should be helped in a way safe to those who are helping them, and that is close to their homes. Sikorski [2019] also publicly addressed the role of pro-immigrant NGOs in the smuggling of immigrants into Europe. Once off the shore of Libya, the smugglers damage the pontoons filled with immigrants and the “European NGOs pull them out of the sea. ... They claim that the fact of being rescued at sea gives them the right to settle in the European Union and not to be hauled back to the nearest safe port. ... I do believe that mass migration may, through a political process, destroy the European Union”.

Ludwik Dorn—until his death in 2022—a prominent critic of Jarosław Kaczyński and PiS, when asked in 2021 by Jarema Piekutowski in an extended interview whether he would select immigrants according to their religion, replied:

“Nationalities, religions and cultures differ in their integration potential. It is quite appropriate to welcome those with the highest one. (...) The Poles were told ‘one thing leads to another, first we take in seven thousand, and then they will be raping white women, our Polish women.’ With a reasonable immigration policy, that problem will not arise. The key is to keep off from reaching a critical mass, from a point when that becomes a problem”. [Dorn 2021: 137-138]

<sup>9</sup> The part in italics appears in the book by Tusk [2019], but not in his officially published letter of invitation [Tusk 2016].

Dorn then continued to further explain to his startled interviewer:

“Formally, it could not be done, practically, however, absolutely. [...] When dealing with Muslims, I would use my discretion. I would differentiate treatment of those categories with higher capacity for labour market integration. ... Between a mullah-refugee and an engineer- or medical doctor-refugee, the mullah ought to ... wait. At the end of the line”. [138]

Having been admonished by Piekutowski that eligibility for refugee status is regulated by international conventions, Dorn replied: “Yes, but they may be tinkered with. If one does that cleverly, quietly, discreetly.” And adds, that—as a matter of national policy—the suffering of the refugees or immigrants does not invalidate other considerations: “One way or another, in view of the inevitable demographic collapse, which will have social, cultural and economic consequences, the only solution is a bold, pragmatic, and hard-boiled migration policy. (...) Such that will let stay in Poland mostly those economic immigrants who will integrate” [130-139].

Apart from Dorn’s firm conviction that he would manipulate international refugee regulations with the skill and effectiveness that the PiS government might never equal, and his many vitriolic comments directed at PiS and Kaczyński, his vision of an optimal immigration policy is even more radical from that laid out by Kaczyński in his 2015 Sejm speech and which his government has since 2016 been executing. Like PiS, Dorn would keep Poland wide open to immigrants of proximate cultures, who might easily integrate through the labour market (Ukrainians, Belarussians, and citizens of other EU Eastern Partnership countries), while keeping it shut to any EU mandated quotas of immigrants from Africa and the Middle East.

It is public knowledge today, that while the PO-PSL Government of Ewa Kopacz succumbed in 2015 to German and European Commission pressures and agreed on the relocation of immigrants to Poland, they were in fact sharing key elements of Kaczyński’s diagnosis of the immigration problem then presented by him in the Sejm. In 2018, at a Polish Chamber of Commerce conference, Janusz Piechociński, a prominent PSL politician and deputy prime minister and minister of the economy in the Kopacz Government, who was privy to the 2015 negotiations with the EU on the relocation to Poland of the Middle Eastern immigrants, held in Greece and Italy, explained:

“One more issue—those 6700. Do excuse me, please, but we did agree, [I know about it] because I was in that government, but we agreed under certain conditions. Only later we did not raise that for European reasons. But we were hoping our political partners would sit down with us and we might have a conversation, at the least. From the outset, we told [them] that [those relocated] were to be Syrian Christians, Yazidis, were to be women, youth, students—6700 (in all)” [Piechociński 2018]<sup>10</sup>

The Polish transpolitical consensus over immigration emerging from the above presented public statements, speeches and utterances appears to be quite solid. In August of 2021, Europe underwent yet another immigration crisis, precipitated by US military withdrawal from Afghanistan followed by the Taliban take-over of that country. Belarus and Russia saw in it their opportunity to escalate divisions within the EU. They would deliver prospective immigrants from the Middle East, at a hefty charge for the service, to the Belarus borders with Poland and Lithuania to then force them into illegal crossing. Poland blockaded the border, preventing most of the migrants from entering the country outside the official crossing points. Lithuania did likewise.

The Polish Government called out Belarus and Russia on waging a hybrid war against Poland and the EU and declared that it would not give in to political and moral blackmail, as the persons illegally crossing the border were presented by immigration supporters as refugees. While all parties to the Polish political scene used the crisis for rhetorical skirmishes, the leaders of the opposition adopted a stance as the then PO's vice-chairman Tomasz Siemoniak [2021] put it: “congruent with the assessment of the situation presented by the Government”.<sup>11</sup>

On August 18, 2021, the PO Party leader Donald Tusk stated that: “Poland belongs to the Schengen area and the rules are clear. No one has the right to cross the border of our country beyond the officially designated points, which are the border crossings. That is why the Polish Border Guard should be provided with all the

<sup>10</sup> Piechociński uses the quota of 6,700, which is close to the quoted above figure of 6,182 set by the European Council decisions on the number of immigrants to be resettled to Poland. Yazidis or Yezidis believe in a syncretic version of Islam, combining Indo-Iranian beliefs and Judaic elements. They are mostly Kurdish. The Yazidis renounce violence.

<sup>11</sup> When pressured by the journalist on the incidents provoked on the Polish-Belarus border by his PO-led Citizen's Coalition MPs, Klaudia Jachira and Franciszek Sterczewski, Siemoniak distanced himself from them and stressed that in the September 6, 2021 Sejm debate on the introduction of the state of emergency in the border area communes, intervening “on behalf of the [PO] Club”, he presented an assessment of the situation “congruent” with that of the Government.

necessary means, support—if needed—of other uniformed services, and a clear plan of action should that wave [of immigrants] rise even higher”.

Like the PiS Government, Tusk characterized Belarus action as “hybrid war” against Poland [2012]. The August 24, 2021 issue of the daily *Fakt* reported Radosław Sikorski’s view that the situation on the border constituted “an attack on the European Union” and that the Belarus strongman “. . .Lukashenka imagines that he could repeat the maneuver of Turkish president Recep Erdoğan from 2015 when he had opened Turkey’s borders and flooded Greece with immigrants. . .”. Sikorski added, that “In this case it is all the more perfidious as in Turkey there were refugees who had fled from the war in Syria, while Lukashenka is importing refugees charging them money.”

He further compared the Belarussian authorities to criminal gangs trafficking people for profit and called on the Polish Government to demand, together with Lithuania, that the EU impose new sanctions on Belarus. Sikorski said that the Polish border is an external border of the EU and must be effectively controlled. He also encouraged the Polish Government to cooperate on the matter with the EU Frontex—the European Border and Coast Guard Agency [Czuma 2021]. Those views of the then Polish opposition leaders seem to reflect their true convictions, not just political calculation, as they had expressed them before it became known that both the Polish public opinion and the EU supported the Polish Government policy to protect the border against the Belarus-manufactured immigration crisis [Wielowieyska 2021; European Commission 2021].

Reactions of the Polish politicians were remarkably similar to the reactions of the Polish society at large. And those were markedly different to the 2021 Belarus regime-manufactured “refugee crisis” on the Polish border and to the influx into Poland of millions of refugees from Ukraine after Russia’s attack of February 24, 2022. In the former case, support to persons illegally crossing the border was mostly limited to pro-immigrant organizations and activists<sup>12</sup>. In the latter case, however, the Poles have spontaneously and in droves rushed to the border

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<sup>12</sup> Many of those attempting to cross the border illegally were young men, albeit families with children were also present, while the Ukrainian refugees, mostly women with children, presented themselves with passports at official border crossings. AI, for instance, explained that as follows: “Women, children, elderly persons are not physically fit to attempt crossing the border so many times, risking that they would have to spend nights under the open sky” [Amnesty International 2022].

crossing points with food, water, toiletries, toys, etc., to welcome the Ukrainian refugees, mostly women with children, and offered to host them in their homes. That popular display of sympathy and solidarity was accompanied by immediate and generous support by the Polish state. No apprehension was voiced that those Ukrainian refugees might be moving to Poland for welfare benefits or that there might be problems with their cultural assimilation, should they choose to make Poland their home. That massive and spontaneous reaction could be regarded as a *sui generis* national plebiscite as to what model of immigration policy the Poles prefer.

### Conclusions

The above compiled reactions of Polish mainstream leaders of politics and opinion to the 2015 EU immigration crisis as well as to the 2021 artificially-induced by Belarus and Russia “refugee crisis” on the Polish border, both involving mostly economic migrants, and to the 2022 massive influx into Poland of genuine refugees from Ukraine, clearly show a transpolitical consensus which has evolved among those leaders, as to the nature of each of those crises and the proper reactions to them. It focuses around the key points on what Polish immigration policy ought to be, outlined by Jarosław Kaczyński in his September 16, 2015, Sejm speech. Paradoxically, as both are otherwise at political loggerheads, Donald Tusk, the leader of the opposition, agrees with Kaczyński on most of the points of his immigration policy. Other prominent political figures, such as Dorn, Piechociński, Sikorski, Siemoniak—all of them staunch opponents of the Kaczyński government—expressed views congruent with important elements of the latter’s immigration policy, as well. When it comes to multiculturalism as an ideology prescribing the “proper” vision of society, Kaczyński’s fundamental disagreement with it seems to be very much in line with the manifold reservations put forth by Nowak, Rokita, Hoffa, Kuźniar, Lindenberg, Lubowski and Michnik. There is no direct evidence that Kaczyński borrowed their ideas. Yet, his own words (“Do you want us not to be hosts in our own country?”) and the actual policy of his government amply demonstrate that his views on the matter are very much in sync with theirs.

The Polish transpolitical consensus on multiculturalism and immigration seems ideologically conservative and politically pragmatic. It clearly appreciates the value of society’s cultural homogeneity. It stresses that the set of values produced by the unique cultural heritage of the West, lays at the root of its cultural attractiveness and economic success. It holds that common national identity and cultural

cohesion are essential for the existence and proper functioning of democracy and the “welfare state”. It therefore expects the elites to defend those values. It clearly distinguishes between economic migrants and refugees. It recognizes that the capacity for social and cultural integration of immigrants is always limited; their influx, therefore, ought to be effectively controlled in terms of volume and selective in terms of skills they possess and cultures they represent. It favours the right of the native population to safeguard their culture and identity over the immigrant aspirations for better life. It avoids absolutization of the rights of migrants and refugees over the rights and interests of native populations. Refugees ought to be helped in a safe way for the helping societies, i.e., not necessarily by letting any number of them into the EU. It does not ignore the manifold abuses accompanying migrations, such as large-scale smuggling of migrants, complicity with those practices by various pro-immigrant activist organizations, exploitation by them of all avenues to maximally relax any admission controls and regulations, while maximally restricting deportations.

The relative ethnic homogeneity of Polish society seems to be the cause of the Polish elite consensus on multiculturalism and immigration as reconstructed here. The more likely cause, however, is to be found in the mentality which was forged by the uniquely Polish, and broader, Central European historical experience of the loss of national independence and Communist subjugation. Geopolitically, it is the experience of existing in a “crush zone” between Russia and the powers of the West. When the stakes are ultimate and the distribution of power is abysmal, as has been the plight of Central European nations for centuries, even politicians start speaking clearly and moving decisively.

The 2015 immigration crisis, with the concomitant political radicalization of Western European societies has begun to convince their elites of the bankruptcy of multiculturalism as an ideology underpinning immigration policies [Ciechański 2021: 187-200]. The EU has been designing a new pact on migration and asylum. The tenets of the Polish transpolitical consensus on those issues should be seriously considered, as other Central European EU Member States have a similar approach. In 2015, they effectively halted the influx of illegal immigrants, thus questioning the many hitherto immigration policy dogmas, e.g., that there is no alternative to permissive stance on immigration and to multiculturalism. In 2021 and 2022, the states of the region demonstrated that selective immigration policy is possible. They have also rejected the presumption in favour of the rights of immigrants over the right of the native population to their culture and identity. A new EU

pact on migration and asylum should reflect that new axiology of immigration policy. After all, what is at stake here is the future of liberal democracy and of the European integration.

Poland has managed to avoid “multiculturalization” in the Western European style. It was only the 2015 EU immigration crisis that forced its elites to begin developing an approach toward multiculturalism and immigration. Its next stage will surely follow the 2022 massive influx of Ukrainian refugees into the country caused by Russian aggression to, hopefully, produce a specifically Polish model of their integration. That, however, would be a topic for another article.

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