Radosław Markowski, The Polish Non-Voters (part 2)

In the second part of the article the author focuses primarily on the relations between social consciousness and political participation. Among the major reasons directly influencing the behaviour of the electorate, in authors's opinion, are the following factors: public issues, psychological constitution and important political attitudes, opinions, decisions as well as general political attitudes and socio-demographic features. In the final part of the article the author presents a model of elements determining participation of the Polish voters. They are similar to their contemporary counterpart living elsewhere in the countries with the so-called 'stable democracies' — concludes the author after Lipset's findings (1960). The passive politically Polish voter is an outsider on three planes; cognitive, affective and behavioral. It is again so that the Polish non-voters believe that the politics have no influence on their individual life whatsoever. This political passiveness correlates strongly with general lack of knowledge about the external world. Political participation is ardently related to social participation. To the above should be also added such elements as attitudes towards politics as decisions, experience, opinions. In other words, not only the description of whom the voters are but also what do they think. Summing up his article, the author draws the conclusion that the Polish political scene is influenced by those satisfied with the process of transformation, though not with its final effects. By an act of voting they support radical changes, not always conforming with democratic procedures, which seem to them relatively simple mechanisms involving rather power and authority than multidimensional analysis.
Michal T. Staszewski, Legal and Polity Dilemma of the State—Church Relations in Poland

According to the parochial statistics 95 percent of Poles in 1989 declared themselves as Roman Catholics. Late autumn of that year 90 percent of them placed the Church on the top of the hierarchy of institutions they trusted. After 1989, under new political conditions, which gave the Church a right to institutionalize its position (legal regulations), global 'religiousness' has declined, also in the declared forms. According to the statistics published by the Polish public opinion poll (OBOP) the trust in the Church as an institution has drastically fallen to 72.5 percent in 1990 and to 59 percent in 1991. The phenomenon of this situation the author analyzed in the chapter on the 'religiousness' of the society and its consequences. The stand which was taken by the Polish bishops in the Communiqué from the Plenary Conference of the Episcopate in February 1990, before the presidential elections, in favour of Lech Wałęsa, the Episcopate Stand on the parliamentary Elections and the stands taken on the social role of mass media clearly show that the Church wishes to play an important role in the public life. The second part of the article, called "Fundamental issues" deals with the most controversial part of the Church-state relations, that is, what role should the Church play in a modern, democratic system. The third and the last part of the article focuses on the Church—state relations as reflected in the new constitution projects prepared by the Sejm, Senate and parliamentary groupings. The author examines all the projects from the point of view of the modern democratic state. The new constitution is, and still will be, widely discussed document where all the pros and cons have to be carefully balanced.
Sylwester Wróbel, Dynamics of the Political System by Talcott Parsons

Political Process and Political Change

The author undertakes an effort to reconstruct the way T. Parsons understands the dynamics of political system. The author's departing point is presenting a definition of the political system, political process and political change. T. Parsons in his early works treated the political system as an analytical category. The author makes an attempt at generalizing his findings for the contemporary understanding of politics. T. Parsons treats the political system in a very narrow way though. Its content serves reaching the goal and allocation of values for the society through the authority and decisions. Thus political life is reduced to the direct relations of power versus the state. Evolutionary approach, which to much stronger effect appeared in his later works, influenced T. Parsons' understanding political changes. It can be clearly seen in his concept of the three stages of evolution and of revolution as a vehicle for changes in modern societies. It is also reflected in describing the political system as a stable, coherent and balanced system. No matter whether we deal with circulation, growth, differentiation or the structural change, the main problem remains — how to keep the system in balance. These changes do not mean, in his opinion, the development but they mean deviation from the normal functioning of the system. The consequence of such assumption is much stronger emphasis on its integration. The system, as understood by Parsons, benefits from it because the main objective of the existence of the political system lies inside of it.
Krzysztof Murawski, Political Dimensions of the Civic Society

The notion of the civic society of the pre-modern states was mainly a political postulate focusing rather on an utopian picture of ideal democracy than reflecting real political changes. The political opposition in the Central and East European states follow that path presenting herself as a natural representative of all interests of their own societies. The author analyzes this phenomenon in the following groups: anti-political opposition, political opposition, quasi-political opposition and civic society as an political entity. The common denominator for the author's comment is differentiation between civic and non-civic polities. By the civic polity the author understands the political system serving all subjects (or at least the overwhelming majority), assuring them a minimum of security and commonwealth. Non-civic polity serves those ruling exclusively. The civic principle is based on two universal elements: ability to overcome particular interests by those in power and the possibility of wide inclusion of other groups and individuals to share responsibilities. The general "weakness" of the political system in Poland, in author's view, is that the political elites are elevated (get recognition) by sharing the power (government structures) or taking part in the parliamentary opposition. In other words, it is the state that creates political elites. The elites do not create the state. The author concludes his article with the question: what kind of activities, what features are required in the present situation from the new political elite in the making, to the re-introduction of a normative arrangements, so essential for regulation of social life?
Andrzej Bukowski, Citizens Committees — the Movement of the Epoch of Changes

To understand the role of the citizens' committees in Poland creates a lot of problems for the researcher. Once an unique Polish phenomenon, a product of the Polish revolution, one of the most important institution of the first stage of political reforms, disappeared. It disappeared as rapidly as it came into being. There are still three notions close to each other although meaning different things. The Citizens' Movement, was a loose structure which emerged after re-registration of "Solidarity" trade union. Thousands of local territorial citizens organizations cooperated with the Citizens' Committee by L. Wałęsa or Citizens' Parliamentary Club. The Movement of Citizens' Committees structures were the local structures organized in an all-Polish network supplementing or sometimes replacing the "Solidarity" trade union branches. Citizens' Committees were the most general of them all. They were referring to the tradition of the 19th century social movements. With this name are linked all concrete local social activities, spontaneous actions, aimed at overcoming the residues of totalitarian rule, introducing democratic and independence values. Further the author analyzes relations between the citizens' movement and "Solidarity showing the elements shared together and pointing out differences. The article focuses also on the attitudes of citizens' committees towards the challenges of transformation, reviews the citizens' movement from the local and central perspective. In conclusion the author writes that the challenge facing the
citizens’ committees and their internal evolution was not a major factor of their disappearance from the political scene. The main reason was, in author’s opinion, a need to answer contradictory expectations of institutional and non-institutional structures. The departing of those two latter, so typical for post-communist states, broke the syncretic structure of the movement and destroyed its force and dynamics.
Andrzej Siciński, Elites and Masses in the Post-Communist States — Polish Problems

The transformation taking place in the countries of the former socialist block are characterized, among others, by facts that many social processes, which in Western Europe lasted centuries or decades, happen here much faster. The author focuses on emergence of the civic society and process of exchange of political elites. The first part of the article deals with the way from masses towards civic society and the second part with the process of change of elites. In author’s findings the most important problem of the new deal in Central and Eastern Europe is incoherence of culture inherited after forty years of the communist rule. New hierarchy of values and traditions does not work yet, and referring to the pre-war system fails as well. It all leads to a kind of dramatic vicious-circle: the lack of civil society makes difficult the creation of reacquired political elites. Lack of the elites slow down re-emergence of the new society. To be optimistic though — concludes the author — despite all odds there are new civic societies emerging in the Central and Eastern Europe. Evidence of this is the growing number of institutions, organization, charity activities from below. If the civic society emerges in this part of the world, it will be entirely new qualitatively different version of the existing one. It may form an attractive option not only for the inhabitants of this part of Europe.
Grzegorz Ekiert, Democratization Processes in Central-Eastern Europe. Theoretical Approach

This article explores various dimension of the issues of transition to democracy in Central-Eastern Europe, focusing on the question of how past experience shapes the process of political change and on the limits of democratization in the region. The first part reviews scholarly debates on the relation between the political crisis and processes of democratization in the region, arguing that the new analytical categories are needed to account for different dimensions of the current transition process. The second part proposes a new framework for analyzing changing relations between the party-state and society across time and in different state-socialist societies. The third part examines some recent political development in countries of the region in order to identify those factors that may contribute to or impede a possibility of the transition to democracy in these countries. It concludes that in all Central-East European countries the rapid collapse of party-states and the multidimensional social, political and economic crisis has initiated a parallel process of diminution of power of both the state and civil society, which may significantly endanger the transition to a democratic political order.
The author contributes to the academic discourse on what is and what should be the "civil society" in Poland. It is not only a purely academic dispute. Its effects may strongly influence the theoretical approach to politics during the transition from the socialist to the capitalist system of many Polish politicians. To enrich the definitions drawn lately by J. Staniszkis and P. Ogrodziński, the author analyzes an antic "civil society", western civil society of late middle-ages and of modern times. On the ground of economic independence and military democracy an antic prototype of "civil society" was formed, including only those being free and having political rights. The forthcoming centuries modified freedoms and rights of state subjects different way. John Lock's idea of freedom and rights equal to every human being formed within the modern frames for the 'civil society'. Bourgeois revolutions put an end to the absolute power of monarchs and new constitutions brought a new qualitative change to a position of societies within their own states. To be a citizen was not a privilege any more. Paradoxically enough in pre-modern epoch the class differentiation was a necessary condition to form the nucleus of the civil society. Although
democracy at its early stage was a system benefitting those elected, the elitist privilege, it performed a duty of executing freedoms and liberties comprised in constitutions at the same time. The article gives a review of the paradigm of attitudes and virtues of what is recently called “the civic culture of the society”, and what created political culture of the given period of history of mankind.
Janusz Stefanowicz, Polish Security Ultima Thule

Ultima Thule was a Roman name of the northern corner of the world, which they thought, was an island. She was fascinating but so distant that did not present to the Romans neither a challenge nor a promise-land. To large an extent it seems to be true for contemporary Polish foreign and security policy as far as the Nordic region is concerned. There are obvious gains of mutual cooperation in those fields. To convince the reader about advantages steaming out of close relation with this region the author defines what the Nordic region (Norden) is in geographical terms. After J.Galtung and J.Oberg author lists nine nordic nations, among them: Denmark and Sweden, the "root pair", states that have never been conquered by foreign sovereigns; Norway, Finland and Iceland, which gained independence only in the 20th century; islands Alands, Faroe and Greenland, still under foreign rule; Eskimos living in arctic parts of Greenland, Norway, Sweden and Finland. Eight of the Nordic nations are sovereign and autonomous and form the Nordic Council. This structure, which is based rather on values than on institutions, is exposed to many new challenges due to transition processes taking part in Central and Eastern Europe, as well as to a global re-arrangement of international relations and security issues. The author agrees with O.Waever, who predicts that nordic region will support strongly creation of the Baltic region, which might perform a function of the bridge between old and new Europe. Poland should watch closely the development of this idea, concludes author of the article, trying to give its own original input to the new concept of future cooperation in the Baltic region.
Shlomo Avinieri, The End of the Cold War and Its Effects on Israel and the Middle East

The end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union have already had a profound impact on the Middle East. This can be seen on a multiplicity of levels, from the strategic to the cultural. On the strategic level, the most significant has been the de-globalization of the Arab-Israeli conflict once the radical Arab side has lost its Soviet patron. This made the road to the current peace negotiations in Washington D.C. possible. The election of Bill Clinton for a president of the United States has further ramifications on these developments. On the cultural level, which is obviously less visible, the re-establishment of links between Israel and Eastern Europe has refocussed attention in Israel on the deep roots of many aspects of Israeli life in Central and Eastern Europe, an will have far-reaching effects on the unfolding process of Israel’s construction of its identity and culture. Both processes need to be examined in some detail.
Challenges and Risks Thinking about the future, fortune-telling, attempts at foreseeing future of the nation, an individual, has accompanied the human kind since the earliest days. Looking into future should not 'overlook' learning from the past though. To make learning by experience more effective we should create a sort of the operational code, states the author. Such code has been developed since 1950s by the 'school of political realism'. The 'school' was founded to study foreign policy and different phases of the Cold War. The theoreticians of international relations worked on simulation models of the states involved in the nuclear crises. Since Morgenthau the revolutionary theory, which would comprise the adequate operational theory in that sphere has not appeared. Existing paradigms have not developed their predictive functions what resulted, among other things, in inability to predict the effect and results of Cold War. The author proposes that the theoreticians of international relations should pay more attention to this phenomenon, without concentrating on the question how it happened but rather why and in which direction the changes may go.
Christopher Coker, An End of American Century

The last decade of this century challenges political scientists to form theories concerning the role superpowers played in the international relations. The collapse of the Soviet empire raised the question of what the 20th century meant for the United States of North America, the sole winner of the Cold War. The author of this article follows that track. With help of the model created by Philip Windsor, the author investigates whether the 20th century can be called an American era. The model is based on three different ways of looking at the 20th century. The first one assumes that it is the continuation of the 19th century, a supplement to what has not been accomplished. Since that century was founded on the Enlightenment faith in progress, many people, including scholars and politicians, believed that the next century would also follow that pattern. The second one tests whether the human-being can be independent from history. The thesis of Marx about the victory of communism and an end of history, as well as the American confidence in free market economy, which will create a new type of men, were widely shared. The lessons learned from the World Wars, Cold War confrontation and exposure to the global international politics showed to the American political elites that their fate is not in their hands alone. It meant that America changed her role from the creator of the historical factors to an actor on the political scene, one of many. The third way creates an apocalyptic vision of future based on the worst experience learned by people exposed to the atrocities of the 20th century wars. The growing anti-American feelings were born on a ground of widely shared believe that the Americans are not going to defend the world against communism but Americanize it in the name of capitalism instead. The author concludes that although there are still more years ahead, it is definitely an end of the American century. The United States will remain a superpower but its external functions will be incorporated into a global security system. Will the 21st century be Western instead? The difference of opinion of the governments about the leadership of the Western world after the end of Cold War makes the author sceptical. Perhaps it is "the moment of the West" that goes down in history.
Guillermo O’Donnell, Helen Kellogg, On the State, Democratization and Some Conceptual Problems. Latin America and Some Post-Communist Countries

The article contains ideas summarily developed during meeting and intellectual exchanges of the project "East-South System Transformation", which are being further developed in the book. This article consists of four parts. The authors focus their attention on the state and new democracies, on some aspects of the crisis of the state, on certain economic crises and present some partial conclusions. The authors pose a question mark. Is there an alternative to the crises depicted? The prisoner’s dilemma has powerful dynamic: invocation to altruism and national unity, as well as policy proposals that assume wide solidarities and firm identities, will not do. If there is a solution, it probably lies in finding areas which are important in their impacts on the overall situation and in which skilled action can lengthen the time horizons of crucial actors. The best known invention for such achievements is the strengthening of social and political institutions. But under the conditions depicted here this is a most difficult task. In the contemporary world, the joyful celebration of the advent of democracy must be complemented with the sober recognition of the immense difficulties that its institutionalization and its rooting in society must face. As Haiti, Peru and Thailand have shown, these experiments are fragile. Also, there are no immanent historical forces which will guide the new democracies toward an institutionalized and representative form, and to elimination of their "brown areas" and the manifold social ills that underlie them. In the long run, the new democracies may split between those that follow this felicitous course and those that regress to all-out authoritarianism. But delegative democracies, conclude authors, weak horizontal accountability, schizophrenic states, "brown areas" and low intensity citizenship are part of the foreseeable future of many new democracies.