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BRIDGING THE NATION AND THE STATE: CATHOLIC CHURCH IN POLAND AS POLITICAL ACTOR²

Abstract

One of the most recognized features of social-political reality in Poland is the role of Catholicism as the determinant of national-political identity and of Catholic Church as the influential political actor. Being undoubtedly peculiar Polish case can be viewed as the example of the religiosity intertwined with national and civil identity existent in different forms in the CEE (Central and Eastern Europe) region. The article aims at casting specifics of Polish case in the wider context of religious-political nexus in CEE stressing the distinctness of the region compared to some other parts of Europe. The conducted analysis focuses on the evolution of Church-state relations in Poland displayed in the broader framework of similar developments that, in spite of existing historical-political differences, characterize the region. Three fundamental perspectives are considered in the article. The first of them is social-cultural dimension creating the wide context for recognizing the religious factor as more or less fundamental for the given society. The second one is formal-legal framework resembling the specific religion-nation-state entanglement. The third is the role played by the Catholic Church in the context of civil society.

Keywords: Poland, Catholic Church, identity, nation, religiosity, civil society

From religious identity to political identity: role of religion in CEE

When looking at the CEE region some fundamental differences compared to Western Europe occur with regard to the mutual entanglement between religion and politics. While the region cannot be perceived as homogeneous, or to a certain extent it can even be perceived as highly contrasting one when such cases as

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Poland and Czech Republic are compared, interactions between “the religious” and “the political” do display some similar features. What distinguishes the CEE is namely the manner in which religious identity and national identity are linked influencing political identity of the societies inhabiting the region but also the socio-political developments present in the public sphere.

The starting point for the above mentioned distinction occurring in multiple forms is the position of religion that in CEE has been closely connected with the specific, “own” notion of state and nation. While in Western Europe the state is the central point of reference in terms of self-identification of citizens, in the central and eastern part of the continent what counts more is (still) the nation which is perceived as the fundamental entity, the collectivity constituting the state and as such the nation confessing particular religion. “For the inhabitants of the Western Europe the state is something incomparably closer, more sympathetic and more often is perceived as the synonym of the fatherland. (...) In Central and Eastern Europe the state is perceived as valuable and important, but at the same time it is only a tool in the hands of its nations. The conviction prevails that the living entities are not the states but the nations and those are usually believing ones”³.

This connection is especially visible in countries where the existence of the nation was, due to the historic reasons, supported by the Church and where religion contributed in the process of creating loyalty of the citizens towards the national community⁴. In CEE it is in fact impossible to understand the identity of specific nations and the political setting of the dominating Church, disregarding the role of the religious factor as the determinant of social and individual self-perception of the national community. As a result, two phenomena have developed to characterize the mutual relations between religion and politics in the region: ethnicization (politicization) of religion and sacralization (deification) of ethnos⁵.

Both processes appear as simultaneous and self-completing, resulting in the occurrence of close dependence and entanglement between what is religious and what is political. Ethnicization of religion can be defined as the process of claiming the right to the monopoly over the figures of saints, places of cult and the selected elements of the religious doctrine by a given ethnic/national group. This process leads to “overtaking” religion which results in the loss of its universalistic character. Religion in its modified version becomes the property of the given nation - it is thus “nationalized”. In this new meaning of religion it becomes national ideology sustaining often the endangered identity.

3 Ryszard Brożniak, „Struktura wyznaniowa rozszerzonej Unii Europejskiej”, in: *Polska w Unii Europejskiej a stosunki wyznaniowe*, Czesław Janik (ed.), Toruń, 2006, p. 52.

4 Pedro Ramet, “The Interplay of Religious Policy and Nationalities Policy in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe”, in: *Religion and Nationalism in Soviet Union and East European Politics*, Pedro Ramet (ed.), Duke University Press, London, 1989, p. 4.

5 Radosław Zenderowski, Etnicyzacja religii i sakralizacja etnosu: nacjonalizm w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej, *Athenaum*, Vol. 24, 2010, pp. 37-39.

On the other hand, sacralization of ethnos (nation) is a long-term process of assigning religious meanings to the given ethnic group through which this group receives some kind of “guarantee of immortality”. This way the nation becomes the quasi-religious community, “holy communion” in which both the living, previous and future generations are rooted. Some messianic ideologies are often formulated with the reference to the nation in the language similar to the sacral one. Above all the category of “chosen nation” appears, as in case of Poland, where the notion of “Poland as the Christ of nations” is recalled in the historical politics discourse. In Central and Eastern Europe (maybe except for the Czech Republic), unlike Western Europe where nationalism has been largely subordinated, or incapacitated⁶, religion and nationalism coexist as the two powerful forces that can effectively influence society and be influenced by society. In this regard one can speak of the competition between the political and religious power over the loyalty of society.

This specific religious-political attachment is the result of historical and political determinants typical of late nations but also to the theologies of main denominations present. While in case of Protestantism religion has been subordinated by the state⁷ in Catholic and Orthodox countries this is not the case. Both majority Churches dominating in the region, Orthodox and Catholic Churches⁸, more of less directly refer to the links between religion and national identity and it was expected by sociologists of religion that these two denominations could become new ideological manifestations in the countries where they had historically and culturally strong position⁹. Peter Beyer in 1990s wrote in this context about the continued dominance of Christian/Catholic/Orthodox religious identities in the region, at least in the foreseeable future, but that did not have to mean, in his opinion, the continued or renewed power dominance of the corresponding religious authorities. He claimed that a form of privatized religion is more likely to appear, though the privatization and pluralization mean neither the necessary weakness of religious authority, nor organizational disunity¹⁰.

6 Ibidem, p. 42.

7 Lisbet Christoffersen, “Not Even Believing in Belonging: States and Churches in Five North-European (Post-) Lutheran Countries”, in: *Law and Religion in the 21st Century: Relations Between States and Religious Communities*, Cristofori Rinaldo, Ferrari Silvio (eds.), Ashgate Publishing, Farnham, 2010, p. 191.

8 In Orthodoxy such references are theologically justified due to the concept of symphonia that is the fundament of the mutual relations between religion and politics meaning the “full harmony and unity”. See: Daniela Kalkandijeva, A Comparative Analysis on Church-State Relations in Eastern Orthodoxy: Concepts, Models, and Principles, *Journal of Church and State*, Vol. 53, No. 4, 2011, p. 587. An important factor was the fact Orthodoxy was unable to engage in aggiornamento, which means the modernization process, that had been undergone by Roman Catholic Church after II Vatican Council and Protestant churches almost for the moment of their creation. See: Lavinia Stan, *Church-State Relations in the Expanded Europe: Between Religious Pluralism and Church Establishment*, 2009, https://www.academia.edu/1657571/Church-State_Relations_in_the_Expanded_Europe_Between_Religious_Pluralism_and_Church_Establishment, (accessed: 7.03.2020).

9 Irena Borowik, “Religion and Politics in Central and Eastern Europe. Paradoxes of Transformation”, in: *Church-State Relations in Central and Eastern Europe*, Irena Borowik (ed.), Nomos, Kraków, 1999, p. 20.

10 Peter Beyer, “Privatisation and Politicisation of Religion in Global Society. Implications for Church-State Relations in Central and Eastern Europe”, in: *Church-State Relations in Central and Eastern Europe*, Irena Borowik (ed.), Nomos, Kraków, 1999, p. 39.

This prediction was confirmed in the decades to come. Despite introducing the religious freedom quickly after the change of the system, post-communist countries have not become bastions of religious diversity. Instead, the religious relations mirror those from the past century when traditional ethnic Churches dominated the landscape¹¹. At the same time some crucial theories concerning the determinants of the level of religiosity were validated only partially in CEE. While in line with the religious market theory the low level of religiosity resulting from the monopolistic position on the “national” Churches has been observed in some Western countries, especially the Protestant ones, it did not prove to be the rule in post-Soviet countries where instead the concept of religious reestablishment has been discussed¹². After the decades of communist-enforced atheism, Europeans in this part of the continent either rediscovered religion immediately after the collapse of communist regime or discarded the religion reaching the level of a-religiosity comparable to Western Europe. Poland and Romania illustrate the first possibility, Czech Republic and Estonia the second one¹³.

Though the rise of religious sentiments is more visible in the countries referring to Orthodox theology and Catholic countries do observe the drop in identification, still the level of religious-national self-identification has been quite remarkable in the whole region. The very essence of these trend was evidenced in the report published in 2017 by the Pew Research Forum emphasizing convergence of national and religious identities in the region once dominated by the atheist regimes. As the authors of the report point out “Roughly a quarter of a century after the fall of the Iron Curtain and subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union, a major new Pew Research Center survey finds that religion has reasserted itself as an important part of individual and national identity in many of the Central and Eastern European countries where communist regimes once repressed religious worship and promoted atheism”¹⁴.

When discussing the process of formulating the national identities in CEE Tomka analyzed the evolution of religion’s socio-political contribution during and after communist period and looked at possible scenarios of future developments. In his opinion the decisive factor in the first place was the ability of religion to oppose the system and preserve the religious identity in the period of oppression. In the institutional sense this meant sustaining religiosity and lasting of disciplined social organization of religion supporting of effectiveness of political opposition. In the second phase it was anticipated that religion, and thus the Church, would contribute to social-cultural integration and revival of the national culture. At the same time while expectations were expressed towards the Church

11 Ani Saarkisian, Religious Reestablishment in Post-Communist Polities, *Journal of Church and State*, Vol. 51, No. 3, 2009, p. 472.

12 Ibidem, pp. 472-501.

13 Lavinia Stan, *Church-State Relations in the Expanded Europe: Between Religious Pluralism and Church Establishment*, 2009, p. 2.

14 Pew Forum, Religious Belief and National Belonging in Central and Eastern Europe, 2017, <https://www.pewforum.org/2017/05/10/religious-belief-and-national-belonging-in-central-and-eastern-europe/>, (accessed: 12 July 2020).

that it liberalizes and opens to cultural innovations, the need for non-confessional civil religion was formulated. Looking at the role of religion in the region it is also important to notice that the imposed, artificial secularization during communism resulted in the absence of religion in those social layers which lost their tradition and did not reconstruct their civic and cultural autonomy. Thus the unbalanced acculturation and anomy that occurs in the region generates a sense of deficit and longing for reproducing or substituting of religion¹⁵.

During the transformation process religion was perceived as a symbolical (sacred) conopy¹⁶ for the societies undergoing difficult, often "shocking" process of political, economic and cultural adjustment to the extremely new conditions. As Janusz Mariański notices "At the turn of 1989-1990, many people in Central Eastern Europe, including in Poland, expected Christian Churches would fulfil the social and moral vacuum and function as giving people a life orientation"¹⁷. However, after the initial increase of interest in religion at the beginning of the 1990s already in the mid of 1990s it turned out that the attitude of CEE societies started to change. Affected by the pluralization of the social life the interest in the new, more individualized and privatized forms of religiosity occurred accompanied by the growing criticism against traditional religious institutions. Simultaneously the Churches that faced the issue of regulating the relations with the state and often the return of property had to define themselves in the new conditions. The growing controversies related to social issues, such as the problem of abortion, stem cells or more generally the changing life-styles of the capitalizing and pluralizing societies not following the Catholic Social doctrine, but also to more "worldly" problems with the restitution of the property. The Churches thus having often great contribution in the process of weakening and overthrowing communism turned out to have both transcendent and more earthly¹⁸ or even "greedy" face¹⁹. Having their share, often the huge one, as in case of Poland, in fighting against communism, Churches often perceived themselves as legitimized to join the public discourse but also to have a word in the political arrangements. As a result the attempts to influence not only the cultural but also political agenda setting continued and grew against the increasing critics on the side of the societies openly expressing the opposition towards the Church's involvement in politics²⁰.

15 Miklos Tomka, Catholics and Protestants in Post-Communist Europe, in: *Religions, Churches and Religiosity in Post-Communist Europe*, Borowik Irena (ed.), Nomos, Kraków, 2006, pp. 37-38.

16 Irena Borowik, "Religion and Politics in Central and Eastern Europe. Paradoxes of Transformation" . . . p. 20.

17 Janusz Mariański, "The Public Engagement of the Catholic Church in Polish Society", in: *Religion, Politics, and Values in Poland. Continuity and Change Since 1989*, Sabrina Ramet and Irena Borowik (eds.), Palgrave Macmillan, 2017, p. 221.

18 Irena Borowik, *Odbudowywanie pamięci. Przemiany religijne w Środkowo-Wschodniej Europie po upadku komunizmu*, Nomos, Kraków, 2000, p. 11.

19 The argument of the "greedy Church" occurred often in the medial discourse in the Czech Republic where the return of the Church property was very long and highly socially contested process.

20 The negative perception of the Churches engaging in the political sphere was expressed at the end of 1990s by an overwhelming majority of respondents in the CEE countries ranging from 60-80% respondents. Baltic countries were not included in the poll. In Poland the level of criticism against Catholic Church's political engagement was the biggest. Sergey Flere, "The Impact

Poland: from religiosity to religious nationalism?

Detlef Pollack and Olaf Müller divide the countries of the region into a few groups. The first of them is a group where traditional religious groups have a strong position and exercise strong influence. The second group are those states where religious groups have a stable position and exercise some influence. Finally there is a group of states where the position of the traditional religions is weak and they exercise a little influence²¹.

Poland belongs to the first group where this influence has been especially strong combining both social-cultural and political perspective. Tradition of Polish Catholicism has been shaped by romanticism featuring strong piety, clear distinction into the “teaching Church” and “taught Church”, engagement in the fate of the nation expressed and protected by that Church, visible manifesting of faith in the public sphere, primacy of moralism over eschatological message and the vision of Poland as the outpost of Christianity protecting Europe against the deluge of paganism. As Jarosław Gowin points out this model of traditional Catholicism was strengthened during the communist regime that forced believers to defend the “fundamental spiritual and material substance”. It expressed itself in the massive piety, attachment to authorities, unequivocal delimiting between “the good” and “the evil” and patriotism. Moreover this traditional religiosity occurred to be extraordinarily resistant to pressure caused by the atheist state during the communist era²².

Relations between the Church and the state are the products of historical traditions. Anna Grzymała-Busses states that to explain the present social and political position of the Catholic Church the past must be treated as the fundamental determinant. In the states where the Churches protected the nation against the secular opponents, patriotism became inseparable from religious loyalty. As a result national and religious identities melted creating a powerful form of religious nationalism and arming the Churches in the moral authority and as a result the powerful actor in the political settings. From the political perspective the determining factor has been thus the fusion of nation and religion which has been dependent both upon demographics and on antagonistic historical relationship to a secular state²³.

In Poland Catholicism has traditionally been strongly linked to the concept of nationhood and statehood which can be found, among others, in the equa-

of Religiosity upon Political Stances. Survey Findings from Seven Central European Countries”, in: *Religion and Social Change in Post-Communist Europe*, Irena Borowik and Miklos Tomka (eds.), Nomos, Kraków, 2001, p. 34.

21 Detlef Pollack and Olaf Müller, “Religiousness in Central and Eastern Europe: Towards Individualization?”, in: *Religions, Churches and Religiosity in Post-Communist Europe*, Irena Borowik and Miklos Tomka (eds.), Kraków, 2006, pp. 22-36.

22 Jarosław Gowin, *Kościół po komunizmie*, Wydawnictwo Znak, Kraków, 1995, pp. 229-230. See also: Jarosław Gowin, *Kościół w czasach wolności 1989-1999*, Wydawnictwo Znak, Kraków, 1999.

23 Anna Grzymała-Busse, *Nations under God. How Churches use moral authority to influence policy*, Princeton University Press, 2015, pp. 8, 150.

tion "Pole-Catholic". This pattern was consolidated after the WWII as a result of significant change of the border when the Polish multinational and multi-ethnic society was homogenized²⁴. But in fact the close relation between the Catholic Church and collective identity goes much further to Partition period. The strong position and the Church, but most notably the perception of Catholicism as the doctrine greatly meritorious for the survival of the nation in the times of Partition as well as the World War II, was strengthened during the communist era. The Catholic Church did not only actively oppose the communist regime and became the center of anti-communist opposition but also played a role in the Round Table talks that led to the peaceful collapse of the Polish communist regime²⁵.

With this significant potential of multifaceted contributions and very high trust the Catholic Church entered the transformation period being both highly estimated moral authority at the societal level and the effective mediator and important player at the political level. As such the Catholic Church has been from the very beginning of the transformation period an active participant in shaping the policies in such areas as education, public media or reproductive rights²⁶. But in fact it was not only the Church that was interested in utilizing the religious-political linkages. Lacking public support for the difficult economic transformation of the 1990s in Poland, but also some other countries of CEE, and, authorities and political elites turned to religion and alliances with Church²⁷.

Similarly to other CEE countries the opposition against the Church's involvement in politics was drastically increasing from the mid of 1990s and Catholic Church in Poland was no longer able to act as the vehicle of anti-regime sentiment²⁸. Still it did continue the attempts to further affect political developments²⁹. At that stage, the Church's political engagement was based on the direct involvement in intervening in the area of law-making, during which the Church was active based on the assumption that it was impossible to separate the religious sphere and social sphere from politics being the integral part of the last one³⁰.

24 "Pole-Catholic" equation was not an obvious one during the interwar period when it was highly contested by different political forces including the "father" of Polish independence Marshal Józef Piłsudski (Grzymała-Busse 2015, p. 150).

25 Antoni Dudek, *Historia polityczna Polski 1989-2015*, Wydawnictwo Znak Horyzont, Kraków 2016; Sabrina Ramet, Irena Borowik, *Religion, Politics, and Values in Poland. Continuity and Change Since 1989*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.

26 Jarosław Gowin, *Kościół po komunizmie*, Wydawnictwo Znak, Kraków, 1995.

27 Irena Borowik, "Religion and Politics in Central and Eastern Europe. Paradoxes of Transformation", in: *Church-State Relations in Central and Eastern Europe*, Irena Borowik (ed.), Nomos, Kraków, 1999, p. 9.

28 John.T.S. Madeley, "European Liberal Democracy and the Principle of State Religious Neutrality", in: *Church and State in Contemporary Europe. The Chimera of Neutrality*, John.T.S. Madeley and Zsolt Enyedi (eds.), Frank Cass Publishers, London, p. 2.

29 The main forum of the consultation between the Church and the State was the Joint Commission of the Representatives of the Government of the Republic of Poland and the Conference of Episcopate of Poland. This body has been established after World War II.

30 The term of the "religious cold war" was coined by Jarosław Gowin to describe the relations between the church and the state that occurred already in 1990. See: Sławomir Sowiński, „Polityka i religia w Polsce po roku 1989”, in: *Religia i polityka. Zarys problematyki*, Burgoński Piotr, Michał Gierycz (ed.), Dom Wydawniczy Elipsa, Warszawa, 2014, p. 660.

The open engagement on the political scene occurred also when during the elections, both the presidential and the parliamentary ones, the concrete candidates did receive the open support on the side of the Church³¹. After the period of strong engagement in the issues connected with elaborating first the Concordate with the Holy See and later the new Polish Constitution as well as the active participation in the discussion connected with the European referendum the Church though backed off from directly influencing Polish politics. It embarked on a strategy of more indirect influencing political decision-making, mainly by supporting the Catholic Radio Maryja that substantially contributed to sustaining national-Catholic ideology³² and gained the informal status as the “political arm”³³ of the Church³⁴.

“The alliance of the throne and the altar”, though present during the entire post-transition period³⁵, has increasingly become the element of the public discourse during the governments of the Law and Justice (PiS) and its allies in the period 2005-2007 and since 2015³⁶. In 2010 during the accelerated presidential campaign the open support was expressed by some representatives of the Church towards the Law and Justice Party’s candidate³⁷. After 2010 the presence of Church in the public discourse has been again increased, though with the visible distance, when the “Smoleńsk religion”³⁸ has emerged as the result of tragic crash of the President’s plane and the death of 96 officials including the President of Poland Lech Kaczyński and his wife. The conflict over installing and later removing so called “Smoleńsk cross”³⁹ and the “marches of memory” organized for

31 Ibidem, p. 661.

32 Ireneusz Krzemiński, “Radio Maryja and Fr. Rydzyk as a Creator of the National-Catholic Ideology”, in: *Religion, Politics, and Values in Poland. Continuity and Change Since 1989*, Sabrina Ramet and Irena Borowik (eds.), Palgrave Macmillan, 2017, pp. 85-112.

33 Krzysztof Zuba, The Political Strategies of the Catholic Church in Poland, *Religion, State & Society*, Vol. 38, No. 2, 2010, p. 121.

34 It needs to be underlined though at the same time Radio Maryja and its leaders were criticized for the political engagement by some top hierarchs of the Catholic Church including primate of Poland at time cardinal Józef Glemp.

35 This alliance was well visible in the 1990’s, to mention the Catholic Election Action or the St. Catherine’s Convent. The Church in Poland regularly plays a role of a paracoalition of right-wing parties. In the 2000s, Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej (especially President Aleksander Kwaśniewski), Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe and Platforma Obywatelska maintained good relations with the church hierarchy. See: Arkadiusz Lewandowski, *AWS. Centroprawica w poszukiwaniu modelu współpracy*, Płock, 2016, p. 95.

36 Zbigniew Nosowski, Nowy sojusz ołtarza z tronem? Soborowa autonomia i polityzacja katolicyzmu, *Więź*, No. 4, 2015, pp. 129-139.

37 Arkadiusz Modrzejewski, Rafał Raczyński, The Attitude of the Catholic Church in Poland towards Current Migration Crisis, *European Journal of Science and Theology*, Vol. 14, No. 6, 2019, pp. 1-14.

38 The concept of “Smoleńsk religion” refers to line of thinking, kind of collective myth, that was adopted by part of Polish society after the crash of 2010. It was based on the conviction that the catastrophe was a planned assassination performed by Russia and supported by some Polish political elites. It included elements of religious symbols and rituals such as referring to the “Smoleńsk cross” installed in front of the Presidential Palace by the group of scouts after the crash and the religious-like manifestations organized under the leadership of Jarosław Kaczyński.

39 The cross was placed in front of the Presidential Palace in Warsaw 5 days after the Smoleńsk crash and became the symbol of not only memory of those who died during the crash but also of the divisions inside of the society on the reason of the crash but also later the way of memorizing the victims. In fact, the dispute over the cross that had a significant group of “defenders” and opponents revealed the conflict between more conservative and more liberal wing of the society. Based on the decision of the Warsaw Curia and the agreement signed between the parties participating in the dispute the cross was to be removed from in

96 months after the plane crash with the participation of the politicians headed by Jarosław Kaczyński showed deep divisions in public opinion but also strong conviction on the side of the society on the necessity of Church's engagement in the discussion of the "Smoleńsk case"⁴⁰. What needs to be stressed is that while some individual representatives of clergy found themselves among the "defenders" of the cross and those participating in the marches of memory, in the official statements The Polish Episcopate did not openly support those who called themselves the "defenders of the cross"⁴¹.

Since 2015 the presence of the Church in the public debate grew stronger as the reference to the religious-national ideology became the clear strategy of the PiS government using religious sentiments to legitimize its position. This tactic turned out to be possible due to the strong rooting of the "popular church" and weak position of the Catholic liberal elites which have not been able to gain the wider public interest. According to scholars dealing with relations between religion and politics in Poland the sharp nationalizing discourse has been detected especially at the lower levels of clergy. At the level of the Polish Episcopate the firm divisions between more conservative and more liberal wing have been observed with the conservative one "winning the battle" in the public reception. The turn into national-Catholic ideology resulted in the sharp division into "us" and "them" reflecting the clear Manichaeic view⁴² of "the good" represented by the national-Catholic and PiS part of the society and "the evil" the rest⁴³.

Meanwhile the distrust in the Church in Poland has reached a never before recorded level. According to the results of the polls published at the beginning of the 2020 the trust in institutional Church between 2017 and 2020 dropped over 13 % and is now 39.5 %⁴⁴. The social perception of the Church has been weekend not only by the perception of Church's involvement in political discourse⁴⁵ but significantly also by the sexual abuse scandal and the strongly self-defendant and hardly self-critical attitude of the Church on its internal problems⁴⁶. However in spite of the steady decrease in the number of religious practices Poles stay one

front of the Presidential Palace but the defenders did not allow for entering this decision into force. Eventually the cross found its place at St. Anna's Church in Warsaw.

40 According to the poll conducted in 2012 50% of the society, mainly the representative of the older generation and with lower level of education, declared that the Church should officially take part in the discussion on the issue (KAI 2013).

41 Agnieszka Kublik, Wojciech Czuchnowski, Roman Imielski, *Krzyż smoleński*, 6.04.2013, https://wyborcza.pl/1,76842,13686085,Krzyz_smolenski.html, (accessed: 23.02.2020).

42 Manichaeic view has in fact been present on the both side of political dispute. Polish opposition – Platform Civic Party – declare from 2015 to be an extremely harsh anti-government because of moral reason.

43 Aniela Dylus, *Z troską o Kościele (ludowym) i o Polsce z nim związanej, Chrześcijaństwo-Świat-Polityka*, No. 22, 2018.

44 *Przewodnik Katolicki, Jak odbudować społeczne zaufanie*, 2020, <https://www.przewodnik-katolicki.pl/Archiwum/2020/Przewodnik-Katolicki-7-2020/Wiara-i-Koscioł/Jak-odbudowac-spooleczne-zaufanie>, (accessed: 28.02.2020). The results of the public opinion polls presented by IBRIS (and referred to by *Przewodnik Katolicki*) differ from those published by CBOS according to which the trust in Church has been quite stable over the last two decades (<https://cbos.pl/PL/publikacje/raporty.php>).

45 CBOS, *Kościół i wybory. Komunikat z badań*, No. 149, 2019.

46 Artur Sporniak, *Gniew ludu, gniew Boga*, *Tygodnik Powszechny*, No. 12, 2019, pp. 12-16.

of the most religious European nations. According to the recent polls 91 % of respondents declare themselves as believers⁴⁷ while over 38% participate in the Sunday masses⁴⁸ which is the highest level reported for Europe.

Church-State relations in Poland

“Religious cold war” meaning the high level of controversies over organizing the model of relations between the state and the church at the beginning of 1990s has not been solely Polish case. In none of the states of CEE the process of constituting and developing new model of Church-state relations has been smooth and unproblematic. Among the crucial problems that similarly caused a lot of heated public debate have been religious freedom and new religious movements (NRMs), the issue of religious education, reproductive rights, sexual minorities rights but also the problem of restituting the property of the Churches, especially the Catholic Church, confiscated in the communist time. All of these matters have been gathered under main “umbrella” issue namely the notion of “autonomy” or “friendly separation” as such bringing the problem of both theoretical and practical interpretation of those concepts.

Poland has a constitutionally guaranteed separation between the Church and the State. Basic rules referring to Church-State relations have been formulated in the article 25 of Constitution. These include the rule of equal rights before law of the Churches and other confessional communities, the rule of impartiality of the public authorities towards religious convictions, freedom of expression within public life as well as the rule of autonomy and independence of the state toward the Churches and confessional communities, each in its own range, and cooperation between them for the common good. Constitution states that relations between the Catholic Church and the Holy See are to be regulated in the concordate which has been signed in 1993 and ratified after the heated political debate in 1998. Constitution of Poland contains *Invocatio Dei*: „(...) we, The Polish Nation – all the citizens of Poland – both believing in God being the source of truth, justice, good and beauty, as well as those not sharing this faith and deriving those universal values from different sources, (...) in the sense of responsibility in front of God or in front of one’s own conscience...”⁴⁹.

Interpretations on how the concept of separation should be understood and practically implemented have been debated in Poland for the last three decades. The cases of the Church’s involvement in the public sphere and in politics resulted in two different interpretations on how this separation, or autonomy, should be understood. Due to extraordinary place of the Catholic Church in Pol-

47 CBOS, *Religijność Polaków w ostatnich 20 latach. Komunikat z badań*, No. 63, 2020.

48 ISSK, *Annuarium Statisticum Ecclesiae in Polonia AD*, 2020, http://iskk.pl/images/stories/Instytut/dokumenty/Annuarium_Statisticum_2020_07.01.pdf, (accessed: 2.03.2020).

49 Constitution of the Republic of Poland (1997).

ish history they only to a certain extent resemble similar discussions conducted in some other states of the region. According to the first interpretation separation means the abandonment of the idea of state's non-religious character. Manifestations of one's own religiosity in the public and political discourse are understood here as domination of religious rituals over the content of political programs. The adherents of such an interpretation express the opinion that within the parliamentary debates too much time is spent on the ideological problems and discussions such as abortion, religious education, presence of Christian values in mass-media and of crosses in public places. According to the second approach Polish Catholicism should be perceived as a kind of political ideology. It explains the phenomena of the political involvement of the Catholic Church not in terms of its authorities' political aspirations, but as an effect of the pulling the Church into the actualities of social life⁵⁰.

Catholic Church and civil society in Poland: the liberal or the normative model?

When discussing both the pre-transformation and post-transformation stage of CEE countries one of the essential issues referring to the religious-political entanglement is the role played the dominating Churches in the context of creation and development of civil society. The concept of civil society, which for a long time has been out of use in Western Europe began to appear in writings of East European dissidents in the last decades of the Soviet Empire⁵¹. While it was understood in many various ways, its main value was polemical and referred to clearly defined opposition between "us" meaning the civil society and "them" referring to the political authorities of that time⁵².

The concept of ethical civil society is one of the crucial ones explaining the reasons of the collapse of the communism and the later changes in both inside and outside of the Church. Edmund Wnuk-Lipiński stresses that this phenomenon occurs usually in the absence of democracy, especially in the monocentric system, which legitimized itself based on the ideology dominating in the public debate. Under these circumstances the civic initiatives, which are the alternative against the initiatives stimulated and controlled by the government, seek for their legitimization in the sphere of axiology and moral norms rather than in the area of group interests. However when the non-democratic system collapses and the moral values, which constituted the power of opposition under mono-

50 Paweł Zalecki, "The Roman Catholic Church in Poland as Both Dominant and Minority Group", in: *Dominant Culture as Foreign Culture: Dominant Groups in the Eyes of Minorities*, Janusz Mucha (ed.), Columbia University Press, New York, 1999, pp. 231-232.

51 Joan O'Mahony, *The Emergence of Civil Society in Eastern Europe: Church and State in the Czech Republic 1992-1998*, London School of Economic and Political Science, London, 2003, p. 8.

52 Aleksander Smolar, *Civil Society After Communism: from opposition to atomization*, *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 7, No. 1, 1996, p. 24.

centric regime, gain state's protection in the public life they obtain the status of the obvious ones. At the same time the emerging multiplicity of axiological options following the pluralization of the public life leads to erosion of the ethical civil society. This way the ethical civil society has the problems with surviving the break of the non-democratic system in the sense that the struggle for values is substituted by the competition of the group interests⁵³.

The essential element of "us" in some cases was the Catholic Church that while crucial for the development of civil society sector in the communist era did encounter serious turbulences when trying to position itself in the post-communist society. As it turned out the simple division into "we" – "they" resembling the relation of the "the good"–"the evil" was hard to maintain in a democratic, pluralist political system which is rooted in concepts of uncertainty, compromise, bargaining and negotiation. Thus an ethical notion of civil society that was useful in combating authoritarianism might occur "dysfunctional" for the political society in consolidated democracy⁵⁴.

In Poland the role of the Catholic Church in the creation of civil society during the communist period has been undebatable. However the question of whether and in what capacity Catholicism and Catholic institution contribute to development of the civil society in the post-transition society is the debatable one. According to one approach Polish Catholicism plays both integrating and activating role in the rather passive society. Inclusion of religious institutions, especially the Catholic ones, is related to some historical and cultural justifications and is linked to the community component in the social culture of Poles as well as respect for Christian values in the national morality. Catholic institutions are deeply rooted in the local and regional traditions embarking the roles of open and privileged arbitrators and activists of the public space. Parish level is viewed here as contributing to creating the civic attitudes, strengthening trust and solidarity. If the Poles activate at all, they often do it through the initiatives undertaken within the Church institution⁵⁵. At the same the Church has engaged in the discourse on how the civil society should be framed. According to this view the liberal, freedom-centered vision of the civil society has not been the one without deficits⁵⁶. Focusing more on the positive, and not negative, notion of freedom and such crucial concepts as common good and responsibility in the public domain the Church opts for the more normative perception of civil society.

According to the more critical approach the specifics of Polish Catholicism is

53 Edward Wnuk-Lipiński, Meandry formowania się społeczeństwa obywatelskiego w Europie Środkowej i Wschodniej, *Chrześcijaństwo. Świat. Polityka*, No. 1(2), 2007, pp. 9–10.

54 John Anderson, "Catholicism and Democratic Consolidation in Spain and Poland", in: *Church and State in Contemporary Europe. The Chimera of Neutrality*, John T.S. Madeley and Zsolt Enyedi (eds.), Frank Cass Publishers, London, 2003, p. 152.

55 Wioletta Szymczak, Społeczeństwo obywatelskie a religia. Typy relacji w perspektywie wiodących teorii socjologii religii, *Roczniki Nauk Społecznych*, No. 43, No. 2, 2015.

56 Dorota Pietrzyk-Reeves, *Idea społeczeństwa obywatelskiego. Współczesna debata i jej źródła*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, Toruń, 2012.

presented as the factor hindering development of democracy and independent, open civil society. Janusz Mariański recalls here the opinion of Jerzy Szacki who pointed out that while Polish Catholicism contributed to initiating of democracy it is not representing the force contributing significantly to development of modern democracy Szymczak⁵⁷. In this regards the efforts to assess the progress of the third wave of democratization heavily affected by the Catholic cultural background⁵⁸ are sometimes rejected as premature⁵⁹. Crucial here has been the concept of “uncivil society” or dark side of civil society which is, among others, connotated with the traditional, nationalistic circles of Polish Catholicism linked with authoritarian attitudes, high self-esteem and the conviction of missionary role⁶⁰.

Towards the secular model in CEE?

After II Vatican Council the Catholic Church declared its autonomy towards the state and non-identification with any particular political system⁶¹. In this regard the biblical “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and to God the things that are God’s” (Matthew 22:21) became the crucial point of reference for setting the mutual relations between the state and the Church. Meanwhile though the Church remained an important participant in the public discourse, and as it turns out in some countries, the powerful political actor that stresses its rights to be influential not only within the realm of morality and social sphere but also politics.

The functions conducted by the Catholic Church are multifold. Along with its main task of offering religious and normative guidance (and thus answering one of the crucial human needs of transcendence) it is the crucial service provider in the sectors of education, health care and especially welfare. But it is also not rarely the influential political actor looking for the effective strategies of achieving some political aims. An attempt to understand the political influence of the Church would thus be the one whether political engagement is for the Church the goal in itself or the “side effect” of securing its religious purposes⁶².

The process of determining the role of religious factor and its links to politics in CEE is the ongoing one and brings some crucial questions on the direction and results of these developments. As Miklos Tomka pointed out some years ago there is no consent on what religion is for those societies and what identifica-

57 Wioletta Szymczak, *Spółczesność obywatelska a religia. Typy relacji w perspektywie wiodących teorii socjologii religii*... p. 68.

58 Samuel Huntington, *Trzecia fala demokratyzacji*, Wydawnictwo PWN, Warszawa 1995, p. 82.

59 Thomas Carothers, *The End of the Transition Paradigm*, *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 13, No. 1, 2002, p. 9.

60 Grzegorz Ekiert, *The Dark Side of Civil Society*, 2019, <http://conciliumcivitas.pl/the-dark-side-of-civil-society/> (accessed: 20.08.2020)

61 *Gaudium et spes. Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World* (1965), Second Vatican Council.

62 Krzysztof Kowalczyk, *Kościół katolicki jako podmiot oddziałujący na system polityczny*, *Wrocławskie Studia Polityczne*, No. 17, 2014.

tion with the Church implies. Relation towards religion polarizes societies and the terms such as religion and religiosity seem unclear. But in each case, they are socially and politically important⁶³.

Undoubtedly the contemporary relations between the state and the Church are the result of historical development. But at the same time those relations are the product of conscious, rationally planned and democratically legitimized statecraft. There are some areas where modern norms are in contradiction with inherited structures, this contradiction however does not have to lead to the open political conflict. Instead it may lead to the reform of institutions⁶⁴ to the extent that is needed both to those institutions and the society in the rapidly evolving social-political conditions. Churches can and should occur as the agents of inspiration and change under the condition of the proper relations with the political sphere.

The “melting of identities” is just one of many but increasingly significant determinant in the debates and controversies on the role of religion run not only in the post-communist states but also in many other ones where the “renaissance of identity” becomes decisive social-political factor. When referring to the issue of Church-state relations Petr Kratochvil remarks the “perplexing role” that religion plays in the politics of the post-communist societies of CEE Europe⁶⁵. On the other hand it seems proper to make space for the approaches according to which the Western models of determining the place and role of religion in public sphere can be inadequate and simplistic⁶⁶. Global review suggest that there are numerous variations between secular and the sacred and that there is a need to achieve a fresh perspective, notably on the religious as it relates to the political⁶⁷. As a result the puzzle occurs whether in the face of existing complexity and far reaching distinctiveness in the European scale one could expect emergence of all-European model of Church-state relations in which some widely accepted standards could be treated as not only expected but the “obligatory” ones. This refers especially to the issue of position and functions conducted by the Churches in the processes of democratization and pluralization on the one hand and to the issue of constituting the voice of the society either supporting or opposing the state on the other hand.

While analyzing political placement of the Catholic Church in the wider Eu-

63 Miklos Tomka, “Religious Change in East-Central Europe”, in: *Religion and Social Change in Post-Communist Europe*, Irena Borowik and Miklos Tomka (eds.), Nomos, Kraków, 2001, p. 11.

64 Zsolt Enyedi, “Conclusions: Emerging Issues in the Study of Church-State Relations”, in: *Church and State in Contemporary Europe. The Chimera of Neutrality*, John T.S. Madeley and Enyedi Zsolt (eds.), Frank Cass Publishers, London, 2003, p. 219.

65 Peter Kratochvil, *The Religion-Politics Nexus in East-Central Europe: Church in the Public Sphere of Post-Secular Societies, Perspectives*, Vol. 17, No. 2, 2009, p. 119.

66 Emilia Moddelmog-Anweiler, *Religia w przestrzeni życia publicznego w regionach Europy Środkowej, Politeja*, Vol. 46, No. 1, 2017, p. 103.

67 Martin David, *The Future of Christianity. Reflections on Violence and Democracy, Religion and Secularization*, Farnham, Surrey, 2011, p. 20.

ropean context it is worth pointing out discussion on religious entanglement and more precisely the role played by majority churches in the CEE countries may lead to the quite surprising outcomes. In the course of this discussion the interesting framework of questioning the well-established notion of "European secular state" has been formulated drawing attention to the fact that the picture of the secularized Europe is much more complex and ambiguous than one could expect. One of the notions used in this discourse has been referring to the principle of religious neutrality as "chimera" that neither historically nor contemporarily finds confirmation in the socio-political reality⁶⁸. This new discourse has been to a significant extent focused not on lowering but actually on raising level of entanglement between state and religion. As Jytte Klausen has summarized this issue: "We are faced with two puzzles. The first is why secular Europe is becoming increasingly less secular. And the second is why Europeans think they are secular when European states have never stopped granting subsidies and preferences for national faith denominations. Europe's still numerous established Churches are the most obvious example of the unabated political importance of religion in Europe" (Klausen 2009, 290)⁶⁹.

The future developments seem to depend on two decisive factors. The first are political claims made by the Church still having difficulty situating itself as one of the actors in the pluralist social-political environment. The second, but not necessarily less important one, are the goals and strategies of politicians frequently openly instrumentalizing the Church for their political interests. For the good of all sides, the Churches, the state and the society the "sound" distance and the healthy dose of self-criticism seem to be indispensable.

68 *Church and State in Contemporary Europe. The Chimera of Neutrality*, John T.S. Madeley and Zsolt Enyedi (eds.), Frank Cass Publishers, London, 2003.

69 Jytte Klausen, Why religion has become more salient in Europe: four working hypothesis about secularization and religiosity in contemporary politics, *European Political Science*, No. 8, 2009, p. 290.

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Јоана Кулска

ПОВЕЗИВАЊЕ НАЦИЈЕ И ДРЖАВЕ: КАТОЛИЧКА ЦРКВА У ПОЉСКОЈ КАО ПОЛИТИЧКИ АКТЕР

Сажетак

Једна од најпрепознатљивијих карактеристика друштвено-политичког живота Пољске јесте улога римокатолицизма као детерминанте национално-политичког идентитета и улога Цркве као важног политичког актера. Пољски случај заправо може бити и пример како су религиозност и национални и грађански идентитет повезани. Овај чланак се бави специфичностима Пољака у ширем контексту региона Централно-источне Европе, фокусирајући се на специфичности овог региона који се у многеме разликује од остатка Европе. Чланак се заснива на анализи еволуције односа Цркве и државе у Пољској, стављајући га у контекст развоја истих односа у региону. Бавим се са три важна случаја. Прво, улога друштвено-политичке димензије која је створила контекст у којем су верски фактор прихваћен као фундаменталан за друштво. Друго, бавим се формално-правним односима Цркве и државе. И треће, анализирам улогу коју је Црква имала у цивилном друштву.

Кључне речи: Пољска, Римокатоличка црква, идентитет, нација, религиозност, цивилно друштво

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