European National Identities
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A thousand years ago, or maybe even more, there lived three brothers, Lech, Czech, and Rus. For many years they had been content in their villages, but the families grew larger and they needed more room to live.

The brothers decided to travel in different directions to search for new homes. Lech, Czech, and Rus travelled with their troops for many days. They rode their horses over mountains and rivers, through forests and wild country. There were no people to be found anywhere, not a town or tiny village. On the crest of a mountain top, they separated, each going in a different direction. Czech went to the left, Rus went to the right and Lech rode straight ahead, down the mountain and across vast plains.

One day Lech saw a splendid sight. He and his troops had come to a place where a meadow surrounded a small lake. They stopped at the edge of the meadow as a great eagle flew over their heads. It flew around in great swooping circles, and then perched on its nest, high on a craggy rock. Lech stared in awe at the beautiful sight. As the eagle spread its wings and soared into the heavens again, a ray of sunshine from the red setting sun fell on the eagle’s wings, so they appeared tipped with gold, the rest of the bird was pure white.

"Here is where we will stay!" declared Lech. "Here is our new home, and we will call this place GNIEZNO... (the eagle’s nest)." He and his people built many houses and it became the centre of his territory. They called themselves Polonians, which means “People of the Field.” They made a banner with a white eagle on a red field and flew it over the town of Gniezno, which became the first historical capital of Poland. And, now you know how Poland began..."
This is one of the most important myths concerning "Polishness." National mythology is a powerful source of national identity. As sets of simplified beliefs, myths provide individuals as well as whole nations with a sense of origin and purpose. "Know thyself" (Gnothi seauton) is the first and foremost advice for those who would like to understand how to apply Apollo's riddling prophecies to their own lives. Self-knowledge is fundamental not just to the philosophizing of a Socrates or Plato; it is universal in other cultures. It touches upon basics such as purpose and destiny, and therefore identity.

As difficult as it is to establish who we are, it is even a more daunting task to establish what a nation is. What are its characteristics and perceptions? What are the limits between individuals, groups, and nations? How much does the way we perceive ourselves as individuals transform into how we see ourselves as citizens? To what extent does the way we perceive ourselves influence our thinking about other groups or nations, and how do their perceptions about us influence what we in turn hold about ourselves? The list of questions seems indefinite. This chapter does not intend to properly address any of them; however, a number of issues discussed herein will revolve around some of them.

The basic problem with an elusive concept such as identity is that it is a multilayered one. Just as individuals may have many layers or, as Anthony D. Smith puts it, "categories and roles," so, it seems, can collective identities, of which nations are political forms. Therefore, gender, space, socioeconomic, religious, and ethnic categories are all indispensable ingredients of collective identities. As rich literature suggests in the case of nations, cultural, ethnic, legal-political, and territorial features add to "colors and flavors" of national identities. Furthermore, since identities in general are not constant and tend to evolve over the years, so will national identities develop, influenced by "historical grammar" creating dialectical continuity and change.

Emphasizing dichotomies is not often considered the best methodological approach when viewing social phenomena. It is the intention of the author, however, for which he was permitted, to draw the attention of the reader to different, indeed often opposing aspects of the matter at hand. Therefore, this characteristic "two sides of the same coin" analysis is meant to emphasize cleavages in the nature of national identity in general and Polish national identity in particular. As such, this chapter also aims at addressing some of the popular stereotypes concerning Poles, such as religious rigidity, general lack of tolerance, and Homo sovieticus mentality.
Poland

The Geography-History Nexus

Many essays on the Polish experience with statehood over the course of history devote a great deal of attention to the geographical location of Poland. As Oskar Halecki puts it, "even if we were to disregard geographical determinism theories, we cannot but acknowledge close relations between the development of history and natural environment in its manifold manifestations, which by itself creates specific conditions and offers various opportunities." These are the exact variables that underpin the cultural fundamentals and, therefore, the politics influencing the history of each and every nation in a permanent fashion.

Revisiting the myth on "Polishness" presented at the beginning of this chapter draws our attention to a number of features. Firstly, the story goes back more than a thousand years, which by itself has a very strong legitimizing element. The Polish see themselves as those who rightly abide in lands in Central Europe, a claim that had to be justified many times over the course of history. It was once one of the most powerful kingdoms in the whole of Europe, but later it lost its independence for 123 years, only to be reborn as a troublesome state after World War I. Finally it was crushed by the two German and Russian titans, suffering greatly during World War II. Neither the geographical shape of the country nor the post-1945 status of the state and its political system were determined by Poles, nor were they ever accepted by the majority of those who tried to redefine their lives in communist Poland. Therefore, much of the modern history of Poland has been dominated by the unquenchable thirst for true independence against all possible odds. This particular theme—the theme of fighting for freedom, of paying the highest possible price for it, and of finally winning it—has deeply engraved the Polish soul, which is manifested by the cultural richness of the country as well as recurring motives in its foreign policy at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Secondly, the aforementioned myth emphasizes the geographical features of Poland as a land-locked country. A glimpse at historical maps reveals a phenomenal truth about the Polish experience with statehood. From a commonwealth of Poland (Crown) and Lithuania—the largest state in Europe in the sixteenth century—through nonexistence to the contemporary middle state in Europe, Poland has shifted so many times that, as Norman Davies claims, “it is impossible to talk of “the Polish lands.” It is a popularly held view that Poland's geography is the villain of its history—the source of all her losses and a useful excuse for
all failings. Described as “the disputed bride,” or worse still as a “gap between two stools,” not protected by any natural boundaries from the east or the west, in the minds of many generations Poland was easy prey for more powerful neighbors from both directions. The feeling of constant insecurity was often evoked as a reason behind the decision to “return to Europe” after the end of the Cold War and, perhaps even more importantly, to join NATO in 1999.

**Between the West and the East**

So where is Poland? Geographically and historically speaking, it is in Eastern Europe. Occasionally, it has been put in Central Europe, with much discomfort associated with the concept of *Mitteleuropa*—always dominated by Germans and Austrians. Yet a “western connection” was undoubtedly forged by Christianization. Trade, politics, and culture also played their parts in shaping the so-called western orientation. The main directions of Polish commerce lay westward over the land to Germany or by sea routes to Holland, France, and Spain. The first Polish cities were founded under German law. Polish monarchies included French, Swedish, and Saxon families. Last, but not least, Poland participated in every important cultural strand, beginning with Romanesque through the Renaissance and Enlightenment and finishing with major trends of the twentieth century. Virtually all arts had their prominent Polish representatives. Mikołaj Kopernik (Nicolaus Copernicus), author of *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium*, studied abroad, like many young Polish people. Education was strongly developed over the years in close connections with western patterns: 1364 saw the foundation of Jagiellonian University. In 1773 King Stanisław August Poniatowski (author of the Stanisławian reforms) established his Commission of National Education, the world’s first state ministry of education. The Lwów and Warsaw Schools of Mathematics were among the best in the world at their time. Polish literature includes such famous writers and poets as Jan Kochanowski, Adam Mickiewicz, Bolesław Prus, Juliusz Słowacki, Witold Gombrowicz, Joseph Conrad, Stanisław Lem, and Ryszard Kapuściński. Worldwide-famous Polish composers include Fryderyk Chopin (Frédéric Chopin), Ignacy Paderewski, and Jerzy Penderecki. Painters such as Jan Matejko and Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz and the playwright, painter, and poet Stanisław Wyspiański are just the tip of an iceberg in the pantheon of Polish “European” artists. Likewise Polish architecture is filled with wonderful examples of European styles.
Poland

Politically, Polish like to brag about their democratic traditions. It was not the type of liberal democracy that is subscribed to in the Western world today, since much of it was actually bargained by the Słachta (nobles) from successive kings, yet most tend to forget that the first European constitution was introduced in Poland.9

Today, according to numerous estimates, the Polish diaspora is between fourteen to twenty million strong. Strong traditions of emigration and Roman Catholicism make for an easy comparison with the Irish. Kosmopolak, a word that combines "cosmopolitan" and "Polish," serves well as an example of the kind of citizens of the world that Polish people are.10

It would, however, be a great understatement to claim that Polish solely belongs to the West. Its geopolitical location means that the internal situation was more often simply a function of relations in the East. Muscovites, Tatars, Russians, or Turks, to name just a few, decided the course of Polish history. It has had an immense influence on Polish culture and, consequently, identity. "Sarmatism" is a term that designates the dominant lifestyle, culture, and ideology of the Słachta (nobility) of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries.11 In itself, as Piotr Wandycz asserts, sarmatism "was more than a conservative landowner's outlook, anti-urban and anti-intellectual, characterized by superficial religiosity, a tendency toward economic waste and ostentatious luxury as well as arrogance of caste . . . it involved a view of Poland as granary of Europe . . . a realization of superior form of government . . . based on the; golden freedom."12 The infamous "golden freedom" concerns a conundrum, where nobles controlled the Sejm (parliament) and the commonwealth's elected king, which ultimately led to the failure of the state and left a deep mark in the minds of succeeding generations, somewhat manifested today by the general disobedience of many Polish toward authorities and a lack of social trust.13

Religiosity versus Tolerance

One of the most common stereotypes concerning Poland has to do with its religiousness. Polak Katolik (Catholic Pole) is a fixed phrase in the Polish language and conveys a mixture of meanings. On the one hand, the sole foundation of the Polish state is inexorably associated with the Christianization of Slavonia.14 The first dynasty, the Piast, is therefore depicted as a founding factor in Polish statehood and culture. Christianization was decisive in the internal consolidation of the state
and for international recognition at the time. Ethnically and religiously, Poland in that period is depicted as coherent and homogenous. In that respect, the historical experience with statehood was very much observed through the eyes of religion. The concept of Poland being an Antemurale Christianitatis (Bulwark of Christendom) much precedes the siege of Vienna in 1683. Religion was important in Romantic views expressed by Polish bards such as Adam Mickiewicz and Juliusz Słowacki when writing about the loss of sovereignty. It was important in the years leading to regaining independence, and finally it was the last resort for many of those who could not find themselves under the communist regime of Poland after World War II. Fifty years of communism were, in this respect, a sort of final element in shaping the image of the Catholic Pole. On the one hand, communist authorities were strongly alluding to Piast traditions to improve their legitimacy and the unity of the nation after World War II. On the other, the Catholic Church was one of the last niches where opposition to state authorities could dwell, and which, with certain memorable and hideous examples, the secret service did not dare openly attack. One of the symbols of Poland worldwide, which still holds in the minds of many, was the pope John Paul II. Being Polish but at the same time one of the big reformers of the Catholic Church, Karol Wojtyła had his own, very personal input into awakening the spirit of the nation and pushing it into the direction of freedom. The Polish “revolution” of the 1980s—the emergence of Solidarity and the mass grass-roots social movement—was very much underpinned by religious elements. Regular masses held across the country during the era of strikes in 1980 reinforced the image of unity, observed first in 1979 when around two hundred thousand people gathered at Victory Square (now Piłsudski Square) for a mass congregated by John Paul II during his first visit to Poland.

Postcommunist Poland still reflects some of those sentiments. They represent traditional, nationalist views on national identity. Lech Wałęsa’s confessor, Father Jankowski; Zygmunt Wrzodak, a former worker and contemporary politician; and Father Tadeusz Rydzyn, the director of Radio Maryja (Mary’s Radio), with thousands of elderly supporters known as “the army of mohair berets” seem to allude to the romantic-messianic vision of the Polish nation—a vision that the so-called Szkoła Warszawska (Warsaw school) of Polish historiography associates with the terrible geopolitical circumstances that gave the Polish no chance for freedom or peaceful development whatsoever, victimizing Poles and their country as chosen, special, and finally scarified.
There is, on the other hand, an opposing view, attributed conversely to the so-called Szkoła Krakowska (Cracow school)—a body of thought that supports the idea that every country’s frontiers, geographical and economic situation, and social dynamics create a set of underpinning variables that shape its position in international relations. In this view, the main fault for losing a once-powerful state rests solely with Poles themselves. Pertinent to such views were also those of Roman Dmowski and his disciples.\textsuperscript{17} Being a scientist (a biologist) and therefore strongly influenced by social Darwinist theories, Dmowski felt very strongly that Poles should abandon foolish romantic nationalism and useless gestures of defiance; instead they should work hard to become businessmen and scientists. Preferring logic and reason over emotions and passion (so typical for Polish romantics), he initially disregarded Catholicism as a source of many unrealistic approaches. Interestingly, being a critic of the Commonwealth (Polish Lithuanian Union) and identifying as one of its weaknesses its religious tolerance, Dmowski decisively supported the vision of an ethnically and religiously homogeneous nation. This view was contrary to that of Józef Piłsudski, whose vision alluded to Jagiellon, a multinational federation based on a wide definition of Polish citizenship in which peoples of different languages, cultures, and faiths were to be united by a common loyalty to the reborn Polish state.

This in particular throws a different light on Polish religiousness and tolerance. Jagiellon Poland and subsequently the Commonwealth were multiethnic and multireligious entities based on tolerance and equality of rights. Apart from the Roman Catholic majority there were Calvinists, Lutherans, Arians, Unitarians, Orthodox, Unities, Old Believers, Jews, Karaim, Chassidim, and Muslims. Polish noblemen and peasants coexisted peacefully with Germans, Jews, Armenians, Dutch, Swedes, Scots, and Italians.\textsuperscript{18} The multiplicity of religions and consequently cultures and languages made the Commonwealth one of the most tolerant places in Europe. In fact, Poland was once home to the largest and most significant Jewish community in the world. Escaping from purges all over Europe, Jews were granted equal status there. They dwelled and thrived for many years in what was termed \textit{paradisus Iudaorum} (Jewish paradise).\textsuperscript{19}

Consequently, contemporary Polish society still displays many characteristics of the old “paradise.” Contrary to popular belief, Poles are not the intolerant orthodoxy that much of Western media would like to see them as. A number of examples in this respect will serve the purpose of dispelling the aforementioned view. Just as in every European country,
there is an ongoing phenomenon of secularization of public life. Political parties that strongly aligned themselves with religion, like the Akcja Wyborcza Solidarność (Election Action Solidarity, AWS) or Zjednoczenie Chrześcijańsko Narodowe (Christian-National Union, ZChN), are out of political life. Religion is still taught at schools; however, parents can choose between religion and ethics classes. Even though close to 90 percent of Poles are Roman-Catholics, churches recently have become more and more empty—a phenomenon known as “non-practicing believers.” It is still difficult even to imagine homosexual marriages, but gay communities are especially strong in large cities in many spheres of public life, and culture in particular. The rate of divorces is still one of the lowest in the EU, but it has been steadily on the rise in recent years. Abortion is openly supported by many activists. Last, but not least, apparently many Polish priests support the abolition of celibacy.

Postcommunism—Idealism versus Materialism

Communism brought a very "special" experience to many of those who were born in Central and Eastern Europe. Poland is no exception in that respect. Such an experience (or rather, a whole cluster of experiences) was not only negative, as some may presume. Indeed its political system and economic developments brought at least some positive changes to a country that was almost totally ruined after World War II. On the one hand, communist authorities literally rebuilt the state in the 1950s and 1960s. Initial economic successes were strongly supported by the overall betterment of life conditions of the population. Social security services were widely available, and the stresses of life were limited compared to previous periods. In comparison with Western European countries, a great many people were enjoying employment security, free health care, and free education for their children.

On the other hand, dates such 1956, 1968, 1970, 1976, 1980, and 1981 commemorate major upheavals in social life, representing resistance against the party, the state, and its bureaucratic apparatus. Unhappiness with the inefficient command economy, limited freedoms, and the secret service's infiltration of private lives created a phenomenon unknown to citizens of liberal democratic societies—having to live two lives: an official one, conformist, more or less along the lines of "political correctness"; and the other one unofficial, intimate, characterized by many internal clashes, which in some cases might lead to a so-called inner emigration. The dates above also symbolize tough reactions of the authorities, reactions that included arrests, beatings, intimidation,
and even murders. Yet the period of communism was quite fruitful in cultural terms. Film, theater, music, and perhaps most of all, cabaret, were all developing against all odds. Art became a sensitive playground for artists and creators of all walks of life, who by all means tried to talk about the hardships of everyday life and infirmities of the system, and official censorship tried its best to curb the free spirit of expression.

Names such as Andrzej Wajda, Krzysztof Kieślowski, and Krzysztof Zanussi are already established trademarks in the panorama of contemporary European culture. The Polish Film School, active between 1955 and 1963 and influenced by Italian Neorealism, took advantage of liberal changes—odwilż (thaw)—and openly discussed Polish history during World War II.26 Another example sees the so-called Cinema of Moral Concern, an important stream in Polish cinematography between 1976 and 1981 stigmatizing injustices and calamities of the communist system, where corruption and nepotism led most young moralists to conformism and survival or rejection and solitude.26 Likewise literature, even though strictly controlled by censorship, had its good times and was often published outside Poland or unofficially in the so-called podziemie (underground).27

The fall of the Berlin Wall, preceded in the case of Poland by roundtable talks in February–April 1989 and the first free elections (June 4, 1989), launched the transformation of government, economy, and society. From undemocratic regimes with command economies, CEE countries within a short period of time changed to free-market economies based on free elections. The shift was sudden, deep, and in many cases very painful. Poland was no exception in this regard. If before 1989 at least some parts of society had an elusive sense of security, it was all gone by the beginning of 1990s. Freedom came to symbolize the new era. The legacy of the past made it particularly difficult for most members of society to adapt quickly. A product of those times was, as Richard Rose puts it, an uncivil economy that combined elements of legal and illegal activities.28 A country of great opportunities revealed itself with all the advantages, yet the disadvantages were also great. On the one hand, private initiative sprang up overnight. If before 1989 people could not buy any goods regardless of how little money they had, later, because of Balcerowicz’s “shock therapy,” the goods were plenty, but few had money to purchase them. This phenomenon created new social cleavages as well as new social postures and identities. Most ordinary people could not participate in privatization. Of those employed in state-owned companies, most lost their jobs due to economic realities.
The level of unemployment was rising fast. Inflation, especially at the beginning of the 1990s, was almost unheard of. Such a situation obviously caused massive distress. To make matters worse, the fruits of “uncivil entrepreneurship” were clearly seen on the streets, where a handful of chosen ones changed their cars from “car-like products” (produced by communist economies) to high-quality Western vehicles. Brand-new, sleek, shiny headquarters of joint-venture companies and banks, and luxurious hotels and shopping malls, started to appear out of nowhere. While on the one hand, the pauperization of society was progressing fast, on the other the standard of living of the new elites was getting out of reach for most very fast. This has produced roughly three groups within Polish society. First is the outcast—most often those who were employed by state-owned enterprises, either in heavy industry or in farming. Since 1989 a great many of them have not successfully adapted to free-market economy conditions. They are often referred to as “post-communist orphans.” The second group is the new elite, either former apparatchiks who had the right connections and potential to organize capital for investments or, in smaller numbers, especially at the beginning, true, brave entrepreneurs with skills. The third group is all the rest, meaning those who adapted to new capitalist requirements with better or worse success. This group is quite diverse and includes small businesses as well as freelancers, those working in mass media, and professionals such as doctors or lawyers.

One of the particular characteristics of life in Poland is a lack of trust. In this regard Poland is no different from other countries in the region. On the one hand, there has for many years been some foreign authority telling Poles what to do (123 years of partitions, or fifty years of communism). This has produced a fundamental division between us and them. A number of surveys carried out since the beginning of the 1990s prove a certain pattern: The highest level of trust is given to family members and friends. Confidence in governmental and administrative institutions is generally lower than for public organizations. There is also significant distrust and skepticism of political parties. Consequently, the number of people declaring an interest in politics and participating in various forms of political life is generally below the EU average.

Europeanism versus Euro-Atlantism

Another cleavage characteristic of contemporary Poland, especially after 1989, concerns Poland’s foreign policy and, in this regard, two
fundamental orientations. Ever since the beginning of the 1990s there has been a deep consensus concerning the so-called return to Europe. Membership in the EU and NATO were and to this day are seen as vital symbols of economic prosperity, democratic success, and security. Advocates of Western community expansion to Central and Eastern Europe often emphasized genuine "European" traditions of CEE countries, their sacrifice during the Cold War, and economic and political prospects based on geopolitical foundations for all parties included. As Judy Batt (2007) puts it, "the notion of 'returning to Europe' usefully captures an essential fact of life in this region: the inseparability of the internal and external dimensions of politics. Establishing and consolidating democracy and the rule of law, overcoming interethnic tension, nationalistic rivalries and mistrust creating flourishing and competitive economies all largely depend on stable external environment, free of the threat of imperialist domination, in which borders can be freely crossed by people, products and capital."

Europeanism has been a trademark of Polish foreign policy right from the regaining of full independence at the beginning of the 1990s. In its endeavors to advance Polish membership in the EU, national diplomacy kept emphasizing three fundamental aspects. Firstly, as far as national identity goes, Poland has always been and will remain a European country par excellence. For that reason, membership in the most important European institution, which it could not confound only for geopolitical reasons, should be perceived as its "natural right." Secondly, such membership falls into the category of raison d'État. That is to say that Polish national interests were to be consequently fought for during accession negotiations as well as later during the everyday workings of the institution. Thirdly, advantages and benefits associated with Polish membership in the EU were to be multilateral, as Warsaw saw its role as a positive factor in developments of the processes of European integration and especially regarding relations between the EU and Eastern Europe. Since its accession Poland has been an active member of the EU. Its two recent initiatives include the Eastern Partnership, a program to forge closer political and economic ties with six former Soviet republics in exchange for democratic reforms (inaugurated last year in Prague). This year in May, Poland has invited Russia to form a "group of friends" of Eastern Partnership, hoping to engage the latter in positive cooperation with the EU. The second half of 2011 will see Poland at the helm of the EU; in preparing for this, the Polish government initially defined its priorities to include a budget for
2014–2020, relations with the East, the EU internal market, fostering of the EU external energy policy, the Common Security and Defense Policy, and intellectual capital.43

On the other hand, close relations with the United States have traditionally been seen in Poland by many members of society and political elites as fundamental for the country's security. The underlying foundation of that view has to do with the history of World War II and the Cold War.44 The United States and its support were decisive in winning the war and rebuilding Western Europe. As for many Europeans, the United States since the nineteenth century has been perceived as a manifestation of all dreams of freedom and prosperity.45 On top of that, the United States has upheld Poles in many periods of their difficult history. Especially important was American support for Polish transformation in both the political and economic fields. Consequently, Poland has looked to America for security and to the European Union for economic development. A strategic partnership between Poland and the United States was forged early after 1990 and recently confirmed by the Declaration on Strategic Cooperation between the US and Poland (August 20, 2008).46 American engagement was again decisive in the case of NATO enlargement to the East.47 Subscribing to "Euro-Atlantism" and special strategic relations with the United States stipulated a number of actions that did not win particular popularity within the EU.48 This included Poland's strong support for the American invasion of Iraq and the engagement in Afghanistan of Polish troops in both campaigns; the support for the missile defense system on Polish soil (a disturbing element in relations with Russia); and last, but not least, the upholding of NATO enlargement to the east, with greater burden-sharing between Europeans and Americans within both NATO and EU structures.49

As the world enters a new millennium, states are confronted with new challenges and tasks that require more cooperation than ever before. States seem to have no choice but to forge stronger and deeper ties should they wish to survive all sorts of "tsunamis" that are bound to come. In doing so, they will also need to redefine their identities, refining themselves as modern political entities capable of transcending the traditional limitations embedded in a national perspective. The EU, with its European air of supra-nationalism and sub-state algorithms of local cooperation based on the principle of "subsidiarity," may yet be one of the effective responses in that regard. Poland, as a fresh and relatively new member of the EU, has a unique chance of emerging
from its troublesome past populated by numerous myths, as a vigorous visionary of future settlements both within the EU and between Europe and the East. As a nation in transition between the West and the East, between the old and the new, between postcommunism and postindustrial modernity, between religiosity and secularism, it has a unique chance of finally deciding about its own future for the benefit of its own people and Europe in general. Europe is defined broadly as a continent that embraces all sorts of peoples and cultures, whereby *In varietate concordia* is not only a motto but also a true spirit that shapes the core of "Europeanness."

Notes

1. The names in this myth represent different nationalities. "Czech" refers obviously to the Czechs, "Rus" to the Russians, and "Lech" to the Polish, since Poland was also referred to as "Lechistan" in the past. The name Lech has therefore a particular meaning and importance in the Polish collective consciousness.


4. Oskar Halecki, *Historia Europy—jej granice i podziały* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Instytutu Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej, 1994), 27. As the author explains it, this is the fundamental conclusion of the French School of humanistic geography as opposed to the determinism of the German *Antropogeographie*.


8. Writers Henryk Sienkiewicz, Władysław Reymont, Czesław Miłosz, and Wisława Szymborska have each won the Nobel Prize in Literature.

9. The Constitution of May 3, 1791 is generally regarded as Europe’s first and the world’s second modern codified national constitution. It was designed to redress long-standing political defects of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth and its traditional system of “golden liberty” that conveyed disproportionate rights and privileges to the nobility. The Constitution introduced political equality between townspeople and the nobility (Szlachta) and placed the peasants under the protection of the government.

10. For interesting research and discussion on Polish young emigrants at the beginning of the twenty-first century see Maria Siwko, "Values and Aspirations of the Polish Youth in the Contemporary Europe," *Yearbook of Polish European Studies* 10 (2006): 89–104.

11. This name has to do with a legend that Poles were the descendants of the ancient Sauromates, a warlike tribe originating in Asia that later resettled in
Northeastern Europe; they were said to be descended from Japheth, son of Noah. For more, see Bożena Grabowska, "Portraits after Life: The Baroque Legacy of Poland’s Nobles," History Today 43/10 (1993): 18–24.


13. Notorious Polish cantankerousness is neatly characterized by the phrase, "Two Poles, three opinions." Sarmatism and all it represents is generally not accepted socially in contemporary Poland. See Paweł Boski, "Humanism and Materialism in Poland," in Uichol Kim, Kuoshu Yang, and Kwang-Kuo Hwang, eds., Indigenous and Cultural Psychology Understanding People in Context (New York: Springer, 2006), 393.


15. The tragic case of priest Jerzy Popiełuszko, (Solidarity Priest), brutally murdered by agents of the secret service in October 1984, well exemplifies how seriously the authorities treated the Church. Arguably that particular political assassination served as a very strong impulse for all sorts of opposition activists and general society in their defiance of official state authorities. For an in-depth analysis of relations between communist authorities and the Catholic Church in Poland see Jan Jerschina, "The Catholic Church, the Communist State and the Polish People" in Stanisław Gomulka and Antony Polonsky, eds., Polish Paradoxes (London: Routledge, 1990), 76–96.


17. Roman Stanisław Dmowski was a Polish politician, statesman, and chief ideologue and cofounder of the National Democracy Endecja. To some extent, still present in Polish political discourse are reminiscences of the great national debate between Dmowski and Piłsudski. The latter was a chief of state (1918–22), first marshal (from 1920), and (1926–35) of the Second Polish Republic, greatly involved in regaining Poland’s independence after 1918.


20. AWS—Akcja Wyborcza Solidarność (Election Action Solidarity)—is a political party coalition that won in 1997 parliamentary elections and consequently created its own government. ZChN—Zjednoczenie Chrześcijańsko Narodowe (Christian-National Union)—took part in AWS. In 2007 most of its politicians joined LPR—Liga Polskich Rodzin (League of Polish Families)—a party that alluded to Roman Dmowski’s views. It was created before the parliamentary elections of 2001 and gained 8 percent of the votes; therefore, its politicians participated in the government. The elections held in 2007 practically eliminated the party from political life.


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23. According to the findings of Professor Józef Baniak, a sociologist who specializes in religion at the Department of Theology at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, more than 12 percent of priests even admitted they were presently living in stable relationships with women. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7884472.stm [accessed July 15 2010].


25. The so-called Polish Film School was represented by Andrzej Wajda, Andrzej Munk, Jerzy Kawalerowicz, Wojciech Has, Kazimierz Kutz, Tadeusz Konwicki, and Stanisław Różewicz.


27. Czesław Miłosz, living for many years in France and United States, came to symbolize the unity of Polish culture within the country and abroad. For his achievements he was awarded a Nobel Prize in 1980, which greatly popularized his books in Poland, which were often published unofficially before that.

28. Rose, 50.


30. In 1990 the official consumer price inflation rate in Poland reached 585.8 percent. The next year saw a decisive decrease, down to 70.3 percent. By 1995 the situation looked much better, but prices were still on the rise by 21.6 percent. See Henderson and Robinson, 280.

31. The beginning of the 1990s saw an outburst of fortunes of unknown, often illegal provenance. This period is well depicted by one of the jokes that appeared in “the street” some time ago: “During one of the private parties organized for Polish and American businessmen, two men are having a conversation—with the help of an interpreter, which adds another element to the whole scene—about their entrepreneurship strategies. And so the Polish businessman, referring to the famous ‘American dream,’ asks the interpreter to tell his American counterpart that with him, it was quite the contrary: the first million was the one that he earned legally.”


33. A special subgroup is formed by the Polish intelligentsia, who are usually very well educated, working as civil servants or in academia. In many cases
they have also not adapted to new realities. Perhaps one of the reasons is that the materialistic world has always been out of reach for this particular group. Polish romanticism has always stressed the world of “inner wealth” rather than such mundane matters as comfort in life, which was a simple reaction to years and years of living in poverty.


43. The document was introduced on July 21 this year: http://www.kprm.gov.pl/centrum_prasowe/wydarzenia/id:5070/ [accessed July 23, 2010].

44. There is a popular view in Polish contemporary historiography that Soviet domination in CEE and the consequent lack of freedom for the people in that region was a price that had to paid for Western Europe’s peace and security.


48. Throughout the period preceding Polish accession to EU and shortly afterward, voices could be heard depicting Poland as a "Trojan horse" of the United States in Europe. Scholars occasionally also alluded to views

49. Adam Daniel Rotfeld, Polska w Niepewnym Świecie (Warszawa: Polski Instytut Spraw Międzynarodowych, 2006), 259.