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Marzena Kuczyńska

Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw

Terrorism pictured by Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI

Abstract

The article presents the reflections of Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI on the phenomenon of terrorism. The understanding of the essence and sources of this phenomenon have been discussed. The author has analysed the teachings of the Pope before he took up the pontificate and during his ministry, focusing on the messages, speeches and pilgrimages. One of the Pope's key texts was the Regensburg lecture. Proposals for counteracting terrorism in order to build a lasting peace in the world have been presented.

Key words: Joseph Ratzinger, Benedict XVI, terrorism, persecution of Christians, peace, freedom, dialogue, irrationality, Islam, Christianity, faith, religion.

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1. Historical context of the thought of Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI

Joseph Ratzinger took up the topic of terrorism in a series of reflections on Europe. The historical and ideological context accompanying the reflections of the Bavarian theologian were the 1980s and 1990s and the atmosphere at the turn of the millennium. The old continent, having overcome the yoke of wars, Nazism and communism, headed for a new beginning, which was to guarantee peace and order for future generations. It is also the aftermath of the division of Europe and the world into two opposing blocs: liberal-capitalist and Marxist, the decades that pass under the sign of the moral revolution, the intensification of protest movements, the crisis of culture and the loss of religious sense, progressive secularization, de-Christianization and Christianophobia, driving the aspirations of Western civilization to cut itself off.¹ It is a commitment to the cult of progress, the scientific and technological revolution, which is the driving force of prosperity and enables eugenic treatments.² This time is marked by the end of the Second Vatican Council, the interpretation

¹ Ratzinger (2005): 60. The context of rapid changes has raised the question of preserving European identity. According to Ratzinger, it was very important for the establishment and maintenance of order for future generations to guarantee in writing all the fundamental rights derived from the Christian vision of man and the world that lay at the heart of European civilization, i.e. respect for human dignity, the institution of marriage and the family, and due respect for Christ in the face of attacks and spreading blasphemy. In the latter, Ratzinger saw Europe's paradoxical hatred of itself, the West's reluctance towards what is its own and fascination with what comes from abroad. See Ratzinger (2005a): 28–31.

² Cf. Babiński (2016): 14–22.

of its provisions and the legacy of John Paul II.³ Reflections on this phenomenon constantly accompanied the deliberations of Benedict XVI also during his pontificate, focusing on Islamic fanaticism. The considerations were underlain by the same unresolved problems of the reality, which still included fear caused by the threat of terrorism.

The dimension of personal, specific life experiences is not without significance for the overall reflection on terrorism. From an early age, the Pope was a witness of the terror of Nazism.⁴ His youthful experiences made him highly sensitive to violence and injustice. He looked at Europe primarily from the perspective of his origin, with great attention to his homeland⁵ and other parts of the continent, marked by progressive nihilism, which is the aftermath of, among others, German and Italian terrorism in the 1970s.⁶

2. The definition of terrorism in terms used by Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI

Basing on the reflections of the Bavarian theologian, the following definition can be coined: terrorism is one of the most brutal forms of violence, a new world war without clearly defined fronts that can break out anywhere. It resorts to attacks on specific, important targets (sites, people), without distinguishing between combatants and civilians. Focused only on defeating the opponent, ready to reach for the last resort, it does not care about the health and life of innocent people. It is a subversive strategy, typical of some extremist

³ See Mazurkiewicz (2017): 236–238.

⁴ Sowiński (2013): 41–53.

⁵ Benedict XVI (2011).

⁶ Ratzinger (1999): 18–19; (2005b): 141–143; Cf. (1977): 171.

organizations, religiously or politically motivated. Often, sophisticated technical means, huge financial resources and large-scale projects are involved in achieving a goal that justifies any form of cruelty, negating international law and human values.⁷

3. The causes of terrorism

Initially, Joseph Ratzinger wrote about the problem of terrorism, which is one of the *characteristic signs of our time* in the Eurocentric aspect, having political and ideological motivations. With time, along with the changing reality, the topics of his lectures focused mainly on Islamic fanaticism.⁸

As he noted, in many cases terrorism has its roots in injustices that have accumulated over the years. Unstoppable in time, they turned into a vicious circle of aggression.⁹ This category includes poverty, injustice of the ruling elite, exploitation, internal conflicts, discrimination, increasing numbers of refugees and displaced persons, difficult relations between emigrants and the local population, natural disasters, and many others, contributing to chaos, favouring the existence of extremist organizations with impunity.¹⁰

⁷ See Benedict XVI (2011a); Ratzinger (2005a): 89.

⁸ By appealing to Osama bin Laden, Ratzinger showed a way to inspire terrorism by trying to morally justify violence. The leader of the emerging Al-Qaeda contrasted the oppressed, weak, pious world of Islam with the cruelty, power and godlessness of the West. The fiery messages, especially addressed to people in a specific political and economic situation, consistently distorted the concept of justice, justifying terrorism as a means of bringing it about, See Ratzinger (2005a): 76.

⁹ Ratzinger (2005a): 89.

¹⁰ See Benedict XVI (2007); (2007a); Cf. Stańczyk-Minkiewicz (2004): 117–153.

Joseph Ratzinger focused on this problem, taking as his starting point the moral dimension of human action. Terrorism is misdirected *moralism*, rooted in a protest against spiritual emptiness of the temporal reality and the desire to change it for the better, the realization of which must be taken care of by man himself.¹¹ The reflection shows the problem of understanding individual freedom, which wants to free itself from all boundaries.¹² So it becomes absolute, anarchist, and consequently abolishes itself. Without reference to the common measure of law and good, defined by Joseph Ratzinger as a safeguard of human rights,¹³ it becomes violence toward others.¹⁴ Lawlessness and self-determination raise the problem of treating the power of a distorted conscience as the last resort. Consequently, this results in a denial of the existence of truth, dehumanization, rejection of authority and indifference.¹⁵

The perpetrators of terrorist acts are always guided by a subjectively understood *good*, using violence as a means to sanctify the end (means justify the end).¹⁶ In the name of creating a *better world*, they take matters into their own hands and commit the greatest cruelty in the name of a new, better political and religious order.¹⁷ Violent establishment of lawlessness, most often taking place under the mantle of a liberation movement, creates serious difficulties in the social dimension (blurring the boundaries of law, drugs, prostitution, arms

¹¹ See Ratzinger (1997): 172, (2005b): 16–17.

¹² Ratzinger (2005b): 135; Cf. Benedict XVI (2008); Mazurkiewicz (2007a): 72–83.

¹³ Ratzinger (1999): 15.

¹⁴ Ratzinger (1999): 62.

¹⁵ Ratzinger (1999): 39.

¹⁶ Benedict XVI (2011a); Cf. Ratzinger (1977): 172–173.

¹⁷ Cf. Ratzinger (2005b): 113–114.

dealing, and others). In the opinion of Joseph Ratzinger, these pathologies pose a greater threat to international peace than wars.¹⁸ The lack of a fixed point of reference leads to negating the order of the state and the law, and imposing one's own will, which over time becomes the only instance, ready for anything to implement one's own totalitarian ideas. The new order, emerging from the previously provoked chaos, actually enslaves man, making him a victim of his own subjectivism, and freedom moving towards true enslavement.¹⁹

Joseph Ratzinger, even before his accession to the Holy See, clearly emphasized that *terrorism is based on the way of self-authorization of man, and not on the study of the Qur'an*.²⁰ Terrorism can be excused neither by religious motives nor by any other reason why the reference to God is often merely a cover.²¹ This type of manipulation raises doubts as to the nature of religion and provokes voices calling for its elimination in order to get rid of the source of intolerance in the name of progress and freedom.²²

According to this thought, terrorism is, first of all, an erroneous reference to the truth and, to put it deeply into its essence, an erroneous relation of man to God. In his considerations, the Bavarian theologian often juxtaposed the phenomenon of religious fanaticism with the reality of negation and exclusion of God.²³ The common denominator of both, despite their different origins and cultural context, is pride,²⁴ contempt for human dignity and an insult to God, which

¹⁸ Ratzinger (2005b): 39–40.

¹⁹ Ratzinger (1999): 62–63, 71.

²⁰ Ratzinger (2005): 60.

²¹ See Benedict XVI (2006); (2009): n. 29.

²² Ratzinger (2005a): 71a.

²³ See Benedict XVI (2006a): n. 9–10.

²⁴ Cf. Ratzinger (1995): 96–97.

is completely denied by nihilism and entirely distorted by fanaticism.²⁵ This implies a distortion of man's self-understanding and narrows the relationship with one's neighbour and with all reality; *where people do not fear God, they become terrible to one another*.²⁶ Letting go of the fear of God, which stems from faith in the constant presence of the Lord, removes the fear of violating it (this presence of God) in others, generating jealousy and hatred.²⁷

This has serious consequences for the personal and social dimension. The actions of religious fanatics violate the principles of justice, freedom, and God's natural law. They are an attack against faith – which they will distort, love – which is expressed by hurting and killing innocent people, and against hope – by trying to create the world based on subjective justice.²⁸ Moreover, the use of violence in the name of religion is in fact a perversion of its nature and is aimed to destroy it²⁹ giving some the false argument that religion is the cause of divisions in the world and should be relegated solely to the private sphere.³⁰ Radical secularization, gaining more and more supporters in the Western world, on the other hand, leads to the problem of eugenics and places the source of power and existence in the hands of other people.³¹ Both religion and reason distancing themselves from God can lose their orientation and succumb to the temptation to instrumentalize, becoming a means in the service of destructive

²⁵ See Benedict XVI (2006a): n. 10; Cf. Benedict XVI (2007b): n. 18–19; Cf. Wielomski (2013): 31–34.

²⁶ Ratzinger (1999a): 140–141; Cf. Benedict XVI (2006b).

²⁷ Ratzinger (1999a): 141; (1998): 128.

²⁸ See Wielomski (2013): 34.

²⁹ See Benedict XVI (2012).

³⁰ See Benedict XVI (2009a); Cf. Ratzinger (1969): 50–51.

³¹ Ratzinger (2005a): 71.

goals, against which Europe and the world were repeatedly warned by Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI.³²

3. A program of mutual understanding with the followers of Islam

After taking over the Holy See, Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI continued his reflection on the sources and nature of terrorism as well as the possibilities of preventing and counter-acting it in the future. The Pope's actions, however, were not limited to solemn words. Through concrete gestures, he consistently carried out the call of the Second Vatican Council³³ to develop a common understanding with the followers of Islam on the occasion of speeches, audiences, meetings and foreign pilgrimages that were popular with the media.

Already in the first year of his pontificate, while on a trip to Cologne, he met a delegation of German Muslims, making clear the difficult issue of Islamic fanaticism. During his speech, he clearly distinguished Islam from the stereotype of terrorist religions, encouraged common prayers and firm defense of the dignity of every person's life. Following the example of his predecessors, he pointed to the need for inter-religious and intercultural dialogue between Christians and Muslims as a hope for a peaceful coexistence in the future.³⁴ The program of mutual opening and seeking cooperation opportunities in the perspective of the common good, formulated in this way at the beginning of the pontificate, was successively implemented in subsequent speeches to the followers

³² Ratzinger (2005a): 94.

³³ See Paul XVI (1965): n. 3.

³⁴ See Benedict XVI (2005); Cf. Regoli (2017): 334–335; Cf. Mazurkiewicz (2017a): 423–425.

of Islam and during meetings.³⁵ A month before his visit to Cologne, during an impromptu press conference, the Pope, when asked about international terrorism and the clash of civilization, said: *They are just fanatics. It's not a civilization as such – at least I think so.* He expressed the hope that the dialogue between the three religions would prove to be an invitation for some to abandon *terrorism*, which, he added, was *irrational*.³⁶

4. The Regensburg lecture – a turning point in building a dialogue

The aspect of irrationality of religious violence was mentioned by Benedict XVI during his Regensburg lecture. The papal argument, during his visit to the University of Regensburg, concerned primarily the relationship between reason and faith, and the defense of the rationality of faith. The speaker took a fragment of the dialogue between Emperor Manuel II Palaeologus and an educated Persian about Christianity and Islam and their relationship to the truth as the starting point. The emperor addressed the Persian with the words:

Show me just what Mohammed brought that was new, and there you will find things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached, and added: God is not pleased by blood – and not acting reasonably is contrary to God's nature. Faith is born of the soul, not the body. Whoever would lead someone to faith needs the ability to speak well and to reason properly, without violence and threats...

³⁵ See Babiński (2011): 378; Cf. Benedict XVI (2006c).

³⁶ See Benedykt XVI (2005a).

To convince a reasonable soul, one does not need a strong arm, or weapons of any kind, or any other means of threatening a person with death...

Faced with the confrontation of the Emperor's premise of the rationality of God's nature with the radical transcendence, the absolute freedom of God, not even bound by the category of truth, the Pope formulated the following problem: Is the belief that unreasonable action is against God's nature only a Greek concept, or is it always and by nature true?³⁷

Due to the reference to the ancient text of Emperor Manuel Palaeologus, the lecture was met with a strongly negative and emotional reaction, but most of all with the Muslim world not understanding the words of the Pope.³⁸ The intention of the Head of the Church was to unequivocally and emphatically condemn religiously motivated violence and to manipulate religion to achieve one's own goals. The content of the papal lecture was far from resolving the problem of whether and to what extent violence is inherent in the religion of the Prophet. He concluded his lecture with the words: *Not to act reasonably, not to act with logos, is contrary to the nature of God*", said Manuel II, according to his

³⁷ Benedict (2006d); Cf. Stróżewski (2009): 11.

³⁸ The rest of the argument focused on compatibility between the Greek logos and the Christian understanding of faith in God, and the importance of integrity of these two planes for the emergence of European civilization. The Pope's thought focused on the need for theology within academia, for it undoubtedly belongs to the field of science, despite the obvious differences between it and the sciences; the particular sciences describe the nature of a thing, while theology focuses on knowing its essence. Theology's task is to search for answers to questions beyond the competence of specific sciences and to direct cognition to problems fundamental to human existence, See Babiński (2009); Cf. Mazurkiewicz (2017a): 414–416.

Christian understanding of God, in response to his Persian interlocutor. It is to this great logos, to this breadth of reason, that we invite our partners in the dialogue of cultures. To re-discover it constantly is the great task of the university.³⁹

Media reports citing the initial quote made the Pope the indisputable enemy of the Muslims calling for conflict.⁴⁰ Many religious and state leaders condemned the Pope's words in an extremely severe, offensive and aggressive manner.⁴¹ In the official text of the already published lecture, Benedict XVI added a footnote to the controversial quote:

In the Muslim world, this quotation has unfortunately been taken as an expression of my personal position, thus arousing understandable indignation. I hope that the reader of my text can see immediately that this sentence does not express my personal view of the Qur'an, for which I have the respect due to the holy book of a great religion. In quoting the text of Emperor Manuel II, I intended solely to draw out the essential relationship between faith and reason. On this point I am in agreement with Manuel II, but without endorsing his polemic.⁴²

To agree with the statement that Islam only brought evil and inhuman things (expressed in a specific place and time)⁴³ would cancel any effort to take any action to open up and build relationships with each other. Creating the possibility

³⁹ Benedict (2006d).

⁴⁰ See Rodari, Tornielli (2011): 20–39.

⁴¹ Cf. BBC News (2006).

⁴² Benedict (2006d); Cf. Majewski (2008).

⁴³ Stróżewski (2009): 11–17.

of a common coexistence on the way of a dialogue understood in this way is a vital necessity on which common future depends to a large extent.⁴⁴

In the fall of the same year, 38 Muslim scholars replied to the Head of the Catholic Church in an open letter, which was, in fact, the first polemical document of this type.⁴⁵ They presented their arguments in a manner devoid of prejudices and aggression, which at the same time proved that dialogue is possible. Another proof of good will were the Pope's numerous meetings with representatives of the Muslim world during his apostolic journeys, cordial greetings and visits to mosques.⁴⁶ At the turn of November and December of the same year, Benedict XVI went to Turkey. In his declarations, he expressed his warm feelings and sympathy for the Turkish society and the state; during meetings with religious leaders, he emphasized the similarities between the children of one Father in the Abrahamic faith; once again expressed his respect for Muslims and Muslim civilization, and expressed his hope for joint efforts in the service of man and life, peace and justice.⁴⁷ The Mufti of Istanbul then said:

⁴⁴ Benedict XVI (2006c).

⁴⁵ Amman Message (2006).

⁴⁶ Pope John Paul II was the first ever governor of Christ to visit a mosque in Damascus in 2011. Continuing the achievements of his predecessor in terms of the willingness to build understanding and dialogue with the followers of Islam, Benedict XVI visited, among others, the Blue Mosque in Istanbul, the Hussein bin Talal Mosque in Amman, and the Al-Aksa Mosque in Jerusalem.

⁴⁷ Benedict XVI (2006e).

With his gestures during his visit to the Blue Mosque, Benedict XVI has overcome the misunderstandings related to the lecture in Regensburg.

He considered the actions more significant than the apologies expressed in words.⁴⁸

On 13 October 2007, the first anniversary of the first letter, 138 Muslim scholars addressed the spiritual leaders of various factions of Christianity with another document of a similar nature, entitled significantly: *One word for you and us*.⁴⁹ This initiative met with an open and cordial response from scholars of Islam, Christian scholars, heads of Christian churches and Pope Benedict XVI himself, who, through Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, expressed thanks and appreciation to all signatories. This unprecedented event, although it did not gain worldwide publicity, became an opportunity for diagonal unification of many Muslim circles and was a counterbalance to the actions and message of the extremists.⁵⁰

5. Apostolic journeys as an opportunity to build understanding

During his apostolic journeys to many parts of the world, the Pope repeatedly called for mutual understanding, respect and peace. At that time, it required a lot of courage, because, according to media reports, before his visit to Turkey and

⁴⁸ Skowron-Nalborczyk (2010).

⁴⁹ Letter written in English and Arabic, coordinated by Jordan's Royal Institute for Research on Muslim Thought Al al-Bait, approved by an extremely large group of representatives of the Muslim community. Never before has such a large group of scholars of various branches of Islam prepared a joint statement, See Skowron-Nalborczyk, Grodź (2008): 31–34; The Royal Aal al-Bait Institute for Islamic Thought (2007).

⁵⁰ Wąs (2008).

the United States, threats had been made against him,⁵¹ following the echo of the Regensburg lecture in the media. Despite all the adversities, the Viceroy of Christ made a pilgrimage to all inhabited continents, also to the countries where conflicts were taking place at that time. Benedict XVI prayed for the victims of terrorist attacks and expressed concern about the growth of this phenomenon. He expressed gratitude and appreciation to all those involved in restoring peace.⁵² Faced with the threat of violence, he called for respect for international humanitarian law, but, above all, he encouraged the victims and their loved ones.

In 2008, the Pope gave a clear sign of solidarity to the whole world by standing on *Ground Zero*,⁵³ the land marked with the blood of victims of terrorist attacks. On the last day of his pilgrimage to the United States of America, he prayed there for eternal life for the heroic rescuers and all innocent victims of the 2001 tragedy,⁵⁴ for the healing and strength for the mourning families, and for the conversion of those whose hearts and minds were consumed by hatred.⁵⁵ Three years later, on the 10th anniversary of the attack on the World Trade Centre, Benedict XVI addressed a special letter to the Archbishop of New York, Timothy Michael Dolan, in which he strongly emphasized that no circumstances can ever justify terrorist attacks, especially invoking God's name.⁵⁶

⁵¹ TVN24 (2008).

⁵² Benedict XVI (2006f).

⁵³ Ground Zero is the name given to the devastated site of the World Trade Center towers in New York that collapsed on 11 September 2001.

⁵⁴ The Pope refers also to the victims of the September 11 terrorist attacks in Washington D.C. and Pennsylvania.

⁵⁵ Benedykt XVI (2008a).

⁵⁶ Benedict XVI (2011b).

A year later, the Pope travelled to the Holy Land on pilgrimages to Jordan, Israel and Palestine. In Amman, like in Istanbul and Jerusalem, he visited a mosque. Faced with the then fierce conflict between Palestinians and Israelis, Benedict XVI tried to be an ally of all parties, calling them to show mutual respect, and persuading them to reach an agreement. Entering Palestine, in Bethlehem, the city of David and the birth-place of Jesus Christ, the Pope argued that peaceful coexistence of nations is possible, and that the experience of violence and terrorism can strengthen the will to build peace.⁵⁷ Saying goodbye to the delegation at the Ben Gurion airport, he made a dramatic appeal to all the inhabitants of these lands:

No more bloodshed! No more fighting! No more terrorism! No more war! Instead let us break the vicious circle of violence. Let there be lasting peace based on justice, let there be genuine reconciliation and healing.⁵⁸

During his pontificate, the Pope also visited the countries of Africa, where many persecutions of Christians take place, and Lebanon, over which he lamented in 2006.⁵⁹ During a meeting with the diplomatic corps, state and religious leaders, he exclaimed:

If we want peace, let us defend life! This approach leads us to reject not only war and terrorism, but every

⁵⁷ Benedict XVI (2009b).

⁵⁸ Benedict XVI (2009c).

⁵⁹ In recent days news from the Holy Land has been a cause of serious alarm to everyone, particularly because of the extension of aggressive actions also to Lebanon and the many victims among the civil population. At the root of these merciless contrasts, unfortunately, are objective situations of the violation of law and justice, as cited in Benedict XVI (2006).

assault on innocent human life, on men and women as creatures willed by God.⁶⁰

6. The distorted meaning of martyrdom and the perspective of Christian hope

It is also very significant that the Pope mentioned terrorism when he delivered the first *Urbi et Orbi* address after taking the office. This procedure was aimed at drawing the attention of the whole world, because, especially during the most important holidays for Christians, the statements of the head of the Church are quoted by the media.

Benedict XVI focused on the victims of the effects of terrorist attacks and violence, pointing out that especially the most vulnerable, i.e. children, women and the elderly, are denied basic rights.⁶¹ In his last messages, just before his abdication, he carried words of encouragement to the persecuted Christians in Africa, who were targeted by bloody terrorist attacks in 2012.

At this point, it is worth noting that the persecution of Christians in the 21st century is ever more often and boldly assessed by researchers as the greatest in the history of mankind.⁶² Not without significance for the reflection made here is the great care and devotion of Benedict XVI, whose pontificate fell on such a difficult time, to the cause of the persecution of Christ's witnesses. The Pope repeatedly looked at the fate of those persecuted who fell victim to terrorism and terror for the sake

⁶⁰ Benedict XVI (2012a).

⁶¹ Benedict XVI (2007a).

⁶² Mazurkiewicz (2017): 218–228 (section: Persecution of Christians and the silence of the West).

of Jesus.⁶³ The theology of martyrdom, close to the Pope because of the special love of the Fathers of the Church and personal experiences, requires a separate study.⁶⁴ It is worth recalling the speech he made in 2004 on the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of the landing of the Allied Forces in France. Joseph Ratzinger, facing the spectre of terrorism plaguing Europe and the threat of using nuclear weapons, pointed out that terrorists, ready for self-destruction according to their own ideology of martyrdom, do not face any dilemmas or limitations.⁶⁵ The act of desperation, followed by the promise of rewarding the daredevils with eternal happiness, in fact results from a misunderstood martyrdom, originates from a deformed image of God and inability to distinguish good from evil.⁶⁶ It is, therefore, a complete contradiction of the Christian understanding of being a witness who, in truth, inner freedom, humility and humbleness, out of love for Christ, endures the world full of oppression,⁶⁷ and does not rebuild it, fights it at all costs, seeking media coverage.

In the messages of Benedict XVI, an inseparable element of the diagnosis of difficult reality was the reflection stemming from Christian hope, which had its source in the events of Christmas and Easter. *True* peace and hope come from Christ, who is true God and true man.⁶⁸ It is the mystery of Christ's love and redemptive death that allows us to look

⁶³ Modern science has distinguished between these concepts. In Polish literature, the most common view is that terror means rape and violence of the strong against the weak, and terrorism is rape and violence of the weaker against the strong, as cited in Resztak (2012): 149.

⁶⁴ See Bachanek (2012): 141–154.

⁶⁵ Ratzinger (2005a): 88–91.

⁶⁶ See Bachanek (2012): 147.

⁶⁷ See Ratzinger (1999): 45.

⁶⁸ Benedict XVI (2007a).

at the misfortunes tormenting humanity in an eschatological dimension, i.e. in the light of hope, giving meaning to undeserved suffering and allowing us to go through a hard test of faith.⁶⁹

7. Remedy for overcoming terrorism – factors constituting peace in the world.

Terrorism, due to the lack of internal logic and willingness to make radical sacrifices, makes it impossible to implement effective safeguards and security systems.⁷⁰ However, overcoming this evil cannot be achieved merely by force, which is constantly at risk of lawlessness and loss of control. Ratzinger, critical of extreme solutions, an eye for an eye approach and pacifism, pointed to the principle of proportionality of the means used and the need to subordinate them to the criteria acceptable for everyone.⁷¹ Faced with the helplessness of state structures, he called for action on the ethical, cultural and civilizational levels. As he noted, the goal of the state and politics, which aims to bring about peace and justice, belongs to the order of a moral nature, not a technological dimension.⁷²

The Pope appealed for concrete actions to heads of states and international organizations. Thanks to a joint effort to build solidarity between nations and respect for the inalienable rights and dignity of individuals and nations,⁷³ it is possible

⁶⁹ See Benedict XVI (2007c); Benedict XVI (2007b): n. 36.

⁷⁰ Ratzinger (2005): 41–42.

⁷¹ Ratzinger (2005a): 89.

⁷² Ratzinger (2005a): 58; Cf. Benedict XVI (2008b); Cf. Mazurkiewicz (2017a): 201–217.

⁷³ Benedict XVI (2011b).

to prevent the cruel phenomenon of violence. He encouraged to follow the path of reason,⁷⁴ to jointly strive to strengthen the will to bring about peaceful coexistence of races, cultures and religions,⁷⁵ and to use proportional measures to guarantee the rights and obligations of individuals and communities, always bearing in mind that they should be guided by fundamental principles.⁷⁶

In order to restore the lost order, it is therefore necessary to raise ethics and morality in contemporary societies above politics, to relate them to good and justice in a universal dimension,⁷⁷ taking into account God, to whom the social issue is related: the problem of mutual responsibility for another human being and the universal values becoming the deciding force for the world order. Working out the basis of the minimum of moral values acceptable to everyone⁷⁸ will allow us to maintain the right to individual freedom, while maintaining the right to life due to every human being.⁷⁹ Individual freedom can be duly exercised only in relation to a common measure, in the name of mutual respect and care for others.⁸⁰

Terrorism is a threat to peace, understood by Benedict XVI primarily in terms of the blessing that the Lord gives to His

⁷⁴ Benedict XVI (2006).

⁷⁵ See Benedict XVI (2012b); (2012c); (2006g).

⁷⁶ See Benedict XVI (2012d). As fundamental rights the Pope understood above all respect for the life of every human being from conception to natural death, protection of the sanctity of marriage and children in the family, helping the poor, the oppressed and the weakest, especially those who are persecuted for their faith, and combating the negative effects of materialism; protection of the created world and the environment. See Benedict XVI, Williams (2006h).

⁷⁷ Ratzinger (2005b): 125–127.

⁷⁸ Benedict XVI (2006b).

⁷⁹ Ratzinger (2005): 81–84; Cf. Benedict XVI (2011).

⁸⁰ Cf. Ratzinger (1996): 110.

people (Ps 29(28), 11). Referring to the seventh Beatitude of the Sermon on the Mount, he explained that the reality of peace is first reconciliation with God⁸¹ (the condition of which is to live according to His will), then it is personal inner peace, from which flows external peace with one's neighbour and with all creation.⁸² There is also a need to return to respect for holiness, i.e. rebirth in the hearts of God's fear, which is an indispensable element of true tolerance.⁸³ The grace of peace requires completion on the part of the human will, which is a kind of co-builder of the possibility of realizing God's gift.⁸⁴ Therefore, the Pope showed in a very specific hierarchy that to achieve it one must pray and then build it with all one's might.

Benedict XVI turned to the representatives of the Muslim world with a request for prayer, deeply believing in its spiritual power.⁸⁵ He also called on Christians to do the same,⁸⁶ entrusting the victims of terrorism and wars to the maternal intercession of Mary, Queen of Peace. The Pope pointed to the need to convert to a God who is love,⁸⁷ stating in his first encyclical, aptly entitled *Deus Caritas est*, that a

personal relationship with God and an abandonment to his will can prevent man from being demeaned and save him from falling prey to the teaching of fanaticism and terrorism.⁸⁸

⁸¹ See Ratzinger (1977): 170.

⁸² Benedict XVI (2013).

⁸³ Benedict XVI (2006b).

⁸⁴ Benedict XVI (2013a).

⁸⁵ Benedict XVI (2005).

⁸⁶ Benedict XVI (2006).

⁸⁷ Benedict XVI (2006i).

⁸⁸ Benedict XVI (2005b): n. 37.

Accepting the truth about God Logos and God of Love enables real solidarity and expansion of the cultural community. Conversion to God, whose essence is love, will generate in mankind the capacity for forgiveness that has the power to effectively break the vicious cycle of violence.⁸⁹

Joseph Ratzinger also clearly outlines the task of returning to rational faith, to the Eternal Logos.⁹⁰ With regard to radical Islam, he pointed to the relationship between reason and religion as the right centre of efforts to restore peace. Disagreement between the two planes destroys the source of morality and law,⁹¹ and fosters violence. Law is conditioned by truth and good, discernible by the ability to reason unlimited by any ideology.⁹²

Summary and conclusions

In view of such a diagnosis, a question arises about the relationship between the culture and religion of the world of Christianity and the world of Islam. These two great opposing systems indisputably interact.⁹³ However, a question arises whether Europe, tired of the dictates of reason, will be able to offer attractive values to other continents. Assimilation of the cultural influences of Europe (rationalism, Christianity) collides with the simultaneous striving to maintain one's own identity and distance.⁹⁴ Benedict XVI clearly distances himself from proselytism and imposing his faith by force. Admitting

⁸⁹ Ratzinger (2005b): 104–105; Cf. Ratzinger (2005a): 89.

⁹⁰ Cf. Gózdź (2013): 43–52.

⁹¹ Ratzinger (2005a): 91.

⁹² Ratzinger (2005a): 95.

⁹³ Ratzinger (2005a): 90.

⁹⁴ Ratzinger (2005a): 76–77.

to God, who defied evil – mercy, and violence – his suffering, is by no means goodness of God. Which was revealed most fully in Jesus Christ, who died for humanity on the cross, a symbol of love to the end.⁹⁵

The inhabitants of other continents admire knowledge and technical achievements, but rationality, which considers the exclusion of God from man's field of vision as its most perfect form, evokes fear in them. They see real threat to their identity not in Christian faith, but in disregarding the Creator, absolutizing freedom, making the highest criterion of usefulness and scientific achievement. There is also the problem of the level of abstractness of world ethics, which may not find fertile ground outside the Old Continent, for which the obviousness of rationalism is inscribed in its own cultural context.⁹⁶ Europe seems to have forgotten that an increase in technical capacity does not imply simultaneous development of moral strength. The old continent, however, still retains its responsibility and mission, despite the crisis and the marked weakening of the importance of the Church in Europe in the universal Church.⁹⁷

The reflections of the Bavarian theologian on the phenomenon of terrorism continue to provide a necessary contribution to the comprehensive understanding thereof. Along with reasons of a political and social nature, one should also take into account the deepest religious and ideological motivations.⁹⁸ Only taking into account all dimensions of the problem's complexity can one hope to find lasting solutions.

⁹⁵ See Benedict XVI (2006b).

⁹⁶ Ratzinger (2005a): 77.

⁹⁷ See Ratzinger (2005): 43; Seewald (2016): 55; Cf. Mazurkiewicz (2017): 241–245; Cf. Babiński (2011): 369–382.

⁹⁸ Benedict XVI (2006a): n. 10.

The Pope has made an in-depth study of the sources of violence, focusing on free and rational nature of man. When studying the phenomenon of terrorism, the focus of Joseph Ratzinger was man and his ways of relating to God. The key to restoring peace is conversion to God, *because goods are not protected when Good itself is lacking*.⁹⁹ The fight against evil is the most urgent task shared by the Church, the state, international organizations, religious leaders, and most of all ordinary people.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ Ratzinger (1998): 128.

¹⁰⁰ Ratzinger (1998): 128.

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Defining threats linked to the influx of immigrants and refugees to France based to the report «Attitudes Towards Refugees, Immigrants, and Identity in France»

Abstract

This paper explores the threats to France's security linked to the influx of immigrants and refugees. As the number of immigrants and refugees entering the country grows, security policies are jeopardised. The opinions French citizens on the safety of local politics, communities, identity, culture, language, and religion are surveyed in the 2017 report *Attitudes Towards Refugees, Immigrants, and Identity in France*. The analysis of data included in the report shows negative attitudes toward Islam and generally doubts towards newcomers. The results of the analysis present an important knowledge for security policies because it is a reflection of a nation's wariness. That having been said, more studies need to be conducted in order to have a better perspective on the identified issues.

Key words: French security policy, cultural identity, immigration, refugees

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Introduction

The goal of this study is to present the attitudes of French citizens regarding security policy in France. Security policy is an important matter because its efficiency can impact citizens' political choices and later influence the future of the country. Today people's views and opinions on security are, amongst others, factors determined by oncoming waves of immigrants and refugees. With their arrival the security of the country can become jeopardised. Not only the country's territorial security, but also cultural, identity, economic, political and religious security could be at risk. The analyzed report *Attitudes Towards Refugees, Immigrants, and Identity in France*¹ reveals those possible threats to France. That having been said, it should be noted that a growing number of immigrants and refugees is a concern for every European country. The way France is dealing with security issues linked to the influx of immigrants and refugees can serve as a signpost for the European Union.

The report was prepared for More in Common by IFOP in 2017. The IFOP is the French Institute of Public Opinion and is an international polling and market research firm, their main slogan being 'Connection creates value'. The More in Common association requested the report to be prepared because their goal is to deepen the understanding of the attitudes toward identity, immigration, and refugees. The report allowed to identify common points and differences of opinion concerning the threats that are real issues for France today. Besides being a social analysis the report is a conversation starter in order to fathom the consequences of the country

¹ Fourquet et al. (2017).

being open and inclusive. People's identity has much to do with how they view the world and the presented issues. Keeping that in mind is important when trying to answer the question: What kind of threats were identified in this report?

I. General context of the report

The report touches on issues such as identity, opinions and views of French citizens towards immigrants and refugees. It does not, however, completely exhaust the subjects linked to immigrants and refugees. Similar issues were identified in another report written by Laurent Delbos in 2019 entitled *Country Report: France*.² His research represents an in-depth analysis of the country's situation. Other important researches include that of Thomas Soehl, who explored social issues connected with the matter in *Social Reproduction of Religiosity in the Immigrant Context: The Role of Family Transmission and Family Formation — Evidence from France*.³ With respect to education experiences of migrants Maïtena Armagnague and Isabelle Rigoni worked on *Editorial: School Experiences of Migrant Minors*,⁴ where they discussed issues linked to schooling and migration in France. In regard to the future of France, Béatrice Giblin wrote in *Éditorial. La France demain...*⁵ about issues concerning security and political changes in the France of tomorrow.

That having been said, the basis of this analysis is the report *Attitudes Towards Refugees, Immigrants, and Identity in France*. This report was created in two steps. The first

² Delbos (2019).

³ Soehl (2018).

⁴ Armagnague, Rigoni (2019).

⁵ Giblin (2018).

step took place in 2016 and its goal was to ask questions online. 2002 representatives of the French people aged 18 and older responded to questions concerning their sexes, education, origin, culture, religion, as well as their opinions towards consumerism, media, political views and of course experiences with immigration issues. During the survey questions concerning immigration and personal experience with the matter were the most important ones in order to understand their point of view. The subject of immigration, but also the definition of it are one of the central elements of the report. The second step of creating the report were face-to-face interviews that took place in December 2016. The goal of the second part of the survey was to analyze and deepen the understanding of the responses that had been given. The interview process was long and detailed. The authors of the report state many times that it is important to keep in mind that people's opinions and points of view change with time and as a result of additional information. That is why the authors of the report presented answers as indicators of general feelings the public has towards the issues related to refugees and immigration. They tried to take into consideration all the various aspects of one's opinions in order to perform an analysis of the data.

Difference between the definitions of an immigrant and a refugee

First of all, it is of great importance to note that an immigrant and a refugee does not mean the same thing. The report starts with a thorough explanation of those two terms. The two terms do not have the exact same meaning although they share some similarities. One of the general goals of the report is to differentiate between the two notions clearly by separating them

from the beginning. In other words, the threats linked to immigration are not the same, although similar, to the dangers linked to the growing number of refugees. That is to say that as the report states the most important difference between an immigrant and a refugee is that a refugee is a person who did not have the choice to leave their country of origin. This explanation throws more light onto the possible issues related to the subject. The motivation and situation of an individual who did not have a choice to leave their country of origin is different than that of someone who leaves voluntarily.

Political concerns in relation to the process of globalization

Another important point that is raised in the report is the perception of the process of globalization. Dynamic political changes in Europe, such as Brexit or the electoral success of the Nationalist Front in France, leave the authors of the report to wonder about the consequences of those changes. Recent events can also have a long term impact on public opinion. Relating to politicization of immigrants, Edgar Grande, Tobias Schwarzbözl and Matthias Fatke wrote *Politicizing immigration in Western Europe*,⁶ where they proved that radical right-wing populist parties play an important role in politicization of immigration. The authors of the report *Attitudes Towards Refugees, Immigrants, and Identity in France* also say that the influx of immigrants and refugees will probably shift the power dynamics in the political field of not only France, but also many other European countries. Their arrival can be seen as a threat to the country's security, because the growing number of refugees and immigrants will

⁶ Grande, Schwarzbözl, Fatke (2018): 1444–1463.

most likely affect the elections in one way or another. The authors of the paper *Immigration and electoral support for the far-left and the far-right* add

Although the outcome of the next presidential election most likely hangs on the economy, our results suggest that far-left and far-right candidates' electoral success is also going to depend on the size and composition of immigration in coming years.⁷

Refugees and immigrants are becoming an increasingly bigger part of society. As such, their opinions and votes have to be taken into account by politicians.

Just like changing political parties and government policies concerning the well-being of the countries they represent, the influx of immigrants can have a long lasting impact on industry. Industry is an important element of the country's functioning and its changes can greatly affect every citizen in the long run. No matter if it is a big city or a small town in the countryside, government's decisions can affect everyone. The same can be said about the tourist regions in both urban and rural areas. Those sectors are greatly affected by threats linked to the development of globalization as well as immigration.⁸ This situation makes 61% of the French citizens say that France should start protecting itself from foreign threats. There is overall pessimism and concerns as regards the rapid process of globalization.

Furthermore, when asked about the adjectives that first come to mind when thinking about the France of today,

⁷ Edo, Giesing, Öztunc, Poutvaara (2019): 35.

⁸ Fourquet et al. (2017): 33.

the people taking part in the survey chose two words: worry and anger.⁹ Worry and anger are adjectives with quite negative connotations, to say the least. Words have a powerful meaning and those chosen by the people in question are among some of the strongest words to express frustration. With all that having been said, the choice of words made by the people participating in the survey is quite bothering. 65% chose the adjective worry, and 50% – angry. Providing this information, the authors of the report claim that French citizens seem to become distrustful of their own country, but at the same time they are often very reluctant to share this conviction.

II. Economic Threats

Limited capacity of the country to welcome immigrants and refugees

The *goal of the report Attitudes Towards Refugees, Immigrants, and Identity in France* was not only to discuss the subject, but also to interview citizens who are not knowledgeable about economics. Their opinions show that the general climate is not too favorable to opening the French borders. A lot of debate is going around the country concerning the matter, and many citizens questioned in the survey are hesitant. It can be seen in the report that the capacity of France to welcome immigrants and refugees is limited by many factors. That said, a certain paradox can be seen when looking closely at the situation. Although the French have welcomed already a number of immigrants, public opinion claims that the French citizens are reluctant to the idea of the completely

⁹ Ibidem: 28.

open borders. The example set by Germany is not one that the French people want to follow. One of the authors of the report, Jérôme Fourquet, suggests that one of the reasons why the French are not as open as the Germans to immigrants is due to a different history of the two countries. All that has happened since the beginning of WWII have impacted the German perception of immigration in some way. To be more precise and provide an example, it can be said that their views of immigration have been shaped in a significant way by large masses of people filtering in and out of Germany due to post war movements. France have not lived through similar events, so the uneasy feelings associated with immigration issues are exaggerated, says Fourquet.¹⁰

Intensity and rapidity of arrival of immigrants and refugees

The financial help that is provided to immigrants is seen as worrisome to every other French citizen. One out of two French citizens considers helping immigrants as a great sacrifice at the expense of the majority of the population. That is seen as unjust because in return immigrants do not show any willingness to adapt to the customs of the country they have settled in. The efforts of immigrants to integrate with the French society are practically nonexistent in the eyes of the people taking part in the survey. On the other hand, 56% also agree that immigrants work hard and generally accept the working conditions that the French refuse to take. That having been said, this affirmation should not be taken as a good sign, as it is causing the minimal wage to drop,

¹⁰ Fourquet et al. (2017): 32.

which is not necessarily a good thing.¹¹ In addition, a large influx of refugees and immigrants can lead to housing issues. Finding a job can be a difficult task for newcomers and unfortunately some of them might become homeless. As stated by Pascale Dietrich-Ragon, the author of the article *On the Sidelines of French Society Homelessness among Migrants and their Descendants*:

While the origin of homeless people is rarely mentioned in the media, this article shows that housing insecurity disproportionately affects migrants and their descendants.¹²

Economic destabilization?

A possible threat that is coming with immigrants and refugees is an economic one. It is impossible to deny that an influx of immigrants affects the economy. Presumably immigrants come to France with hopes and dreams of a better life. Some of them are entrepreneurs, Tesseltje de Lange wrote *Welcoming talent? A comparative study of immigrant entrepreneurs' entry policies in France, Germany and the Netherlands*,¹³ depicting highly skilled immigrant entrepreneurs. In order to help them function in a new environment the French government has set a system of financial aid. This decision has sparked conversation around the question who should benefit from it. In a perfect world, if one would wish to receive financial aid, it would also be imperative to contribute back to the society. The reality is that unfortunately many

¹¹ Ibidem: 43.

¹² Dietrich-Ragon (2017): 23.

¹³ de Lange (2018).

try to abuse the system. French citizens are aware of this issue. As it is shown in the report, the economic dimension should be taken seriously because it is an important issue for French citizens.¹⁴ When asked: Do you agree that immigrants demand aid and help of the public services without making any contribution in return?, 65% responded: Yes. Financial aid given to every immigrant is seen as a threat to the economic system. In addition, many interviewed people shared the feeling that immigrants have been given priority over French citizens. That is a problem because it shows that citizens do not feel prioritized by their own government. This could lead to distrust towards immigrants and resentment between French citizens and immigrants. Furthermore, abuse of help provided by the government can lead to economic destabilization. Instead of uniting immigrants and local citizens, financial aid can cause more divisions between them.

III. Social threats

Cultural differences and language barrier

When talking about immigrants and refugees it is important to note that another threat linked with their arrival concerns their different traditions and lifestyles. The French slogan of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity is not the only representative of the French culture and beliefs. The country has also an important heritage of Christianity among many other factors that make up the identity of French citizens. France has its own cultural background, and many citizens believe that traditions and lifestyle is an important part of their life. This

¹⁴ Fourquet et al. (2017): 43.

statement is reflected by the answers provided to the following question. When asked: Do you agree that refugees should be able to continue their traditions?, only 18% responded in the affirmative. It is clear that immigration leads to integration issues. As briefly mentioned before, the French are not considering immigrants as willing to integrate with the French society. The issue of immigrants not willing to adapt to their new country is an important issue. France has a strong position in political and economic areas, and up to 54% of respondents confirm that they are proud of being French.¹⁵ Identity is a mix of many elements. Cultural elements are a big part of the feeling connected with France and the French identity in general. There is a danger linked to the rapidity and intensity of the influx of immigrants to France because adapting to a new culture takes time and effort.

Although the French agree that the unique customs and culture are important in building a person's identity, they also believe that newcomers should make a great effort in order to acquire a new identity. A new identity that would be the basis for assimilation. The report shows that assimilation is seen as a must in order to become a part of the French society. That having been said, it is not an easy task to adapt to a new culture and its beliefs. Taking on a new identity in a foreign country is a big issue. One of the key elements of assimilation is learning the local language. The language barrier can be the biggest obstacle to assimilation. Refusing to learn the language can be a threat to the French language in general. If less and less people will be learning French, then it can have long term linguistic consequences. Those linguistic consequences have to be taken into consideration when analyzing

¹⁵ Fourquet et al. (2017): 36.

the report's data. When asked: Do you agree that refugees coming to live in France should learn the language?, 85% said: Yes.¹⁶ This answer shows that communication is most important in order to properly integrate into the society. Integration is first and foremost achieved through acquiring the command of the local language, and as the survey shows the vast majority of French citizens share the same belief.

Islam: Is it incompatible with France's beliefs?

Welcoming refugees and immigrants is for many a threat to the security of the country. Being reluctant to welcome immigrants is largely due to terrorist threats that have been preoccupying the country for the last few years. The report shows that the three issues that concern French citizens most are terrorist threats – 53% selected it as the number one issue. Secondly, unemployment that was selected by 52% and, last but not least, the immigration problem that was chosen as a threat to the French society by 37% of citizens taking part in the survey.¹⁷ Those threats are part of everyday life of French citizens. They are major indicators of fears that preoccupy them. Important issues such as terrorism and unemployment exert a great impact on their opinions concerning refugees and immigration. That leads to the problem of open borders. Public opinion has expressed a desire to strengthen border controls. Following a series of terrorist attacks that started in 2016 public opinions shifted, and begun to demand more restrictions at the borders. The growing threat of terrorism is a result of the growing number of immigrants and refugees.

¹⁶ Ibidem: 56.

¹⁷ Fourquet et al. (2017): 25.

Furthermore, the report showed that 53% of the French agree that the threat of terrorism is constantly present.¹⁸

In addition to the issue of terrorism, there is a threat of a foreign religion – Islam. Islam is a big part of the identity of many refugees and immigrants from the Middle East. As the report shows, French citizens see a clear connection between Islam, terrorism and the increasing number of refugees entering the country. In total, only 33% of the French believe that Islam is a peaceful religion.¹⁹ The rest of the interviewed group sees this religion as very problematic and incompatible with the belief system of France. Another paper on a similar issue was written in 2018 by Marie-Pier Joly and Jeffrey G. Reitz. In their research paper *Emotional Stress and the Integration of Muslim Minorities in France and Canada*²⁰ they explore the challenges that the Muslims face regarding mental health while trying to integrate in France and Canada. Those are only a few among the issues that can become a growing problem. Also a comparison of the position of the woman in the Muslim and French society is different, and therefore debatable. Danièle Joly from the University of Warwick did research concerning the place of women in the Muslim society in *Women from Muslim Communities: Autonomy and Capacity of Action*.²¹ Her research concerns Muslim communities and emancipation of women. As stated in the report *Attitudes Towards Refugees, Immigrants, and Identity in France*, the French society differs from that of the Muslims. According to the respondents, the place of women is not favorable in Muslim societies. For many

¹⁸ Ibidem: 16.

¹⁹ Ibidem: 62.

²⁰ Joly, Reitz (2018): 1111–1129.

²¹ Joly (2017): 816–832.

French citizens it is a negative characteristic associated with Islam.²² This opinion is significant as it shows that the French see Islam as having pejorative qualities and a negative impact on their country in general.

Conclusion

Public opinion concerning the treats linked to the influx of immigrants in France covers a wide spectrum of views. Oftentimes people who participated in the survey placed themselves in the middle of the spectrum avoiding its extremities. Those situated on the extremes were in the minority in this specific report, which is an interesting observation because often times the media represents the public as having strong opinions on immigration issue. It is not the case in this report; many people were not sure how to respond. Because many people placed themselves in the middle, it is highly possible that they will be open to changing their minds. It is possible that in the future, when presented with convincing arguments, public opinion will sway more one way or the other. Those are of course only possibilities, but as shown by results of the report, it can certainly be seen that the issue is complex.

To conclude, basing on the information provided by the report it is evident that French citizens have a feeling of general discomfort towards the unknown. Their views are largely due to the negative image of Islam and Muslim culture. There is an ambivalence between the questioned groups on the subject of foreigners. The threats that were identified as the most dangerous ones concern mostly the process of globalization. French citizens have a negative approach to this evolving

²² Fourquet et al. (2017): 63.

matter. Other worrisome dangers linked to the influx of immigrants and refugees were identified as economic threats. People who were interviewed expressed concerns about the country's security. Another threat that can lead to destabilization of the country is a cultural one. The report does question its participants about the future of France. The information that refugees will continue their lifestyle, traditions and religion once living in France the overall causes that feelings are quite pessimistic. The French are also aware of the threats of terrorist attacks, that can lead to chaos and the feeling of insecurity in their own country. Those dangers and concerns are addressed and included in the report. It also shows that French citizens do not have a positive view of the current situation of immigrants and refugees in their country. The defined threats are linked to the economy, society, culture, terrorism, and religion. Those are the main factors identified by the authors, but surely not the only ones. This report can also be a start to many other reports and debates on this issue. As this matter concerns also other European countries and the EU at large, it can be a reason to do more research and comparative analyses in the future. More studies are needed in order to better our knowledge and understanding on immigrants and refugees. It would be helpful to conduct similar surveys and draw reports on the subject of attitudes towards refugees, immigrants, and identity in other countries. It could give a global picture of different attitudes of various nations, and in that way more efficient security policies could be productively implemented in each of the EU Member States. That way the EU security policy could become increasingly effective and proficient.

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**A path to follow or a journey to the unknown?
Brexit in Polish opinion weeklies before
and after the referendum**

Abstract

As an unprecedented event in the European history Brexit was an important reference point in the Polish media. The paper analyses how the Polish opinion weeklies, as one of the topmost opinion-forming Polish media, reported on Brexit and assessed the phenomenon. Basing on the content analysis of the four most prominent Polish opinion weeklies it has been concluded that regardless of their editorial line in relating Brexit to the Polish reality and the political situation in Europe this phenomenon was negatively evaluated. All the titles pointed out that it was a crisis for the European Union and a success for Eurosceptics. National politics and national factors such as the problematic situation of the Polish community in the UK played an essential role in its assessment. The topic of Brexit was often referred to Poland's possible exit from the European structures or loss of an ally who tried to stop the European integration proposed by France and Germany.

Key words: Brexit, content analysis, Polish opinion weeklies, referendum, European Union, media discourse

Introduction

Brexit is an unprecedented phenomenon in the European political history. Never before has any country left the European structures – only Greenland in 1985 decided to resign from membership without being a fully independent member of the organisation. It is worth remembering that Brexit is a unique phenomenon not only politically but also in the media.

The literature covering the current relationship between the UK and the European Union is primarily concerned with political science aspects. This issue has received very detailed coverage in many publications.¹

The relationship between the referendum result and the media has also been of equal interest to researchers. Previous publications have often concluded that the British press had a relatively strong influence on the local population's political views and, thus, indirectly affected the referendum's outcome.² Other phenomena characterising the media discourse on Brexit have also been discussed in academic literature. Researchers have addressed, among other things, a critical discourse analysis of the nationalist narrative or the spread of fake news about the consequences of Britain's withdrawal from the European Union.³

Having analysed how did Brexit owe much of its success to the media, including print media, it seems worth analysing how did Brexit resonate in the media of other European countries. A cross-sectional qualitative study of the ongoing discourse on the coverage of Brexit confirmed that the event

¹ E.g. Jensen&Snaith (2016), Hobolt (2016), Gamble (2018).

² E.g. Levy (2016).

³ Gavin (2018).

was perceived in the media as a significant socio-political crisis compared to other problems known from Europe's post-war history.⁴

Brexit has occurred in the UK, but it affects other countries. It provides a reference point for the European policies of other Member States as evidenced by the emergence of Brexit-like acronyms for other countries. Brexit itself was a paraphrase of Grexit – Greece's withdrawal from the European Union due to the ongoing economic crisis.⁵ After the 2016 referendum, on the other hand, the media used similar acronyms to other Member States assessing their internal policies that might be heading towards withdrawal from the organisation.⁶ This situation shows that the subject of Brexit in the columns of the European media went beyond mere sections dealing with international politics. These discussions were at the same time the basis for debates about the future of a particular state in the European structures.

The research results so far seem to be worth deepening more in-depth analysis, with a distinction being made between individual countries, the political actors involved, the emotional nature of the statements or the subject matter which accompanied the description of the phenomenon. The Polish study may serve as a comparative material for the analyses mentioned above. It is no coincidence that the media referred to Brexit in the context of Central and Eastern European countries – Poland and Hungary. These are the countries that have often been regarded as Eurosceptic or even aiming to leave the European Union. The tensions between Warsaw or Budapest and Brussels were evidenced,

⁴ Krzyżanowski (2019).

⁵ Iordanoglou & Matsaganis (2017).

⁶ E.g. Ash (2020).

among others, by the European Commission's actions on the activation of the procedure under Article 7 of the Treaty on European Union against Poland as a country that violates the EU rule of law.⁷

That is why the analysis of the debate around Brexit in Poland seems to be particularly interesting. The debate focuses on the European Union as a whole, its pros and cons, and the most critical challenges it faces as a community. The detailed analysis of Polish opinion weeklies is, in turn, interesting because of the function they play in the media system – for this type of press in Poland is distinguished by greater emphasis on shaping the opinions of its audience and other media.⁸

Therefore, researching how this phenomenon has been presented in Poland becomes even more valuable – Polish weeklies can impact how Polish public opinion is shaped. Furthermore, the way they report on Brexit may also, to some extent, be indicative of how they would report on a similar event taking place in Poland.

International politics is an essential element of media coverage and often affects opinions on the domestic political scene. The research conducted in this paper aims to show what role Brexit played in describing the Polish political scene and Polish existence in the EU by weeklies. This topic is essential because the withdrawal of one of the largest European Union countries from its structures directly affects the organization's further operation and the political situation in other Member States, including Poland. Therefore, an essential element of the study is a) to determine how the weeklies related

⁷ Gabor (2018).

⁸ Bartoszewicz (2019).

to Brexit's consequences; b) how they interpreted this event in the context of domestic politics.

An essential aspect of the study is to determine what predictions concerning the situation of Great Britain and possible events were formulated by Polish authors, writing in the most significant Polish periodicals pages. With the passage of time and the end of negotiations, it can be reasonably ascertained to what extent the predictions turned out to be correct. The study also allows for partial verification of the extent to which sympathies and antipathies regarding Polish political events expressed in individual weeklies reflected the editors' attitudes towards Britain's withdrawal from the European Union. Nowadays, numerous political science publications raise the so-called 'personalisation of politics', i.e. describing political events from the viewpoint of the individual characters involved.⁹ By examining how the weeklies mentioned above portray particular figures, this paper aims to verify whether the materials analysed also fit into this trend.

Due to its topicality, Brexit analysed from a media studies perspective has not yet been comprehensively developed. Understandably, the literature covering the relationship between the United Kingdom and the Community and later the European Union is primarily focused on political aspects. This issue has received very detailed coverage in both Polish and foreign publications. However, Brexit is a new phenomenon and potentially volatile.

Considering that Brexit is an unfinished process, it must be acknowledged that the study carried out covers the most important, but only a particular stage relating directly to the voting and the referendum results. It is supposed to present

⁹ Karvonen (2007), Campus (2010).

a fragment of media reality concerning the described phenomenon, using literature typical for press studies.

This paper aims to show how Britain's exit from the European Union was perceived by the largest circulation, secular Polish socio-political weeklies – *Do Rzeczy*, *Newsweek*, *Polityka* and *W Sieci*. The post factum published content should be more comprehensive than potential forecasts before the actual voting, so this study examines the texts written one week before and two weeks after the referendum. The sample, therefore, included the texts published between 20 June and 6 July 2016. The materials in which the phrase 'Brexit' occurred and at least 1/4 of the entire text was devoted to it were analysed.

The study will use the methods and techniques known from media research. The leading role is played by a content analysis, on the basis of which a quantitative analysis will be carried out, taking into account the variables necessary for the study.¹⁰ According to the chosen method, the content analysis, an essential part of the work will be to explore the content and compare the messages in the different titles. The analysis of how much space did the titles mentioned earlier devote to Brexit on their pages; how often did particular figures mention the content included in the sample – their position on the balance of gains and losses after Brexit as well as any future predictions – was also examined.

Basing on the categorisation key, a digital database will be created with information on the components and specifics of the analysed messages. Another important aspect is the comparative analysis of the collected material – checking whether the theses or opinions contained in the texts

¹⁰ Kerlinger (1973).

differed from each other, and if so, according to which determinants – editorial, genre or thematic.

Basing on the above elements, the study identified the following research questions: Which axes of personal, international and social disputes in Brexit did the Polish weeklies outline?; How did the Polish weeklies evaluate the phenomenon of Brexit and how did they translate it into the state of the European Union?; What predictions were made about Brexit immediately after the referendum?

They will make it possible to assess how the articles in the weeklies adopted a national or international perspective in their information. Thanks to the passage of time, the author will also be able to answer the question as to how accurate the forecasts contained in the materials turned out to be.

The fact that this study is conducted several years after the referendum also allows testing the so-called CNN effect, known from the literature on the subject, i.e., the media's influence on the state's international policy.¹¹ On the other hand, the opposite phenomenon is possible – just as foreign policy is often used to benefit relations within the state,¹² so the media themselves may act – use events from external policy to argue their position on domestic policy.

Results

In analysing these publications, I adopted the assumptions already developed in research on the Polish media. As a result, I classified *Polityka* and *Newsweek* as liberal/left-wing magazines, while *Do Rzeczy* and *W Sieci* as conservative/

¹¹ Livingston (1997).

¹² Lumsdaine (1996).

right-wing ones.¹³ The sample included 63 texts – 12 from *Polityka*, 14 from *Newsweek*, 18 from *Do Rzeczy* and 19 from *W Sieci*. Already on this basis it can be concluded that it is the two titles considered to be right-wing that devoted most space on their pages to the topic of Brexit at the time of the referendum.

The index indicates the text area and whether the text was a featured topic on the cover. The following scoring was used to calculate the index: material on a maximum of $\frac{1}{4}$ page is 0.25 points; between $\frac{1}{4}$ and $\frac{1}{2}$ is 0.5, between 0.5 and 1 page is 1 point, and 2 points for an article exceeding this limit. Besides, 1 point was awarded for each photo, and a cover story on Brexit was awarded 3 points per issue. Thus, the exposure index for each of the weeklies is as follows:

Magazine	Score
<i>Do Rzeczy</i>	48.5
<i>Newsweek</i>	37.25
<i>W Sieci</i>	32.25
<i>Polityka</i>	29.25

The table shows that the political orientation did not determine whether a given medium devoted space on its pages to Brexit during the referendum, even despite the disproportion in the number of texts themselves. On the one hand, *Do Rzeczy* gave the greatest prominence to its material on the subject, but on the other, grouping the analysed titles according to the right-wing/left-wing axis, it was the left-wing option that altogether gave more prominence to the subject of Brexit.

¹³ Dobek-Ostrowska (2011), Kotras (2013), Kotras (2016), Mielczarek (2018).

Topics

The topics of the published texts were relatively homogeneous. The dominant theme of most texts was politics. It occupied the leading position in 45 articles. A much smaller number of articles focused on the economy (7 texts) and society (4 texts) understood as citizens' lives, movement of people, or social problems that resulted from the referendum and that may arise as a result of Brexit. Only two texts – one each from the weekly magazine *W Sieci* and *Do Rzeczy* – analysed Brexit primarily in terms of military consequences – further action by NATO. The list of side topics is slightly different. Social issues dominate – the situation of British society, immigrants' position, and the sizeable Polish minority living in Britain are often discussed. Politics as a dominant theme is also often complemented by economy, which was the second topic in 26 texts, and culture, appearing as a side topic in 10 texts. Again, as in the central theme, the whole is complemented by military issues (2 texts), again raised in two texts by the duplicate titles – one by *Do Rzeczy* and *W Sieci*.

Title of weekly magazine	Main subject	Number of texts on a given main theme / Number of all texts in the magazine	Secondary subjects (may be more than one)	Number of texts on a given issue / total number of texts in the magazine
<i>Polityka</i>	Politics	0.83	Culture	0.25
	Economics	0.083	Economics	0.5
	Society	0.083	Society	0.58

<i>Do Rzeczy</i>	Politics	0.72	Economics	0.27
	Economics	0.16	Society	0.83
	Society, Militarism	0.055	Culture	0.11
<i>Newsweek</i>	Politics	0.64	Economics	0.42
	Society	0.22	Society	0.64
	Economics	0.14	Politics	0.36
<i>W Sieci</i>	Politics	0.78	Society	0.63
	Society	0.1	Economics	0.53
	Militarism, Economics	0.05	Culture	0.26

All the analysed titles were dominated by political themes with a clear advantage over others. In each case, it noticeably outweighed the other side categories, indicating that it was the only topic covered in many materials. It means that even if the focus was on the possible consequences of Brexit, economic and social effects were often ignored. Among non-political issues, the most common focus was on social and economic themes, such as economic development, maintenance of the Eurozone and introduction of possible tariffs, how the UK's exit might affect migration and the lives of Poles who live there. Military texts dealt with the impact of Brexit on NATO, while with respect to culture, which is sometimes a side issue, it is mainly a discussion of the extent to which the British identify with continental Europe and how the referendum result relates to the perception of elites.

The fact that news coverage of Brexit focused on politics is a necessary (though not sufficient) condition for determining whether Brexit provided an opportunity for individual titles to: a) describe the events from the viewpoint of particular political actors; b) maintain or contest their political liberal or conservative editorial line.

Political actors

Brexit was considered in the Polish weeklies primarily from the political perspective, which is confirmed by the frequency with which specific names and figures from this sphere of public life appear in the texts. Politicians are figures in 51 texts, with 46 articles featuring more than one of them.

	Proportion of texts mentioning a given actor to the total number of texts from the magazine				
	<i>Do Rzeczy</i>	<i>Newsweek</i>	<i>Polityka</i>	<i>W Sieci</i>	Total average
David Cameron	0.50	0.71	0.58	0.53	0.57
Jarosław Kaczyński	0.22	0.36	0.50	0.16	0.29
Jean-Claude Juncker	0.39	0.14	0.00	0.37	0.25
Marine Le Pen	0.28	0.29	0.17	0.21	0.24
Angela Merkel	0.22	0.14	0.25	0.32	0.24
	<i>Do Rzeczy</i>	<i>Newsweek</i>	<i>Polityka</i>	<i>W Sieci</i>	Total average
Nigel Farage	0.28	0.14	0.33	0.11	0.21
Donald Tusk	0.17	0.14	0.25	0.26	0.21
Martin Schulz	0.22	0.07	0.00	0.37	0.19
Boris Johnson	0.11	0.21	0.33	0.11	0.17
Beata Szydło	0.22	0.00	0.17	0.05	0.11

	Proportion of texts mentioning a given actor to the total number of texts from the magazine				
Andrzej Duda	0.06	0.07	0.25	0.05	0.10
Vladimir Putin	0.00	0.29	0.00	0.00	0.06

The analysis of the frequency with which individual actors were pointed out proves that individual titles chose the main characters of Brexit as if creating a kind of a combination referring to V. Propp's morphology of fairy-tale.¹⁴ In the narrative of each magazine, the actors can be divided into Euro-enthusiasts and Euro-sceptics. The first group includes EU politicians and the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, who is critical of Brexit, which is perceived as an event they wanted to prevent (D. Tusk, J.C. Juncker, A. Merkel, M. Schulz). On the other hand, their opponents were British politicians supporting the leave option: Nigel Farage and Boris Johnson, as well as figures presented as enemies of European integration – Marine Le Pen and Vladimir Putin. On the other hand, it is difficult to unequivocally classify D. Cameron, who is often presented both as a person who, having Eurosceptic feelings, led to organization of the referendum and as a politician who opposed leaving the European Union.

It is worth noting the figures mentioned as escaping from the categories of British, Polish and EU politicians. They were identified as participating in the Brexit process from outside the centre of events and the national perspective. Angela Merkel was framed as a leading force in the EU, an embodiment of Germany's most determined EU player. On the other hand, Marine Le Pen was presented as the greatest internal

¹⁴ Propp (1964).

threat to the cohesion of the European Union – and it was pointed out that Brexit indicates that Eurosceptic sentiment in Europe is intensifying. This phenomenon will translate into the increasing popularity of the politician. Vladimir Putin, on the other hand, is an external enemy who was keenly interested in Brexit.

It should be noted that the Polish media, when pointing to domestic politicians, mainly focused on the ideologically opposite option – *Polityka* and *Newsweek* more often mentioned Jarosław Kaczyński, Andrzej Duda and Beata Szydło. At the same time, *Do Rzeczy* and *W Sieci* together in a higher percentage indicated Donald Tusk and described Brexit as his failure for which he bears responsibility.

There was also a high exposure of Jarosław Kaczyński, who did not hold any state function at that time but was the ruling party leader in Poland. He was most often framed as a leader in Polish politics, a kind of demiurge who, on the one hand, had lost an ally in the EU, while, on the other, should be happy that the EU would become weaker and negative attitudes towards it would grow.

Parties to the conflict

In presenting politics in the light of actions by individuals, it is equally important to outline the sides to the argument, i.e. characters acting in opposition to each other, presenting completely different views.¹⁵ It shows to what extent the media, in line with one of the classical approaches to politics and rhetoric, use the enemy-foe comparison to explain political

¹⁵ Kriesi et al. (2012).

processes to their readers.¹⁶ This narration mode was found in 17 of the 63 analysed texts, making it, although not dominant, significant and noticeable. Interestingly, right-wing weeklies – *Do Rzeczy* and *W Sieci* – presented such a vision much more often (11 times).

Conflicts can be divided into four main categories:

a) Intra-British conflict

The most frequently mentioned (6 times) by Polish weeklies when describing Brexit was the conflict between a Brexit supporter and the political face of withdrawal from the EU, Nigel Farage, the United Kingdom Independent Party leader and Prime Minister David Cameron, who is a supporter of the remain option. It was pointed out that Brexit was a success of Nigel Farage, who led it and started talking about it. Simultaneously, David Cameron was described as a symbol of failure, who failed to convince the British people of the contradiction he represented (on the one hand, he organised the referendum, and the other urged to stay in the EU). He also became a victim of Farage's policies, which forced him to resign.

b) The UK-Europe conflict

This dispute was presented very differently from the conflict in the UK, as evidenced by Prime Minister D. Cameron's different position. From being a supporter of the remain option, he became a factor that caused Brexit. Besides, he acted in opposition to EU politicians, bolstering the negotiating

¹⁶ Netelenbos (2016).

requirements based on which the UK would stay in the EU. His main rival was the head of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, who wanted to preserve the status quo and keep the UK in the EU structures. He failed, however, and the weeklies gave him dual coverage. The liberal/left-wing framed him as a politician who lost due to a rising tide of populism and the foul methods used. The right-wing conservatives framed him as an inept leader of the EU structures, whose behaviour contributed to the unfavourable referendum result. However, this conflict was sometimes presented in light of rivalry between other politicians. On the EU side, the President of the European Council Donald Tusk was identified, and on the side of the British Eurosceptics Nigel Farage and one of the prominent supporters of the leave option in the Conservative Party, Boris Johnson.

c) The conflict within Poland

In the materials on Brexit, the context of Polish domestic political rivalry also resounded clearly. This axis of the dispute was presented in *Polityka*, *Newsweek* and *Do Rzeczy*. Journalists resorted to transferring the significance of the UK referendum to the dispute in Poland. It was to be translated into politics in Poland and the conflict between the ruling Law and Justice (PiS) party and the most significant opposition Civic Platform (PO) party. While the Law and Justice party was identified by all the weeklies with the figure of the party leader Jarosław Kaczyński, in fact on the other side, as the leader of the opposition in Poland the media saw Donald Tusk, who was at that time serving as President of the European Council, and the leader of the opposition, Grzegorz Schetyna. On the one hand, the dispute was defined

in two ways; the liberal/left-wing media described Kaczyński as having lost an ally in the EU, and Donald Tusk as an influential European politician. In contrast, and on the other hand, the right-wing conservative media said that the vision of a Europe of the Homelands proclaimed by the Law and Justice leader would prove more effective than the Civic Platform policy represented by Grzegorz Schetyna.

d) The Polish-EU conflict

Equally crucial against the backdrop of Brexit was Poland's dispute with the European Commission over the rule of law and possible activation of Article 7 of the Treaty on European Union due to the Polish reforms of the judiciary. All analysed weeklies identified this dimension as a personal battle between the PiS leader, Jarosław Kaczyński, the European Commission chief, Jean-Claude Juncker, and the Belgian Liberal leader in the European Parliament, Guy Verhofstadt. In this view, the conservative/right-wing media pointed out that weakening the EU will make it less eager to pull Poland down on Article 7, and besides, Brexit proves that Kaczyński's vision is better than the plan of European politicians seeking further integration. On the other hand, the left-wing/liberal media warned that the head of the Law and Justice party could have a similar effect on Poland's potential departure from the European Union and a move towards authoritarianism. EU politicians can and should counteract this.

In this aspect of the analysis, it can be seen that domestic politics played a significant role in the articles on Brexit. Although the selection of political actors in the analysed texts does not suggest that the local dimension has replaced the international dimension of Brexit, it was indeed an essential part

of the disputes presented in the magazines. All the analysed magazines agreed that Brexit had an impact on the political situation in Poland – it strengthens or weakens the Polish government or opposition.

Exposure of states

It is necessary to check the frequency of individual countries' appearance to confirm that the international politics represented in the weekly opinion magazines was merely an extension of national politics.

	Proportion of articles mentioning an actor in relation to the total number of articles in the magazine				
	<i>Do Rzeczy</i>	<i>Newsweek</i>	<i>Polityka</i>	<i>W Sieci</i>	Total average
United Kingdom	16	14	12	16	0.92
Poland	15	12	10	11	0.76
Germany	10	7	7	13	0.59
France	9	6	5	10	0.48
	<i>Do Rzeczy</i>	<i>Newsweek</i>	<i>Polityka</i>	<i>W Sieci</i>	Total average
USA	4	6	5	5	0.32
Russia	3	1	1	5	0.16

There are no references to the UK in the five texts on Brexit – this indicates that the authors did not always treat the phenomenon as inseparably linked to the state itself. Together with the fact that they often pointed to other countries, this indicates that they gave Brexit a sometimes universal, supra-national character.

The analysis of the mentioned countries also allows us to conclude that Brexit has become an extension of the national political debates. This statement is confirmed by the fact that Poland was the second most frequently mentioned country. The reality of Polish politics was highlighted as concerns the balance of gains and losses and the impact of Brexit on the Polish diaspora. Germany was further portrayed as the most robust and most influential EU country, which at the same time would have a more significant influence on the further fate of the Community and bore shared responsibility for the UK's exit. On the other hand, France was mentioned as a country that may undergo (with the growing popularity of the National Front) a similar trend to that of the United Kingdom, as well as a country that may create EU policy together with Germany without British resistance. The United States was presented from the angle of the November 2016 presidential election, the future of the North Atlantic Alliance or the role the US may play militarily in Europe. Russia, in turn, was portrayed as an enemy of the international transatlantic order, which profits from – according to the left-wing/liberal media – Britain's withdrawal from the European Union, and according to the conservative/right-wing media – the European Commission's mistakes and lack of a harsh response to, for example, the conflict in Ukraine.

Exposure of international organisations

	Share of texts mentioning a given country in relation to the total number of texts from a particular magazine				
	<i>Do Rzeczy</i>	<i>Newsweek</i>	<i>Polityka</i>	<i>W Sieci</i>	Total average
European Union	17	14	11	19	0.97

	Share of texts mentioning a given country in relation to the total number of texts from a particular magazine				
	<i>Do Rzeczy</i>	<i>Newsweek</i>	<i>Polityka</i>	<i>W Sieci</i>	Total average
NATO	6	3	2	4	0.24
United Nations	1	0	0	2	0.05
Visegrad Group	2	0	0	1	0.05

Understandably, the European Union, which was affected, was mentioned most frequently among all international organisations. However, worth noting is also the frequent mention of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. The authors saw a legitimate connection between changes within the Union and the effectiveness of military cooperation. Occasionally, attention was also drawn to the United Nations and the Visegrád Group, which would balance Germany and France's Euro-integration intentions instead of the United Kingdom.

Exposure of social groups

	Share of texts mentioning a specific group in relation to the total number of texts from a particular magazine				
	<i>Do Rzeczy</i>	<i>Newsweek</i>	<i>Polityka</i>	<i>W Sieci</i>	Total average
Immigrants	6	4	5	10	0.40
Non-wealthy British	5	5	4	4	0.29
European officials	3	4	2	9	0.29
Wealthy British	2	3	3	0	0.13

Individual social groups were often referred to in the articles – all in all they appeared in 41 texts. The analysis of the social groups quoted in the texts tells us a lot about the background of Brexit. These groups illustrate the social conflict described in the Polish weeklies. The decision on Brexit was supposed to have been made primarily by the votes of poor British people, who on the one hand were fed up with European bureaucracy identified with Brussels bureaucrats, and on the other with the growing presence of migrants – first from Central and Eastern Europe and then from the Middle East. It should be remembered that the referendum was held in the shadow of the EU migration crisis. The situation of migrants was more often written about by the right-wing weeklies, which had previously been eager to describe the European Union's inefficiency and criticise the mechanism of automatic relocation of refugees. The articles dealt with the possible consequences for immigrants already living in Britain. There was speculation about their potential problems and the Polish community's anxiety as regards the return of some citizens to Poland. Moreover, it was pointed out that the referendum turned into a purely class dispute – the poor's decision to oppose the wealthy elite actively supporting the remain option.

The conservative/right-wing and liberal/left-wing media differed radically in their portrayal of particular groups. The right-wing emphasized that European officials had alienated the British public by their tardiness, trouble-making and compulsion to accept migrants. Left-wing liberals, by contrast, insisted that this manufactured impression was false and based on populism and a dirty election campaign by Eurosceptics who misled the public.

In conclusion, it should be noted that all weeklies 1) considered the lower social strata as the main force behind Brexit; 2) indicated that the issue of migration was an essential element that could influence the outcome; and 3) the dispute over Brexit has a class character.

Expert exposition

In this study, experts are figures who speak as specialists in a particular field, representing NGOs, research and think tanks or universities not directly affiliated to political parties.¹⁷

In order to obtain experts' exposure in the individual weeklies, an index was used which takes into account mentioning an expert (1 point), interviewing an expert (2 points) and publishing an expert's text on their pages (3 points). The analysis conducted in this way shows that experts' most significant exposure was in *Newsweek* (16 points) and *W Sieci* (14 points). The remaining two titles had noticeably less: *Do Rzeczy* – 8 points, *Polityka* – 5 points.

Thus, it turns out that it is not true that the right-wing conservative weeklies abstracted from expertise much more than the liberal left-wing ones did in the case of Poland. The right-wing weeklies twice invoked the figure of an expert to refer to it polemically. The weeklies *W Sieci* and *Do Rzeczy* did so to Aleksander Smolar, President of the Batory Foundation founded by George Soros.

There were noticeable differences in interviews with experts themselves – definitely more were conducted in the liberal/left-wing magazines. The interviewees were both foreign scholars (Norman Davies, Ivan Krastev, Antony Beevor, Jan

¹⁷ Albæk (2003).

Zielonka) and Polish philosophers or economists (Agata Bielelik-Robson or Jakub Borowski). Only once an expert (Robert Geyer) was interviewed by the weekly *W Sieci*. On the other hand, the right-wing magazines much more often (five times in total) gave their pages to experts (foreign affairs specialists and academics), while *Newsweek* did it only once. This makes the hypothesis that the analysed weeklies avoided expert opinions altogether during the period in question false. In no case did the selection of experts overlap. Therefore, this can be read as an attempt to create a counter-establishment with their own experts. Brexit was one of the pretexts for this.

Gaining and losing from Brexit

The Polish weeklies mostly looked at the Brexit phenomenon in the context of gains and losses, but the balance was not equally distributed. Most of the articles did not point out the entities for which Britain's exit from the European Union would be beneficial – the predominant statement was that there were many more losers than winners. Gainers were identified in only 26 out of 63 surveyed texts. Among the potential winners of this situation, the UK was most frequently highlighted, although, on the other hand, a more significant proportion of authors considered that leaving the EU would be disadvantageous for the UK. All editors were much more consistent when analysing the losers of Brexit – first and foremost, the European Union was the loser, indicated in 45 of the analysed texts. This was followed by the United Kingdom (in 29 texts), the British public, and the British Conservative Party (six texts).

As many as 16 texts pointing to Brexit's profits (9 in *W Sieci* and 7 in *Do Rzeczy*) were published in the conservative/

right-wing magazines. The authors of the weekly *Do Rzeczy* were unanimous in their opinion that the European Union would lose on Brexit. However, they are divided when it comes to diagnosing who benefits from it – the only entity mentioned seven times is the United Kingdom, which, although sometimes to the detriment of the EU or other countries, stood up for its sovereignty. This opinion was in stark contrast to the articles in *Newsweek* and *Polityka*, as these editorials did not see the reduction of sovereignty by the European Union as a real problem. Besides, the United Kingdom's potential gain from leaving the European Union was negated in five texts published in *Do Rzeczy*, which claimed that no one gains from Brexit and both the United Kingdom and the European Union lose. According to *W Sieci*, the most frequently mentioned entity benefiting from the referendum results was Russia – presented three times in this context. Nine, or nearly half, of the analysed articles in *W Sieci* argued that Brexit benefitted no one and that everyone faced a loss – first and foremost the European Union, and then the United Kingdom itself.

Polityka journalists believe that no one benefits from Brexit and that both the European Union and the United Kingdom lose. It threatens to destabilize the continent politically and economically, and, as a result of the referendum, European stability is exposed to the growing influence of populists. Contrary to the assessments of the authors of *Do Rzeczy*, the British public will lose out if their country leaves the EU. The editors of *Polityka* see no benefit in “regaining sovereignty”, an argument used in *Do Rzeczy*.

The majority of *Newsweek*'s texts pointed to entities that benefit from Britain's exit – an exception compared to other weeklies, which in most of their texts presented the position

that everyone loses on Brexit. According to *Newsweek*, the Russian Federation or the British Conservative Party may benefit from this event – these entities appeared three and two times in this context, respectively. Interestingly, the authors of *Newsweek* agree that both the United Kingdom and the European Union lose from the referendum results. This distinguishes the weekly from others, in which the proportions were not so evenly distributed, and the losses suffered by the EU were much more frequently discussed.

The Polish dimension of Brexit

A vital element of the study was to verify how often the Polish opinion weeklies analysed Brexit and its consequences for the situation in Poland. The British exit was most often – 26 times – presented as a weakening of Poland's position on the international arena. The second most frequently presented forecast was the possible return of Polish economic emigrants to the country. In 14 texts, the predictions were more far-reaching than the lowering of Poland's position globally and spoke of a threat to the country's security. There was also a frequent opinion that Brexit meant the loss of a potential ally within the European Union – this argument was mentioned 15 times. Other frequently mentioned consequences of Brexit for Poland was the possibility of Poland's leaving the European Union in the footsteps of the United Kingdom (mentioned ten times), advancement of Poland in the EU hierarchy (outlined in eight texts) or the consequences of losing the British contribution to the EU budget (six materials with such statement).

Only four texts of *Do Rzeczy* did not include the Polish perspective. This shows that journalists often looked at Brexit

in light of the situation in their homeland. Again, the weekly was a place where second opinions clashed – on the one hand, some journalists or their interlocutors believed that Britain's exit from the European Union would harm Poland. Five texts stated that Brexit would weaken Poland internationally, as many stated that Poland had lost an ally in the EU, and two that it was a threat to Poland's security. Interestingly, four texts raised the issue of Poland's advancement in the EU hierarchy after Britain's exit – much more often than in the other writings. In *Do Rzeczy* there was practically no theme of Poland's potential exit from the EU following the British example, which distinguishes the weekly from *Newsweek* and *Polityka* and makes it similar to *W Sieci*.

In *W Sieci*, Poland's position was analysed mainly in its social dimension – the issue of economic emigration to the United Kingdom. The issue was mentioned seven times. Six times it was claimed that it would weaken Poland in the international arena, but the statement about a threat to state security was avoided. Three times there was an opinion about a rise in the EU hierarchy after the British withdrawal. Similar to *Do Rzeczy*, the issue of Poland leaving the European Union was not mentioned at all.

Nine out of 13 full *Newsweek* texts analysed included the Polish perspective in the context of Brexit. The authors of *Newsweek* thought that Brexit meant, above all, the weakening of Poland in the international arena – this statement appeared in six texts. A similarly essential and possible issue was Poland's potential exit from the European Union. The loss of an ally in European structures was mentioned in five texts, while the threat to Poland's security and the problem of economic emigration returning to Poland were discussed in four texts.

Forecasts

A vital element in the weeklies' material was predictions about what would happen to the European Union and the UK after the referendum. For the analysed Polish weeklies, Brexit meant above all weakening of the European Union. This thesis appeared in 27 texts out of 47 that included possible forecasts about Brexit. According to this assessment, in the face of Britain's exit from the EU, the organization's potential disintegration was becoming more and more possible, although columnists did not explicitly state whether this would happen. The second critical view on the political reality after Brexit was that the effect of the UK's withdrawal would be quite the opposite – it would prove to be a stimulus for further integration, contribute to other federalist tendencies and strengthen cooperation between states remaining in the European structures. Such a thesis appeared in ten of the analysed press materials.

Most articles dealing with the speed of exit from the EU suggested that Brexit was a long process. Ten texts posited that the UK's withdrawal could exceed the expected period and that arduous negotiations would take years. None of the examined texts defended the opposite position that Brexit would take a short time. The only opinion that argues against a protracted process is that it will not happen at all. Such a suggestion appears twice in the weekly *W Sieci*. Twelve texts predicted the United Kingdom's break-up through Scotland's separation, which voted in a separate referendum for remaining in the European Union. Other predictions include claiming that Brexit would create a two-speed Europe or cause an escalation of violence against economic immigrants.

The standpoint of the weekly *Do Rzeczy* on Brexit forecasts was not uniform. Out of 15 texts predicting what could happen in the future, two prominent opinions prevailed – on the one hand, Brexit could contribute to the end of the European Union, and on the other, owing to the stubbornness of European officials Brexit could become a catalyst for further European integration, which was also presented in a negative light as an action wholly detached from reality. Individual predictions that were made include the possibility of Scotland's seceding from the United Kingdom or an increase in violence against economic migrants.

In *Polityka*'s forecasts on Brexit's a dominant opinion was that it could lead to the break-up of the European Union. Such a statement was made in 5 out of 12 analysed texts. Only interviewees from the Civic Platform party upheld the position that it would contribute to further integration. As in other weeklies, the possibility of Scotland's seceding from the United Kingdom was singularly considered. The authors of *Newsweek* stood by the position that Brexit could contribute to the European Union's end. Such an opinion appeared in five out of six texts in which forecasts of further developments appeared.

Eight articles published in *W Sieci* contain the thesis that Brexit will contribute to the European Union's disintegration. This stance has a clear advantage over the opinion that European integration will deepen – this is the forecast found in only two published materials. *W Sieci* most often among the analysed weeklies raised Scotland's separation from the United Kingdom – this possibility was mentioned in four publications. The weekly was also the only one to argue that the procedural issue of Brexit is not a foregone conclusion and it may yet turn out that the country in question will

remain in European structures – this opinion appeared in two texts.

Therefore, the predictions focused on the relationship between the European Union and the United Kingdom as well as the position of the EU itself. The predictions that it would be a long process involving arduous negotiations have indeed come true. However, the speculation about the break-up of the European Union, and also about the secession of Scotland, has not been confirmed.

Discussion & further research

The weeklies took positions in compliance with their editorial line. Like their British counterparts, the liberal/left-wing media criticised Brexit and pointed out that both the United Kingdom and the European Union were losing out on it. On the other hand, the conservative/right-wing media did not support Brexit outright and had doubts somewhat reminiscent of the division within the British Conservative Party itself.

The analysis also revealed features known from the research concerning Euroscepticism, i.e. criticism of the EU for bureaucracy or crises,¹⁸ although it seems that it takes on a specific character in Poland, different from that known from Western countries. It can be assumed that the relatively restrained opinion resulted from Polish society's pro-European attitude and the fact that the right-wing Law and Justice party did not question the sense of functioning within the EU despite the ongoing conflict over the rule of law. This attitude is confirmed by the research on the nature of Polish political

¹⁸ Usherwood&Startin (2013).

parties' Euroscepticism.¹⁹ This, in turn, would confirm the hypothesis indicated earlier that the media evaluate information on international politics by filtering it through the prism of the policies of those in power, but only when they are neutrally or favourably disposed towards them. When the media openly criticise the authorities (which was the case in the analysed texts), it seems that this effect may not work.

The class theme outlined by the weeklies and confirmed in later research on the specifics of Brexit²⁰ also seems to be an interesting thread. It indicates that it may have resulted from social inequalities and conflict between the elites vs. the indigent population. Therefore, Immanuel Wallerstein's theory of the centre-periphery conflict is also reflected in the media discourse, and this analysis confirms this phenomenon. This also alludes to the return of the concept of cleavages,²¹ according to which intra-state conflicts involve entire social groups and are related to wealth or cultural identity. It can be assumed that the Polish weeklies eagerly referred to this theme also because they found these regularities in the Polish realities. They have been proven in many studies.²²

A research deepening or extending this analysis could address several issues. Firstly, a comparative analysis between opinion magazines in other countries, especially in Central and Eastern Europe, could test whether the Polish observations are in line with perceptions of other media systems or whether they are fundamentally different from them. Secondly, to deepen the Polish analysis by introducing other media such as television, radio, and internet traffic, including social

¹⁹ Paczeński (2015).

²⁰ Evans&Tilley (2017).

²¹ Hooghe&Marks (2018).

²² E.g. Kuświk (2013).

media platforms. Thirdly, to broaden the time perspective of the study – by a diachronic analysis taking into account the Brexit negotiations and possible changes in the perceptions of the media themselves.

Conclusion

A research deepening or extending this analysis could address several issues. Firstly, a comparative analysis between opinion magazines in other countries, especially in Central and Eastern Europe, could test whether the Polish observations are in line with perceptions of other media systems or whether they are fundamentally different from them. Secondly, it would be valuable to deepen the Polish analysis by introducing other media such as television, radio, and internet traffic, including social media platforms. Thirdly, to broaden time perspective of the study – by a diachronic analysis taking into account the Brexit negotiations and possible changes in the perceptions of the media themselves.

Indeed, the opinion weeklies' editorial line determined their approach to Brexit, although the right-wing conservative ones were more reserved in their unequivocal assessment of the event. National politics and national factors, such as the Polish community's problematic situation in the UK, played an essential role in its assessment.

Despite the difference of opinion in their feelings about Brexit itself, the weeklies had many common elements in their coverage. All the titles pointed out that it was a crisis for the European Union and a success for the Eurosceptics.

The magazines on a similar level exposed figures recognised as experts, but each interviewed its own authorities. References to domestic politics and allusions to Polish problems

with the rule of law were also a standard. This was often referred to Poland's possible exit from the European structures or loss of an ally who tried to stop the European integration proposed by France and Germany. However, it cannot be said that local issues strictly displaced the subject of Brexit. Instead, they were complementary depending on the sympathies and antipathies of the authors.

Literature

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The contribution of the Roman Catholic Church in Poland to creating health security at the beginning of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic

Abstract

The article describes the activities of the Roman Catholic Church in Poland for creating health security at the beginning (March 2020) of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. Those activities illustrate the coordinated collaboration of state with church, which enjoys a significant public opinion-forming power and influences the behaviour of a major part of the society. The authors conclude that creating health security implies the need to refer to the benefits arising from the collaboration of state with church. The article provides conclusions which may prove useful in different political and religious contexts.

Keywords: health security, public health, church-based health promotion, SARS-CoV-2 virus, Poland, Roman Catholic Church

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Introduction

Apart from the medical aspect, the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic carries significant consequences for various walks of human life. Therefore, the fight against it requires not only strictly medical measures, although these are of foremost importance. Measures employed by the authorities of many countries are also aimed at limiting the harmful effects of the pandemic in the economic and social areas. On the one hand, the pandemic, considered to be the largest since the 1918–1920 Spanish flu pandemic, exposes the weakness of many social and economic structures which are unprepared for the need of a radical limitation or change of the forms of human active-ness. On the other, the new situation of the countries that fight against the pandemic discloses a large potential latent in many structures of social life. Worth noting among such structures are religious institutions and communities. They are – likewise all other elements of social life – affected by the restrictions as a result of the pandemic. At the same time, however, in those circumstances, they may turn out to be an important integrator of society in the face of the threat, supporting and supplementing health policy of state authorities.

In this article, the importance of religious institutions in supporting health security will be presented on the example of the activities of the Roman Catholic Church in Poland in the early period of the outbreak of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic in this country, namely in March 2020. The example of this concrete religious community is significant insofar as it refers to the church which – for historical, social, and cultural reasons – is significant for public life in Poland. Therefore, it is not only one of many structures of social life but – as the majority church that is strongly associated with

Polish national identity – also plays a crucial social role. This role is manifested both in the activities of developed ecclesial structures (educational, charity, and cultural institutions), as well as the strong ideological and political impact. In this context, the article presents how the church has seen its role in supporting the fight against the pandemic, including cooperation with state administration.

The article has been divided into six parts. The starting point is a review of positions encountered in contemporary literature concerning the importance of religious institutions in shaping health security. This review indicates the importance of religious institutions not only because of their potential of marshalling certain pro-health behaviours of the faithful, but also with a view to the promoted doctrinal contents, which in many cases may support pro-health efforts of the authorities and other social organisations. In the second part, the development of the SARS-CoV-2 epidemic in Poland will be outlined in its initial phase, in March 2020. The third part is aimed at introducing the possibilities of the social impact of the church. Therefore, it presents the legal situation of that church in Poland as well as the extent of its influence in public life arising from the available statistics. The fourth part discusses the stance of the Conference of the Polish Bishops concerning the pandemic, while the fifth – selected positions of Polish bishops. In this light, the sixth part sums up the conclusions concerning the legitimacy and effectiveness of religious institutions' contribution to creating health security.

The article analyses the activities of representatives of the Roman Catholic Church in Poland that contribute to the measures employed at the government level for creating health security in connection with the SARS-CoV-2 virus outbreak in March 2020. The background for a proper

presentation and contextualisation of those activities are the facts relating to both the course of the pandemic in Poland as well as the data illustrating the possibilities of the social impact of the church. The article is based on official source documents: statistics (published by Polish central and local government institutions), legal regulations relating to both the fight against the pandemic and public activities of religious organisations, as well as official statements of representatives of the church in Poland.

1. Religious institutions vis-à-vis health security: a review of positions

Mass meetings (pilgrimages) of the followers of a given religion are not immune to infectious diseases which, as is common now, are more easily communicated in large gatherings. Since this fact is observed, recommendations are worked out for organisers of such meetings, their participants, as well as medical service involved.¹ A change of health behaviours requires both input from individuals who possess knowledge and credibility and a receptive audience. Mark H. Anshel and Mitchell Smith rightly noted that one group of individuals who may be uniquely positioned to promote a community change but have been virtually ignored in the applied health and consulting psychology literature is religious leaders. The researchers postulate the effectiveness of invoking the potential of this group.

¹ Haworth, Barasheed, Memish, Rashid, Booy (2013): 215–223; Ebrahim, Memish, Uyeki, Khoja, Marano, McNabb (2009): 938–940; Memish, McNabb, Mahoney, Alrabiah, Marano, Ahmed, Mahjour, Hajjeh, Formenty, Harmaneci, El Bushra, Uyeki, Nunn, Isla, Barbeschi, Jeddah Hajj Consultancy Group (2009): 1786–1791.

These individuals possess extraordinary credibility and influence in promoting healthy behaviors by virtue of their association with time-honored religious traditions and the status which this affords them – as well as their communication skills, powers of persuasion, a weekly (captive) audience, mastery over religious texts that espouse the virtues of healthy living, and the ability to anchor health-related actions and rituals in a person's values and spirituality.²

From the research carried out by Nii Lante Heward-Mills and his associates, it follows that

faith leaders are able to influence health behaviour not only on the individual level but also on a socio-cultural and environmental level. They exert such influence through several mediators, including through scriptural influence, social influence and by serving as role models.³

Their intervention does not require extensive training or licensure in counselling psychology.⁴ Nancy E. Schoenberg and Mark Swanson have concluded that

practitioners and researchers may find religious leaders to be natural allies in health-promotion and disease-prevention activities.⁵

² Anshel, Smith (2014): 1046–1059.

³ Heward-Mills, Atuhaire, Spoors, Pemunta, Priebe, Cumber (2018).

⁴ Anshel (2010): 32–49.

⁵ Schoenberg, Swanson (2017): 447–451.

An important method of influence is open communication between church leaders and their parishioners, as it follows from research conducted by Maricruz Rivera-Hernandez in Mexico, mostly within the Catholic community.⁶

Observations and studies of common space formed by the institutions associated with religion and health service in a given state (and in transnational entities such as the European Union) constitute the elaboration of analyses concerning the effect of both various religions on political space and politics on religions, as well as the relations between religions and health of individuals and societies. A challenge for health policy is to balance fundamental human rights, such as the right to equality, the right to health and the right to freedom of religion, with the simultaneous observance of secular laws established in states or the international space.⁷

Both scientific and popular analyses concerning the relations between religion and health offer very diverse descriptions of this thematic area, postulating, however, further observations and research.⁸ A vital element of this research is frequently consideration of social capital.⁹ This fact unequivocally indicates the complexity and prominence of the phenomenon. John Blevins provides a social history of the relationship between religion and America's health policy from the latter 19th century to the present. The study shows the impact – from the viewpoint of the United States – of religious thinking on health practice and health policy.¹⁰ Some studies bring up the relation between religion and one type of health;

⁶ Rivera-Hernandez (2015): 303 – 315.

⁷ Petrova, Clifford (2009).

⁸ Blasi (2011); Aten, Schenck (2007): 183–190.

⁹ Hye-cheon, Ounpraseuth, Moore, Bursac, Greene (2012): 331–347.

¹⁰ Blevins (2019).

this concerns mainly mental health,¹¹ also in the historical perspective.¹²

Some of the studies raise philosophical, theological, and ethical aspects.¹³ Some works present a viewpoint strictly associated with a specific religion, such as Islam¹⁴ or Judaism.¹⁵ An example of the effects of insightful observation of the relation between religion and health care is the study entitled “Religion and Health Care in East Africa: Lessons from Uganda, Mozambique and Ethiopia.” The research on which the book has been based included not only geopolitical and economic conditions of the region but also the policies of state authorities.¹⁶ This is the first study of this type which presents the role of religion in health care in African cultures. The effects of research conducted in Australia indicate that churches have a higher potential as regards health promotion than has been so far revealed.¹⁷

Designing the most effective actions for health in society should consider the spiritual and cultural aspects that are important in a given community. Evidence indicates that church-based health promotion programmes have produced significant impacts on a variety of health behaviours.¹⁸ In local communities, churches – with their human and material resources – may become important centres of health

¹¹ Flannelly (2017); Loewenthal (2006); Koenig (1998).

¹² Classen (2014).

¹³ Dell'Oro (2006): 13–32; Taylor (2006): 225–230; Hamel (2006): 231–240; Fitzgerald (2006): 241–246.

¹⁴ Koenig, Shohaib (2014).

¹⁵ Moskalewicz, Caumanns, Dross (2019).

¹⁶ Lloyd, Haussman, James (2020).

¹⁷ Ayton, Manderson, Smith (2017): 52–58.

¹⁸ Campbell, Allicock Hudson, Resnicow, Blakeney, Paxton, Baskin (2007): 213–234.

promotion and pro-health behaviours. Religious communities are frequently interested in things beyond spiritual matters, and that is why they present the reality of the entire human life, something utterly practical. Thomas Aechtner describes the church's concern with the utility of the Prosperity Gospel and Holy Spirit Power.¹⁹

The impact of religion and spirituality on physical and mental health turns out to be a valuable space for research. Its results are a vital source of information for scientists both from the area of medical science as well as specialists in religious studies and theologians, though also for practitioners – health care staff, public decision-makers, and all those interested in the relations between religion and health.²⁰ Observations of common space delimited by three topics – health, religion, politics (state) – provide a lot of information which allows for seeking new legal, administrative, and educational solutions. When designing social programmes concerning health issues, it is worth considering whether it would not be appropriate to utilise the potential of the axiology of the religion which is trusted by the community in a given area, the influence of religious leaders, and lastly the structures and administration of such religious community. Detailed solutions introduced in a specific place and time provide information and inspirations for improvement of future health-promoting systems. Such an example is the contribution of the Roman Catholic Church in Poland to creating health security at the beginning of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, which is of interest to us in this article.

¹⁹ Aechtner (2015).

²⁰ Oman (2018); Koenig, McCullough, Larson (2001).

2. The outbreak of the disease and the response of state authorities in Poland

On 11 March 2020, the World Health Organisation officially pronounced the outbreak of the infectious COVID-19 disease caused by SARS-CoV-2 virus, which had been spreading from mid-December 2019, as a pandemic.²¹ At the end of 2019, cases of the disease occurred initially in central China, in Wuhan, the capital of the Hubei Province. However, already in January, a first case was diagnosed in Europe. In Poland, the first case of infection with this virus was confirmed on 4 March 2020.²² The Frederick Chopin Airport in Warsaw was the first institution in Poland to introduce on 25 January 2020 special procedures for passengers arriving from the People's Republic of China.²³

Alongside the reports of new cases throughout Poland and the deteriorating situation in other European countries, various institutions in the country started to introduce appropriate safeguards. On 8 March, the Chief Sanitary Inspector recommended cancellation of all mass events over 1000 people organised in enclosed premises.²⁴ Two days later, Rector of Warsaw University suspended all lectures and classes for over a month, except for those held online.²⁵ Other academic

²¹ Adhanom Ghebreyesus (2020). ,

²² *Pierwszy przypadek koronawirusa w Polsce (First coronavirus case in Poland).*

²³ *Komunikat Lotniska Chopina (Communique of the Chopin Airport), 25 January 2020.*

²⁴ *Informacja Głównego Inspektora Sanitarnego w sprawie imprez masowych (Information of the Chief Sanitary Inspector concerning mass events).*

²⁵ *Zarządzenie nr 50 Rektora Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego z dnia 10 marca 2020 r. w sprawie zapobiegania rozprzestrzenianiu się wirusa COVID-19 wśród społeczności Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego*

institutions followed the example of the largest Polish university.²⁶ The National Security Board — a constitutional advisory body to the President of the Republic of Poland in matters of internal and external security of the state — met on 10 March. Beside President Andrzej Duda, it was attended by Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki, Speakers of the Sejm and the Senate, Ministers of the Interior and Administration, Health, Education, Foreign Affairs, and National Defence. Also present were representatives of parliamentary factions of both the ruling party (Law and Justice) as well as the opposition.²⁷ On 11 March, Prime Minister and Ministers of: Health, National Education, and Higher Education informed about the preventive closing of all kindergartens, crèches, schools (public and non-public), as well as academic institutions, with the exception of special schools, care or socio-therapy centres, psychological-educational counselling centres as well as schools at corrective and penitentiary facilities for a period of two weeks.²⁸

(Instruction no. 50 of the Rector of Warsaw University dated 10 March 2020 concerning prevention of the spread of COVID-19 virus among Warsaw University community).

²⁶ *Pismo okólne nr 1/2020 Rektora Warszawskiego Uniwersytetu Medycznego z dnia 10 marca 2020 r. w sprawie: odwołania zajęć dydaktycznych na Warszawskim Uniwersytecie Medycznym (Circular no. 1/2020 of the Rector of Warsaw Medical University dated 10 March 2020 concerning cancellation of classes at Warsaw Medical University).*

²⁷ *Posiedzenie Rady Bezpieczeństwa Narodowego z udziałem Marszałek Sejmu (Meeting of the National Security Bureau with the participation of the Speaker of the Sejm),*

²⁸ *Zawieszenie zajęć w żłobkach, przedszkolach i szkołach (Coronavirus: Suspension of classes in nurseries, kindergartens and schools).*

Two days after the World Health Organisation had announced the pandemic, Prime Minister informed about the proclamation of the state of epidemic emergency in the country (from March 14) and appropriate restriction in order to contain the dissemination of the virus. They included, among others: a ban on public meetings gathering more than 50 people, including state and religious ones.²⁹ Then restrictions concerning forms of community life were introduced from 20 March alongside the proclamation of the state of epidemic on the territory of the Republic of Poland.³⁰ As a consequence, public gatherings were limited to the absolute minimum. The ordinance of the Minister of Health specified that from 25 March religious ceremonies could be attended by no more than five people, not counting the ministers of religious services or people employed by a funeral home in case of a funeral (Ministry of Health of the Republic of Poland).³¹ Such a situation prevailed until the end of April.

²⁹ *Rozporządzenie Ministra Zdrowia z dnia 13 marca 2020 r. w sprawie ogłoszenia na obszarze Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej stanu zagrożenia epidemicznego (Ordinance of the Minister of Health dated 13 March 2020 concerning proclamation of the state of epidemic emergency on the territory of the Republic of Poland).*

³⁰ *Rozporządzenie Ministra Zdrowia z dnia 20 marca 2020 r. w sprawie ogłoszenia na obszarze Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej stanu epidemii (Ordinance of the Minister of Health dated 20 March 2020 concerning proclamation of the state of epidemic on the territory of the Republic of Poland).*

³¹ *Rozporządzenie Ministra Zdrowia z dnia 24 marca 2020 r. zmieniające rozporządzenie w sprawie ogłoszenia na obszarze Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej stanu epidemii (Ordinance of the Minister of Health dated 24 March 2020 amending the Ordinance concerning proclamation of the state of epidemic on the territory of the Republic of Poland).*

3. The Roman Catholic Church in Poland in light of applicable laws, statistics, and sociological research

A reflection on the contribution of the Church as a non-governmental entity to creating health security in the context of infections caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus undoubtedly requires taking into account its position in the state. The legal position of the Church in the state, its social reception and its activities form a background against which the phenomenon that is of interest to us in this article can be seen.

The situation of the Roman Catholic Church in Poland is regulated by the Concordat signed between the Holy See and the Republic of Poland. That international agreement was signed on 28 July 1993 and ratified on 23 February 1998. The Concordat came into force as of 25 April 1998.³² The first article of that document reads as follows:

The Republic of Poland and the Holy See reaffirm that the State and the Catholic Church are, each in its own domain, independent and autonomous, and that they are fully committed to respecting this principle in all their mutual relations and in co-operating for the promotion of the benefit of humanity and the good of the community.³³

³² *Konkordat między Stolicą Apostolską i Rzeczpospolitą Polską, podpisany w Warszawie dnia 28 lipca 1993 r. (Concordat between the Holy See and the Republic of Poland signed in Warsaw on 28 July 1993).*

³³ *Ibidem*: Art. 1.

The 1997 Constitution of the Republic of Poland³⁴ provides for the separation of both communities (religious and political). Art. 25(3) reads that

The relations between the State and churches and other religious organizations shall be based on the principle of respect for their autonomy and the mutual independence of each in its own sphere, as well as on the principle of cooperation for the individual and the common good.³⁵

The statistics published by the Main Statistical Office (GUS)³⁶ indicate that in 2018 as many as 91.9% of people at the age of 16 and older declared affiliation with the Roman Catholic Church.³⁷ The 2020 report of the Institute for Catholic Church Statistics³⁸ states that in Poland about 38% of all those who are obligated do attend Holy Mass on Sunday³⁹ (year: 2018 – 38.2%; 2017 – 38.3%; 2016 – 36.7; 2015 – 39.8%).⁴⁰

³⁴ *Constitution of the Republic of Poland.*

³⁵ *Ibidem*: Art. 25 (3).

³⁶ Main Statistical Office – central body of government administration, subordinated to Prime Minister, whose task is to collect and publish statistical information on the majority of areas of public life and certain elements of personal life in Poland. GUS does not carry out public opinion surveys.

³⁷ Bieńkuńska et al. (2019): 34..

³⁸ Institute for Catholic Church Statistics SAC – Poland's largest and chief centre of statistical and sociological research on religiousness and Catholic Church in Poland.

³⁹ This concerns the ratio of dominicantes, which is calculated as the percentage of Catholics attending Holy Mass on Sundays in relation to the total number of obligants, i.e. people over seven years of age excluding the bedridden and the elderly with reduced mobility. The number of obligants has been determined as 82% of all Catholics.

⁴⁰ Sadłoń, Organek (2020): 28–29.

Table 1. Assessment of activity of Roman Catholic Church in the years 2013–2020

Assessment of activity of Roman Catholic Church	Indications of respondents by dates of survey															Changes Sept 2019-Mar 2020
	2013		2014		2015		2016		2017		2018		2019		2020	
	Jun	Sept	Mar	Oct	Feb	Sept	Mar	Sept	Mar	Sept	Mar	Sept	Mar	Sept	Mar	
	percent															
Positive	59	56	62	58	62	53	55	55	52	61	54	55	57	52	57	+5
Negative	28	32	29	27	28	33	32	31	35	29	32	33	32	38	32	-6

“Hard to say” responses have been left out from the Table.

The immediate background of the contribution of the Church in creating health security in Poland at the beginning of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic is shown by the results of a sociological survey carried out on 5–15 March 2020 by the Public Opinion Research Centre (CBOS).⁴¹ Almost three fifths of the respondents had a positive opinion about the Church (57%, up by 5 percentage points), and a negative one – one third (32%, down by 6 points).

⁴¹ Public Opinion Research Centre (CBOS) – its task is to carry out public opinion research and disseminate knowledge on the state of public opinion and its change tendencies, providing research results to state authorities and public institutions.

Most of the positive answers about the activity of the Church were given by respondents attending religious practices at least once a week, people with right-wing views, having primary school or vocational education, at the age of 55+.⁴²

In the Polish social and political reality, the voice of the Church hierarchy and the lay who invoke Christian axiology and the faith they profess is an almost everyday phenomenon. Therefore, it is by no means unexpected that to the question asked by a journalist:

Mr. President, do you think that the restrictions successively introduced in Poland will be sufficient to overcome the coronavirus epidemic?

President Andrzej Duda answered:

I have no doubts that for people the restrictions that have been introduced are very painful

and then added:

I admit that together with my wife I took part in a Holy Mass broadcast on the Internet. We did so as millions of Poles did, following the recommendation of the Conference of the Polish Episcopate.⁴³

⁴² CBOS, No. 38/2020.

⁴³ *Wspólnie przetrwamy ten trudny czas. Z prezydentem RP Andrzejem Dudą rozmawia Jarosław Grabowski (We shall survive this difficult time together. Jarosław Grabowski talks with the President of the Republic of Poland Andrzej Duda).*

The Roman Catholic Church has been present in the public space since the beginning of Poland, i.e. the year 966. The identity of Poles has been in a large measure shaped by Western Christianity and relations with Rome. The political and social transformations of 1989 associated with the Solidarity movement and the fall of communism were unequivocally linked with the activity of the Church. The views of the Church hierarchy, in particular the position of the Conference of the Polish Episcopate solemnly expressed at the moments that were difficult for the life of the community, are absolutely desirable. They have an inherent potential of directly influencing everyday decisions of individual citizens, not only the believers.

4. Conference of the Polish Episcopate vis-à-vis the pandemic

The first reaction of the Conference of the Polish Episcopate (KEP) to the worldwide outbreak of the coronavirus infections was the communique of its President Abp. Stanisław Gądecki.⁴⁴ The document, dated 28 February 2020, directly referred to the issue of health security:

In connection with the possibility of the coronavirus appearing in Poland I encourage the clergy and the faithful to exercise increased care. In potential centres of this phenomenon efforts should be made – in churches and parish facilities – for its duration to alleviate the risk of infection by turning special attention to observance of basic rules of hygiene. Since

⁴⁴ Stanisław Gądecki – b. 1949, since 2002 Metropolitan Archbishop of Poznań, since 2014 President of the Conference of the Polish Episcopate, since 2016 Vice-President of the Council of the Conference of European Bishops (CCEE).

there are many ways of transmitting the virus – and communication between people is today very intensive – the bishops in their dioceses, in the localities where such a threat would appear, should inform the faithful of the possibility of taking Communion by the hand.⁴⁵ (...) Whoever is afraid of infection should not at this time use holy water contained in stoups.⁴⁶

In the context of the contents of this document worth noting is the fact that the President of the Conference had made this statement before the first case of the coronavirus infection was diagnosed in Poland. The precautions were employed as a result of the knowledge about the increasing scale of infections and deaths in Italy, when at that time in some dioceses churches were closed, particularly because of a large tourist traffic.

The problem of health security was also raised by the Conference in its subsequent communique, published on 10 March 2020. In that document it was indicated that the Church undertook concrete actions following the recommendations of the Chief Sanitary Inspector.⁴⁷ It was the Chief Sanitary

⁴⁵ In Poland, a common practice is to take Communion by mouth (not by hand) from the hand of the dispenser, usually a clergyman.

⁴⁶ Gądecki (2020b).

⁴⁷ Chief Sanitary Inspector – heads the Chief Sanitary Inspectorate (GIS), which is one of the central bodies of government administration. GIS is responsible for initiating and supervising the actions of government administration aimed at preventing and minimizing negative effects of events relating to public health. In particular, Chief Sanitary Inspector supervises, coordinates and sets direction of activity of the bodies of State Sanitary Inspection, and moreover manages the process of the exchange of information with other bodies of state administration. Chief Sanitary Inspector is appointed by Prime Minister upon a motion of the Minister of Health.

Inspector that on 8 March recommended cancellation of all mass events over 1000 people organized in enclosed premises. The recommendation was issued as a result of decision adopted at the meeting of the Government Crisis Management Team headed by the Prime Minister. On 9 March, the Chief Sanitary Inspector issued a communication addressed in particular to elderly people. The text published on the official website of the office reads as follows:

Large gatherings of people form an environment favouring the dissemination of coronavirus and other viruses transmitted by inhaling infectious droplets. If possible, it is necessary to limit staying in public places.⁴⁸

In connection with the above, the communique of the Conference's President contained the following recommendations:

1. In connection with the recommendations of the Chief Sanitary Inspector not to have large gatherings of people I would like to ask to increase – as far as possible – the number of Sunday Masses in churches so that the liturgy could be at any given time be attended by the number of people indicated by sanitary services.
2. I would like to remind that – in the present situation – the elderly and the sick may remain home and from there watch Holy Masses broadcast on Sundays by the mass media (...).
3. I would like to remind that

⁴⁸ *Informacja Głównego Inspektora Sanitarnego dla seniorów (Information of Chief Sanitary Inspector for senior citizens), 9 March 2020.*

it is not required during a Holy Mass to offer a sign of peace by handshake.⁴⁹

The recommendations listed in the communique are preceded by a specific preamble, which reads as follows:

In the current situation, I would like to remind that as hospitals treat the diseases of the flesh, churches are, among other things, for curing the ailments of the soul, and that is why it is unimaginable for us not to pray in our churches.⁵⁰

In this statement, one should recognize not only the theological contents, but also perceive a manifestation of integral thinking about man as a unity of body and soul. Just like chapels and chaplains in hospitals are an important element of care about the health of patients and condition of their relatives, the same goes for churches and clerical service in the space of life of the entire Polish society. Similar contents may be found in the message of the President of the Conference of the Polish Episcopate broadcast by various TV stations and available on YouTube. In that message Abp Stanisław Gądecki compared the Church, understood as the spiritual reality, with a field hospital. However, from this comparison he immediately moved in his narration to indicating the role of the Church as the spiritual reality and the role of church buildings as places of prayer:

⁴⁹ Gądecki (2020a).

⁵⁰ Ibidem.

The Church is the sacrament of salvation. The Church is wherever Our Lord is loved and wherever man «in a world which is imperfect by its nature» is loved. That is why – though respecting the recommendations of the sanitary authorities – we do not close our churches.⁵¹

Those contents could also be found in the instruction of the Standing Council of the Conference of the Polish Episcopate dated 12 March 2020, which contained a set of detailed preventive precautions which should be respected by the clergy and the faithful with a view to the life and health of the society.⁵²

In the process of creating health security and for the entirety of social life, it was undoubtedly very important for the citizens to submit themselves to successive restrictions introduced by state authorities. The voice of the Church was especially significant here; it comforted and encouraged people to persevere. The President of the Conference of the Polish Episcopate addressed the society with a message, which was broadcast by many TV stations. Here is one of the fragments of this address:

I am spiritually close to all those who stay on quarantine, who are sick, who are afraid of their future and the future of their nearest, who offer help. I thank all those who – in various walks of public life – devotedly

⁵¹ Gądecki (2020c).

⁵² *Zarządzenie nr 1/2020 Rady Stałej Konferencji Episkopatu Polski z dnia 12 marca 2020 r. (Instruction no. 1/2020 of the Standing Council of the Conference of the Polish Episcopate).*

wage a struggle for our health and safety, many a time risking their own health and life.⁵³

Since posts criticising bishops started to be placed on the Internet (also Italian and Spanish ones), who allegedly succumbed to the dictate of state authorities and “forbade” the faithful to participate in liturgy, it was necessary to confront such contents. This is the way in which one should interpret the TV address of Abp. Stanisław Gądecki, who said:

At the same time I would like to ask you to accept with understanding the limitation of the number of participants in the liturgy (...), which follows from concern about the health of all. (...) I am aware that such instructions may be hard to accept for some people. Notwithstanding – with a view to one’s own and your neighbours’ health – I beseech you to accept them in the spirit of love for your neighbour.⁵⁴

This and similar statements made by the hierarchs of the Church became particularly important when subsequent restrictions on the number of people who could take part in liturgy were introduced.⁵⁵

5. Diocesan bishops vis-à-vis the pandemic

The recommendations of the Polish government connected with the proclamation of the state of epidemic emergency

⁵³ Gądecki (2020c).

⁵⁴ Ibidem.

⁵⁵ Gądecki (2020).

and then the state of epidemic throughout the country⁵⁶ have become a basis for the diocesan bishops to pronounce their position on what concerns collective religious practices in the dioceses under their administration. Presented below will be representative positions of selected hierarchs, which illustrate the activities of the Roman Catholic Church in Poland in individual dioceses for health security at the beginning of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic.

Cardinal Kazimierz Nycz,⁵⁷ Archbishop of Warsaw, whose position on many social issues is an important point of reference and even a specific model for other diocesan bishops in Poland, in a special communique contained instructions concerning communal forms of religious life:

1) I beseech all parish priests and rectors of chapels to observe the adopted rule of attendance at Holy Mass of no more than 50 people provided for in the regulation issued by state authorities. 2) I would like to ask the faithful to make use of the dispensation as regards participation in Holy Mass announced in the communique of the Standing Council of the Conference of Polish Episcopate and granted by myself on 13 March 2020. At the same time, I encourage participation in Holy Mass via television, radio and Internet. Those media have worked out many proposals for broadcasting Holy Masses on Sundays.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ *Rozporządzenie Ministra Zdrowia z dnia 20 marca 2020 r. w sprawie ogłoszenia na obszarze Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej stanu epidemii (Ordinance of the Minister of Health dated 20 March 2020 concerning the proclamation of the state of epidemic in the territory of the Republic of Poland).*

⁵⁷ Kazimierz Nycz – b. 1950, since 2007 Metropolitan Archbishop of Warsaw, since 2010 cardinal.

⁵⁸ Nycz (2020).

Not without weight is the fact that the decision of state authorities was invoked in that document as an argument in favour of introducing the above instructions:

Abiding by the guidelines of state authorities of 13 March, after the proclamation of the state of epidemic emergency, I order in Warsaw Archdiocese the following supplements to the communique of the Standing Council of the Conference of Polish Episcopate of 12 March 2010.⁵⁹

An example of following the guidelines of state authorities by Church hierarchs are the contents of the document published for Cracow Archdiocese. In a decree of 14 March 2020, Archbishop Marek Jędraszewski⁶⁰ addressed the faithful of his archdiocese with the following instruction:

I entreat the faithful to abide by all decisions and recommendations of state authorities which are aimed at containing the dissemination of the coronavirus and the COVID-19 disease it causes.⁶¹

With a view to the issues of health security that are of interest to us in this article, which are contained within a more extensive area of national security, it is important to consider the position of the Field Bishop of the Polish Army, Józef Guzdek.⁶² Owing to the fact that his function is placed within

⁵⁹ Ibidem.

⁶⁰ Marek Jędraszewski – b. 1949, since 2017 Metropolitan Archbishop of Cracow, professor.

⁶¹ Jędraszewski (2020).

⁶² Józef Guzdek – b. 1956, since 2010 Field Bishop of the Polish Army, general.

the area concentrating directly on the subject of security and at the meeting line between the state and the Church, the decisions of that hierarchy are of special significance. Invoking the relevant provisions of the Code of Canon Law (can. 87 § 1, can. 1245 and can. 1248 § 2), he granted the faithful dispensation from the duty to attend Holy Mass on Sunday. He substantiated his decision, as he mentions in the first sentence of the document, by the threat to the health and life.⁶³ A day after the publication of that document the Bishop addressed an appeal to the faithful of the Military Ordinariate. In that text, he referred to health security and responsibility for it in the following manner:

I would like for us all to abide by the recommendations of sanitary and law enforcement services since this is a necessary condition for putting a stop to new infections. We should not succumb to panic, but neither should we expose ourselves to the threat of infection by irresponsible behaviour and actions. Let us have in mind not only our own health, but also the health of our neighbours. We are responsible for each other.⁶⁴

Shortly afterwards, after the state authorities proclaimed the state of epidemic throughout the country,⁶⁵ the Field Bishop published a decree in which he instructed chaplains

⁶³ Guzdek (2020b).

⁶⁴ Guzdek (2020).

⁶⁵ *Rozporządzenie Ministra Zdrowia z dnia 20 marca 2020 r. w sprawie ogłoszenia na obszarze Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej stanu epidemii (Ordinance of the Minister of Health dated 20 March 2020 concerning the proclamation of the state of epidemic on the territory of the Republic of Poland).*

to abide absolutely by all roles concerning hygiene and safety issued by competent military and civilian institutions.⁶⁶

In a special way the hierarch treated the issue of confession, which under normal conditions and circumstances requires direct contact between confessor and penitent. The decree reads as follows:

At the time of the epidemic, confession should be held with all the applicable safety and hygiene measures being observed. At this special time, a distance of at least two metres between confessor and penitent, as well as between those waiting for confession, should be maintained. At this time, classical confessionals should be replaced with spacious places which guarantee discretion (...). Confessions could be also heard in an open space, at a distance from other people. Penitents should be instructed at this time not to combine confession with spiritual guidance, but limit themselves to a brief admission of sins. Confessors, on the other hand, should offer a brief instruction and give appropriate penance in consideration of extraordinary circumstances.⁶⁷

In the last days of March 2020, bishops of individual dioceses in Poland issued appropriate instructions with respect to celebrating Easter. They explicitly recommended that all liturgies of the Holy Week, beginning with the celebration of the Palm Sunday to the Sunday of the Resurrection, were

⁶⁶ Guzdek (2020a).

⁶⁷ Ibidem.

celebrated with a minimum number of the faithful present, that is the clergy, the minimum number of assistants and a congregation of not more than five people. Numerous TV broadcasts of the liturgy have been ensured for the faithful.

6. Conclusions

As a result of the above analysis, the following conclusions may be formulated:

1. Actions aimed at alleviating the pace of SARS-CoV-2 dissemination in the case of Poland could not ignore the threats arising from the real possibility of transmitting infections in gatherings during collective religious practices. A clear message reached the society: we deal with a strange situation since the bishops call for not attending Holy Masses (!!!), while in normal circumstances the faithful are obliged to take part in the liturgy on Sundays and certain holidays. Bishops' appeals, repeatedly broadcast by the media, to stay home on successive Sundays and pray in families were a step towards minimisation of opportunities for the virus to be transmitted, slowing down the rate of increase of the number of people infected and thus requiring hospital treatment.
2. Creating health security requires coordinated cooperation of the state with entities which can influence the society by invoking the values, and thus morality. In the case of Poland, the message of state authorities was noticeably enhanced by the quick response on the part of the church. The position of the Conference of the Polish Bishops proved to be a stabiliser of social behaviours and a message on the responsibility

for the common good. The moral message based on faith should be recognised as a major force contributing to the creation of the security of citizens.

3. Legal regulations and the stable situation of the Roman Catholic Church in Poland turned out to be a clear imperative for the bishops to feel responsible for the entire society. Their voice proved to be a point of reference for many decisions of millions of Poles. That is why the statements of the bishops turned out to be a manifestation of taking part in responsible co-creation of health security in the state. This fact illustrates that in Polish conditions legally guaranteed separation of the religious community and the political community does not mean mutual hostility, but forms a space of care for the common good, namely life and health of citizens and the well-being of the national community.
4. Health security is also part of national security, in which the interest of the state in a large measure overlaps with the interest of the religious community. This principle is true for such churches that see their mission in serving the well-being of people regardless of their views and religious beliefs. In Poland, the effectiveness of cooperation of the state with the church is based on two elements. First, on the part of the political community, it is the role of Christianity in forming the national identity of Poles as well as religiousness and faith of individual citizens. Second, on the part of the church, it is the transparency of moral principles concerning the love for others and the responsibility of the faithful for the earthly order.
5. Creating security in the state, which requires the employment of effective, adequate, and available measures,

implies the need to refer to the benefits arising from the collaboration of the state with the church.

6. The moral potential of entities, such as the church in the case of Poland, whose charitable activities in the society are supported by the majority of citizens, should become part of the social security policy. This moral potential may also become a force in creating health security if the state and church narrations with respect to a given problem turn out to be consonant.
7. Designing cooperation of the state with the religious community in security policy considered should be the capability (or its absence) of the religious entity to enter a relationship with the political body. On the part of the state, preference should be given to the entity that does not aspire at becoming a political movement. The members of such an entity are not obligated (by a written doctrine or by hierarchs) to political unity. However, in the context of the emerging threat, given the possible dilemmas concerning the above-mentioned preference, the need of the moment should be considered. In such circumstances as a pandemic, time is a powerful force of destruction. That is why it is clear that no time should be wasted when life and health of citizens are at stake. It means that in the security policy space should be guaranteed not only for standing, but also for *ad hoc* cooperation with religious entities. This should be concretised in the form of legal provisions concerning situations of crisis in the state.

When citizens' health is at risk, it is an imperative for state authorities to seek the best means of action and influence the society. In such circumstances, the use of the power of religious beliefs is legitimate even given legal separation

of church and state. The participation of the Roman Catholic Church in Poland in the activities for health security at the beginning of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic is an example of the rational use by the state of the available, effective, and adequate means aimed at the fastest and most efficient response in the situation of a severe threat to citizens. The activities of the church authorities are an example of coordinated cooperation between church and state.

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Secular and religious terrorist groups according to Yonah Alexander

Abstract

Having analysed Yonah Alexander's texts and statements the author presents his narration about terrorism, making a distinction between terrorism inspired by secular ideas and religiously motivated terrorism. In his opinion the first group includes: Al-Fatah, Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, while the other: Hamas and Islamic Jihad Movement in Palestine. Following the through of Yonah Alexander the author shows the synthesis of his scholarly and journalistic accomplishments, including those concerning terrorism. This article is a contribution to the research in the area of contemporary national and international security studies in individual countries.

Key words: Yonah Alexander, secular terrorism, religious terrorism, security

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Introduction

this article is aimed at presenting main directions of Yonah Alexander's studies on terrorism, in particular terrorist groups operating in the Middle East. The work offers an analysis and synthesis of the researcher's texts. The selection of sources – authors and texts – has been determined, first, by the headline target: depicting a multifaceted reflection on creating security at the same time confronting it with the threats brought about by terrorism. Secondly, referring to the accomplishments of one of the greatest scholars dealing with the heritage of terrorism – Yonah Alexander.¹ Thirdly, presenting internal thematic linkages in the studies on security, secular terrorism and religious terrorism. The texts and views that has been quoted and discussed – primarily those by Yonah Alexander, but also other researchers – have been selected from the viewpoint of their relation with the securitological and semantic problem area investigated in this article. It is made up of an introduction, an outline of the problem, two analytical

¹ Yonah Alexander (b. 1931) – a researcher of terrorism of international renown, author of many publications in this area. From among many of his numerous functions worth mentioning are the following: Member of the Board of Regents, Senior Fellow, and Director of International Center for Terrorism Studies at the Potomac Institute for Policy Studies, Director of the Inter-University Center for Terrorism Studies and Director of the Inter-University Center for Legal Studies (in Washington, D.C.). Both academic institutions are consortia of universities and think tanks throughout the world. Previously, Dr. Alexander served as Professor of International Affairs and Director of Terrorism Studies at the George Washington University as well as Professor of International Studies and Director of the Institute for Studies in International Terrorism at the State University of New York system. Cf. *Professor Yonah Alexander, Ph.D.*

chapters and a closing, which sums up the basic assumptions and the formulated conclusions.

1. Issues

Terrorism is without doubt one of the main problems relating to the shaping of security of the contemporary world. The characteristics of terrorist acts include primarily: considerable spectacularity, unpredictability and multifaceted impact on the functioning of societies and governments. Despite its popularity and long-time efforts at systematising and qualifying it, the term has never been captured in a single universal definition which would be binding for the international community. The obstacle hindering the road to working out a uniform and precise definition is a result of: political reasons, cultural and ideological issues, interests of various individual and collective entities.² Because of such a broad spectrum of terrorism, the article presents only selected views concerning the area on hand.

One of the most popular definitions which is universally used by scientists and researchers dealing with terrorism has been worked out at the US Department of Defense. It defines terrorism as premeditated acts involving politically motivated violence, targeted at civilians and committed by groups of a regional reach or secret state agencies, usually intended to impact the population.³ A similar view was expressed by Bartosz Bolechów, who defines terrorism as a form of political violence consisting in using murders or destruction (or threatening to use them) in order to cause shock and extreme

² Cf. Bolechów (2002): 33.

³ Cf. Holms, Burke (2001): 20.

intimidation of individuals, social groups or governments, aimed at forcing out desired political concessions, provoking inconsiderate actions and/or demonstrating/promoting one's own political convictions.⁴ In contrast, this phenomenon is totally differently perceived in Russia. Terrorism is interpreted there as a threat to use violence targeted at organisations or people, destruction of certain material assets and various facilities and sites, which may result in the death of citizens. It involves a threat of a serious damage to property or inciting other socially important consequences aimed at disturbing social peace, intimidating the population or influencing various decision-making processes, so that they conform to the expectations of terrorists.⁵ This is merely part of the activities that may be regarded as acts of terrorism under Russian law. A broad terminological perspective in a way ensures greater freedom in interpreting the phenomena which may be classified as acts of terrorism. In turn, Yonah Alexander⁶, who has researched terrorism for many years, presents his view as follows:

Terrorism – the calculated employment of violence, or the threat of violence by individuals, subnational groups, and state actors to attain political, social, and economic objectives in the violation of law, intended to create an overwhelming fear in a target area larger than the victims attacked or threatened.⁷

⁴ Cf. Bolechów (2002): 35.

⁵ Cf. Nowakowska-Krystman, Zubrzycki, Daniluk, Mazur-Cieślak (2015): 62.

⁶ Cf. Alexander (2015): 335; *Professor Yonah Alexander, Ph.D.*

⁷ Alexander (2002).

The essence of those actions should be seen in its effectiveness aimed at paralysing the functioning of major bodies responsible for making key decisions on issues connected with security, which is confirmed by Cezary Smuniewski's statement of a popular character:

Terrorist attacks are aimed at intimidating society. There are various measures for the «effectiveness» of terrorism. I believe that terrorism is effective when it paralyses societies, deprives them for a long time of the ability to think critically, hold them captive in fear, frustrating their hope and creative reflection. The «effectiveness» of terrorism must not be measures by the number of victims or the amounts of money allocated for countering the attacks. «Effective» terrorism is tantamount to hopeless fear which debilitates the reasoning ability of a political community.⁸

Summing up, terrorism is a dynamic phenomenon, permanently evolving, which so far has not been specified in a single universal definition. The terminological problem is connected, first of all, with the diversity of classification of acts of violence as terrorist events in the legal systems of individual states. Therefore, we are faced with a diverse and imprecise nomenclature of this phenomenon. Despite a multitude of definitions, we are able to discern some common features repeated in almost all publicly available definitions. First of all it concerns violence which is employed by those who want to influence the decisions (decision-making processes), in most cases of a political nature, a result of which is omnipresent fear and terror.

⁸ Smuniewski (2017): 12.

2. Secular groups

2.1. Al-Fatah

Fatah was founded in 1958 by Yasser Arafat, Salah Khaleb and Khalid al-Wazir when they were university students in Cairo. As stated by Yonah Alexander, Fatah is a secular nationalist Palestinian movement organised in order to liberate Palestine from Israeli occupation. Fatah's ideology is based on two main events. Yonah Alexander believes that the first one was the victory of the National Liberation Front⁹ over French colonialism in Algeria, which for the analysed group is an example of successful armed struggle, whereas the other one is associated with the texts written by Franz Fanon.¹⁰ Those influences shaped the position of Fatah as regards legitimisation of armed struggle as an inseparable element that could unify the Palestinian nation.¹¹

According to the interpretation of Yonah Alexander's texts Fatah regards Palestine as part of the Arab world inhabited by the Palestinian nation, which has its inalienable identity, can decide its own fate, and therefore sovereign. The struggle carried out by the Palestinians plays a gigantic role in the liberation of Palestine and is an integral element of international fight against colonialism, Zionism,¹² and imperialism. The liberation of Palestine is considered the main target

⁹ National Liberation Front – an Algerian political organisation heading the armed national liberation revolt in the years 1954–1962. Cf. Alexander, Keiger (2012).

¹⁰ Franz Fanon – was an anti-colonialist revolutionary writer living in Algeria administered by the French in the mid-20th century. Cf. Zeilig (2016); Hudis (2015).

¹¹ Cf. Alexander (2003): 1.

¹² More on Zionism cf. Schwartz (2009); Rotenstreich (2007).

of the organization and treated as a national obligation, that is why any and all treaties or resolutions adopted by the UN or other similar organisations, which evidently undermine the rights of the Palestinian nation, are in the light of Fatah's convictions unlawful. The Zionist movement is identified with aggression in its ideology, methods and goals, and that is why Israeli presence in Palestine is an invasion comparable to colonisation.¹³ According to Yonah Alexander the main targets of Fatah are as follows:

- Complete liberation of Palestine and eradication of Zionist economic, political, military and cultural existence,
- Establishing an independent democratic state with complete sovereignty on all Palestinian lands, and Jerusalem is its capital city, and protecting the citizens' legal and equal rights without any racial or religious discrimination,
- Setting up a progressive society that warrants people's rights and their public freedom,
- Active participation in achieving the Arab Nation's goals in liberation and building an independent, progressive and united Arab society,
- Backing up all oppressed people in their struggle for liberation and self-determination in order to build a just, international peace.¹⁴

The manner in which Fatah strives to the implementation of the above postulates is based on staging terrorist attacks directed at both military targets and the civilian population. Yonah Alexander lists here, first of all, attacks with bombs,

¹³ Cf. Alexander (2003): 5–6.

¹⁴ Ibidem: 6.

mortars, grenades or firearms. The organisation operates primarily in the areas of the Gaza Strip, Israel and the West Bank.¹⁵

2.2. Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine

In the light of Yonah Alexander's texts the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine is a group which arose in the wake of the six-day war¹⁶ in 1967. Its founder was George Habash, an Arab of Christian denomination, who by having united three independent groups, namely: the Heroes of the Return, the National Front for Liberation of Palestine, and the Independent Palestine Liberation Front, initiated one of the groups affiliating in its ranks Palestinian Arabs, which at the time were distinguished by their influences.¹⁷

According to Yonah Alexander, the concept underlying the operation of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine rested on three pillars: Palestinian uniqueness (*wataniyya*), Arab unity (*qawmiyya*), and Marxism-Leninism. This group regards the Palestinian population as a separate Arab nation which is entitled to its own autonomous territory, which is to become a sovereign state. It should be noted that this state is to be based on Marxist-Leninist principles.¹⁸ Yonah Alexander rightly seeks ideological similarities of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine to the revolutionary partisan teachings of Fidel Castro.¹⁹ Those similarities become evident when it is noted that the aim of the Popular Front for

¹⁵ Cf. *Ibidem*: 24–26.

¹⁶ More on the six-day war cf. Louis, Shlaim (2012).

¹⁷ Cf. Alexander (2003): 33.

¹⁸ Cf. *Ibidem*.

¹⁹ Cf. Alexander, Sinai (1989): 40.

the Liberation of Palestine is to liberate entire Palestine from the Zionist thinking, which in its arguments invokes religious (biblical) factors. In practice this means carrying out such policy which will utilise all possible means to neutralise the state of Israel basing primarily on terrorist attacks. Moreover, Yonah Alexander points out that the group does not envisage any negotiations with the government of the state of Israel, thus maintaining an uncompromising position.²⁰ It should be noted that the development of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine was directly supported by the Soviet Union. Following its collapse, Marxist-Leninist slogans were replaced by democratic-socialist ones²¹, which read as follows:

1. Liberation from Israeli occupation.
2. Construction of a democratic society.
3. Recognition that the Palestinian people are an integral part of the Arab Nation.
4. Recognition that the Palestinian struggle is part of the international, democratic struggle towards liberation, progress, democracy, and social justice.²²

As noted by Yonah Alexander, the operating area of the group covers Israel, Gaza Strip, Lebanon, Syria, Left Bank of the Jordan, and Europe. The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine sees the implementation of its political goals in the civilian population and the military, at the same time staging attacks with the use of firearms and grenades. Already in the 1970s the group acquired international renown for its ruthlessness and brutality.²³

²⁰ Cf. Alexander (2003): 33.

²¹ Cf. Ibidem: 35.

²² Ibidem: 36.

²³ Cf. Ibidem: 38.

2.3. Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine

The Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine is a Marxist-Leninist group established as a result of separation from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine in 1969, the initiator of which was Nayef Hawatmeh. According to Yonah Alexander, the ideology of the group is focused around the following statements:

- The Palestinian national goal cannot be achieved without a revolution of the working class,
- Revolutionary change in the Arab world, especially in the conservative monarchies, is a necessary precursor to the achievement of Palestinian objectives,
- An international stance must be taken that places the Palestinian struggle within a general world context of liberation in the postcolonial world,
- Elite members of the movement should not be separated from the masses. Lower classes should be educated in true socialism in order to carry out the battle of liberation,
- There must be “hostility and resistance” to U.S. policy in the Middle East, its support for the nonaligned bloc, and its solidarity with all national liberation movement that fight against “imperialism” and “racism”,
- The situation in the Middle East must be upgraded to an armed conflict against Israeli soldiers and civilians in the Disputed Territories.²⁴

The organisation sees the state of Israel as its greatest enemy, which they believe is characterised by imperialist and racist inclinations. Yonah Alexander claims that the initial

²⁴ Ibidem: 46.

views of the people affiliated with the democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine evidenced that they tended to create a common state for the Arabs and the Jews. However, with time those convictions were evolving. Eventually they arrived at an unequivocal position that an Arab state can be established exclusively on the land liberated from Israel. The operations of the group were concentrated in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. Yonah Alexander states that they consist mostly in bomb attacks, abductions for negotiations and assaults with the use of firearms.²⁵

2.4. Conclusions

In the above chapter selected terrorist groups described in his texts by Yonah Alexander have been presented. The headline target put forth by each of the above mentioned groups is based on neutralising the state of Israel and the Zionist movement, as they constitute the main obstacle to further existence of the Palestinian people. In the opinion of the groups that have been analysed above Israel is cast in the role of the oppressor of the Palestinian people, characterised by imperialist and racist tendencies. The analysed organisations engage in terrorist activities motivated by the desire to create one's own sovereign and autonomous state, which can responsibly represent the Arab position on the international arena. Yonah Alexander categorically excludes religious motivations in the described groups, thus underlining closeness of some of them to the Marxist-Leninist system. The ideology of those groups combines nationalistic and national liberation tendencies.

²⁵ Cf. Ibidem: 48.

3. Religious groups

3.1. Hamas

According to the sources drawn from Yonah Alexander's publications, Hamas was officially established in 1988, soon after the outbreak of the first Palestinian Intifada,²⁶ by member of the Muslim Brotherhood,²⁷ who decided to add a military component to their organisation. Active military operations against the state of Israel and the Zionist movement are considered the fundamental *raison d'être* of the group. Hamas owes a lot of its success to its impact in the Gaza Strip. Yonah Alexander claims that social and economic problems of the refugees in Gaza as well as the fact that other nationalistic parties were not dominant at that time made it possible for Hamas to gain widespread support. Thus the organisation managed to create a social system alternative to the Palestine Liberation Organisation.²⁸ In August 1988, Hamas disseminated its ideological doctrine called the Covenant of the Islamic Resistance Movement. It reads, first of all, that only Hamas is the sole legal representative of the Palestinian people, and moreover that it opposes not only Israel but also the Palestine Liberation Organisation.²⁹

Hamas' ideology is based primarily on the main current of the Muslim Brotherhood, which was founded in 1928 by Hassan al-Bann in Egypt. It combines both religious principles and pan-Arabic ideas, as well as Palestinian national

²⁶ More on the Intifada cf. Aronson (1990).

²⁷ More on the Muslim Brotherhood cf. Wąs (2006).

²⁸ More on the Palestine Liberation Organisation cf. Cobban (1984); Becker (1984).

²⁹ Cf. Alexander (2002): 1.

aspirations. Hamas enriched Palestinian nationalism with religious beliefs – Islam. In this manner it led to a confrontation between the secular national ideology of the Palestine Liberation Organisation and the Islamic nationalistic programme. In the Covenant, published by Hamas in 1988, its authors described themselves as the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood. They made it the main aim of Hamas to establish an Islamic state in all Palestinian countries, including Israel. They state that the Holy War is the only method to redeem entire Palestine, whereas it is a duty of all Muslims to take part. Not irrelevant is also the fact that since its establishment Hamas has been striving at setting up a civic religious structure to deal with such issues as help to the poor, education, religion and health.³⁰

Yonah Alexander believes that the primary aim of the organisation is to annihilate the state of Israel. He notes that Hamas presents itself as an organisation that has a potential to contribute directly to halting the conflict. However, the path to this aim leads inescapably through an open ultimate struggle. The ideological assumptions of Hamas are evidently not underlain by the desire to end the conflict peacefully, and moreover any concessions which would be aimed at leaving even a smallest scarp of land to Israel are considered as a betrayal of the Palestinian and Arabic cause. This stance was initiated by the events arising directly from the second Intifada,³¹ after which Hamas additionally doubled its strength calling all Palestinians to continue the struggle with all means any time and in any place.³²

³⁰ Cf. Ibidem: 3.

³¹ More on the second Intifada cf. Bregman (2010).

³² Cf. Alexander (2002): 3.

3.2. Palestinian Islamic Jihad

The organisation was established in 1979–1980, spurred by the revolution in Iran,³³ and also in the context of anxiety caused by the Muslim Brotherhood's neglect of the Palestinian issue, i.e. the striving to establish an autonomous Palestinian state. An alternative ideology was put forward, which became the foundation for a new organisation. Having made in-depth studies Yonah Alexander arrives at a conclusion that the Palestinian Islamic Jihad does not aspire to unify the Islamic world as this is not a *sine qua non* condition for the liberation of Palestine, whereas the very freeing of Palestine from Zionist influences will be a key to the unification of the Islamic world. The Palestinian Islamic Jihad maintains that the jihad³⁴ applied by Islamic groups will liberate Palestine and shall reconstruct an even greater and united Islamic states.³⁵ For Yonah Alexander it is important that the founders of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad had close relations with radical Islamic groups of Egyptian students, some of whom were involved in the coup against the President of Egypt, Muhammad Anwar al-Sadat, who was in power in the years 1970–1981.³⁶ As a result the Palestinian radicals were expelled from Egypt and established the Palestinian Islamic Jihad in the Gaza Strip.³⁷

The annihilation of the state of Israel with the use of violence is the topmost objective of existence of the Palestinian

³³ More on the revolution in Iran cf. Bayandor (2019).

³⁴ More on the jihad cf. Cook (2005).

³⁵ Cf. Alexander (2003): 29.

³⁶ More on Muhammad Anwar al-Sadat cf. Al-Sadat (1979); Waterbury (1983).

³⁷ Cf. Alexander (2002): 29–30.

Islamic Jihad. Moreover, another of the aims of the organisation is to topple those Arab government which do not live in compliance with Islamic laws. The activists of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad sharply criticised the Palestine Liberation Organisation for its active part in creating the peace process with Israel. That process was perceived by the Palestinian Islamic Jihad as incompatible with the desire to establish a Palestinian state. The Palestinian Islamic Jihad is one of the most influential terrorist groups which accepted the ideology of Islamic Jihad perceiving Israel as the fundamental enemy of the Muslims.

That is why members of the organisation call for Islamic armed struggle to liberate all of Palestine. The main tactic is the use of guerrilla groups led by the revolutionary avant-garde. In turn, its main task is to carry out terrorist attacks gradually weakening the position of the state of Israel. The Palestinian Islamic Jihad focuses primarily on attacks with the use of firearms, cold weapons, bombs and psychological manipulations aimed at challenging people to use violence and stage suicide attacks. Targets are usually Israeli soldiers and civilians, as well as Palestinians collaborators. Traditionally, they try to attack Israeli targets on the anniversary of the killing of their leader, Fathi Shaqaqi (d. 26 October 1995). Members of this organisation perceive themselves as those who have created the foundations for the Islamic army, and in the future will be able to defeat Israel in direct military confrontation.³⁸

³⁸ Cf. Alexander (2002): 29, 36.

3.3. Conclusions

The above chapter presents selected terrorist groups inspired by religious ideas. The cause for the existence of these groups, like in the case of secular groups, is to destroy the state of Israel and the Zionist movement by all available means, thus giving the key place to actions of the terrorist nature. According to their basic assumptions those organisations focus on the unification of the Arab people within an Islamic state. They emphasise that unification will be possible only and exclusively thanks to jihad, which will liberate Palestine from the oppressor, which according to Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad is Israel. Islam is the core of the functioning of those groups, an example of which is no tolerance for those Arab government which are not correlated with the religion they adhere to. What is more, those organisations aim at creating a civic and religious structure which would in compliance with the law interfere into people's lives and at the same time make other state sectors dependent on its unlimited powers. The Palestinian Islamic Jihad and Hamas are among the most radical and brutal organisation operating in the Palestinian territory, which try to expand their influence and legitimise their actions with their impeccable religiousness and devotion of the Palestinian cause.

Conclusion

Terrorist organisations presented in Yonah Alexander's publication are divided into religious and secular ones. The area of their operation is limited primarily to the Middle East, Israel being its central point. The main purpose for the functioning of the analysed groups is to destroy the state of Israel

and the Zionist movement by all available means. Their tactic is focused on staging terrorist attacks aimed at weakening the enemy state, which in their eyes is the oppressor of the Palestinian people. An equally live topic characteristic of the described groups is also the desire to establish an autonomous Arab state. Despite coincident objectives, both groups have completely different views as regards the foundations of such state. Religious groups – Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad – are for the state based on the Islamic principles, whereas secular groups – Al-Fatah, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine – adhere to leftist ideas. This may be considered as the greater difference between those groups, which in the future may bring about an additional conflict arising from the intolerance of religious groups of the leadership of the Arab state of people who do not adhere to Islam. An additional threat may be the unpredictable possible future development of Marxist-Leninist ideas.

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