Monika BANAŚ
Jagiellonian University in Kraków
monika.banas@uj.edu.pl

THE JAGIELLONIAN IDEA AS EXPRESSION OF POLITICAL CULTURE:
CORE CONSTITUTIVE VALUES AND THEIR POSSIBLE CONTEMPORARY IMPLEMENTATIONS

ABSTRACT   The article aims to discuss the concept of political culture as a powerful tool for shaping thoughts and actions of individuals and communities (societies). By elaborating on the Jagiellonian Idea (JI) – its specific features and implementation, the author seeks to provide answers to several questions including: what made the JI a vibrant political and social concept being undertaken over centuries by some politicians, social leaders, researchers and scholars – is it just an attractive narrative which recalls times when Poland was a powerful state or is it a realistic program still applicable to contemporary societies? What kind of features of the JI concept may be selected, adjusted and developed today in the international and intercivizational dimensions? If at all possible, thus by what kind of means and under what conditions? These and other aspects of the JI as a specific expression of political culture are the core of the article.

Key words: the Jagiellonian idea, political culture, values, identities

INTRODUCTION

The Jagiellonian idea is one of those phenomena whose interpretation often leads to intense disputes and sometimes even deeper divisions in – not only scientific – communities interested in history, politics or political culture. This idea refers to a special set of concepts which unify neighbouring nations as well as political and social structures by peaceful means. These concepts, implemented by Polish rulers, and directed primarily towards Lithuania, but also today's Belarus and Ukraine, took the form of, inter alia,

the unions of: Krewo (1385), Horodło (1413) and Lublin (1569) – with the latter seen as the crowning achievement of the unification processes. Although it is true that there were more legal acts aimed at joining the forces (above all political and economic, but also social and cultural) of the Kingdom of Poland and the Duchy of Lithuania, the three mentioned above played a decisive role in the history of the two nations. Their history, especially in recent decades, has become a subject the has been intensively researched, reinterpreted and often also revised. And not only in terms of new directions and approaches in historical research, but a different outlook of the observer belonging to another time – the beginning of the 21st century, when countries and nations: Poland, and to an even greater extent: Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine, can enjoy independence, after the fall of the USSR in 1991.

For Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia – former Soviet republics which shared the fate of Ukraine and Belarus, the regaining of statehood was associated with a sudden need to broadcast their own identity; emphasising that 'finally we are free', we have our own country, our own authorities – at least in the sphere of imagination/wishes of the citizens – independent of other external entities. In this context, examples of state-national or just state unification introduced by Polish rulers may have appeared as forms of symbolic violence from the perspective of the independent nations. They took place, however, as part of a peaceful merger, although they did carry the risk of gradually blurring the borders between the smaller nation and the Polish Crown, which was the initiator, scriptwriter and de facto director of the EU enterprise.

There were also, and there still are, many critics of the Jagiellonian idea on the Polish side. At the end of the 19th century, representative of the so-called Kraków historical school formed a group of greater and lesser sceptics, with Michał Bobrzyński, Józef Szujski and Stanisław Smolka at the forefront. They believed that the Polish Republic's involvement in eastern matters was unnecessary, which diverted attention from more important issues in the western part of Europe, where the cultures and countries with which Poland should cooperate were located.[1] The work of Józef Ignacy Kraszewski, an extremely prolific 19th-century writer, publicist and social activist, a continuator of the political thought of Adam Jerzy Czartoryski and a proponent of the Jagiellonian idea, was a counterweight to these critical views. The works of Władysław Konopczyński, which described the efforts of the Jagiellonians as an extraordinary undertaking whose benefits were not limited to Poland, while simultaneously pointing to flaws in the realisation of the project, carried a similarly positive message.[2]

In the 1920s a critical attitude was represented by Roman Dmowski and his notion of, as Andrzej Nowak puts it, a 'Piast' Poland – looking vividly towards the West rather

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[1]   A. Nowak, "Idea jagiellońska w polskiej pamięci i wyobraźni politycznej", in idem, *Strachy i Lachy. Przemiany polskiej pamięci 1982-2012*, Kraków 2012, p. 216; see also J. Maternicki, "Stanisław Smolka i powrót historiografii polskiej do mitu jagiellońskiego", *Przegląd Humanistyczny*, vol. 33, no. 1 (1989), pp. 83-101.

[2]   W. Konopczyński, "O idei jagiellońskiej", in idem, *Umarli mówią. Szkice historyczno-polityczne*, Poznań 1929.

than the East.[3] This view was generally shared by supporters of National Democracy, who saw Germany, rather than Russia, as a potential threat. Undertaking similar actions with Poland's eastern neighbours would therefore be unnecessary and counterproductive.

Józef Piłsudski, Poland's head of state in the years 1918-1922, and later the leader of the Sanation movement, promoted the Intermarium concept, which was based on the Jagiellonian idea. He believed it had the potential to secure the broadly understood interests of not only Poland, but also other Slavic nations. An active eastern policy was a necessary part of Piłsudski's plan, with the objective of building a coalition that could effectively face Moscow, which continued to operate in an imperial manner.[4]

The Jagiellonian Idea also attracted much attention in the following decades of the 20th century. A comparison of the benefits and losses resulting from implementing the unification of Poland and Lithuanian was carried out by the Cracovian historian and lawyer, Stanisław Kutrzeba. In a 1932 lecture entitled "The Character and Value of the Polish-Lithuanian Union", the author outlined the strengths and weaknesses of the union, including that of the Union of Lublin.[5] Among the advantages of this socio-political and religious arrangement, Kutrzeba lists, among other things, the military strengthening of both sides through combining forces, the opening up of Lithuania to values (including Christian values) flowing from the West, strengthening cultural and economic life, as well as raising the prestige of the unified state in the international arena.[6] As losses, the historian outlined, among other things, the neglect of western affairs (including attempts to secure Silesia) by the Crown, becoming entangled in conflicts with Russia, the moving of the Lithuanian nobility to the Kingdom of Poland which resulted in Lithuania being subjected to the power of magnate families. A delayed effect during the time of the latter was, as Kutrzeba writes, the degeneration of the democratic-aristocratic system.[7] The ideas of unification also returned to the historical and political discourse during the second half of the 20th century

The strategy of strengthening and deepening relations with Lithuania, Belarus, and especially Ukraine, was strongly supported in the 1960s and 70s by Juliusz Mieroszewski, a columnist of the Parisian *Kultura*, an émigré magazine commenting on the state of Polish culture, politics and society. Mieroszewski, who spent many years in emigration, far from his homeland, saw the fundamental role of Poland's alliance with, as he put it, LBU – Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine. Like Jerzy Giedroyć, the editor in-chief of the magazine, he saw this alliance as, on the one hand, a form of joint opposition to the

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[3]   A. Nowak, "Idea jagiellońska…", p. 231.

[4]   J. Levy, *The Intermarium. Madison, Wilson, and East Central European Federalism*, Boca Raton 2007, p. 165; J. Cisek, "Kilka uwag o myśli federacyjnej Józefa Piłsudskiego", in A. Ajnenkiel et al. (eds.), *Międzymorze. Polska i kraje Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej XIX-XX wiek. Studia ofiarowane Piotrowi Łossowskiemu w siedemdziesiątą rocznicę urodzin*, Warszawa 1995.

[5]   S. Kutrzeba, "Charakter i wartość unii polsko-litewskiej", in idem, *Swoistość polskiej kultury i stosunek do Zachodu. Wybór pism*, Kraków 2006, pp. 219-228.

[6]   Ibid., pp. 223-225.

[7]   Ibid., p. 225.

usurping practices of (then) Soviet Russia and, on the other, as a way to establish peaceful relations – not only with Poland's nearest eastern neighbours, but reaching much further, to the former Russian Empire. This could come true only under the condition of close cooperation between the four countries which act as an intermediary between the West and the East.[8]

The Jagiellonian idea has also experienced a modern revival, finding supporters and propagators among some members of the political, scientific and intellectual elites of the end of the second decade of the 21st century. The Three Seas Initiative, supported by President Andrzej Duda, aims to facilitate closer cooperation, mainly in the areas of transport, digitalization and energy, between Central and Eastern European countries, as well as Slovenia, Croatia, Bulgaria, Romania and Austria. The name of the initiative refers to the territory occupied by the aforementioned countries, which extends from the Baltic Sea to the Adriatic and Black Seas. This area, which is part of the European Union, remains infrastructurally handicapped in comparison to other EU areas, which impedes the balanced, equally advanced and proportional development of the entire Union. Of course, like any geopolitical and geo-economic concept, the Three Seas Initiative faces criticism from those who see it as a divisive element which could result in the creation of member state 'subgroups' in a larger, joint project.[9]

THE JAGIELLONIAN IDEA AS A STRATEGY FOR BUILDING A COMMONWEALTH OF NATIONS

The Union of Lublin, concluded in June 1569 between the Crown of the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, was the result of long-term actions, both direct – in the form of months of negotiations (from January 1569), and indirect – early attempts to unite the political and military potential of the Crown and the Duchy.[10] It became a real, rather than just a personal, symbol of combining the state structures of both entities, acting as partners united under the rule of Władysław Jagiełło, who was crowned King of Poland, but also had a Lithuanian heritage. The Union of Krewo, which took place before the Union of Lublin, was a kind of pledge on Jagiełło's part, who was hoping that Poland would be an ally in the fight against the Teutonic Order and Ivan the Terrible's Russia. The set of promises involved the acceptance of Christianity through marriage to Jadwiga of Anjou as well as the annexation of Lithuanian lands to those of the Crown.[11]

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[8]　J. Mieroszewski, *Listy z Wyspy. ABC polityki 'Kultury'*, ed. by R. Habielski, Paris–Kraków 2012.

[9]　Critical opinions were voiced by, among others, political parties opposing the formation from which the president, Andrzej Duda, originates – Law and Justice (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość), mainly members of the Civic Platform (Platforma Obywatelska) and the coalition in the previous government – the Polish People's Party (Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe).

[10]　The previously mentioned Union of Krewo from 1385.

[11]　J. Krzyżaniakowa, J. Ochmański, *Władysław II Jagiełło*, Wrocław 2006; U. Borkowska, *Dynastia Jagiellonów w Polsce*, Warszawa 2011.

The following fragment of the document from Krewo, concerning the unification of lands and indicating the specific intentions of the parties, is worth noting: *Demum etiam Jagalo dux saepedictus promittit terras suas Litvaniae et Rusiae coronae regni Poloniae perpetuo applicare* [Finally this Grand Duke Jagiełło promises to forever join his Lithuanian and Ruthenian lands with the crown of the Kingdom of Poland].[12] The term *applicare* [join] can be found in the cited excerpt, which emphasises the will to treat these two entities as equal partners. The intention found in these words is not an incorporeal or sovereign one, but rather a desire to co-create a strong political, economic, social and cultural entity, based on the principles of voluntary, albeit imposed by external factors, cooperation. Perhaps this fact of being forced to cooperate will recur with subsequent attempts to interpret, or reinterpret, the Jagiellonian idea, since it was perceived differently in its time than by subsequent generations, which, with the passage of time, gained a different temporal, historical, cultural and research perspective.

External conditions, as well as the lack of an heir to Sigismund II Augustus, led the king to opt for the transformation of the personal union into a real one in order to increase the chances of continuing the policy started by his ancestors. This ultimately came as a result of a new act – the Union of Lublin, concluded not without turbulence, broken off and resumed negotiations. Objections were heard mainly from the Lithuanian side, which was afraid of losing its independence. Ultimately, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the goal and the result of the Union of Lublin, came into being in June 1569.

This new entity on the map of Renaissance Europe, enlarged to the east by up-to-then pagan lands, modified its internal economic, political, religious and cultural structure. The unification of Poland and Lithuania in a common statehood brought a strong and serious player with the potential to become a superpower, a vast territory covering 800 thousand square kilometres, a competitive economy – a player to be reckoned with and respected, onto the European stage.

The new state was based on the principles of a federation, with a jointly elected ruler, a joint *Sejm* (the Commonwealth parliament) and Senate, jointly conducted foreign and defence policy and a unified monetary and legal system.[13] It should be emphasised that this type of unification required great conceptual, organisational and financial effort, necessary to carry out and implement the changes, not to mention the human factor, that is the competent people required to carry out the reforms. This points to the determination and real commitment of the parties in the creation of a common state, gathering various nations under its roof – not only Poles and Lithuanians, but also Ruthenians (now Belarusians and Ukrainians), Germans, Jews, Tatars, Armenians and Cossacks.

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[12]　The text of the act in Latin and Polish available at: Oszmiańszczyzna, at <http://oszmianszczyzna.pl/strona_krewo.html>. The Polish text was taken from: H. Mościcki (ed.), *Unia Litwy z Polską. Dokumenty i wspomnienia. W 350-tą rocznicę Unii Lubelskiej*, Warszawa–Kraków 1919.

[13]　A. Sucheni-Grabowska, A. Dybkowska (eds.), *Tradycje polityczne dawnej Polski*, Warszawa 1993, p. 179.

Administrative offices, the army, the judiciary and treasury remained separate areas in the federation. In the symbolic sphere, this multinational construct, united under the Jagiellonian sceptre, adopted a common flag and a common coat of arms as a visual declaration and a message of unity.

For this drawn-up strategy of constructing a common, well-synchronised state, it was necessary to have properly trained, educated and experienced officials, namely lawyers, administrators, secretaries, treasurers and commanders. In his publication *Między kulturą a polityką. Sekretarze królewscy Zygmunta Starego (1506-1548)*, Andrzej Wyczański outlines the key functions at the disposal of those serving at the court of the king. The author, in conducting an analysis of royal secretaries, emphasises their high level of education, gained both at the Cracow Academy and abroad, which allowed the enrichment of the Polish solution regarding the government of the state with the experience of western theorists and practitioners. Moreover, officials with a noble background clearly dominated while members of the bourgeoisie were poorly represented in this group. In addition, the average age of such individuals taking up office (37 years) allows one to conclude that those engaged in government affairs were already experienced politicians. Wyczański outlines one more significant attribute characterising the approach of most officials of the early 16th century, thus the period directly preceding the signing of the treaty of unification in 1569, namely humanism as the main principle regulating the activities of secretaries.[14] A clear strength of this human capital was also its relatively large degree of independence in comparison with western practices in the ideological sphere, as well as a better general education, one enriched by Western and Central European traditions, along with those of the eastern borderlands.[15]

SOLIDARITY AND TRUST AS VALUES

The united statehood of the two previously separate entities was based around the four main axiological pillars: partnership, cooperation, solidarity and trust.

Partnership assumed equal treatment of both parties, with mutual respect for cultural, linguistic, customary and moral differences resulting from tradition formed by each country's history. Such an arrangement required the active involvement of the participating countries, which had to demonstrate an open, receptive attitude towards differences, accepting the 'other', willing to respect that which appears foreign, distant, dissimilar. This was no doubt accompanied by great mental – and often also physical, bearing in mind the means of transport available at the time – effort, in order to work out a coherent system of managing the new state by way of negotiations and extensive administrative and organizational undertakings. Therefore, determination, will and conviction as to the importance of the undertaking, as well as faith in the success of this

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[14] A. Wyczański, *Między kulturą a polityką. Sekretarze królewscy Zygmunta Starego (1506-1548)*, Warszawa 1990, pp. 173-174.

[15] See ibid., pp. 37-42, 166-167, 203, 205-211.

great project, had to be present in the minds of people directly and indirectly involved in its implementation.

Cooperation on the levels of: administration, economy and economics, military, finance, infrastructure and transportation, was a great challenge for specialists developing forms of communication, primarily at the state level and, to a lesser extent, the regional level. The regional level was least affected by the new situation due to the fact that, at the time, the royal/state authorities had far fewer possibilities of controlling, and thus interfering in, the lives of ordinary citizens (in that era – subjects). The postal communication system, among other examples, developed and adapted to the circumstances at the time, is particularly noteworthy. In order to carry out inheritance procedures after the death of his mother, Sigismund Augustus opened a postal line between Kraków and Venice and thus created a permanent form of contact with Italy. In this manner the monarch, who wanted to control the division of property left by the late Queen Bona from afar, contribute to the creation of the Polish Post (1558), a company which operates to this day. The original, southern direction in which the regular post circulated, Kraków – Venice, was quickly supplemented by a north-eastern route, Kraków – Vilnius.[16] The decision to establish and finance permanent communication links was evidence of the direction of changes adopted by a ruler aware of the need to modernise the country, and thus also society. It should be noted that the pace of social development is correlated with the pace of circulation and dissemination of information, which must be – let us add – qualitatively valuable.

Returning to the importance of the circulation of information, Edward Opaliński outlines that the type, form and methods of circulations allow one to make judgements about the democratic face of the First Republic.[17]

Solidarity, as a concept and simultaneously a strategy for building a strong multicultural state, contained a message about a set of common values for which both the Crown and the Duchy of Lithuania were willing to take up the task of forming a new entity. Referring to the words of Emil Durkheim, these values can be divided into two categories: mechanical solidarity and organic solidarity.[18] The first concerns the most basic relations, based on family, neighbourhood and local ties, on similarities; the latter to relations which go beyond familiar circles, beyond blood ties, beyond distant kinship or convergence of fates. At the time organic solidarity consisted of, and generally consists of, the unifying power of the differences present in the interacting communities. In the case of Poland and Lithuania, the use of these differences made it possible to improve upon each country's deficiencies, whose presence was felt by both sides – and which, when supplemented, translated into the creation of a strong, multicultur-

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[16] "Polecony konno do Wenecji – początki polskiej poczty", at Polskie Radio, <http://www.polskieradio.pl/39/156/Artykul/1259839,Polecony-konno-do-Wenecji-poczatki-polskiej-poczty>, 15 September 2017.

[17] See E. Opaliński, *Kultura polityczna szlachty polskiej w latach 1587-1652. System parlamentarny a społeczeństwo obywatelskie*, Warszawa 1995, p. 272.

[18] E. Durkheim, *O podziale pracy społecznej*, transl. by K. Wakar, ed. by E. Tarkowska, Warszawa 1999.

al, multi-faith and multilingual First Polish Republic, which would later be given the name of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth by historians.

This may have occurred as a result of a distinctive sense of morality, which saw virtue, the driving force of pro-social action, in solidarity.[19] This morality did not emerge out of nowhere, it was shaped based on the European tradition – the Christian tradition. The Christian foundations of European civilisation have become the carrier of a unique idea which strongly emphasises and exposes the need to develop the capacity to sympathise with those who find themselves in need. Apart from its religious-spiritual dimension, solidarity as a virtue allowed and still allows to shape (in the individual, group, community, society) a unique kind of sensitivity and empathy directed towards the other, both in the individual and collective sense. Even in this day and age one can find, without much difficulty, examples of solidarity between nations as a result of natural disasters or political catastrophes, resulting from foreign intervention or even physical aggression.

Due to its location, the old Republic of Poland was a natural mediator, a 'messenger', of ideas developed, inter alia, from the feeling of solidarity with the *Other*, which, to quote Ryszard Kapuściński, is indispensible for us to see ourselves in it, thus getting to know our true selves.[20] Therefore, solidarity as a virtue appears to be a necessary element of our human and social existence, which was noticed by the initiators and creators of the Jagiellonian project. However, solidarity *per se* required an additional aspect on part of the participating parties – trust.

Trust, without which one could not even consider, let alone implement, the Jagiellonian idea (and not only this idea), lay at the foundations of the new formation. Although, depending on the social class, the degree of trust varied on both sides, it remained very high at the highest level, that of the monarchy. Lithuanian magnates, concerned about the risk of losing their influence, were sceptical about the idea. Like any change, also – and perhaps above all – one which is political in nature, this one also gave rise to fears about the future shape of the state and the place and role of its diverse elites.

Trust is classically defined as a reciprocal and mutually beneficial relationship. By trusting each other both sides hope that the goals they have set will come to fruition; according to imagined or articulated desires, plans and expectations. This form of trust is based on knowledge, on the one hand, and choice, on the other – a choice made with limited sources of reliable information.[21] In the case of the Jagiellonian idea, knowledge was supplemented by estimation and anticipation rather than a lack of knowledge. It was impossible to state with complete certainty whether the project implemented in its entirety would be successful. As history has shown, it did indeed succeed, but it

[19]   M. Schlick, *Fragen der Ethik*, Wien 1930 [repr. in: *Moritz Schlick Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 1/3, Wien 2006, pp. 520-521].

[20]   R. Kapuściński, *Ten Inny*, Kraków 2006.

[21]   R. Hardin, *Zaufanie*, transl. by A. Gruba, Warszawa 2009; P. Sztompka, *Zaufanie. Fundament społeczeństwa*, Kraków 2007.

also ended with the partitioning of Poland, tragic in its consequences for the country. The partitions were however not its immediate cause, they could not be, but they did take place, 'suspending' Polish statehood for 123 years. There was little left of the vast, sprawling empire with a strong economy. One could say that the days of glory obscured the rulers' vision – a process which is not foreign to history. For instance, in his work *Al-Mukaddima*, Ibn Khaldun, a 14th-century Arab philosopher, defines 'laziness' and the vigilance of not just the elites gradually becoming dull, as a result of living in long-term prosperity, as the primary reasons for the collapse of civilisation.[22]

The relational treatment of trust makes it fall under the mechanical category, but it may also be analysed as a value. A value whose importance lies in the fact that without it one cannot contemplate the individual living in a group, community or in society, which is an even more complicated construct. Interpersonal relations, inter-group relations and social relations in general are based on trust. Thus trust defines the cannons of forms of cooperation, minimises the time, psychological and financial costs of undertaken activities. According to Francis Fukuyama it plays a key role in the economic sphere: it is an indispensible condition for a transaction to take place.[23] One can easily notice this aspect in the implementation of the Jagiellonian plan.

THE JAGIELLONIAN IDEA AS POLITICAL CULTURE

The concept of a federative organism, united under the Polish sceptre, and its subsequent iterations (the unions of Krewo, Horodło and Lublin), were a product of their times, the 15th and 16th centuries. The thought of the Renaissance period and early absolutist action combined two elements: culture and politics. The Renaissance referred to ancient heritage, treating it as a fertile ground for its own intellectual, scientific and artistic creations, absolutism, on the other hand, urged countries and communities to follow the path of intensified rivalry due to new economic conditions caused mainly by geographic discoveries, or more accurately by access to raw material resources (especially gold and silver), which were to be found in the new lands.

The combination of thought and action found its expression in political culture. And no matter how hard it would be to find *explicite* definitions of this concept located in a time several centuries ago, evidence for its existence and practical implementations exist. Edward Opaliński identifies a range of approaches and accepted practices characterising the behaviour of the elite of the First Republic at the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries. The author of *Kultura polityczna szlachty polskiej w latach 1587-1652* draws attention to the custom observed among the magnates and Polish nobility of sending their representatives to the royal court with the aim of gaining administrative and political experience, as well as acquiring general knowledge of courtly *savoir vivre*. The

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[22] F. Baali, *Society, State, and Urbanism. Ibn Khaldun's Sociological Thought*, New York 1988, p. 73ff.

[23] F. Fukuyama, *Zaufanie. Kapitał społeczny a droga do dobrobytu*, transl. by A. Śliwa, L. Śliwa, Warszawa 1997.

same applies to the practices observed at the royal chancellery.[24] Opaliński emphasises the disposal of members of successive administrative elites to things such as: a readiness to broaden one's knowledge; the development of already-held abilities; an appreciation of the importance of education; an involvement in political life; an awareness of the seriousness of active citizenship; a feeling of responsibility for the state, namely *res publica* as a common good.[25] These traits or, in other words, approaches were a reflection of a specific political culture, albeit one which had not yet been termed as such, in contrast to today.

Political culture, as a term, began to appear in scientific discourse quite recently, at the beginning of the 20th century. Its origin can be traced back to a formulation used by Johann Gottfried Herder, who believed that actions in the sphere of politics were derived from the national character of society. According to the German scholar, national character is the driving force behind all, especially collective, action, but also affects individual behaviour. National character, formed as a result of a long historical process, a response to the external environment merged with the bonds of community, appears in the form of community and individual action. These undertakings, in turn, are proof of a particular way of thinking, which, according to Herder, initiates all action, also in the field of politics.[26]

According to Józef Milewski and Józef Siemieński, Polish researchers who at the beginning of the 20th century focused on, among other subjects, the history of political thought, one's way of thinking is correlated with elements such as: tradition, values, beliefs, customs and habits. Thus derivatives of historical, social, economic, religious etc. processes in a given region, country, area or cultural circle, influence the functioning of a particular group or society.[27] This is how collective identity and self-identification are formed within a community, ultimately aiming at national identity, which is the culmination of the whole process. And so political culture, which creates a particular environment for political thought, is a product of time, tradition and history as well as the collective efforts of mankind.

A more complete picture of the phenomenon discussed above was provided by Gabriel Almond who in 1995 proposed a new research approach to political phenomena. According to him, in order to understand political processes, one must first acquire a substantial body of knowledge about the cultural aspects which constitute their background. Why? Because it is culture that directly and indirectly determines one's perception of the world, one's ability to give it meaning and interpret phenomena. According to Almond the type of government, types of party or political systems, are products of

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[24]   E. Opaliński, *Kultura polityczna...*, p. 273.

[25]   Ibid., pp. 273-276.

[26]   F.M. Barnard (transl. and ed.), *J.G. Herder on Social and Political Culture*, New York 1969.

[27]   M. Banaś (ed.), *Teoretyczne i praktyczne problemy kultury politycznej. Studia i szkice*, Kraków 2013, p. 16.

political culture and are derived from civilian culture.[28] He later expanded on this idea with Sydney Verba in a comparative study devoted to five countries, societies and cultures (the USA, Mexico, Great Britain, West Germany and Italy). The researchers were able to identify factors which influence the degree of political involvement of citizens. They proved that it is dependent on one's definition of community of interests, which is understood differently depending on the country or, more specifically, the culture of a given country or region. Community of interests, combined with community of identity, leads to active involvement in shaping the socio-political space. The weaker the bonds of community of interests and identity, the greater the scale of political passivity.[29]

Ideas to unify the countries of Eastern Europe, which originate from the Jagiellonian period and were later referred to as the Jagiellonian idea, are an example of an exceptional political culture based on the peaceful merging or, to be more precise, integration of countries into one jointly governed political entity. The values on which the vision of this federative entity was based determined: the acceptance of cultural diversity as a normal state, respect for linguistic and religious differences, taking into account diverse traditions of office (administration), acceptance of different educational systems, trust and solidarity in action.

The idea of peaceful integration, whose purpose is to strengthen all parties involved in political and economic terms, would regularly reappear in later centuries. As Andrzej Nowak writes, it became a kind of Jagiellonian myth, characterised by Jerzy Maternicki as *an expression of longing for a better world, a world without rape or violence, in which all nations can enjoy their freedom and live in accordance with the principle 'Free among the free, equal among equals'* [...].[30]

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The political culture contained in the Jagiellonian idea can be characterised by two distinct attitudes. The first is trust and faith in the good intentions of one's potential partner, which result from the positive perception of man as a being more willing to choose good rather than evil. The other assumes that, in the actions of those who have promoted this idea for centuries, noble reasons stood out above a lack of concern, loyalty above betrayal and solidarity above division. The individuals deciding or co-deciding on the shape of internal and external politics were filled with a feeling of duty towards

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[28] G. Almond, "Comparative Political Systems", *The Journal of Politics*, vol. 18, no. 3 (1956), pp. 392--397, at <https://doi.org/10.2307/2127255>.

[29] G. Almond, S. Verba, *The Civic Culture. Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*, Princeton 1963.

[30] A. Nowak, *Horodło z perspektywy XX-XXI wieku: pamięć modernizacji, pamięć republiki, pamięć imperium.* Text delivered at the conference "Horodło (1413-2013). Królestwo Polskie i Wielkie Księstwo Litewskie w dobie unii horodelskiej", organised by the Polish Academy of Learning in Kraków and Niepołomice, 20-21 September 2013, based on: J. Maternicki, "Początki mitu jagiellońskiego w historiografii i publicystyce polskiej XIX wieku. Karol Szajnocha i Julian Klaczko", *Przegląd Humanistyczny*, vol. 32, no. 11/12 (1988), p. 48.

the state, being aware of their own responsibility for the state.[31] This could not have happened without the necessary sacrifices to a common idea: personal, professional and psychological. The readiness to bear them on behalf of higher, rather than particularist aims was one of the hallmarks of the Jagiellonian Idea.

The above-mentioned values and anti-values have not disappeared from the political scene: as then, they are still present in socio-political practices, spreading with various intensity from the activities of actors on the local, regional, national and international stage.

Observing recent historical developments and the recent history of Europe, it is difficult to dismiss the impression that there are certain permanent inclinations in how reality is perceived which characterise Polish political thought. In it one can find narratives which sound both romantic and realistic and which underlie the attempts made to give shape to the modern – and now the postmodern – Polish state.

The Jagiellonian idea, returning in the present day in national and international discourse, is a form of evoking fundamental values, without which the peaceful coexistence of neighbouring nations and cultures becomes a very difficult challenge. Perhaps in the first decades of the 21st century the Jagiellonian idea as a model of political culture, in its modernised form, will be accepted as the modus operandi of Central and Eastern Europe, located in a dynamically changing environment.

Without application, slogans as mutual respect, equality of treatment before the law, respect of sovereignty, trust, solidarity and cooperation become useless. However, when transferred into action, in accordance with Austin's concept, they have a creative power.[32] In focussing attention on contemporary Central-Eastern European societies, as well as their political, business, cultural and even religious elites, the high level of functionality of this concept seems to be an important task and a worthy approach, especially from the current perspective (2017-2018). The dynamic of change which the EU is undergoing but particularly its repeatedly invoked interpretation of the union as one of 'two-speeds' (thus categorising member states into a group of leaders and a group which follows the leaders), the determined carrying out of Brexit, namely Britain's departure from the structures of the EU, as well the revived ambitions of Russia to be a power, create a sufficient body of reasons to take on the idea of constructing a strong Central European community. Such a community would be based on Jagiellonian ideas, being fully aware of it strengths and weaknesses. It seems, however, that the Jagiellonian Idea as model of political culture in a modernised and modified form for modern circumstances bears within itself the potential to genuinely constitute a *modus operandi* for the nations of our region. *Historia vitae magistra est*.

Translated by John Czekalski

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[31] W. Czapliński, "Rola sejmów XVII wieku w kształtowaniu się kultury politycznej w Polsce", in J.A. Gierowski (ed.), *Dzieje kultury politycznej w Polsce*, Warszawa 1977, p. 45; see also S. Russocki, "Uwagi o kulturze politycznej Polski XVI-XVII wieku", in J.A. Gierowski (ed.), *Dzieje kultury politycznej...*, p. 19.

[32] J. Austin, *How to do Things with Words*, Cambridge 1975.

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Monika BANAŚ, PhD – Associate Professor at the Institute of Intercultural Studies, Jagiellonian University in Krakow, Poland. She specializes in cultural studies with particular focus on migration and integration processes, political culture, intercultural relations, Nordic societies and Nordic cultures. In her latest research Monika undertakes issues connected with political activism of ethnic minorities in multiethnic societies. Main publications include inter alia single author books: *Etniczność na sprzedaż* [Ethnicity for Sale] (2005), *Szwedzka polityka integracyjna wobec imigrantów* [Swedish integration policy towards immigrants] (2010), book editing of *Contemporary Transformations. Culture, Politics, Economy* (2012), and articles: "Nordic Federation as a State – a Challenge for European Integration?" (*Rocznik Instytutu Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej*, vol. 10, no. 6 (2012): *European Economic Integration and Convergence*), "Anti-Immigrant Sentiment, Actions, and Policies in Europe. The Case of Three Scandinavian Countries" (in M. Verea (ed.), *Anti-Immigrant Sentiment, Actions, and Policies*, Mexico 2012).