



## Right-wing extremism in the European Union Conclusions from the conference in Warsaw.

*By Kazimierz Wójcicki based on video recording of the conference*

### Panel 1: Thinking History as a Mirror of Ideology. A Polish Perspective

- Michał Broniatowski, JOURNALIST AT POLITICO.eu
- Marcin Celiński, JOURNALIST AT LIBERTÉ
- **Moderation:** Andrzej Potocki, SELFGOVERNANCE AND DEMOCRACY FOUNDATION

### Panel 2: Central European Mythology and Identarianism (The Case of Great Hungary)

- Anita VelicFabijanic, YOUNG DEMOCRATS, CROATIA
- Istvan Szerto-Radics, MAJOR OF USZKI, HUNGARY
- **Moderation:** Wojciech Maziarski, JOURNALIST AT GAZETA WYBORCZA

### Panel 3: Europe's far right and Kremlin's sources

- Tomasz Gajewski, FOUNDATION Po.Int,  
INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL POLICY AND SECURITY UNIVERSITY JANA  
KOCHANOWSKIEGO, KIELCE
- Gert Weisskirchen, GERMAN POLITICIAN, FORMER MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT, SPD
- **Moderation:** Kazimierz Wójcicki, PROFESSOR UNIVERSITY OF WARSAW

1. In many respects, the European Union is in crisis, associated with changes in civilization, which make it possible to conduct **a new type of war**, called an information (disinformation) war. The European Union is in a state of such war that modern Russia is waging against it. These activities **constitute an important background for the contemporary wave of populism**. Contemporary right-wing extremism is largely inspired and supported by the Kremlin.
2. Tools and new means of mass communication represent threats that are often identified as a technological issue (cyber-security). The second, no less serious threat are **the new opportunities for external and indirect influence on individual communities and thus on the international community via the Internet and social media**. This interaction takes place across national borders and cultural barriers. This issue should be considered primarily in terms of sociology and social psychology and through categories such as **extended participation, dispersed identities and social narratives**.
3. According to Habermas's classical theories of liberal democracy, the higher the participation in the political process, the more mature democracy is. The impact of the Internet suggests looking at the issue of participation in a new way. Experience in recent years has shown that other societies can be influenced at relatively low cost (e.g. elections). The tools for such actions are not only fake news, but also **intensive**



**meminisation<sup>1</sup> of the public space, creating broad narratives** (examples are the historical concepts - the Great Lechia, the anti-vaccination movement) having a strong impact on political processes. As a result of **extended and interactive participation, expression of divided identities** is an important phenomenon<sup>2</sup>, creating strong tensions in political communities.

The Internet has become an essential tool for communicating and gathering information for people all over the world. However, the knowledge about the Internet itself among its users is low. Therefore, there is little awareness of the threats that the Internet may pose both to individual users and to the functioning of states and developed economies based on modern technologies and Internet systems. An example is the Ukrainian crisis caused by a hacker attack, which showed what could happen in countries with higher technological development than Ukraine. Well-developed countries function only on virtual control, where there are no gears, buttons and everything happens in the network. An effective protection against burglary, data theft and even taking over infrastructure control, e.g. public transport, is only disconnecting the plug from the Internet, and only then can safety be assured. Such action would mean regression, not progression. Therefore, an effective protection against attacks on the network, which would be tantamount to ensuring the security of the society, should be a desirable measure of the highest priority.

- 4. Narratives of Russian influence policy.** The West is decadent (anti-religious, LGBT-controlled, etc.), the elites are corrupt, old, incapable of managing political processes, creating a "system" that should be overthrown. The word *system* in this propaganda-verbal configuration is not connected with the promise of a new system, but is intended only to mobilize social mass and anarchize political relations (Russian 3.0 warfare textbooks refer to the disintegration of the enemy).

The Internet provides an opportunity to create a narrative tailored to the needs of a disinformation war. An example is the theory of the Great Lechia, which in Poland has a group of several thousand supporters. The aim of proclaiming such theories is not to convince them, but only to disseminate them. Low level of education, especially historical knowledge, allows to conduct this hybrid war, which aims at disinformation and disintegration of the opponent. **Disintegration of society through disinformation.**

The scope of the virtual world's influence on the surrounding reality should lead to reflection, including asking the question - what people and money are behind these actions. A lot of money is being spent on a disinformation war, especially by Russia. With this money you can buy people, so the creators of virtual reality are not necessarily people acting for ideological reasons. This is because Internet activity has become a source of earning for living. And who is on the other side - there are also people - often frustrated, lost, lonely. Hence disinformation falls on fertile ground and easily sows its theories.

Attempts to straighten and explain with the use of facts and arguments on the Internet lead to an escalation of fake news and to presenting the European Union as communist and homosexual, which affects, for example, Polish, true patriots and Catholics who expect such confirmation of their theories. It turns out that there is a much greater need for simple answers describing the complex dependencies of the modern world than for research, analysis and facts. Reducing vulnerability to this hostile influence is difficult and the only way seems to be through education.

<sup>1</sup>Meminisation - presenting the world through a meme

<sup>2</sup> (F. Fukuyama, *The Great Disruption: Human Nature and the Reconstitution of Social Order*, translated from English by Hanna Komorowska and Krzysztof Dorosz, Warsaw 2000, published by Bertelsmann ŚwiatKsiążki)



5. **The neo-imperial ideology** has deep roots, which can be found in Russian thought in response to the collapse of the Tsarist Russia and the crisis of the Russian empire at that time. It is worth noting how important a figure in the development of this thought was, among others, Alexander Ilyin, an emigrant living in the West after the First World War, who in the conditions of the 1920s and 1930s created a utopian vision of great Russia with clear sympathies for Nazism. In Ilyin's writings, Russian society dominated over the others, and the word "race" was replaced by the word "spirit". This is a political mysticism in which Russia is presented as a separate, higher civilisation - which by other thinkers was described as Eurasianism<sup>3</sup> - which, because of its values, is subject to external attacks. This idea was also reflected in the circles of some Russian dissidents already in the 1970s and 1980s, such as Lev Gumilov. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the crisis of the 1990s refreshed this mindset and made it topical for the Russian political elite. This was confirmed by the fact that Ilyin's body was brought to Moscow after 2000, where he was buried in the Moscow cemetery in the presence of Russian President Putin<sup>4</sup>.
6. The intensifying theory of **German submissiveness to Moscow** and the claim that Germany is a state that is acting to Russia's advantage, that promotes Russian interests in Europe, has been gaining momentum for some time now. We observe this phenomenon on the Internet, especially among young people. This is only one side of the puzzle. We are witnessing a series of dramatic simplifications describing how the world functions, in which Russia plays out everything, where Germany, hand in hand with Russia, smashes the European Union, where Germany, hand in hand with Russia, once again places Poland in a geopolitical crumple zone.

Germany remains a very important, if not the most important European partner for Poland. It is therefore puzzling why AFD, an unambiguously nationalist group, meets with such broad support in Poland.

If AFD gains significant strength within the German political system, it will become part of a broader context of renationalisation of politics among EU member states, which from the point of view of relations with Poland will be an extremely negative factor, but this is not seen by its Polish supporters.

Without cooperation with Germany, Poland is not able to maintain a stable position in Europe. The party influencing the development of the situation in Europe from outside has perfectly analyzed and recognized lines of argument. These include, among other things, the issues of old grudges, which are not justified today. Incitement could fuel international conflicts.
7. **Conclusion:** The European Union is facing serious problems with social change as a result of the current breakthrough in civilisation. Analysing these changes, we cannot ignore the war that Russia is waging against the West because of its neo-imperialist ambitions. The fundamental values of European culture and freedom in the process of European integration after the Second World War are being called into question.

<sup>3</sup>Eurasianism - a political movement created at the beginning of the 20th century in the environment of Russian "white immigrants"

<sup>4</sup>T. Snyder, *The Road to Unfreedom*, published by Znak Horyzont, Kraków 2019