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## The Europeanization of Polish Democracy

*Abstract:* This article is about the discussion which has been going on in Western Europe concerning interpretation of the Europeanization concept and the resulting theoretical instruments for the analysis of the effects of European integration on the political transformation in Poland after the fall of communism. It presents selected mechanisms and channels of Europeanization of EU member states with reference to the “new democracies” and the anticipative modernization of Central-Eastern Europe. This perspective is used to discuss the specific nature of Europeanization of the post-communist countries and the post-transformation crisis of democracy in some countries in the region following accession to the European Union in 2004. This crisis, according to the author, was also caused to a certain extent by the contingencies and conditions of EU accession. In Poland these contingencies and conditions triggered fears of perpetuation of the country’s peripheral position vis-à-vis the “old” European countries. These fears are related to various interpretations of modernization, dependency theory, the world system theory and globalization.

*Keywords:* Europeanization and modernization in Poland, eastern EU expansion, the “EU effect” in Poland, interactivity and multidimensionality of Polish Europeanization.

### The Europeanization of EU countries

Ever since the nineteen-eighties the effect of European integration on the policies of countries which are now members of the European Union has been the focus of interest. Like many other international organizations, the EU was established by countries which are still the main actors in this group’s policy development. But at the same time, due to the specific nature of the EU, the multidimensional effect of EU institutions on member countries and their mutual relations has been increasing systematically from the moment the common currency and, more recently, the EU Reform Treaty, were introduced. Despite the gradual shrinking of EU countries’ national prerogatives, “the number of countries wanting to join the EU in the hope that they will benefit economically and avoid political isolation” (Budge & Newton 1999: 50) continues to increase.<sup>1</sup>

This interest was reflected in the coining and popularising of the term “Europeanization.” Simon Bulmer and Christian Lequesne (2005: 12) noted that issues relating to European integration mainly focus on politics and the development of

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<sup>1</sup> This tendency has been confirmed by the territorial expansion of the EU which, following the 2007 expansion, now has 27 members compared with the 6 countries which were the precursors of European integration when the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom or EAEC) were founded in Rome in 1957.

supranational political institutions whereas the term “Europeanisation” usually refers to analysis of the consequences of this process for member states and their domestic policies. There is no single definition of Europeanization although the term has often been used to describe a variety of phenomena and processes. For example, Rinus van Schendelen (2006: 27–28) defines Europeanization generally as the development of public and private affairs in the EU, unlimited by the boundaries of one country. Like most researchers, Schendelen points out that Europeanization is an interactive and bidirectional process: it proceeds “from the European level toward the country level or vice versa. In the first case we are dealing with an issue which emerged in one of the member countries or at an EU forum and then spread to the internal system creating the obligation to adjust to EU decisions. In the second case we are dealing with an issue which emerged in internal country reality and then spread to another member country or to the European level.” Claudio Radaelli (2003: 30), in turn, defines Europeanization as the process of construction, diffusion and institutionalization of the formal and informal principles, procedures, political paradigms, work styles, ideas and norms which define and consolidate the EU decision process and incorporate it in the internal logic of state discourses, identifications, political structures and public policy.

Johan P. Olsen (2007) reviewed the various definitions and interpretations of Europeanization and identified five applications of the term: 1) Europeanization as enlargement of EU territory; 2) development of EU institutions which are changing the conditions of operation of political actors, also at the national level; 3) the effects of EU institutions on affiliated countries, modifications of these countries’ management systems, policies and behaviour patterns; 4) expansion of EU institutions beyond the EU (export of forms of political organization, emulation, diffusion etc.);<sup>2</sup> 5) the political unification of Europe and the deepening of the integration of countries belonging to the European continent within the EU framework. Olsen notes that in practice the key to understanding Europeanization lies in the way the term is used and its specific applications. Another important component of the debate on Europeanization of EU country policies is the evaluation of the consequences of the process, including its effects on the evolution of the state and democracy. Despite the years-long discussion differences of opinion still exist due to differences in the major theoretical paradigms of European integration: neo-realism and neo-functionalism.

Advocates of the neo-realistic paradigm view states as the main actors of international affairs. In political practice this approach usually translates into caution and scepticism with respect to supranational institutions and European integration is mainly viewed as the outcome of negotiations between sovereign states. This idea takes the form of various types of federalism or the loose confederation of independent states (the “Europe of Fatherlands”). The advocates of neo-functionalism

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<sup>2</sup> Previous expressions of this form of Europeanization included the colonial and imperial expansion of several Western European countries. After 1945 Europeanization was understood as a strategy of defence against the threat of communism and expansion of the eastern bloc. Today it is viewed in terms of an inspiring model of a new system of supranational management and a regional reaction to the challenges of globalization. In this latter sense it is also seen as a counterbalance for the USA and Asian countries (especially China).

accentuate the increasing importance of actors other than the state, particularly actors who represent economic and regional interests. Their mutual connections lead to the spill-over of integration and the political scale effect which increases the role and importance of parties to the process. The existence of connections such as these requires the creation and development of supranational institutions. These institutions gradually acquire more and more power in relations with affiliated countries. According to the neo-functionalists, the activities of the European Commission and the European Court of Justice are examples of such solutions.

The process of European integration whereby supranational institutions are formed is catalyzing the controversies concerning the scope and areas of actual control of members' internal policies by national governments. Three general positions on this issue have been identified. First it is believed that decisions at the European level strengthen state institutions and the order based in these institutions in a new way (Milward 1992; Moravcsik 1999). Second, attention is drawn to member countries' limited capacity to operate within the EU framework and to the diminishing role of democratic policy in member countries' societies due to the transfer of decisional competences to the supranational level (e.g., Scharpf 1999). The third position stresses the fact that, rather than strengthening or weakening individual states, the EU is transforming them by developing a system of new co-operative connections between the different political actors at various levels of governance (Kohler-Kosch & Eising 1999). As these connections develop and evolve, the role and functions of the different political actors at the national and supranational (European) level are continually being redefined.

### **The Mechanisms of Europeanization**

Interestingly, despite the controversies over the effect of integration on member countries, the predicted convergence of political systems has not materialized. Empirical research suggests that alternative mechanisms of internal change are still in operation and that new EU norms, rules and practices are being internalised to various extents. This has not basically altered the political structures, however, and these have retained their institutional identity and cultural specificity (Cowles, Caporaso & Risse 2001). Researchers who write about the effect of the EU on member countries' policies have pointed out two patterns. First, the "EU effect" varies depending on the country, institution and political area due to differences in response to, and capacity to adapt to, the challenges of integration. The second pattern has to do with the role of factors which intervene between European and national policy, state institutions and the integration process.

Olsen (2007: 481) observed that "events at the European level do not impose strictly defined forms of institutional adjustment, they give national actors and institutions a considerable amount of freedom. The EU is having a considerable effect but the ability of the European level to penetrate institutions is not complete, universal or constant. [...] Signals coming from the EU are interpreted and modified

by national traditions, institutions, identities and resources and therefore the level of convergence and unification is limited.” Years of investigation into these problems in countries belonging to the Fifteen have enabled the development of instruments with which to analyse the mechanisms of EU influence on member states on various dimensions of internal change. They have also led to the identification of various channels of influence, various patterns of adjustment of member states and evaluation of the scale of changes due to the “EU” effect.”

In this sense, Europeanization causes a certain degree of convergence of models, behaviours and policies in member states even if it does not lead directly to convergence of political systems. Olsen names several convergences including EU political values and paradigms which are adopted at the national level and which affect discourse and identity (e.g., the development of a set of shared values); the development of shared ideas concerning macroeconomic policy among the elite as well as changes in structures and policies resulting from the adjustment of member countries to the EU institutional framework and administrative reforms coordinating national activities and international cooperation.

Tanja A. Borzel (2005) has identified four major types of mechanisms of internal change in member countries in response to the “EU effect”: 1) the pressure to adapt to changing regulations (constitutional, functional etc.) as a consequence of discrepancy or inconsistency between EU and national policies; 2) resource redistribution due to new conditions or new possibilities of operation of the involved actors such as market unification or strengthening of regional positions; 3) European socialization, i.e., adoption and internalization of new, external norms, principles and mores which redefine interests, identities and social practices (e.g., legitimization of new ideas, development of a consensual culture); and 4) institutional adaptation, a specific form of institutional isomorphism due to continual interaction between the EU level and the national level. There are various mechanisms of adaptation such as coercion (legal harmonization), development of political frameworks facilitating concern for the ideas and interests of outside actors including the EU level and other EU countries.

Van Schendelen (2006), in turn, identified four “EU effect” vectors relating to adjustment of EU countries to EU policy. Two of them involve “Brussels governance” in relations with the public sector and the private sector at the national level (implementation of directives, guidelines or other soft forms of intervention). The two remaining vectors involve adjustment processes inspired by the private sector at the national level. One example of this type of influence is the activity of European economic federations and business groups, supranational corporations or trade unions which affect national regulations with respect to technological standards or labour law. The “European path” or the “Brussels strategy” are also present in other areas relating to the interests of occupational groups, especially the “professions” (lawyers, physicians, architects etc.), public interests (consumer, ecological, civic) and territorial, regional and local interests (Greenwood 2007).

The interactive and bidirectional nature of relations between the EU level and the national level in EU countries is expressed in the different scopes and scales of internal change and in the feedback between these process and EU decisions.

As far as the scope of internal change is concerned, Tanja A. Borzel (2005: 58–59) distinguished five different consequences of the “EU effect.” She placed them on a continuum, from small influence to big social change, i.e., from inertia, limited change and absorption to accommodation (adjustment) and political transformation. Many different circumstances contribute to the presence of these consequences in different countries and areas of social life, including the behaviour of actors who have different and often conflicting preferences with respect to the ideas promoted by EU institutions. One important aspect of actor behaviour in EU countries is the undertaking of actions which may reciprocally affect EU decisions by strengthening their position at the national level.

State or national influence “paths” take advantage of domestic contacts and attempts to influence their own government in order to influence the EU decision process. Helen Wallace has identified several channels of EU countries’ access to EU institutions. Whether or not these channels are unobstructed depends, for example, on the clarity of the distinction between “public” and “private” actors and the extent to which the state has lost its monopoly in the network of political connections. Governments in EU countries have many instruments with which to gain access to EU level institutions and can use these instruments to modify the nature, direction and strength of the “EU effect” and to strengthen their own position on the EU forum. They include participation in consecutive stages of the decisional process at the EU level: development of political projects, project negotiation, legitimization of decisions, implementation of obligations (Wallace 2005: 29–36). Schendelen specified four vectors of state level influence on the European level. One of these vectors points from the national public sector (mainly the government) to the analogous EU sector (the EU Council, Commission or—less frequently—Parliament). The second vector points from the same national sector to the private sector at the EU level (for example, participation of the public authorities in attracting foreign investors). The two remaining vectors of influence of the national private sector on the EU level involve other patterns of activity. As far as influence on the EU private sector is concerned, this can be seen in the sector activities of private EU federations which try to influence each other’s behaviour (for example, pharmacists or consumer organizations). Finally, as far as pressure of the national private sector on the European public sector is concerned, this is exerted particularly strongly by private entrepreneurs including large firms and some social groups. Complaints about market malpractice submitted to the European Commission are an example (Schendelen 2006: 30).

Real power, however, and the capacity to influence the EU system, depend on a combination of factors including resources and the ability to use them. The crucial factors are the weight of EU country votes in EU institutions, obliging rules and practices of the most important EU organs, and the capacity to build coalitions or block the decision process (veto power). Other important determinants of the role of EU countries include both objective and subjective factors. Political resources such as a country’s area, population and geopolitical situation belong to the first group. A country’s historical position in Europe, its length of EU membership and its contribution to solution of specific types of problems belong to the second group.

Another important political factor is a country's ability to relate strategically and consistently with the EU and other EU countries.

At the economic level, a country's position is determined by its economic potential, the size and structure of commercial exchange and the amount of money it contributes to the EU budget. Prestigious factors such as implementation of ideas which have gained wide EU acceptance (e.g., British market liberalization policy) or spectacular success in a selected area (e.g., Finland's technological innovativeness or Ireland's effective social partnership model) are also important. Power and influence in the EU are the result of continual bargaining and therefore competing ideas and articulation of demands, particularly with respect to budget distribution, provide a significant developmental impulse. For example, the United Kingdom has developed the image of a country which focuses on the "adequate budget" whereas France is perceived as a country whose priority is "financial solidarity" in common agricultural policy. Finally, goodwill, style of leadership, reliability and predictability are also important political resources (Wallace 2005: 36–42).

### **Anticipatory Modernization in Central-Eastern Europe**

After 1989 the political changes and pro-western reorientation in foreign policy radically altered both the nature of Polish institutions and Poland's international relations. As far as the latter are concerned, Poland's accession to the European Union was a particularly significant factor. Due to the broad scope of obligations relating to the accession it was necessary to develop new political and institutional frameworks for the development of democracy in Poland. In the Hungarian context, Atilla Agh (2003) called the way in which such frameworks were created "anticipation and adaptive Europeanization" of the new political system. This idea converged with the assumptions of the transitological paradigm which predominated during the first decade of political transformation in Central-Eastern Europe after 1989. As it was applied to post-communist states, this paradigm referred to the experiences of Greece, Spain and Portugal after the fall of authoritarian rule.

The paradigm's main assumption was that democratization and market reform combined with integration with NATO and the EU would facilitate modernization in our region and create safeguards against the revival of dictatorship, just as they helped Southern European countries. In this context, the main idea behind Europeanization processes, accession negotiations and application of various instruments with which to exert pressure on candidate countries converged with the basic goals of post-communist political transformation. Development of these countries in the direction of ability to achieve EU standards and function effectively in the Community created a clear perspective for political evolution and also provided a strategic motivational vision for the political elite and communities of the "new Central-Eastern European democracies." Hence a rare historical opportunity was offered: the opportunity to interactively combine one's own good (development of one's country) with the common good (European integration).

By adopting the concepts and terminologies developed during the debate on Europeanization of “old EU” countries it is possible to analyse the “EU effect” in relations with Poland. Taking advantage of these inspirations we can try to identify more precisely the extent to which institutional change promoted by the EU has contributed to the development of democracy in Poland and to identify the dimensions on which such development has taken place. Most researchers seem to share Jacques Rupnik’s opinion that entry into the process of integration with the EU greatly contributed to stabilization of post-communist political systems in the pre-accession phase of development.

Rupnik (2007) reflected that “anyone who has studied the political history of Central-Eastern Europe knows that the phrase ‘return to democracy’ is just as problematic and ambiguous as ‘return to Europe’.” Prior to communist rule, in this region only Czechoslovakia was considered to be a stable democracy and a highly developed country. Without the support of the West, including the EU, would it be possible to transform the post-communist countries in the direction of liberal democracy and market economy? What might the repercussions of rival scenarios of political change be? And how has the prospect of EU membership affected the direction of political transformation in Poland and other countries in the region?

### **The Specific Nature of Europeanization in Post-Communist Countries**

When communism fell, Central-Eastern Europe was often compared to the fragile South-American democracies. Attention was drawn to its poor institutional foundations, lack of social roots and economic hardship, none of which were conducive to neoliberal reform. The risk of political chaos, economic breakdown and ethnic conflict was greatly feared as was the revival of authoritarianism and nationalism, both of which had been endemic in this region before. The Balkan war which followed the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the civilization regression in the Commonwealth of Independent Nations were clear warnings of the consequences of rejection of rapid institutionalization of relations with NATO and the EU. At the same time, however, several well-known actors including Jeffrey Sachs and Peter Mair voiced their concern that the European Union would export its deficient democracy and stagnant institutions to Eastern Europe and would therefore slow down economic growth in this region.<sup>3</sup> So how did the EU affect the political transformation in Poland and how did it contribute to the development of new political mechanisms?

In order to answer this question let us draw upon the typology of major mechanisms of internal change in EU countries brought about by the so-called “EU effect” in association with the rating scale proposed by Tanja A. Borzel. Some comments are due, however, before we begin to apply these proposals. In the case of Poland (and other countries in the region), the Europeanization concept has different meanings, each of which had their own particular sequence determined by the accession

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<sup>3</sup> For a detailed review of the Fifteen’s opinions concerning the controversies and apprehensions relating to EU expansion eastward see Zielonka (2006).

chronology. The earliest connotations of the term apply to export of the forms of political organization existing in EU countries to Central Europe. Shortly after the fall of communism, the “EU effect” began to operate in the form of “anticipation and adaptive Europeanization,” that is implementation of reforms in response to the anticipated expectations of “Brussels.”

In this sense, Europeanization understood as EU influence on the main political actors, management and patterns of behaviour soon became an important factor of political change in Central-Eastern European countries including Poland. The policy whereby aid policy (e.g., the PHARE program) and other benefits were contingent upon fulfilment of specific conditions, including guidelines, performance measures, monitoring and control conditions and protective clauses, was its most important instrument. The conditions were imposed on candidate countries who had to accept them and also had to be more observant of EU law than the “old” EU countries. Compared with the Iberian accession, these conditions were much more stringent because of the new mechanisms of verification of the degree of implementation of EU law (Mayhew 2002: 20–21).<sup>4</sup>

Due to asymmetry of potential, the EU’s structural and ideological advantage (who was more motivated to negotiate the accession?) and the institutional weakness of the core of post-communist countries, the political process favoured the interests of the “old” Union. One of the expressions of this tendency was the failure to lift the barriers on Polish exports to EU markets (which had been in force since the 1994 European Agreement when Poland was rapidly lifting its barriers on imports of industrial goods from the Communities). Another one was the lifting of import quotas for agricultural produce from the EU to Poland’s disadvantage, one of the major causes of the increasing deficit in Poland’s trade turnover with the EU. Equally bad for Poland was the refusal to liberalize the flow of workers and services from Poland to the Communities despite earlier affiliation agreements between, for example, Greece and Turkey on the one hand and the Common Market on the other hand.<sup>5</sup> The “Brussels Path” strategy of pre-accession adjustment for candidate states described by Schendelen enabled successful enforcement of conditions which were beneficial for private investors from the Fifteen. Within this framework, the “Partnership for Poland” accepted by the Polish government in 1999 anticipated, for example, continuation of the privatization of state-owned enterprises and greater freedom of capital flow including new legislation limiting the influx of direct foreign investments which enabled the expansion of hypermarket chains and the flow of short-term, speculative capital. All in all, throughout the process of trade negotiations, adjustments

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<sup>4</sup> “Not only did the Union tell the Eastern European candidates what to do—for example with respect to legislative change or administrative reform—it also sent its representatives to the various ministries to make sure that changes had been implemented according to instructions [...]. The adjustment process was carefully monitored. At each stage, during regular meetings, the leading candidates and the marauders were named. [...] Discussions with the EU were typically inflexible and hierarchy was strictly observed; negotiation was practically impossible” (Zielonka 2006: 56).

<sup>5</sup> For an evaluation of the Assumption and principles of Poland’s affiliation with the European Communities and a discussion of the positive and negative aspects of the European Agreement for the Polish economy and Polish society see Doliwa-Klepacki 2001: 122–172; Kuźniar & Szczepanik 2002: 70–71.



and pre-accession negotiations which lasted for over a decade, Poland (and other countries in the region) was the object rather than the agent of political influences in relations with the EU and the largest EU countries.

Just like Southern European countries before them, the new candidate countries were in a position of structural inequality and were largely policy-takers rather than policy-makers. This position in these countries relations with the EU resulted from the “outsiders” low status: first as potential candidates then as applicants, then negotiation partners and finally as members (Goetz 2005: 255). Risse, Cowles and Caporaso (2001: 12) pointed out that “the causal relations between Europeanization and national structures are bilateral.” This proposition generalizes the experience of the “old” EU members, however. This analytic and causal schema can be applied to Central-Eastern Europe prior to accession only to a very limited extent. We may hypothesize that at least until the EU accession their relations with EU institutions were based on top-down causality and that the influence of Europeanization on national structures was largely unilateral. As the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs observed, throughout most of the post-1989 years “we were a supplicant, a candidate country to various structures, and hence—we had to meet the conditions which others imposed on us and comply with rules which we were perhaps unwilling to accept” (Warzecha 2007: 265).

This could be seen in the striving of Poland and other countries in the region for acceptance of their aspirations at the EU level (e.g., in EU agreements) or in diplomatic efforts to participate in bodies which were discussing “Eastern expansion” and the future of the EU. During the pre-accession period such participation usually confirmed the unequal status and influence hierarchy. It is no coincidence that when the European Convention was preparing the EU constitutional Treaty, no Central-Eastern European representative was included in the Executive Committee.

If we analyse the dynamics of political transformation in Poland we see that the EU’s influence on different countries differed depending on the political domain and institutional change. If we analyse the internal changes which took place in Poland as a result of the “EU effect” using Tanja A. Borzel’s typology we can hypothesize that the consequences were greatest in two domains, institutional adaptation and regulation. In these two domains the scale of change (compared with the starting point) was enormous and took the form of political transformation which defined the rules of state functioning anew. In some cases, particularly harmonization of Polish and EU law, the scale was a function of various forms of EU institutional coercion including the entire achievements of *acquis communautaire*.<sup>6</sup>

In other domains, for example constitutional change, the EU had an indirect effect and national political actors and institutions enjoyed considerable freedom. In this case, the “EU effect” took the form of normative pressure, emulation or diffusion of patterns transferred from EU countries. Decisions concerning choice of patterns remained in the competence of the state and the national political elite. “The Union did not present [...] specific models of democracy, the system of administration of social policy which could be models for the candidates” (Zielonka 2006: 58). In this

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<sup>6</sup> When Poland was preparing to join the EU, community law consisted of 20 thousand directives published on 80 thousand pages of documents.

context one must draw attention to the great variety of political models in Europe. There are many rival political and institutional solutions which national elites may adopt depending on the preferences of the dominant political actors in a particular country, for example the constitutional division of competencies among the various organs of power or the shape of electoral law.

However, the aforementioned indirect “EU effect” was in operation and a set of values and practical solutions was provided. These indirect forms of EU influence were also stimulated by various instruments of external political pressure such as the Copenhagen or Madrid criteria specifying the necessary conditions of EU membership.<sup>7</sup> In Poland where the directions of political transformation were often inconsistent and determination to implement them wavered, the mechanisms of reform supported by the European Union acted as a catalyser of political change and supporter of the principle of procedural democracy and civil society. They promoted free media, human rights and new modes of operation of the public authorities and their organs. As T. A. Borzel (2007: 52) aptly observed, EU influence in candidate countries often involved building new institutions in the local community rather than merely supporting institutional change.

Hence, as far as the development of democracy is concerned, we may speak of institutional isomorphism with respect to key political principles. This isomorphism helped to remove the fundamental discrepancies between Polish and EU standards. We can adopt this way of thinking to the new 1997 constitution which introduced institutions which were not rooted in Polish tradition, including court control of the constitution (the Constitutional Court) and independence of the central bank.<sup>8</sup> Other regulations were also introduced via model diffusion, such as barrage thresholds for parties and coalitions during parliamentary elections or the powerful position of the Prime Minister (the constructive confidence vote) adopted from Germany.

The “EU effect” can also be seen in the functioning of the mechanisms of re-distribution of political and legal resources. Initiation of the European integration process also began to change and redefine the political scene and the party system, the expert communities and interest representation system. From the very beginning of the transformation pro-European politicians and political groups received external political support and this was a powerful developmental incentive, particularly for liberal-democratic parties. New think-tanks and expert groups were formed. These

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<sup>7</sup> Four groups of criteria were decided on at the 1993 Copenhagen summit: 1) stable democracy, respect of human rights and protection of minority rights; 2) market economy; 3) the ability to meet the demands of EU competition and market forces and 4) the ability to assume responsibilities resulting from membership (implementation of *acquis communautaire*). The conclusions of the 1997 summit in Madrid also mentioned the need to adjust the candidate countries’ administrative structures to the demands of EU integration. Poland responded to these demands by founding the Office of the Committee for European Integration (UKIE) and the Ministry of Regional Development as well as European integration departments in central and local institutions.

<sup>8</sup> According to Y. Meny and Y. Surel (2007: 39–40), the decline of European democracies and the positive experiences with the US model were the factors which underlay the new constitutional developments in Western Europe based on a system of mutual blockades and inhibitions spelled out in “regulations executing human rights, constitutional courts, the territorial and functional division of power and the autonomy of central banks.”

were largely funded from abroad and they were a source of HR and financial support. They tried hard to popularise western political and economic standards. They became part of the network of external political, scientific and expert connections related to institutions which promote globalization, such as the International Monetary Fund or the World Bank.<sup>9</sup> Together, political transformation and European integration greatly modified the system of interest representation which, among other things, modifies the power of various actors and the form of political coalitions. The new economic rules increased the autonomy of entrepreneurs and the organization of businesses and their relations with the government and the administration as well as the trade unions.

This process took a specific turn in companies with foreign investor shares where most of the capital came from EU countries. The domestic and foreign business interface, combined with various forms of influence at the level of the political elite, became an important birthplace for financial and economic elites and part of the new urban middle classes which are now the most “Europeanized” segments of Polish society.<sup>10</sup> The first sector to obtain continual EU support (including financial support) was the NGO sector. NGOs began to cooperate with their western equivalents, particularly ones involved with ecology, social issues, human rights and women’s rights. A model example of the redistributive role of the EU, and one which is also important for the development of civil society, is regional policy and utilization of structural funds at the local level, something which the European Commission strongly encourages. This approach also has significant political consequences because regions and local elites which have considerable funds at their disposal with which to implement EU programs stand on strengthened positions in their relations with the government, a factor which sometimes contributes to decentralization against the central administration’s will.<sup>11</sup>

Against the background of the tendencies presented above, the “EU effect” seems to have been relatively weakest in the domain of socialization mechanisms. The process of adoption and internalization of new norms and standards of behaviour developed in response to Poland’s integration with Europe is selective and socially limited. “Opening to Europe” is most pronounced in those social groups which have relatively more forms of professional and social contact with European partners due to more frequent travel or educational contacts. Western researchers have drawn attention to the fact that in Central-Eastern Europe this type of socialization is largely limited to the elite and select political, administrative and economic communities (Goetz 2005: 262; Perez-Solorzano Borragan 2006: 144). Therefore, participation in the practicalities of EU integration has been and still is used to their own specific advantage by various public actors. The “EU effect” has been incorporated in the

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. the work on the Centre for Social and Economic Research (CASE) viewed in terms of “an internal western culture” in Polish economic culture (Brzeziński 2007).

<sup>10</sup> It is no coincidence that the economic press publishes rankings of the 500 largest enterprises operating in Poland, not Polish enterprises. Within the last few years nearly half of these businesses have been owned by foreign investors and many of them are parts of international corporation networks. Cf. Lista 500 [List of 500] (*Rzeczpospolita* 2008: 20).

<sup>11</sup> The prospect of EU structural funds was one of the main factors responsible for the development and implementation of regional policy and decentralization in Poland in the nineteen-nineties (Grosse 2003).

logic of public policy, the discourse and identifications of various political or interest groups by, for example, making this issue a new axis, an additional dimension of political difference, and also a point of reference for the construction of new political models, both positive and negative.

Because, for many years, the demands of EU membership in Poland legitimized the neoliberal economic reforms which a considerable portion of Polish society did not accept, critique of the post-1989 political transformation spread to a certain extent to the question of European integration itself. Due to the recent increased political influence of anti-political, populist and nationalist groups, the consensus of the elites concerning the best way to approach EU membership broke down in the nineties in wake of the critique of “imitative modernization.” The radical, neoconservative critique of the basic directions of transformation postulated introduction of a new political system and the Fourth Republic (under the banner of combating corruption and other pathologies) and as far as international affairs are concerned it legitimized its demands by vociferous rejection of “diplomacy conducted on our knees” in Polish-EU relations. In 2005–2007 the leaders of the governing coalition and their followers promoted a style of thinking and many values which competed with the dominant paradigms of European policy.

Official introduction of Euro-sceptic and anti-European arguments into public discourse emphasized the distinctness of Poland’s stance regarding the European Union and rejection of shared values and political ideas. The leading party’s conflict-generating style spread from the national level to the EU level. Efforts to develop institutions conducive to negotiation and consensus gave way to the aggressive rhetoric of defence of national interests, accentuation of the importance of traditionally interpreted Christian values and the Catholic church, postulates to reinstate the death penalty, condemnation of sexual minorities, criticism of foreign investors and disapproval of plans to introduce the euro. This policy evoked much controversy at the EU level and in EU countries and Poland gained the image of a country which rejected a number of European norms and values.<sup>12</sup> Poland now had much less chance of developing coalitions with other EU countries.

### **The Interactivity of Integration**

The “EU effect” is not a linear process. Nor is it unidirectional. The scale of change in Poland following political transformation and European integration is multidimensional, at both the national and the EU level. Adaptive processes are usually interactive. Participants learn to operate in new conditions. Olsen (2007: 473) observed that “leaders in former communist countries are becoming increasingly better at distinguishing between those aspects of European integration which are useful for their own political goals and those which are useless.” In Poland analogous reflections

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<sup>12</sup> For example, according to French political scientists, most of the political elites in Europe were against using the death penalty to fight with crime, viewing such an approach as “populist and unacceptable” (Meny & Surel 2007: 31).

can be applied to other political actors who have learned to “milk the Brussels sprout” and take advantage of the opportunities created by participation in the process of European integration (for example, of EU funds or the “EU path” in the system of interest representation).

The “EU effect” has become a catalyst of a variety of adjustment responses and adaptive strategies. Although the institutional and regulative changes were the most radical ones, they too are being modified attesting to the institutional and cultural uniqueness of Polish political structures. For example, it is possible to pass a new constitution changing the country’s political principles or to introduce major legislative changes in many spheres of public life.<sup>13</sup> In the post-1989 period political change not only created liberal or leftist “Euro-enthusiasts.” Groups of neoconservative and populist “Euro-sceptics” have also emerged on the political scene as well as pronouncedly anti-European nationalists and traditionalists (such as the Maria Family) which have developed new patterns of political mobilization based on critique of Poland’s integration with the EU. The practices of the government which governed in 2005–2007, backed by such groups, have shown that the “Europeanization” of public administration, including coordination of activities on the home front with supranational cooperation with the EU, may be subordinated to different priorities and can significantly change the direction of politics.

The scale of change in all the types of internal transformation outlined above also differs greatly. Even the most advanced institutional and regulative changes may be incomplete or fragmentary, for example implementation and execution of the law or the Polish judiciary. Inertia and resistance to adaptation to the EU can be seen in many areas. Powerful interest groups rallying around huge monopolies and well-organized branches are able to delay reforms or redirect them so that they suit their preferences rather than helping to reduce the discrepancies between the national and EU levels. Consecutive programs of reconstruction of coal mining, the power industry or national railways expose these tendencies (Gilejko 2006). Other sectors, for example agriculture, have adopted EU solutions (legal regulations, direct subsidies etc.) but because they lack sufficient modernization impetus they have failed to modify the existing structure and logic of behaviour of farms in any major way.

The interest groups listed above and the related socio-occupational communities know how to apply the “national path” in their relations with EU institutions. They are weakening the “EU effect” by influencing government agendas, obtaining legal privileges, creating barriers to market entry or transitional periods etc. Other professional groups, for example physicians, quote EU directives to demand pay rises. Another trump card which various occupational groups are using in their relations with employers is now the opening of labour markets for Poles in many EU countries, especially the United Kingdom and Ireland. Since May 2004 the possibility of legal gainful migration has structurally strengthened employees’ position and this has

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. the discussion of changes in the constitutional order introduced under the governance of Law and Justice in such areas as freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, relations between the state and the Catholic church, the right to privacy, assumed innocence, equality of rights, the attitude toward the Constitutional Court, or appointment and supplementation of constitutional organs (Sadurski 2007).

translated not only into wage increases but also into a change in entrepreneurs' and managers' treatment of workers, change of methods of human resource management and willingness to employ employee categories which had recently been discriminated against (for example women or the 40+ age group).

From employees' perspective, the adjustments to EU policy following the accession in 2004 have also led to many new legal solutions, for example establishment of European works committees in branches of international corporations, prohibition of mobbing or sexual harassment. Women's movements, meanwhile, have quoted EU standards of male/female equality in the workplace and women's rights (liberalization of abortion, artificial insemination etc.). Ecological organizations are now able to apply pre-accession and members' adjustments to promote protection of the environment and animal rights. The latest spectacular example of application of a combination of the "national path" and the "Brussels strategy" (with the help of the international Greenpeace organization) by ecologists is the debate on the ring road in the Rospuda valley. Consumer organizations, whose social and financial resources are weaker, make even greater use of the "European path." This "path" also plays a significant role in the activity of sexual minorities (cf. the verdict of the European Court of Justice concerning the Equality Parades or Eurodeputies' pronouncements).

### **The "EU Effect" and the Post-transformation Democracy Crisis**

A new question arises when we accept that the EU has played an important role in Central-Eastern Europe's transition to democracy and market economy in 2004. Can we be sure that the effect of the European Union on countries in this region "was unequivocally positive," asks Zielonka. Does the "EU effect" have any relation (and if so, what kind) with the symptoms Rupnik found in Poland, Hungary, Czechia and Slovakia in terms of negative common features and trends "which may have serious consequences for the condition of democracy and the future of European integration"? He mentions, for example, political instability and poor predictability of the main actors' behaviour, loss of trust in democratic institutions, the significant influence of populist groups and attacks on the main institutions of the liberal order; promotion of moral order based on religious and national values, allegedly superior to individual liberties; acute party polarization which rejects compromise, questions elite consensus with respect to economic policy and foreign policy oriented toward NATO and the EU, and scepticism toward European integration interpreted as introduction of a neoliberal, supranational and elitist project for political change (Rupnik 2007).

In 2006 the Gallup Institute reported that, compared with all other parts of the world, Central Europeans, despite their EU membership, are most sceptical of democracy as the best form of governance. Also, in its ranking of the quality of democracy, the Economist Intelligence Unit put only two Central-European countries in the "full democracies" group, Czechia and Slovenia. In this ranking Poland was categorized as a "flawed democracy" together with Estonia and Hungary (Kekic 2007). In this context, it has been hypothesized that post-communist Central Europe is going through

a phase of crisis of the policy developed in the nineteen-nineties. According to Ivan Krastev, one of the evident signs of this crisis is the coincidence of a number of political events: the street riots in Hungary in autumn 2006, Czechia's inability to form a stable government, the coalition of populists, nationalists and Mecziar's party in Slovakia and the rule of the Kaczyński brothers in Poland following the 2005 elections.

According to this hypothesis, rather than installing the "triumph of normalcy," the end of the transformation whose political caesura was the EU accession in May 2004 brought a profound identity and value crisis and ended the consensus concerning the future direction of political change. Joining the European Union coincided with rejection of neoliberal political correctness and a major redefinition of what was "political" and reversal of the trends which began in Western Europe in 1968. This redefinition, rooted in neoconservative values, assumed the form of "new anger policy" based on national solidarity and political nationalization, strong leadership and mobilization of the losers against the winners of the transformation. This approach is conducive to the creation of coalitions based on nonliberal consensus, conspiracy theories and the development of noncivic societies. It reinforces the distinction between "old" and "new" Europe (Krastev 2007). Similar descriptions also shed new light on ideas concerning the "EU effect" on the development of democracy in post-communist "new member countries."

We may hypothesize that not only issues relating to home policy but also the circumstances and contingencies of the EU accession have contributed to the post-transformation crisis of democracy in Central-Eastern Europe. The disturbing political tendencies in Poland (and several other countries in the region) can also be interpreted in terms of abreacting the "EU effect." This abreaction involves three issues in particular: 1) political and moral exhaustion of neoliberal transformation strategies; 2) emergence of a new neoconservative strategy, "the Polish road to modernization" and 3) reinforcement of the top-down, elitist nature of political transformation. For over a dozen years Poland implemented political reforms combining transition to democracy and market economy with the demands of EU integration under the "return to Europe" and "catching up with the West" banners. However, because of the particular way these reforms were implemented, "in the nineties we were a more stratified and a more meritocratic society but still without equal opportunities" (Domański 2000: 11).

Due to the economic hardships, mass unemployment and unaccepted social stratification, the transformation led to frustration, tension and conflict which, together with the rapid decline of trust in public institutions, created convenient premises for radical critique of the neoliberal strategy of "imitative modernization." The purpose of this strategy was to close the gap between Polish standards and the standards of developed western countries as soon as possible. The goal has hardly been achieved, however, and Poland (together with Bulgaria and Romania) is among the poorest countries in the EU. Populist and rightist parties have generalized their disappointment with the costs of transformation and adjustment to EU demands onto the entire process of European integration, ignited by the difficult conditions of accession. In the context of general relations with the EU and candidate countries' limited nego-

tiation power, even the governing elite feared the “potential long-term risk of turning Poland into a source of raw materials and cheap labour for EU countries” (Government Centre for Strategic Studies 1998: 231). It was feared that Poland would retain her peripheral position in her relations with “old” EU countries with respect to different interpretations of modernization, dependence theory, world system theory, and globalization (Szczepański 2006; Zarycki 2007). As a result, the “Euroenthusiasts” political position waned and support of Eurosceptic and anti-European parties increased. This trend culminated in the results of the parliamentary and presidential elections in 2005 which shoved pro-European parties into the opposition.

The critique of the previous combination of political transformation and European integration was reflected in the “Polish road to modernization” strategy based on the attempt to modernize the conservative identity and values rooted in the vernacular cultural code and the tradition of the Solidarity movement. This strategy was promoted and advocated by right-wing politicians, the Catholic church and Polish business (state-treasury-owned companies, the Ministry of the State Treasury), the majority of the rural population and the provinces. Advocates of the “Polish road to modernization” also endorsed the idea that this strategy included radical change to get rid of the spiritual and institutional legacy of post-communism, including promotion of historical politics which was meant to revive Poles’ national identity (Żukowski 2005; Jasiiecki 2007). On the international arena the advocates of this strategy criticized “old” Europe for its paternalistic treatment of Poland during the pre-accession period.

This attitude could be viewed as a form of candidate countries’ abreaction of the superimposed mechanisms of “Europeanization” and the outsider status, the procedures of supervision and control, the lack of partnership. All the more so that, as participants in this process observed, the European Union did not trust the candidates during the pre-accession negotiations and tried to delay expansion. The Polish side felt as if the EU was “withdrawing the reward for making the effort to change” (Mayhew 2002: 22–23). In addition to its definitely positive effects, the EU’s encouragement of democracy in Central-Eastern Europe also had a number of ambiguous or negative effects.

The mechanisms of “Europeanization” of post-communist countries outlined above partly confirmed the apprehensions concerning export of the EU deficit of democracy to Eastern Europe. One of the most prominent signs of this was reinforcement of elite dominance and the dissemination of social apathy in the public sphere. During the pre-accession period the “EU effect” reinforced the top-down nature of the transformation, a process which had two different political consequences. First, “Europeanization” mainly supported the autonomy of the executive and the administration (the government, the experts, the officials) who played a key role in the negotiations with the EU and gave them a more technocratic twist (cf. Goetz 2005: 272; Perez-Solorzano Borrigan 2006: 146).<sup>14</sup> This specific shape of the political

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<sup>14</sup> One example of this style was implementation of the PHARE program by the European Commission decision makers who preferred to deal with the Polish state administration because they did not trust the



process weakened the other political actors, including parliament and the nongovernmental organizations, who participated in the process of adjustment to EU demands only to a limited extent. They also delegitimized it due to corruption in the top echelons of the government, the institutions which decided how to use foreign assistance programs and also decided about the forms of transactions in which foreign investors participated (privatization, networking in expert and decision-making communities within government agencies, consulting firms, foreign financial institutions etc.).<sup>15</sup>

Second, development of new political solutions in Central-Eastern Europe coincided with institutionalization of the influence of actors who were not elected in direct elections. In addition to EU institutions,<sup>16</sup> these included international or global economic actors (huge corporations, stock exchanges, private banks, corporate auditors etc.), constitutional courts, central banks and the media. Although public space is becoming increasingly pluralist and complex thanks to their increasing incomes, the legitimization of politics “is often external rather than internal” (Zielonka 2006: 119). In Poland this can be seen in the exceptional role of the media which are largely controlled by foreign capital and also in the significance of economic experts or NGOs who usually refer to criteria and standards borrowed from international capital markets, EU directives etc. in public debate.

These political models are more akin to new form of “postnational democracy” than the traditional democratic institutions which inspired dissidents and oppositional movements in the final phase of communism. Their functioning brings Poland closer to the styles of thinking and action which are typical for developed countries. At the same time, in a poorly-rooted “new democracy,” these patterns marginalize a large portion of citizens who do not participate in these mechanisms (partly for generational reasons or due to deficits in cultural competence).

Vis-à-vis the relatively low level of education and material status, these contingencies are structurally conducive to the tangible presence of populist, authoritarian or traditionalistic attitudes in the public sphere, attitudes which are sceptical with respect to the modernization impulses resulting from integration with the EU and globalization processes. From the perspective of the directions of political transformation outlined above, relating to various aspects of the “EU effect,” the consecutive consequences (not all of which are easy to recognize) of Poland’s accession to the EU are very important. Several phenomena and tendencies which are going to have a significant effect on the form of Polish democracy one way or another are worth mentioning.

First, after 2004 the mutual effects of Poland and the EU have become more interactive and multidimensional. The unidirectional asymmetry of influence which was typical prior to accession has been modified, giving the Polish state and Polish

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new local and regional institutions and also because they had well-learned patterns of cooperation with governmental representatives (Grosse 2003: 19).

<sup>15</sup> Cf. J. Wedel’s (2001) excellent account of the mechanisms whereby people reaped the profits of their participation in the development of political and economic connections at the interface of western helping institutions and the government in Central-Eastern European countries in the nineties.

<sup>16</sup> The only supranational institution in the EU whose members are elected in direct, general elections is the European Parliament (this practice was introduced in 1979).

society greater freedom to exert empowered influence on the EU level and to cooperate with other EU members. This freedom may be exercised in various ways but the fact that it exists is attested to by, for example, Poland's active participation in work on the Lisbon Treaty, the vetoing of EU's trade negotiations with Russia, support for Ukraine's "orange revolution" or initiating the discussion on energetic safety on the EU forum.<sup>17</sup> These activities were motivated by the need to gain access to new instruments of influence on EU institutions and member states, thanks to which the directions and forces of the "EU effect" can be modified.<sup>18</sup>

Second, Poland's joining the EU has significantly expanded the social powerbase of "European socialization" and has consequently reinforced the horizontal dimension of integration (as opposed to its vertical dimension which dominated in the pre-accession period). Utilization of structural funds and direct subsidies, cooperation with EU projects, Polish firms' increased exports to EU markets, opening the EU labour markets, travel on a mass scale (to tour and to work), decisions to study and settle in EU countries are all examples of mechanisms which are helping to stop the perception of European integration as an elitist project benefitting only the chosen few. One important aspect of this is further intensification of contacts between Poles and citizens of other EU countries, economic and civic organizations, cities, universities or local communities, already initiated in the previous decade. EU membership provides qualitatively new institutional possibilities to set root and to dynamize the resources of democracy and civil society, grassroots fashion.<sup>19</sup> Per analogy with other EU countries, we may expect to see the feedback of such socialization on the shape of democracy in Poland (diffusion of political behaviour patterns, changes in the criteria of evaluation of politicians, new frames of reference etc.). Perhaps the effect was already anticipated by the outcome of the 2007 parliamentary elections. During the campaign, for the first time on such a grand scale, the winning party PO [Civic Platform] took advantage of the negative image of the leaders of the rival party PiS [Law & Justice] and their coalition partner which prevailed in the EU media and made a great effort to mobilize the Polish electorate in the UK and Ireland.

Third, it is still hard to say which mechanisms of institutional and regulative change will evolve in Poland. In most of the post-communist new EU countries, the tempo of reform, especially economic reform, dropped significantly following the accession due to the loosening of EU pressure. Instead, signs of political crisis emerged, for example in the Visegrad Group. This crisis was caused by abreaction of the costs of accession adjustment and the search for new ideas concerning the country's place and role in

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<sup>17</sup> A less familiar example of such activity was the lobbying campaign for antidumping duties on the import of frozen strawberries from China which Poland and Spain conducted successfully in 2005–2006 (Rotkiewicz-Chudzicka 2007: 28–30).

<sup>18</sup> This does not mean, however, that Poland had no influence whatsoever on EU affairs. Examples of the most significant signs of Poland's "assertive negotiation" include the decision concerning the weight of votes in the Nice Treaty (2001) and leading (with Spain) to the breakdown of the agreement concerning the European constitution in Rome in December 2003. According to some researchers, this was the price that "old" EU countries paid for the way they treated the candidate countries (Goetz 2005: 270).

<sup>19</sup> On the economic plane, this increase in resources can be seen in the private money transfers from Poles who are working in EU countries (an estimated 20 billion zlotys in 2007) and also in the fact that over 3.2 billion euro have been transferred within the Common Agricultural Program (Wiśniewski 2008: 28).

the EU. It looks as if marginalization of left-wing groups and domination of liberal-conservative values in Polish society will facilitate the implementation of projects referring to Anglo-Saxon experience (e.g., construction of a “second Ireland”) in the next few years. The international financial crisis which began in the USA in 2007 and which has eroded the doctrinal foundations of the American “global capitalism” model may boost preferences for other variants of democracy and market economy however (a more statist, populist one perhaps?).

Fourth, following EU accession Poland is redefining her national interest and her position in the constellation of European countries. She is also trying to modify the mechanisms of redistribution of political and legal resources implemented in the political system sphere (the project of the Fourth Republic) by Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz’s and Jarosław Kaczyński’s governments as well as efforts to increase state autonomy in relations with the EU environment (the Lisbon Treaty, the Charter of Fundamental Rights, the Northern Pipeline, the Rospuda Valley, the Eureko debate, the debate concerning the fusion of two banks—PKO SA and PBH, the postulate to limit the expansion of hypermarkets etc.). Prior to accession, one of the manifestations of this redefinition (partly motivated by geopolitical concerns, including Poland’s desire to play a more empowered role in international affairs) was the support for NATO intervention in Afganistan, participation in the Iraq war and the purchase of the American multi-purpose F16 aeroplane. Poland’s activity in the Commonwealth of Independent Nations (Ukraine, Georgia) and her agreement with the USA concerning construction of the American anti-rocket shield can be similarly interpreted.

### **Concluding Remarks**

Integration of the majority of Central-Eastern European countries had a considerable stabilizing effect in the pre-accession stage of development. Comparison of the “new EU countries” with other countries in the region with an analogous political history demonstrates beyond doubt that rejection of “adaptive Europeanization” did not foster the development of democracy. This is evident if we look, for example, at the political systems in Russia, Belarus, Ukraine or the Western Balkans.

The changes which have taken place in Central Europe within the last few years force us to question many of the assumptions of the transitological paradigm, however. This paradigm viewed EU membership as a factor conducive to modernization and protection against the return of authoritarian rule. Discussions of the stages of consolidation of the new systems or the development of stable “high quality” democracy suggest that these issues are much more complicated than assumed in the early nineteen-nineties. It follows from the critique of the superficiality of democracy, corruption, the weakness of political parties or the poor standards of public authority and the fragility of civil society that many systemic dysfunctions or pathologies still exist which stray from the teleological models of post-communist transformation (Carothers 2002; Jarosz 2004).

As far as Poland is concerned, the “EU effect” has been strongest with respect to institutional adaptation and changes in the regulations supporting the principles of procedural democracy (introduction of new political principles, adoption of EU law etc.). Due to the structural dominance of the EU, the “Europeanization” of Poland during the pre-accession period mainly consisted in adopting the role of recipient rather than author of EU policy. This raised fears that Poland’s position in the EU would be weak and that modernization would be shallow and would merely involve transition from the Unions “external” peripheries to its “internal” ones. Another negative dimension of the accession was the transfer of some of the mechanisms of EU democracy deficit to Poland, to name just two: reinforcement of dominance of the elite and social apathy in the public sphere. The technocratic negotiations with the EU strengthened the position of the government and the administration to the disadvantage of other political actors and this in turn strengthened the top-down nature of the transformation even further. Add to this weakness of the state and the social actors and the increasing activity of actors who were not elected in direct elections (the EU, media, mega-corporations etc.) who imposed external criteria of political legitimization which were very different from political traditions and more akin to “postnational” democracy.

Sociologists have drawn attention in this context to the specific circumstances which accompanied the integration of Poland (and other Eastern European countries) with the EU and the world capitalist system. These circumstances were like a “more than zero sum” game where one group of players (“the central countries”) gains more and strengthens its position whereas the other group of players (“the peripheral countries”) gains less or even loses (Wnuk-Lipiński & Ziółkowski 2001: 34–35). Like most countries in this region, Poland with her relatively low level of civilisation, economic and social development, is now playing a “semiperipheral” role in her relations with western countries, similar to the one played prior to the communist regime (Sosnowska 2004; Mokrzycki 2001; Berend 1996). This can be seen, for example, in the per capita national product, the low economic competitiveness and innovativeness, the high rate of poverty and social exclusion, the low rate of broadband Internet users as well as the low funding of research and development or health care (Weresa 2008; Wnuk-Lipiński 2004: 254–271).

From a slightly different theoretical perspective Poland’s position has been described in terms of the rational asymmetry of post-communism and globalization where European integration is a regional variety. This asymmetry has two dimensions: structural and temporal. The structural dimension involves Eastern Europe’s adoption of western systemic rationality and institutions, the consequence of which was the radical reduction of autonomous steering power in the “new democracies” and transformation of their economies into “incomplete capitalism” with its typical poor capacity to accumulate home capital and its permanent dependency on foreign preferential treatment and transnational decision centres if it is to grow (Staniszki 2003, 2006). One of the signs of this rationality is the dominance of foreign capital in the financial sector (the key sector on the global market) and the large share of foreign capital in the ownership structure of large enterprises and the consequent re-

duction of local firms to the role of subcontractors to the multinationals, for example in retail trade (Jasiecki 2007a). The equivalent in politics are institutions called ‘the soft state’ (to borrow the term from J. Galtung). These institutions cannot realize long-term programs of economic and social development or generate public goods (Hausner & Marody 2000; Hausner 2007). This form of rationality in Central-Eastern Europe often resembles the “follower democracies” which evolved in non-European developing countries that imported political models (Kohli 1997).

As far as the temporal dimension is concerned, the asymmetry of highly developed countries and post-communist countries is reflected in the different types of problems which dominate in each group of countries. In Western Europe, for example, this phenomenon is reflected in the preference for increased financing of research and development, investment in human capital or emphasis on protection of the natural environment whereas in Eastern Europe it is reflected in the financing of the roads and telecommunications infrastructure, regional development, the village and agriculture. At the EU level it is reflected in suggestions that the richest countries reduce their EU contributions or in motions to reduce resources for equalization of regional development. The “old” and “new” countries also differ in their approach to state and national sovereignty. The “new” countries which have only recently liberated themselves from Soviet dominance and begun to develop a new identity based on national tradition interpret sovereignty more conservatively than the Fifteen which have been integrating with Europe for a long time.

Hence it is not clear to what extent Poland will be able to take advantage of the opportunities for development provided by EU membership and to reduce some of the risks relating to her new status, for example massive migration of workers, including very well educated ones, to the “old” European Union (Jasiecki 2006). This lack of clarity is associated with the fear (felt not only in Eastern Europe) of not being able to cope with demands and threats generated by global capitalist centres such as the international financial crisis which began in the USA in the summer of 2007. The different approaches to ecological or social standards in countries differing in their level of social and economic development can be analysed in a similar vein. Such preferential differences, largely rooted in the fact that “old” and “new” countries are going through different phases of development, are an additional factor which is contributing to centrifugal tendencies in the EU such as the revival of nationalism, Euroscepticism and populism and the ensuing reluctance to expand European integration. How powerful this reluctance is could be seen in the results of the referendum in France and Holland which rejected the Constitutional Treaty or Ireland’s later rejection of the Lisbon Treaty. In this context the post-transformation crisis of democracy in Poland (and several other countries in the region) can also be interpreted in terms of abreaction of the “EU effect.” This abreaction is sparked by the feeling that the neoliberal transformation strategy of the nineties has burned out and a new, neoconservative strategy (“the Polish road to modernization”) has emerged. This latter strategy is trying to redefine the national interest following EU accession as well as the dominant identities and values. Whatever the final ideological and political shape of these attempts will be, they are being facilitated by the different

conditions of state functioning and the different forms and forces of EU pressure on the government. The political and institutional options are being broadened anew. Within the European Union this time.

In many ways the fact that Poland is a member of the European Union is having major impact on the development of democracy in this country. First, the very definition of “Europeanization” is changing. The mutual influence of the EU and Poland is gradually becoming more interactive and multidimensional. Before, relations were largely asymmetrical. Now Poland is gaining more opportunities to influence the EU and cooperate with other EU countries.

Second, new mechanisms are developing which are having a major effect on the development of the social powerbase for “European socialization” and are strengthening the horizontal dimension of integration of Poland and the Poles with the EU. The related diffusion of behaviour patterns will probably have an increasing effect (just like the educational boom had) on the shape of democracy in Poland and there will probably be greater receptiveness to new forms of democracy (deliberative, direct, associative, cosmopolitan, ecological etc.).<sup>20</sup>

Third, the relations between state institutions and the integration process are changing. According to Jurgen Habermas (2007), “the more dependent the core of the community is becoming on the peripheries, the less harmony there is between the striving to expand the Union and to deepen it.” When the community core becomes stagnant, such a dependency is a prerequisite for increased importance of the dynamic peripheries. At the same time, however, the increasing internal differentiation of the EU, enlarged as it is with new groups of countries, is going to force us to readdress the question of the future political and institutional form of the European Union, the question which the Reform Treaty was to have answered for a while.

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<sup>20</sup> For a discussion of new forms of democracy see Saward 2008: 144–166.

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