Institution and Political Behaviour

Edmund Wnuk-Lipiński, Living Standards and Voters’ Behaviour

This article attempts to answer a question that sociologists, political philosophers, and primarily politicians have been concerned with for years. How are the living conditions and political attitudes interrelated? The author puts the question more broadly: To what extent can political attitudes be explicated by the individual’s overall material standing? The empirical background for the article has been provided by the researches „Poles 90”, completed in the current year in a countrywide sampling, and by political declarations of three presidential candidates (L. Wałęsa, T. Mazowiecki, and S. Tymiński) as a starting point in the analysis of their electorate.

The author winds up with the statement that membership of each electorate can be interpreted in terms of economic variables only to a small extent. The data suggest that the reasons of support granted to those candidates should be searched for in the sphere of axiology, structural conditions, and dangers to group interests connected with the place in a social structure, which is not identical with the level of incomes obtained.
Radosław Markowski, The Polish Non-Voters

The article takes up the problem — one very essential in Poland — of large social groups staying away from the polls. It considers one aspect of political apathy — its behavioral dimension — i.e. the voters' abstention; this refers to the whole three-year period of changes in the system.

The scale of participation in the country's political life is determined by the following factors: affluence of the numerous middle class; the existence of a network of mediating institutions (associations, clubs, parties) which perform a politically moderating and activating role; and the development of mass media. Of much importance is also the type of parliamentary democracy and the "complexity" of state institutions — and lastly, local communities.

The article describes the abstention by reference to "objective" factors — the place of individuals in the social structure. The results obtained indicate that the Polish non-voter resembles his Western counterpart, and elements of actual status seem crucial in a voter's activity or passivity.
Free parliamentary elections have been held for the first time in over six decades. The coming months and years will certainly see many insightful papers published on each element of the ballot, electoral campaign and conditions of the competition over the seats in Lower and Upper House. Before this happens, the author wishes to present a preliminary analysis of the elections. He proceeds from the election result to the actual membership, characteristics of those voting for the major political groupings, a change in the preferences during the campaign and the changed political scene a year after presidential election. The elections unquestionably terminated an extremely important epoch in Poland’s history — a period of the society loyally consolidating in a movement to reject an old, communist system of power and management. Over the past two years, some members of the movement have left the political scene, actuated chiefly by disenchantment with the developments. The active ones divided their votes not between two camps, but a dozen or so parties. Even though most votes of the active society went to groupings stemming from the Solidarity camp, the tremendous differences in the programmes and mutual conflicts lead to the conclusion that the civic social solidarity is now history.
Philosophy and Theory of Politics

Maria Szyszkowska, Legal Compulsion as Moral Basis

Living in a state calls for organizing decisions of a universal and imperative nature. One cannot draw a line between individuals' personal and public life. The state can concede each individual some zone of freedom, in which one acts freely and even wilfully. When going beyond the zone, the individual violates some social order. However, nonconformist behaviour, which is conducive to internal development and usually abides by moral norms, only causes the society some inconvenience without posing any dangers. Although so different, the moral and legal norms have one target: regulation of people's coexistence. Some philosophers, e.g. Rudolf Stammler, maintain that morality implies some good will in observance of regulations. At any case, the assumption that law be derived from morality is controversial. The separateness of the two spheres rules this out. There is also a clash of opinions regarding the ultimate foundations for a legal and moral order.
Stanisław Mocek, Ethics and Politics. Attempt at Systematization of Research

The primary objective of the author of this text was to collect and reconstruct the notable opinions in the controversy over relations between ethics and politics. For analytical purposes, the author discriminates the Machiavellian trend, the pragmatic trend as ethics of responsibility, the religious trend as the ethics of conviction, and the trend of political activity free from violence (non-violence). The author is aware that the characteristics of each trend presented in the article describe the most meaningful, though certainly not all, conceptions. They originated from quests for model political behaviour patterns related some patterns of ethical presence in politics. This set of topics, believes the author, should be made a theoretical basis for further researches in this field which are bound to begin in the near future.
Krzysztof Pałecki, Dynamics of Political Change or the Need for a New Paradigm

The debacle of communism exposed with unprecedented vividness the obsolete interpretations of political changes underway in Central and Eastern Europe. In most cases, not a political change but a social change "at large" is put to analysis, and not a change in the political system but the adaptive reactions of latter to the external changes in progress, i.e. in the economic system.

The author propounds a new (different) paradigm of interpretation of the dynamics of those changes by reference to the conception of political attitude, conceived as a specific variety of social attitude, and to the conception of social subjectiveness. The latter needs to be expounded not solely in objective (material) categories of potential self-realization of the subjects of social (political) life, but also in the categories of the citizens' political consciousness - their claims regarding the degree of their subjectivity. It is in the latter sphere (political consciousness) that changes dynamize the system of attitudes of political power in that they affect the dimensions of assymetrical subjectivity in the rulers and the ruled. International, economic etc. situation can certainly stimulate or vitally hamper transformation of political consciousness, yet without such transformation no change in rule (political change) is possible. An increase or decrease in the scale of citizens' social subjectivity and decision-makers' subjectivity is interdependent, and is subject to fluctuation, somewhat comparable to the pendulum movement. With all possible "objective" restrictions, (unless the "derangement" of the social system leads to its annihilation) the process will repetitively recur throughout the changing historical developments, culminating in formation of definitive systems of power (political regimes). Author proposes that the process that forms this paradigm be termed the political transition.
In methodological characterization of the science of politics, of importance is the fact whether the learning it comprises is represented by a set of tasks, or not. This view of development of the Polish science of politics allows to distinguish its two models: the model of traditional political science and the model of theoretical political science. These two are
parallel. The methodologically essential differences resolve themselves into the few points: 1. The manner of description of the object under examination. In traditional political science — according to the criterion of object and method, applicable exclusively to the main divisions of sciences; in theoretical political science — according to essential qualities, forming the adequate class of phenomena. 2. Cohesion of the notional apparatus: the terminological and notional confusion versus definitive associations of research categories. 3. Sources of methodological directives: the common vision of the world and man versus the theory of politics. 4. The place in a more extensive system of knowledge: interdisciplinary relations. 5. The internal development logic: the principle of dialectical negation versus the relation of generalising correspondence. 6. The impact of valuations on the research process: direct impact on the choice topics, methods and formulation of statements versus the indirect impact, a theory-controlled research.
History of political thought is handled by representatives of five branches of science: historians, lawyers, sociologists, philosophers, and political thinkers. The latter’s specific approach demands that when working from the analysis of nature of political phenomena, one needs to ask what endows any political ideas with political character. The political thinker focuses on ideas that he considers political, showing them in functional dependence on existence of social groups. Only in this way is he in the position to discriminate his specific object of cognizance and outline a distinct conception of investigation in this field.

The fact that the political thinker stands under an obligation to examine political ideas in relation to the accepted worlds of ideas, justifying the political existence of great communists, makes it imperative to adopt a comparative perspective. To the political thinker, ideas do not exist of themselves but as part of worlds of ideas already in existence, or as a reaction to those — they are thus an attempt at reconstruction of change of knowledge that a society is possessed of.
Janusz Stefanowicz, Is the „Cold War” Likely to Come Back? ........................ 119

The author begins with the statement that the cold war of our day has had its historical precedents, its fundamental syndrom being a mutual dissatisfaction of the sides with the existing status quo, coupled with the impossibility of any change thereof, which frequently happened in the past. Can the similar situation recur in a foreseeable future? The author proceeds his reply in the negative to the title question with an analysis of the three strata of conditions which form the phenomenon called the cold war. First, the „roten compromise” which the Yalta agreement turned out to be, allowing Stalin’s perverted and biased interpretation of the accord. Second, the emergence of the „bipolar” system as a modern version of a balanced forces politics, which constitutes the prerequisite, structural condition of a cold war. And third, a total (including the systems of value level) character of confrontation between the East and the West. Cold war, concludes the author, is only imaginable in an international system where the classically sovereign states reign supreme, whereas the modern day sees them growing dependent on one another, and it sees — alongside of the states — other subjects take part in international relations — primarily individuals and minor communities, which locks out the totalitarian structures prerequisite for a cold war to begin.
Wojtek Lamentowicz, The Atlantic and European Options in Quest for a Central and Eastern Europe Security Model

With disbandment of the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union, not only vanished one of the two poles of the European and world security system, but also the former satellites of the Soviet Union have been faced with a new challenge. The syndrom of old and new hazards to safety of Czecho-Slovakia, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Albania, Slovenia, and desintegrating Yugoslavia, as well as to Poland’s safety, comprises many elements of doubt. The author of the article has undertaken to analyze them. Our attitude, believes he should be free of illusions,
yet open and self-assured. We should approach gradually and without haste, yet in a consistent and complex way, aware that neither does Poland need to be Europeanized, nor Europe except Polonization. Growing dependence on Europe would prove as fatal as the idea of Poland’s religious and cultural mission in Europe. To evade it, the internal coordination of foreign policies would need to be consolidated (which is incumbent on president, prime minister and foreign minister) in order that in spite of its multiparty system, Poland could finally reach a stage where there is only one — supraparty and adequately consistent — state foreign policy. Free debate should not end up in wilfulness, nor should the natural variety of political orientations be ignored.
Desintegration of the system of really existing socialism, resultant on the cold war spell in East-West relations, makes many observers of international political scene jump to over-optimistic diagnoses and forecasts on a post-communist world. One could say that the potential jeopardy of outbreak of an international high intensity conflict (nuclear war between two superpowers) has been recently replaced by a wide gamut of tensions and low intensity conflicts. However, they too pose a risk to Europe’s peaceful and stable development. Some of the dangers are qualitatively new and are related to overall progress of civilisation and emergence of new conditions, and some have been defrosted as a result of the fall of communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. As history certainly never recurs, the theses of going back to the past should not be taken literally. Even as many conflicts, preserved for over forty years by Europe’s division, are coming back to life, their neutralisation will largely depend on the levels of safety and stabilization in new Europe.
The Polish railway system is much inferior to those in most European Community countries, both in the standard and scope of its services as well as the quality of performance. Compared to the EC area, Poland’s transport infrastructure is much lower standard and less developed. Things are similar with the rolling stock utilised in various types of transport, with its lower parameters and much inferior state of repair. This major obstacle in development of Poland–EC cooperation should be removed in the coming years in a systematic, and possibly prompt, way. Gradual alignment of Polish transports to fit the requirements imposed on this sphere of economy in EC countries is likely to be seen as a condition of Poland’s obtaining EC membership in future. This applies primarily to the rail and car transport, as well as aviation and inland navigation.