National identity of Poland: A Case Study of Debates in the European Parliament

Research Question: How do Polish politicians frame national identity discourse to defend or contest neo-traditionalist values at the European Parliament?

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates how Polish political discourse contests neo-traditionalism when framing national identity, with an attempt to answer the research question: *How do Polish politicians frame national identity discourse to defend or contest neo-traditionalist values at the European Parliament?*. This thesis undertakes a Qualitative Discourse Analysis of three debates held in the European Parliament regarding three controversial cases where Poland played a main role. The thesis is based on the conceptualization of neo-traditionalism and on the theoretical concept of 'imagined communities', which supports our understanding of national identity. Constructivism is used as an underlying theoretical approach that serves to understand political power in an international setting, discussing it in the context of normative power structure. Specific emphasis is given to the neo-traditionalist idea that a liberal (Western) hegemony challenges the system of values in Poland. While the neo-traditionalist literature has focused on several elements of neo-traditionalism, it does not address international relations and power balance in IR. The authors show how the framing of national identity in Poland is highly polarized within the discourse delivered at the European Parliament. While at first, the speeches by politicians of the populist party Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (PiS) seemed to have expressed overarching support for EU values (democracy, freedom), a deeper analysis of the speeches demonstrated otherwise. It demonstrated that PiS-aligned speakers addressed support for democracy and freedom in their favor, to justify their breach of EU Rule of Law, the abortion ban and the LGBT-free zones, in fact describing EU openness towards LGBT rights as 'ideological madness'. PiS appealed to the EU Parliament audience, adopting a narrative of defending neo-traditionalist-conservative values rooted in the 'rejection of liberal and progressive 21st century modernity', nostalgia for past values and history, and desire to restore 'collective ontological security'. Finally, the authors discuss how PiS-aligned speakers' neo-traditionalist narratives challenge the EU, by demanding the EU to respect Poland's identity and its sovereignty.

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Introduction

"The stories [that] countries tell about themselves are key to national identity - and [...] governments in Hungary and Poland have made it their mission to control the plot" (Gosling, 2019).

Donald Trump's election in the 2016 presidential election was a shock to the system for a generation of scholars and politicians who had foreseen a more liberal and progressive international society. Suddenly, it appeared that right-wing politics and conservative values were on the rise - not as a throwback to the past, but in a fully-fledged, modern take on traditional values. Anti-abortion, critical immigration policies, harsh stances on LBGT rights and religious values moved to the forefront of many nations' agenda. Many nations that had previously kept quiet about their conservative stances became emboldened and found allies across the world.

The POPREBEL research group[1] refers to this political phenomenon as 'neo-traditionalism', an individual or collective strategy with the goal of returning to what is claimed to be "tradition" (Benczes et. al, 2020). In his research, scholar Francesco Melito (2021a; 2021b) argued that Poland showed signs of neo-traditional, exhibiting common traits such as a rejection of liberal elites, emphasis on religion and anti-immigration stances. Poland is brought into the literature where neo-traditionalism (and populism) attempts to replace liberalism in what he calls "liberal hegemony" (Melito, 2021a, p. 23).

Poland has been experiencing significant political and social polarization throughout the last decade. In Poland, the infamous LGBT-free zones form spaces meant to be free from the supposed menace of non-heteronormative persons, while abortion has been made more and more difficult for women to attain. Most recently, Poland was embroiled in a political scandal, as the EU criticized the Polish government for packing the Polish constitutional courts. All three issues were a subject debate in the EU Parliament generating lots of attention in opposition parties and interest groups, in Poland and outside it. We base our thesis analysis on three EU Parliament

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[1] *"POPREBEL– Populist rebellion against modernity in 21st-century Eastern Europe: neo-traditionalism and neo-feudalism is a large Horizon 2020-funded research project on the rise of populism in Central and Eastern Europe. The aim of POPREBEL is to describe the phenomenon, create a typology of its various manifestations, reconstruct trajectories of its growth and decline, investigate its causes, interpret its meanings, diagnose its consequences, and propose policy solutions"* (Kubik, 2022)

debates, where the PiS-aligned argue against the opposition, justifying Poland's conservative actions and stances.

In the debates, the national identity of Poland often comes up as an argument; that Poland is a country different from the Western liberal nations that criticize it, and so has different laws written into its Constitution. The argument goes that Poland, as a proud member of the EU and as a nation of conservative values, should be allowed to maintain its national values while being part of the EU. This argument, of course, is hotly contested by opposition parties - this resulting in a discrepancy in how Poland is framed in the debates. For some, Poland is a conservative country that adheres to traditional values, but for others, it is progressive and supportive of LGBTQI and women's rights. The debates show a great difference in how Poland is imagined to exist and reveal a high polarization in Polish politics and society; one where the two sides disagree on the exact nature of the divide, and on whether both sides have a place within Poland (Keszthelyi, n.d.).

In this thesis, we aim to detect the neo-traditional talking points delivered at the European Parliament, by analyzing three debates where Polish politicians argued for or against the actions of the Polish government. We will also assess the importance of national identity within these speeches, how it is framed by different speakers and how it is used to "justify and shape policy and political decision making" (Butler, 2017).

Problem Formulation

This thesis aims to answer the research question: *How do Polish politicians frame national identity discourse to defend or contest neo-traditionalist values at the European Parliament?*.

The research question aims to provide an understanding of how Polish politicians frame national identity discourse to either defend or contest neo-traditionalist values. These speeches are delivered in an international/regional setting, being the European Parliament. Poland was chosen as a country, based on the fact that within the last decade, it has been embroiled in numerous controversial issues, both political and social. These include accusations of court-packing by the ruling party Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (which can be translated to 'Law and Justice', and will be referred to as 'PiS' from this point onward), the development of so-called 'LGBT-free zones' in south-east Poland and criticism over a lack of abortion rights for Polish

women. Our goal with this research question is to understand how Polish politicians defend or context neo-traditionalist values through national identity discourse.

The theoretical concept of neo-traditionalism is a lightly conceptualized concept throughout political studies which we believe to be very relevant, and thus requires more literature. From a cursory look, we detected some elements in the discourse used by Polish politicians that can be connected to neo-traditionalism (Melito, 2021a). Hence, we wanted to investigate further into how Polish political discourse uses national identity to defend or contest neo-traditionalist features in an international setting like the EU Parliament. If we find evidence that neo-traditionalist values are being contested or defended in the EU Parliament, it would contribute to neo-traditionalist literature on Poland and color the understanding of Poland as a member of the EU. This would also signal to other scholars that the concept is spreading across national borders, and would also require further research to work on the topic.

With this in mind, we give ourselves the challenge to draw our thesis on this theoretical concept, allowing us to determine whether it can be used in future political studies. We acknowledge that our thesis is a small piece of a broad and new puzzle in the study of neo-traditionalism in Europe, but we wish that our studies may add more knowledge to the topic.

Term Definition

Before diving further into the thesis, we dissect the terms used in the research question (*How do Polish politicians frame national identity discourse to defend or contest neo-traditionalist values at the European Parliament?*) to avoid any misunderstandings.

'National identity': Despite Anderson's work on nationalism and national identity, we note that he admits that defining a national identity is difficult, if not impossible (1991, p. 3). According to Anderson (1991), national identity is not based entirely on objective reality, but on shared codes and frames that people within a certain geographical area can attest to and see themselves in ('imagined community'). This concept will be described in the Theory section (see p. 28).

'National identity discourse': By this, we refer to all discourse by politicians that may describe directly or indirectly the national identity of Poland. "National identity" refers to the meanings

that come with Poland as a nation. In other words, we assume that Polish politicians perceive and speak about the national identity of Poland in different ways, presenting a narrative that defines what path a country is on.

'Neo-traditionalist values': Neo-traditionalist values are a set of ideologies and values that belong to neo-traditionalism. A better conceptualization of these values is described in the Theory section

'Defend' neo-traditionalist values: In this thesis, 'defend' is used as a synonym of 'display' or of 'support'. If we state that a politician "defends neo-traditionalist values" we mean that they display neo-traditionalist values through their speech.

'Contest' neo-traditionalist values: As opposed to 'defend', we use the term 'contest' as a synonym of 'challenge' or 'oppose'. However, "contesting neo-traditionalist values" may also mean that the speaker displays values that indirectly are opposed to neo-traditionalist ones.

Literature Review

This section provides an evaluative overview of the already available literature on the topic of current national discourses of the Polish government. This allows us to document the state of the art and critically analyze what is missing by identifying important gaps or what can be looked into with different lenses, with the purpose of then formulating areas of further research. We draw this literature review on three recent papers which review the discourse in Poland following the election of the Law and Justice Party in 2015. The papers are:

- *At the intersection of racism and nationalism: Theorising and Contextualizing the 'anti‑immigration' discourse in Poland* by Polynczuk‑Alenius (2021);
- *Finding the roots of neo-traditionalist populism in Poland: 'Cultural displacement' and European integration* by Melito (2021a);
- *Defending the Traditional Polish Way of Life: The Role of Fantasies* by Melito (2021b).

The first paper seeks to contribute to an improved grounding of 'anti-immigration' discourse in racism and Polish nationalism. The author theorized 'anti-immigration' discourse as an intersection of racism and nationalism, following the approach offered by Foucault. Polynczuk-Alienus (2021) argues that the major shift in 'race discourse' in the 19th century was strongly influenced by the idea of framing a "national consciousness" (p. 769), to consolidate a nation that was homogenous in ethnicity and religion. The author draws links between racism and nationalism, where national identity is built on racist notions that turn inwards, against ethnic or religious minorities. The analysis of the 'anti-immigration' discourse in Poland is organized into an interface between "racist themes circulated in the communicating vessels of global media infrastructures" and the perception of liminality, engendered by global developments that disrupt this "national self-definition" (Polynczuk-Alienus, 2021, p. 771).

Another key consideration made in this paper regards the idea of "cultural integrity, physical security and health of Polish society" being disrupted by foreign arrivals (Polynczuk-Alienus, 2021, p. 772). Similarly, this national mission of preserving security and cultural integrity reverberates through the discourse that Western Europe feeds the dangerous 'ideology' of multiculturalism and is an enemy to the intended "national self-definition" (Polynczuk-Alienus, 2021, pp. 771-772). Overall, the paper focuses on the anti-immigration discourse in Poland, a discourse that pictures the West and Europe as enemies to Poland's national mission of preserving its identity, sense of security and physical security. While we acknowledge the substantial work done by this author on anti-immigration discourse, we argue that the examination of Polish nationalism in this paper is limited in the sense that it only engages the category of race, while not taking into consideration other factors that could be important such as religion and family models.

When researching contemporary discourse and national identity in Poland, we also came across two papers by Francesco Melito (2021a), a researcher at Jagiellonian University in Poland. The first article we looked at was *Finding the roots of neo-traditionalist populism in Poland: 'Cultural displacement' and European integration*. This article brought to our knowledge the concept of neo-traditionalism, a concept that we were not familiar with, yet that proved to be very relevant to our thesis, as it describes the traditionalist-conservative fashion in Polish contemporary discourse. Having never read about neo-traditionalism, we were interested in finding a better contextualization of it, so as to have a thorough understanding of it. We then

looked for papers that would contextualize and address neo-traditionalism, yet with scarce results. In fact, most research on neo-traditionalism stems from work devoted to understanding neo-traditionalism in the political contexts of Russia or several countries in Asia (David-Fox, 2006; Fitzpatrick, 2000), while there is considerably less work done on neo-traditionalism in Central Europe. For this reason, we decided that it would be interesting to expand the research on neo-traditionalism in Poland, considering the fashion of current Polish discourse.

At this point, we reached out to Francesco Melito, the author of *Finding the roots of neo-traditionalist populism in Poland: 'Cultural displacement' and European integration* (2021a). We asked for some literature covering neo-traditionalism in Central Europe, addressing the fact that we were not able to find literature on the topic. Francesco Melito agreed with us on the issue of the limited literature on the topic and shared with us that he and his research group were working on two research projects (FATIGUE and POPREBEL) that are expanding on the contextualization of the topic. In addition, he sent us relevant literature that we have used for the section on Neo-traditionalism (see pp. 37-43).

The first article by Melito (2021a) used for this literature review (*Finding the roots of neo-traditionalist populism in Poland: 'Cultural displacement' and European integration"*) investigates the roots of right-wing populism in Poland. It emphasizes that right-wing populists speak in the name of the people who refuse liberal hegemony and European values (Melito, 2021a)[2]. The paper also reveals the contrast between East and West world views, analyzing the neo-traditionalist discourse in Poland, mostly produced by the right-wing party Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (PiS). Melito (2021a) argues that political groups like PiS adopt a traditionalist-conservative narrative as a way to a) stop the threat to their identity caused by the Western liberal and individualistic values, and b) create a new common sense among the Poles. This new common sense that Melito talks about acts as an ultimate goal of a "hegemonic project" that will create unity among the population, rejecting EU integration (Melito, 2021a, p. 29). The hegemonic project is a discursive frame that presupposes a struggle between different discourses (i.e., traditionalist vs liberal) "that aim at filling a (political) void created by a crisis" (Laclau and Mouffle in Melito, 2021a, p. 25). Which is similar to Benedict Anderson's idea that

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[2] *We understand the concept of "liberal hegemony" by Melito (2021a) as the dominance of liberal values (e.g., secularism, openness, multiculturalism, modernity) over the more traditionalist set of values (e.g., religion, conservatism, homogeneity, tradition). 'European values' are embedded in the liberal hegemony, as the EU is a supporter of liberalism and its values.*

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nations are imagined to be limited (see pp. 28-33). Melito argues that the aspiration to hegemonic totality is impossible because the social reality is always surrounded by an "excess of meaning" that cannot be mastered, and, therefore, objects and meaning will always be challenged (Laclau in Melito, 2021a, p. 26). Hence, representing the whole society as a united totality is impossible.

Finally, Melito (2021a) argues that the current Polish discourse is far-right and populist. However, what distinguishes the current Polish discourse from the typical populist discourse is the lack of a "people vs elitist establishment" narrative. In this case, the enemy of Poland shifts from being the 'elitist establishment' to being liberalism and modernism (Melito, 2021a). Accordingly, the far-right produces a counter-hegemonic narrative, where the hegemony is liberalism. In other words, the current Polish discourse is a "project" for rejecting Western liberalism in Poland (Melito, 2021a). Overall, the paper examines whether the process of EU integration has given space to the rise of populist movements in Poland; the paper also discussed the importance of neo-traditionalist discourse as a strategy to create a new common sense amongst nationals, a new national identity. Overall, the paper was very important for the development of our thesis, considering that it brought to our knowledge the concept of neo-traditionalism and thus encouraged us to include it in the thesis.

The third paper, also written by Francesco Melito, in our literature review, *Defending the Traditional Polish Way of Life: The Role of Fantasies* (2021b), was crucial for describing the state of the art in Polish discourse. It draws on Poststructuralist Discourse Theory[3]. The paper is a discourse analysis that demonstrates how neo-traditionalist, idyllic "fantasies […] strengthen [Polish] identities" and are grounds for fighting liberalism in Poland (Melito, 2021b, p. 2). To clarify, neo-traditionalist fantasies bond members of the community; these fantasies can be traditional social roles, religion, and national communities. The paper demonstrates how political fantasies define the 'authentic Polish way of life' by analysing counter-marches against LGBT parades taking place in 2019-2020 (Melito, 2021b). The main argument of the paper is that fantasies are necessary to disguise the fact that what we believe as our way of life may be an illusion, or in other words "might not necessarily be so" (Melito, 2021b, p. 4). To clarify, Melito (2021b) argues that fantasies hide the fact that Polishness may also include non-traditional values (like multiculturalism or alternative family models) and thus defend traditions against modernity.

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[3] *We understand Post-structuralist Discourse Theory as a philosophy of society that focuses on 'discourses' as the meaningful practices through which human subjects experience and understand themselves and others (Newman, 2020).*

Overall, this paper - which we believe is substantially romantic in its nature, as he talks about fantasies in nationalism - was quite concrete in clarifying the notion of neo-traditionalism and Polishness, as well as the role of discourses in framing the "lost [national] unity", disrupted by the liberal elite (Melito, 2021b, p. 7).

In conclusion, the literature on current Polish discourse points to the fact that it is characterised by far-right themes and topics, which some may argue are neo-traditionalist. The papers we have explored and built the literature review on all address a general struggle that Poland and perhaps other CEE countries are facing: a struggle in forging a new common sense in response to the disruption of traditional values. The literature on neo-traditionalism proved to be very relevant, especially given our focus on the case of Poland. The features of neo-traditionalism may be useful to demonstrate how Polish politicians' national identity discourse defends or contests it. For this reason, we decided to take the theoretical concept of neo-traditionalism further and write a thesis that would allow us to deepen our knowledge on the topic.

BACKGROUND

In this section, we wish to briefly describe Poland in a historical context, from the Versailles Peace after World War One to after the fall of the Berlin Wall. We also describe the current political makeup of Poland, the important parties and their interests. This is not only because history plays a significant role both in 'imagined communities' and 'neo-traditionalism', but also because the speeches analyzed often refer to historical events in Poland.

Poland in the Historical Context

From Versailles Peace to the Cold War

The shape of Poland as we know it today took form after the peace talks in Versailles after the First World War, which also started a recurring trend of presenting the country as being between the two major political powers of Germany and the Soviet Union/Russia (Grenville, 2005, p. 118). In the following years, Poland fought a defensive war against Lenin's Soviet Union with limited allied help; as a stepping stone to the worldwide communist revolution, Lenin sought to "instal[l] a puppet communist government" (p. 122) in Poland through a quick military win.

However, Poland resisted the Soviet Union and managed to win independence in 1920 (Grenville, 2005). The independence did not last long; in 1938, Poland was invaded again by Germany under the lead of Hitler's Nazi party - negotiations were started between the two nations, and though they had many things in common (i.e anti-Jewish and anti-Communist sentiments), negotiations broke down (Grenville, 2005). As Grenville puts it, in Polish historic memory, "cession of territory had been the prelude to partition" (p. 234).

To acquire "*lebensraum*" to the east of Germany, Hitler invaded Poland in 1942; first acquiring the 'Polish corridor', a stretch of land giving access to the Baltic Sea through Danzig, a Polish port town, but later, Germany also invaded much of western Poland and occupied it until the close of the war (Grenville, 2005, pp. 135-137). Meanwhile, through a secret agreement, the Soviet Union quickly moved to overtake eastern Poland, leaving the whole country occupied (Grenville, 2005). Regardless, the Poles fought with tenacity despite bad leadership and a lack of forces, resources and equipment compared to the Red Army and the Wehrmacht. Under the directive of Nazi Germany, Poles lived as a "colony called the General Government of the Occupied Polish Territories headed by Hans Frank, a fanatical, brutal Nazi" (Grenville, 2005, p. 265). The vast majority of Poles would live as workers as long as they accepted cultural assimilation, while Jews were hunted down and subjected to the brutality of the Holocaust. Meanwhile, the Poles in Soviet territory were subjected to forced movement and the communist party's laws. However, in both cases, it was difficult to enforce allegiance to Germany and the Soviet Union, partly because the Catholic Church continued to support the Poles' feelings of national belonging to Poland, and not to their two occupiers (Grenville, 2005).

In 1945, Poland was liberated from Germany and Nazi personnel, alongside many Germans who had lived in Poland before the invasion were expelled or killed by Poles. Meanwhile, the Red Army continued to occupy Poland - Stalin had promised an election to the Western Allies, but for fear of losing control of the country's path to communism, elections were postponed. Regardless, Poland was changed into a semi-communist satellite state allied with the Soviet Union - their economic plan was "based on the coexistence of a private, a cooperative and a public state sector", and all industries numbering more than fifty employees were absorbed by the state, lending the Polish state 91% of the country's industry and banking (Grenville, 2005 p. 323). Through it all, the Catholic Church maintained a strong relationship with the Polish people (Grenville, 2005).

In the decade that followed, Poland took on an important role as the buffer to the west for the Soviet Union and they remained strongly tied to the union economically. The Catholic Church remained important to the Poles; the Church came to exemplify resistance to Soviet rule as industrial workers were exploited, worker's unions were crushed and industries were nationalised. In response, the Stalinist government attempted to curtail it, to little success; many Poles, especially among the peasantry, did not see the party, the secret police, or the bureaucracy as a part of their country, but as a "'them', to be suffered only as long as was necessary - and that meant, as Poles realize, as long as Soviet military force held Poland in its grip." (Grenville, 2005, pp. 477-478). Poland regained some of its independence later when Polish reformists established new 'Worker's Councils' to further the democratization of the country. Alarmed by the sudden loss of control, Former President of the Soviet Union Khrushchev and a large delegation arrived to halt the development, and troops were set in motion to invade Poland. The crisis was averted when the leader of the Polish communist party, Wladislaw Gomulka, assured the Soviets that they would remain closely tied to the Soviet Union, but would otherwise rectify many Stalinist issues left behind over the years, which Khrushchev accepted (Grenville, 2005).

Despite attempts to reform the country's agriculture and heavy industry, Poland continued to suffer economically. Grenville argues that Polish nationalism grew in response to these issues; the Workers' Defense Committee was started by Jacek Kurón, which attempted to counter the propaganda produced by the Communist Party, and strikes increasingly forced the regime to make concessions, allowing more personal, political and publishing freedom. In an effort to retain power, General Jaruzelski led a coup and created a "communist military regime" (Grenville, 2005, p. 781). However, the next decade of the military regime did not fully curtail the dissent to any fundamental degree and "Soviet dominance was upheld with difficulty" until the end of the Soviet Union in 1989-1991 (Grenville, 2005, p. 781).

Polish Government from 1989 to today

In 1990, Poles elected Lech Walesa, who immediately set to work privatising much of the previously nationalised industry in Poland. However, due to the loss of the Soviet markets, development into a privatised economy was slow and inflation rose sharply. The next few years showed improvement, but unemployment and inflation caused many Poles to lose faith in the democratic system, leading to low voting numbers. As the decade went on, Poland recovered

slowly but surely and took its place as the "most important of the central European countries", slowly facing out the old opposition party Solidarity with an alliance between the Democratic Left Alliance, the Polish Communist United Workers Party and the Polish Peasant Party, who, despite their communist roots, continued to grow away from their communist roots and into a Western-style capitalist model (Grenville, 2005, p. 892-893). Among the post-communist eastern nations, Poland managed the conversion to capitalism the best, but with the international economy slowing at the close of the century, the country began suffering from a lack of developed infrastructure. After joining the European Union in 2004, the Polish economy improved through agricultural subsidies, but issues with higher food prices also followed. Politically, the country was dominated by post-communist parties that developed from the now-reeling Solidarity party and the Democratic Left Party - though they all showed a greater emphasis on pragmatic policies that served to improve Poland's economy (Grenville, 2005).

The organization of the Polish government and the Law and Justice Party (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość)

Poland's current government system was established in 1997 as determined in the Constitution of the Republic of Poland. The government is made up of "a two chamber Parliament which includes the Sejm and the Senate" (European Commission, 2022a). The Sejm, the lower chamber, is made up of 460 members that are elected "according to the proportional election system" (European Commission, 2022a). The role of the Sejm is legislative power and supervision of the government. The Senate, the upper chamber, is made up of 100 members that are elected "according to the majority system" (European Commission, 2022a). The Senate's role is "legislative initiative and proposals of amendments to bills passed by the Sejm" (European Commission, 2022a). Executive powers are held by the President, who is the head of the state, and the Council of Members. The President is elected by the Polish citizens through direct elections and can maintain the role for up to two terms of 5 years. The President is also in charge of appointing a Prime Minister, with confirmation from the Sejm (Freedom House, 2022). The Prime Minister "holds most executive power, the president also has some influence, particularly over defense and foreign policy matters" (Freedom House, 2022; European Commission, 2022a).

In 2001, two brothers, Jarosław and Lech Kaczyński founded the Law and Justice party, managing to establish it "as the major conservative force on the Polish political scene" (Pytlas,

2021, p. 2). PiS embraced a "social conservative programme with an increased focus on 'law and order' and anti-corruption politics" (Pytlas, 2021, p. 2). In 2005, PiS won the Sejm election, placing Lech Kaczyński as President. The 2005 election victory led to a coalition of PiS, Samoobrona (an agrarian populist political party) and the League of Polish Families (a radical right party). This coalition "rebranded political and economic issues into a conflict between a 'social solidaristic' and 'liberal' Poland embedded in the overarching anti-liberal project of a 'Fourth Republic'" (Pytlas, 2021, p. 3). They framed the enemies to be "corrupt elites, but additionally [also] anti-Polish 'traitors' of traditional, Catholic values" (Pytlas, 2021, p. 3). Due to their strong conservative campaign, the 2010 elections were lost, while President Lech Kaczyński died in a plane crash the same year. PiS quickly shifted its campaign "discourse between a radical and moderate mode" (Pytlas, 2021, p. 4). In 2015, PiS won the election with Andrzej Duda as the President, also being a candidate from the PiS party (Pytlas, 2021).

In 2015, the party quickly worked to dominate the "Parliament as well as the President rubber-stamped legal changes that allow[ed] Law and Justice to seize control over the public media, as well as weakened and eventually captured the Constitutional Tribunal" (Pytlas, 2021, p. 6). At this point, the European Commission intervened, (see Background on Case 1, p. 22). The party's discourse was starting to be predominantly focused on anti-immigration (Pytlas, 2021). There was also a "pop-culture heroisation of historical nationalist and anti-communist resistance units [...] elevating them to mythicized role models of patriotism" while avoiding their "involvement in massacres against civilians[4]" (Pytlas, 2021, p. 8). Furthermore, Jarosław Kaczyński as a member of PiS has criticized the LGBT movement, labeling it as an attack on the Church, threatening the Polish identity (Pytlas, 2021, p. 8), reactivating "the classical 'Bulwark of Christianity[5]' frame copied from the radical right framing LGBT+ persons and progressive liberal values as 'non-Polish'" (Pytlas, 2021, p. 8). In 2020, Andrzej Duda was successfully re-elected as President of Poland, with Mateusz Morawiecki as Prime Minister (appointed in 2017) (Freedom House, 2022). As this thesis will demonstrate, much of PiS's discourse follows the arguments presented above, since its founding.

Although PiS leads with a majority, it is confronted by opposition from the Polish government, but also outside of Poland, such as from the European Union. The other political

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[4] This is referring to "massacres against non-Polish civilians" (Peters, 2016)
[5] The Bulwark of Christianity is a nationalist myth that implies a specific nation's mission of acting as a wall against other religions, nations or ideologies (Emden, Keen & Midgley, 2006).

alliances/coalitions in the Polish government include the Civic Coalition, the Democratic Left Alliance, the Polish Peasant Party, the Confederation and the Independents, yet we will only briefly provide a background on the larger of the 5, the Civic Coalition and the Democratic Left.

The Civic Coalition, Koalicja Obywatelska (KO), is made up of the Civic Platform (established in 2001), the Modern Party (established in 2015), the Green Party (established in 2003) and the Polish Initiative. These parties advocate and campaign liberal views economically, but also socially and morally. They support women's rights politically and socially (referring to abortion for example), and are "moderately LGBTQ+ progressive". This coalition was elected between 2007 and 2015 and led by Donald Tusk (Gwiazda, 2021, p. 11).

The Democratic Left Alliance, Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej (SLD) is made up of the Democratic Left Alliance (1991), Spring (2019), and Together (2015). According to Gwiazda (2021), these parties have a broader left programme "addressing issues ranging from socialist concerns about unemployment, the rising cost of living and taxation, to environmental concerns (energy and climate issues) and sociocultural progressive policies concerning abortion, and gay and women's rights (p. 12).

METHODOLOGY

This section provides a detailed overview of the methodological steps taken to answer the research question: *How do Polish politicians frame national identity discourse to defend or contest neo-traditionalist values at the European Parliament?*. This section is divided into three sections: the first section explains our **Choice of Theories** ('imagined communities', Constructivism and Neo-traditionalism); the second section explains our **Choice of Data** (European Parliament Debates); lastly, the third section provides a brief understanding of the **Structure of Analysis** and the analytical tool this thesis uses (Qualitative Discourse Analysis). The figure below provides an illustrative overview of the methodology of this thesis.
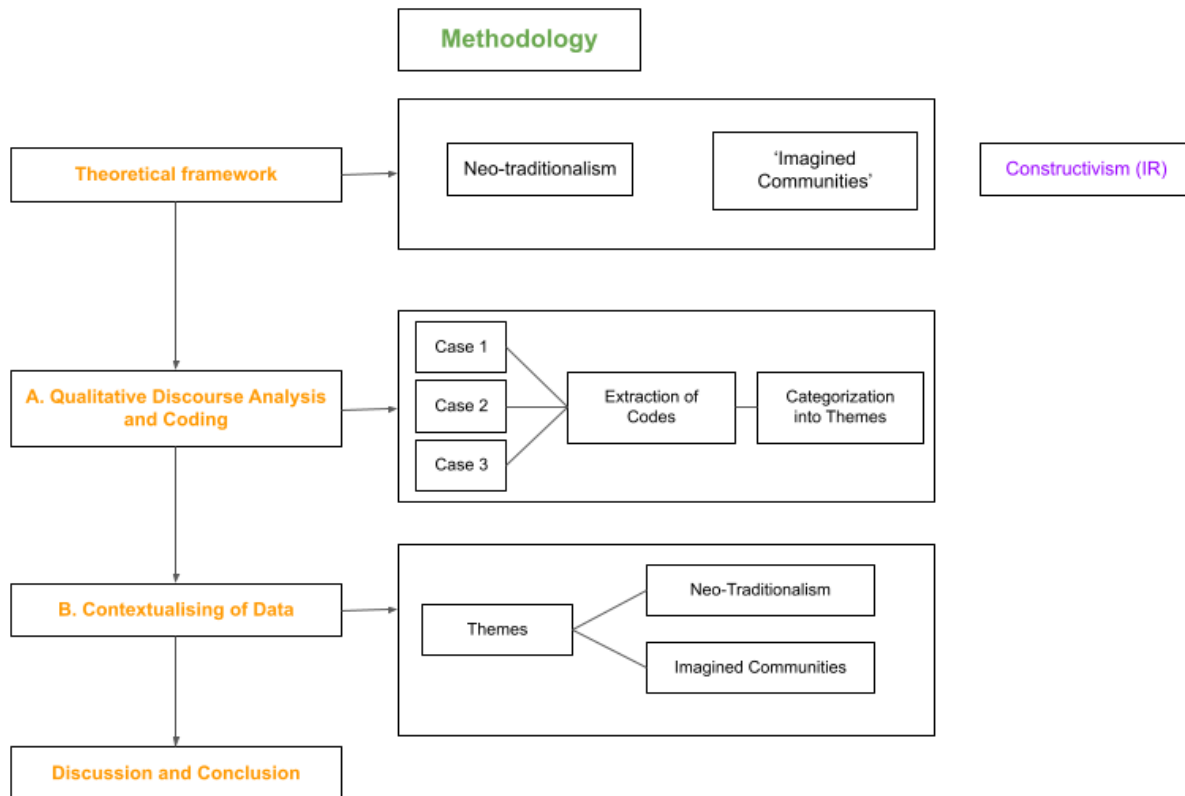
Figure 1. Structure of the thesis.

Choice of Theories

The literature search provided relevant inspiration, not only on the topic of this thesis but also on insights of theories used in similar studies, as well as some less discussed theories. While searching on the general topic of national identity we came across a prominent scholar in the field, Benedict Anderson, whose *Imagined Communities (1991)* is still considered a hallmark of the study of nationalism.

We decided to include Anderson's concept of imagined communities in the theory section, both acknowledging it as a hallmark in the study of nationalism and the state entity, as well as believing it would be a useful concept for studying the framing of national identity, since 'imagined communities' are linked to the idea of the nation and national membership. His take on nationalism and national identity creation, which he calls 'imagined communities', uses historic context to understand the role of nationalism in a world that previously defined itself by religious ties and not borders. As we will describe in the following section, Anderson (1991)

argues that the national identity and nationalism in general is a frame formed by elites to define spaces and people under their control, which could be used to safeguard it against opposing political forces. It also emphasizes the role of language as a nation-building tool used by elites, forming mental connections to traditions, places and customs in a way that creates a web of understanding that is connected directly to the language and the words in it. We found that using a theoretical concept that values discourse was relevant, as we were making a discourse analysis the core of our own thesis. Anderson's 'imagined communities' also uses historic memory (or the creation of historic memory) to a great extent, which we believed would help us analyze the Polish speakers. This is because of Poland's unique history over the last hundred years, and its role in the European community during the Second World War and the Cold War. Finally, Anderson's national identity concept is rather easy to follow, as he defines any 'imaginary community' by four aspects. This simplifies our analysis and helps us find the most important data to work with.

Despite Anderson's work on nationalism and national identity, we note that he admits that defining a national identity is difficult, if not impossible (1991, p. 3). While most scholars agree it exists there is not one definition and not many can agree on it.

Anderson's argumentation also leans on constructivist methodology and analysis patterns. This was important to us because this thesis and its research question are rooted in constructivist concepts. For this reason, we decided to also feature a section on Constructivism as it is used within the realm of International Relations; this allows us to understand the basis of some of the ideas behind 'imagined communities'. Having a common theory that can connect all our ancillary theoretical approaches was a logical step. We believe Constructivism is substantially relevant for national identity studies and for approaching national identity as something actively constructed and framed by the government, politicians and the media. It is important to note, however, that in this thesis, Constructivism serves as a background for the 'imagined community' concept, as it helps us understand how leaders and elites can construct power dynamics by conjuring imagery of nations being victimized, powerful, or anything in between. By doing this, elites can dictate how the balance of power is understood on the international stage. Despite including Constructivism in the theory section, we wish to stress that we will treat Constructivism mainly as a theoretical basis for this type of political study, and not as a core

theory that we will use in our analysis. We will return to Constructivism in the Discussion section (see p. 114).

Finally, we dedicate a section to neo-traditionalism, as it is the main theoretical concept used in this thesis and a core part of our research question. As such, we have a theory section on neo-traditionalism. The section draws on Francesco Melito's publications (2021a; 2021b) (*Finding the roots of neo-traditionalist populism in Poland: "Cultural displacement" and European integration* and *Defending the Traditional Polish Way of Life: The Role of Fantasies)* and on a working paper from POPREBEL (Benczes et. al, 2020) that Melito himself has shared with us (*Conceptualisation of neo-traditionalism and neo-feudalism*). All three papers discuss neo-traditionalism, with the difference the last one specifically attempts to conceptualize it. As not much work has been dedicated to this theoretical concept, we were inspired to figure out its relevance, to explore further what the theoretical concept of neo-traditionalism could offer not only to Poland's case but also to other CEE countries like Hungary. We believe that this theoretical concept can open new doors for studies in this field and wish that our thesis can be a small contribution to the literature.

Choice of Data

In order to answer our research question: *How do Polish politicians frame national identity discourse to defend or contest neo-traditionalist values at the European Parliament?*, we looked at three European Parliament debates regarding various topics where the government of Poland was the key actor. We provide a brief background understanding of the three cases before moving on to explain the reasons behind their selection. These three debates are:

- Case 1: The Rule of Law Crisis in Poland and the Primacy of EU Law Debate, which took place on Tuesday the 19th of October, 2021 in Strasbourg, France (Part 1 only).
- Case 2: Declaration of the EU as an LGBTIQ Freedom Zone Debate, which took place on Wednesday the 10th of March 2021 in Brussels.
- Case 3: The first anniversary of the de facto abortion ban in Poland Debate, which took place on Tuesday the 20th October 2021 in Strasbourg, France.

Background on Case 1: Rule of Law infringement

By way of background, Poland is a representative democracy, this means that it has a President as a head of state. Every 5 years, a bicameral parliament (consisting of a lower house, "Sejm", and an upper house, "Senat") and the Polish people elect the President (Rule of Law Education Centre, n.d.). The European Commission has been concerned about Poland's respect for the rule of law since 2016 (Rule of Law Education Centre, n.d.).

In October 2015, Poland's Law and Justice Party (PiS) won an absolute majority in the lower house of the parliament and ensured "its appointment to both the presidency and the upper house" (Rule of Law Education Centre, n.d.). The first developments by PiS that were a reason for concern in the European Commission were the following:

1) The appointment of judges to the Constitutional Tribunal is "in breach of its rules of appointment" (Rule of Law Education Centre, n.d.).

2) The lack of publication and implementation of the Constitutional Tribunal judgments rendered since the 9th of March 2016 (European Commission, 2016);

3) Lowering the age of retirement of judges in the Supreme Court to 65 (Rule of Law Education Centre, n.d).

To clarify, we see Development 3) as a reason for concern for the EU, because by lowering the age of retirement, the PiS was making space for Minister-appointed judges, infringing the independence of Courts. PiS's argument for lowering the retirement age is that "it was trying to fight corruption and replace judges whose careers date back to the communist era" (BBC News, 2019). At this time, PiS also gave the Minister the "final decision on which judges could stay in a job" (BBC News, 2019). To make matters worse, the lack of publication of the Constitutional Tribunal judgments hindered transparency, pointing in the direction that the Minister was building a biased Supreme Court that sides with him.

Following unsuccessful steps by the European Commission (e.g., recommendations by the European Commission, Poland being referred to the Court of Justice of the EU), the Commission triggered Article 7 of the Treaty on European Union procedure against Poland[6].

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[6] *Article 7 allows the suspension of certain rights from a Member State, based on a member breaching the rules of the European Union (European Commission, 2021).*

In 2021, the Commission considered that Poland failed to take the measures to comply with the recommendations and interim measures imposed by the Court of Justice (European Commission, 2021). At that point, in October 2021, the Court of Justice imposed a €1 million a day penalty payment on Poland until the interim measures ordered in 2021 were fully complied with. Moreover, the Commission sent a formal notice to Poland, highlighting the incompatibility of Polish law with EU law (European Commission, 2021).

A few days later, Strasbourg hosted the debate we analyse for Case 1 ("Parliamentary debate on the ruling of the Polish Constitutional Tribunal") during which, among other things, President of the Commission von der Leyen expressed the concern about the independence of the judiciary and the threats to the rule of law. Following the presentation of the case by von der Leyen, Prime Minister Morawiecki took the stand to defend the actions of PiS with a speech, which was followed by responses by Polish members of the European Parliament. These speeches are included in our Analysis, are featured in full length in Appendix A and form the bulk of the evidence in Case 1.

Background on Case 2: The LGBTIQ-Free Zone

In March of 2019, several Polish local authorities began to declare themselves an "LGBTIQ-free zone"(s) (Brudzinski, 2021). This resulted in more than 100 Polish regions, counties and municipalities adopting resolutions against the LGBTIQ "ideology" (European Parliament, 2021a). According to these resolutions, local authorities should prevent encouraging tolerance towards LGBTIQ people and should withdraw financial support from organisations promoting equality between LGBTIQ and cisgender and sexual individuals, citing a need to defend the Polish Constitution's protection of "marriage between a man and a woman" (Brudzinski, 2021).

The creation of these 'LGBTIQ-free zones' created reactions from various groups across the world. Locally, PiS, the ruling party egged the movement on and indirectly supported the creation of the zones, citing LGBT as "an attack on the family" and "an attack on children", though they publicly refused that they were lending the movement support (Noack, 2019). Reactions from LGBT advocacy groups and activists were resoundingly negative; LGBT activists claimed to feel unsafe and unequal in Poland. Marek Solzc, an openly gay politician in Warsaw stated that LGBT members had "lost the feeling that we are equal [with heteronormative

Poles]" and criticized the widespread support the LGBTIQ-free zone had gained from everyone from PiS to Archbishop Jędraszewski (Davis and Holroyd, 2019).

Within these "LGBTIQ-free zones", the LGBTIQ community is subject to hate speech from public authorities, elected officials, and pro-government media (European Parliament, 2021a). These local authorities also arrest activists and ban Pride marches. In response to this discriminatory situation, on the 11th of March 2021, MEPs declared the EU an "LGBTIQ Freedom Zone", urging the Commission to use all tools possible to stop the situation from deteriorating, including infringement procedures, Article 7 of the Treaty on EU (European Parliament, 2021a). On the same day, the debate chosen for Case 2 took place in the European Parliament, Brussels (European Parliament, 2021a).

Background on Case 3: The Abortion Ban

On October 22nd, 2020, the Polish Constitutional Tribunal imposed a quasi-total ban on abortion, declaring as unconstitutional the provision of the 1993 Act on Conditions of Termination of Pregnancy. This act disallowed abortions in cases where medical considerations "had indicated a high probability of a severe and irreversible fetal defect or an incurable illness that threatened the fetus's life". This meant that women have to seek unsafe abortions, travel abroad, or "carry their pregnancy to term against their will, including in cases of fetal impairment" (European Parliament, 2021b).

A year after the provision, on the 20th of October 2021, the European Parliament hosted a debate in Strasbourg to discuss the situation just mentioned.

There were several reasons for selecting the above-mentioned speeches. Firstly, at the beginning of the process of selecting data, we realized the great limitation of choosing speeches addressed to the Polish citizens, considering that none of the authors of this thesis speak Polish. Speeches addressed to Polish citizens are rarely translated to English, which would have been an obstacle we could not handle. Therefore, we looked for speeches by Polish politicians mainly speaking to audiences from the European Parliament or to the United Nations, expecting most of the speeches to be in English. Therefore, we chose speeches where Polish politicians were addressing the European Parliament in debate settings. Although the majority were speaking in

Polish, the EU dubbed the videos in English, solving the language barrier obstacle. We do acknowledge the possibility of lost meaning or specific discourse as a result of the translations, however, the ideas and topics are still portrayed, and therefore, we believe it does not alter the results of this thesis.

There were only two excerpts from Case 1 that were not dubbed in English - the speech from Magdalena Adamowicz, Opposition Civic Platform and the one by Joachim Stanisław Brudziński, PiS. Those excerpts have been translated by a native Polish speaker, Dan Dudkowski, a student at Roskilde University in Communication and Global Encounters.

The fact that the speeches were presented to various nationalities in the European Parliament means that we analyze a discourse intended for an international environment. In saying this, we do not place significance on the setting (national or international), yet on the content. Furthermore, as there is one set of speakers (the Polish politicians) and one set of receivers (the European Parliament) it helps simplify our analysis significantly. If we looked for speakers and recipients from various sources, we would need to differentiate our data further. This means that the national identity discourse in these speeches was specifically framed for the goal of argumentation within the European Parliament forum, meaning that the discourse created here has a direct function in each Case, and not distracted by other elements. Though the possible different forums and recipients are not a main concern of the thesis, it means that we can focus on the research question rather than mapping out webs of discursive speakers/writers and receivers. This is a significant advantage, as it narrows down our interpretive analysis to a more manageable space.

Another reason for choosing these debates was the variety of Polish stances in them; the debates contain both stances by the PiS, the current ruling party in Poland, and by minority or opposition parties in Poland (Civic Platform, Spring Party, United Poland, New Left, Democratic Left Alliance, Polish People's Party, The Left, Poland 2050). We chose only the sections where Polish politicians were talking (both current and previous PiS members, as well as other political parties in Poland). This is because we are looking at Polish politicians framing national identity, instead of at how other countries' politicians do this, hence we have omitted those sections. We also chose to use only Part 1 of the debate for Case 1, as the second part mainly repeats what has been talked about in Part 1.

Lastly, we chose these specific debate topics of Rule of Law, LGBTQI and abortion as we believed it was relevant to look for the most recent prominent and visible political cases in which the government of Poland was the key actor and not a secondary actor. As Polish speakers, and more specifically, PiS speakers are in a defensive position, we believe they are more determined to present their stances clearly and perhaps even aggressively, compared to situations in which Poland is not the center of the issue in discussion. We also believe that the choice of these cases provides a holistic understanding of Poland's identity, as the data covers both political and law issues but also social and human rights issues.

Structure of Analysis

Having provided an explanation of the choice of theories and choice of data, it is important to draw the connection between their roles in the analysis. The analysis section is divided into three segments: Theme Collection and Definition, Contextualizing the Data (Neo-traditionalism) and Contextualizing the Data (Imagined Communities).

Theme Collection and Definition

In this first segment of the analysis, we follow the analytical tool of Qualitative Discourse Analysis to collect discursive codes from the speeches, this is explained in much detail in the Methods section (see p. 44). These codes are then divided into themes based on recurring patterns and/or relationships. We describe each discursive theme, justifying why the codes belong where they are placed, how the codes relate to one another and what function the codes serve discursively (the concepts of 'codes' and 'themes' will be described in the Methods section, see p. 45). By defining the themes, and placing the codes into context, we hope to demonstrate two things:

1. that the themes are elements of the national identity of the 'imagined community' of Poland;

2. that the themes are framed discursively by Polish politicians to defend or contest neo-traditionalist features.

Contextualizing the data in relation to 'Imagined Communities' and Neo-Traditionalism

Having collected the codes from the three cases, categorized them into themes, and justified the themes, the next step is to understand the data using the two main theoretical concepts 'imagined communities' and neo-traditionalism. We do this by extracting the main points of the two concepts and using them as lenses to interpret the data and results of the themes that emerge from the analysis of the speeches. The main points from the theories can be found in the Theory section, pp. 27-43. In this way, we will have a theoretical understanding of the data set. Each concept will have its own section in the Analysis; Part 2 for 'imagined communities', and Part 3 for neo-traditionalism. We do this deductively, as we analyze and test our data with the theoretical frame grounded in the literature.

As mentioned previously, we first wish to get an understanding of what elements make up the national identity of the 'imagined community' framed by Polish politicians and secondly, how these elements are used to defend or contest neo-traditionalism features.

THEORY

This section provides the theoretical tools that we believe will help answer our research question: *How do Polish politicians frame national identity discourse to defend or contest neo-traditionalist values at the European Parliament?*. We first present Benedict Anderson's understanding of national identity from his publication, *Imagined Communities* (1991). In this book, he presents a theoretical concept of the same name, which he uses to describe the arrival of modern nationalism in a historic context, and what defines the frame of a national identity. Next, we present Constructivism (as an International Relations theory), which underpins Anderson's 'imagined communities' concept. For that reason, we briefly describe the theory, how it functions in relation to the other theories in this thesis, and how it is important to this thesis - though we stress that it will not be used actively in the Analysis section.

Finally, we present the theoretical concept of neo-traditionalism because it was the concept that led us in the first place to take this specific direction in the thesis. Melito's paper (2021a; 2021b) and Benczal et. al (2020) provided us with the knowledge of neo-traditionalism, a very relevant concept and approach when understanding national identity in current Poland.

Given its relevance, and given the few literature on the topic, we wish to draw this thesis on neo-traditionalism and take it further.

National Identity as a Theoretical Concept

National Identity is an umbrella term for theoretical concepts that aim to explain the phenomenon of national identities: their development, how it is created, and how it is used. According to Coakley (2018), Edward Shils (1910-1995) was one of the first theorists to explain the concept of national identity. He expressed the argument that national identity can be explained as "primordial," referring to "features attributed to blood ties, and to the perception of the role of membership of kin groups" (Shils in Coakley, 2018 p. 335). Since Shil's time, the theory and research surrounding it have been further developed. Diving deeper into national identity research, scholars like Ernst Gellner (1983), Paul Gilbert (1998) and Benedict Anderson (1991) became prominent with more contemporary reflections on national identity. It is important to note again, that there is no definite definition of what a national identity is. Anderson himself admits that national identity exists, yet there is no agreeable definition as to what exactly that is (1991).

'Imagined Communities'

One of the core theoretical concepts in this thesis is 'imagined communities', as described in Benedict Anderson's book of the same name. This served as a hallmark in the study of nationalism and the state entity and is frequently cited and used in studies even today. In this section, we wish to describe the concept of 'imagined communities', as well as detail Anderson's approach to nationalism, its historic background and how that affects the writing of this thesis.

Anderson introduces the concept of nationalism by describing how difficult defining the term is, which contrasts with how important nationalism has been in the political world for several centuries. He quotes British historian Seton-Watson on the subject, saying that "no scientific definition of the nation can be devised; yet the phenomenon has existed and exists" (in Anderson, 1991, p. 3) which indicates the same. In response, Anderson writes that his book will attempt to define the nation and nationalism. His point of departure for his analysis is that nationalities are "cultural artefacts of a particular kind" rather than a political concept and that

one of their defining features is the strong "emotional legitimacy" that nationalities command in people (Anderson, 1991, p. 4). In other words, Anderson defines nationalism as a framed concept being kept alive by the people who hold it dear due to its importance as a part of their own identity. Anderson describes nationalism as closer to the concepts of 'kinship' and 'religion', rather than with 'liberalism' or 'fascism'", which also describes nationalism as a part of people's identity, rather than a political ideology (Anderson, 1991, p. 4).

Anderson moves on to define political communities as the eponymous of 'imagined communities', which stems from four characteristics: "imagined", "limited", "sovereign" and "a community" (Anderson, 1991, pp. 6-7). First, they are imagined because, in his mind, they exist because people imagine them to exist, without knowing for sure that they do exist. The imagined community comes from all members (or all who feel as though they are members) of the community who have a notion of how other members behave, and on some level, believe they are like themselves. This includes that they assume that they speak a common language, and have some knowledge and traditions in common. Anderson quotes Gellner, stating that "nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it *invents* nations where they do not exist", though he also notes that he believes that is a cynical look at the concept (in Anderson, 1991, p. 6). Instead of seeing the imagined community as a lie or an illusion, it is a framed idea that is as real as people make them up to be; something he defines later in the book through a historic perspective.

The imagined community is also "limited, because even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations" (Anderson, 1991, p. 7). Nations have to be limited to make sense as communities; without borders to other nations, they cannot be defined as separate and unique entities without opposites and "them" to be contrasted with the "us" in your own community. Even imperialist communities do not wish their own community to be expanded across the entire world; at some point, the borders reach groups that are better to leave out of the imagined community, likely because you cannot imagine them being a part of it. The 'limited' and the 'imagined' parts of the community go well together - members of the community imagine a limited mental, and cultural space that they occupy so that they can define themselves in contrast to other communities, who do the same. Anderson notes that the national imagined community is

different from the religious imagined community, as many religions do imagine a world where all share their faith (Anderson, 1991, p. 7).

The second core part of Anderson's imagined community is that it is imagined to be "sovereign" (Anderson, 1991, p. 7). He claims that the concept of nationalism arrived as a response to the Enlightenment Age, which eroded the "divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm" (Anderson, 1991, p. 7). Early nationalism arose due to the plurality of religions in the world, which made believing in one true religion difficult. In response, the imagined community makes people within it free, "and, if under God, directly so" (Anderson, 1991, p. 7). To remain free, the imagined community needs to be sovereign and free from outside influences, so the people within it can live by their common imagined history and culture.

Finally, and obviously, the imagined community is a 'community'; which is a "deep, horizontal comradeship" that assumes all members have a connection with one another, regardless of social standing and minor differences (Anderson, 1991, p. 7). This is also an imagined frame, as there is no way that anyone can know that they are connected in that way with all the members of their community, let alone know who those people would be. It is also likely that all members of the imagined community do not agree on what constitutes their own community and the cultural artifacts that define it (Anderson, 1991).

When these four elements are combined, we end up with Anderson's 'imagined community'; his view of nation-building in the people's consciousness. It is crucial to point out that when nationality is framed in speech and writing, the national identity is not based entirely on objective reality, but on shared codes and frames that people within a certain geographical area can attest to and see themselves in (Anderson, 1991).

The state has often sanctioned artists, writers and more to produce pieces of art that adequately describes and defines the nation's ideals. Think of *'La Liberté Guidant le Peuple* by Eugéne Delacroix; a famous painting that reinforces the idea of the French Revolution in the Enlightenment Era to today - a bloody, society-encompassing conflict nonetheless guided by the wish for freedom. Or think of the gigantic Mount Rushmore, which displays the faces of George Washington, Theodore Roosevelt, Thomas Jefferson and Abraham Lincoln, carved out of the mountainside. Both examples display important codes: the former expresses that the French Revolution was a people's revolt for freedom that shaped France, and the latter expresses that the four presidents are more important than any others in US history. Yet at the same time, the

painting could have exhibited the dangers and violence of the Revolution, and the tragic end to the conflict, and Mount Rushmore could have exhibited William Howard Taft or John Quincy Adams over or alongside the other presidents. We can make arguments for or against the presentation of the French and American national frames shown here, but we cannot deny that they project a specific, imagined idea of their nation's culture.

The concept of 'imagined community' is not entirely, and rarely is, a controllable process. The identity of a nation is not just framed by political and cultural elite, but created by years of construction and framing by the entire populace of an 'imagined community'. However, people in visible positions (such as politicians) tend to be able to convey their framing of national identity better than the average citizen. Hence, we note that the way in which we approached 'imagined communities' (and the concept of national identity overall) is more flexible as we argue to a certain extent it can be framed by political and cultural actors, as well as the general population of a nation.

Anderson uses the example of "Russification" to prove that nationalism came to be to allow leaders of Enlightenment nations to control their own country (Anderson, 1991, pp. 86-87). He shows how Count Sergei Uvarov composed a report on the Russia of the time, stating that it should be based on "Autocracy, Orthodoxy and Nationality", which he claims was important due to the fact that most of Russia did not speak a common language, and so were not united under the Tzar (who, like all Russian royalty, spoke French at the time) (Anderson, 1991, p. 87). Much later, in 1887, Tzar Alexander the Third made "Russian compulsory as the language of instruction in all state schools", beginning a process of "Russification" (Anderson, 1991, p. 87). Anderson follows up with examples of Anglicization of India to cement his argument. In it, he reiterates that nationality is imposed on people in an effort to enforce their loyalty to their sovereign through a process of removing local beliefs and replacing them with English language and learning - though we will not describe it here for brevity's sake (Anderson, 1991).

Using these historic examples, we argue that while the 'imagined community' of a nation may be framed and reconstructed by anyone, even people who are not members of that nation, it is elites who hold the most sway over this process. By endorsing official languages, connecting past history with the present and by imposing national values on a variety of people, the leaders of the past managed to create the nations we know of today. In the present, we argue that

political leaders (alongside other 'elites', such as actors and business leaders) have an exceptional ability to frame this old national narrative, due to the resources and attention they have available to them. This is compared to average citizens, who will need to assemble in interest organizations or parties to frame their nationality - and even then, their impact is arguably less than the leaders of those groups.

Besides his work to define the way nations are shaped, Anderson also attempts to define the nature of the nationalist political movement. First, we wish to clarify that the movement he speaks of does not need to be of the same type that many of us think of as populist movements or radical right-wing groups; rather, they are simply groups that wish to promote their idea of their imagined community. In this sense, any movement wishing to create a new nation or community is a nationalist political movement.

Anderson argues that nationalist movements always connect to historic events and the notion of 'national heroes', which become "pearls strung along a thread of narrative" (1991, p. 109). Of particular importance for this thesis is how certain discursive codes are reiterated over longer periods in official and public speeches. Much of the analysis will consist of detecting codes that are used again and again within speeches directed at the larger European Union. Following Anderson's logic, we should be able to detect attempts to frame an idea of Poland through these codes; some of which may be bound to historical events and figures. The figure below presents our comprehension of what the main points of Anderson's 'imagined communities' concept represent.

'Imagined Communities' Anderson (1991)
Main Points

'Imagined'	*They exist because people imagine them to exist, without knowing for sure that they do exist.*
'Limited'	*The imagined community is also* "limited, because even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations" (Anderson, 1991, p. 7). *That is why we have us vs them.*
'Sovereign'	*To remain free, the imagined community needs to be sovereign and free from outside influences, so the people within it can live in accordance with their common imagined history and culture.*
'A Community'	*Which is a* "deep, horizontal comradeship" *that assumes all members have a connection with one another, regardless of social standing and minor differences* (Anderson, 1991, p. 7).
'Historic Events'	Nationalist movements always connect to historic events and the notion of 'national heroes', which become "pearls strung along a thread of narrative" (Anderson, 1991, p.109).

Figure 2. 'Imagined Communities" Main Points.

Critique of the Theory

A major issue in Anderson's work on Imagined communities is that it lacks a definition of national identity. Despite Anderson's work on nationalism and national identity, he claims that defining a national identity is difficult, if not impossible (Anderson, 1991).

However, it is also easy to see why the concept of Imagined Communities has had a large impact on political studies. Anderson describes the concept with terms and concepts that every person can recognize within their own lives, with examples and short arguments to back them up. The concept is, however, more philosophical than theoretical in scope; defining the idea of the state and the nation in thought experiments and a writing form that mirrors that of Socratic dialogue. For example, Anderson argues that the 'limited' imagined community never would think of itself as spanning the globe. However, here he assumes that different empires throughout

time have not tried to take over their world due to a lack of interest in it, not for a lack of trying. Antique empires (which, granted, are not nationalist in the sense we understand them in a post-Enlightenment world) have often attempted to dominate their own sense of the world and were stopped not by lack of effort but by technical, bureaucratic and logistic limitations. The Roman Empire comes to mind as the conquering, ever-spreading nation which broke and fell before it could dominate Europe fully - but then again, not for a lack of trying.

Another issue with the concept is perhaps how simple yet challenging it is to apply to context. Anderson does not provide any model, theory, or function to structure the use of the concept. Here the concept's philosophical bend becomes an issue, as it bars us, and other users of the concept, from relying solely on it to define framed national identities. As has been done in this thesis, it requires other theories to support it - alone, it fails to properly define a given case community as anything but an 'imagined community'. For this specific reason, we decided to align it to the theory of constructivism, as well as to the concept of neo-traditionalism, to make the concept of imagined communities more concrete and contextualized.

Finally, an interesting wrinkle of 'imagined communities' is the lack of emphasis on common values. Anderson's four defining characteristics of the 'imagined community' feature fairly basic, non-negotiable elements that can be used to define the scope, scale and content of a given community, but he does not deal with ethics, agreements or other values that connect people to any significant degree. It is true that the concept skirts the idea that values are important - most clearly, the concept's emphasis on historic events and idealized historic heroes imply a level of agreement with the values that they are prescribed. However, since both the events and heroes are framed and imaginary (though based on reality), the values they are prescribe are not indelible, and are not in the forefront - in other words, the hero is not based on values, values are found within the hero because the hero belongs to a specific 'imaginary community'. This is an area of understanding that Anderson does not emphasize, relying instead on the political, practical understanding of community.

Constructivism

We stress that while the theory of Constructivism remains important for the thesis, it is as an acknowledgment of it as the philosophical and theoretical bedrock of this type of political study,

and not as a core theory that will be used in the analysis. However, we argue that 'imagined communities' are in certain ways, influenced by constructivism. We wish to note that we will be using Constructivism as an International Relations theory and that it should not be confused with its brother Social Constructivism. We choose Constructivism because our analysis looks at the Polish discourse taking place in an international arena, the EU Parliament, keeping in mind that the EU is a space where countries can interact and attempt to change the political (international) structure and landscape.

Constructivism is a relatively young theory within the studies of International Relations, appearing just 30 years ago in scholarly publications. Unlike the previous IR theories (e.g. Realism and Liberalism), Constructivism is more attentive to the process of "how identity, norms, and culture shape patterns of war and peace" than the mechanics with which states and markets interact (Baylis et al, 2017, p. 145). At its core, the Constructivism theory is occupied with the "relationship between agents and structures" - 'agents' in this case being any actor (from an individual to a state) who can interact and attempt to change the form of the 'structure' (Baylis et al, 2017, p. 146-147). These agents are assumed to act to change the structure of the international society out of holistic or idealistic notion; "influencing what states and non-state actors do and their ideas of what is legitimate behaviour" to fit closer to the agent's own notion of the ideal international society (Baylis et al, 2017, p. 145).

There are largely two key differences between the realist and liberalist schools of thought and constructivism. One is that Constructivism tends to attribute behavioral structures to ideas, norms and knowledge that is disseminated through agents' relationships with each other, while the other two theories emphasize physical and 'provable' sources of structure. Neorealists and neoliberal scholars often disagreed in many areas but found common ground when it came to "individualism and materialism", in the sense that they agreed that state actors "have fixed interests and that structure constrain their behaviour" and that "the structure that constrains behaviour is defined by the distribution of power, wealth and technology" (Baylis, 2017, p. 145). Constructivism differs in that it argues that the perception of individualism and materialism, alongside many other political '-ism's', power relations, state boundaries and much more were defined by the actors involved in international politics. As with all of the major IR theories, Constructivism attempts to understand how the balance of power is kept and challenged internationally - however, the theory is unique in that it argues that the balance of power "does

not objectively exist out there, waiting to be discovered; instead, states debate what is the balance of power, what is its meaning, and how they should respond" (Baylis, 2017, p. 148). Rather than presupposing certain elements about international structures, Constructivism assumes that those structures are not really alone, but made real by repeated affirmative action and reaction made within this structure to change, affect or reconstruct it. When a political leader speaks of 'neighboring countries', they reconstruct the constructed ideas that states exist, that they exist in physical relation to each other, that each has a national spirit equivalent to a personality, and that they 'live' beside each other, as if they were families living in a suburb (Baylis, 2017)..

Constructivism accepts "holism or structuralism", believing that the world is "irreducibly social and cannot be decomposed into the properties of already existing actors" (Baylis, 2017, p. 148), meaning that it sees the world as interconnected webs of understanding between people, and understands this as the 'structure' of international society. Holism, which is the idea that various systems should be viewed as a whole, and not as a collection of parts, allows agency for the individual; examples include important political leaders approaching cross-national relations by personally engaging in discussions with the country's leader, not just as professionals and representatives, but as people (Baylis, 2017).

Constructivists argue that the world is "not just material but also normative" (Baylis, 2017, p. 149). This means that besides the facts of the world we can not argue with (i.e that seas and mountains exist), the world as we see it is created by "regulative" and "constitutive rules" that define how the political world ought to behave and how new events and behaviors ought to be; in other words, common values formed in the international community defines how nations act (Baylis, 2017, pp. 148-149). This results in a normative world order that broadly defines how political conduct should be made; though it is important to stress that this order isn't absolute. One of the arguments for Constructivism in this regard is the "existence of different normative environments" which points to the fact that all political actors look for ways to create legitimacy in the wider political community (Baylis, 2017, p. 149). Baylis et. al (2017) argue that legitimacy is worth pursuing because it helps the political entity cooperate with other entities; the more legitimate a given political goal is, the more likely it is that the entity can get support to bring it into the world - this is why, in their words, "even great powers […] frequently feel the need to alter policies in order to be viewed as legitimate - or bear the consequences" (p. 149). Even

actors without the materials to challenge larger political entities can, by 'naming and shaming' or 'canceling', force them to adapt, change and fall in line with the normative state of things (Baylis, 2017).

As the normative political order is created by actors, it is also being challenged by them[7]; one can assume that any entity who is displeased with what they perceive as normative will do their best to change it. Their ability to do so is dependent on their ability to convince important, legitimate entities to support them, and on other entities already in agreement supporting them. New values are introduced by actors supporting the normative order, in a way that fits with it, so that they might be considered a part of that order. Slowly but surely, new values can be added to the political order, as long as there is support and agreement around them.

As this thesis uses discourse as its main data, we felt it was important to understand what role discourse can have on the international political stage. By repeatedly conjuring up certain images of what a nation is perceived to be like, the speaker or writer can invoke internationally accepted values or understanding of the same that others can recognize. A reason for producing national identity narratives is to shape how listeners and readers understand the role of a nation on an international level (see Constructivism, p. 34). This is an idea we will return to as we delve into the Analysis and Discussion sections. We will return to the theory in the Discussion, to assess the findings from the Analysis with a Constructivist approach.

Neo-traditionalism

This section conceptualizes the type of neo-traditionalism present in Poland's current far-right populist fashion. Most research on neo-traditionalism stems from work devoted to understanding neo-traditionalism in the political contexts of Russia (David-Fox, 2006; Fitzpatrick, 2000), or several countries in Asia, while there is considerably less work done on neo-traditionalism in Central Europe. In fact, we argue that neo-traditionalism requires a better conceptualization. There are currently research projects working on neo-traditionalism in Central Europe (e.g., projects like FATIGUE and POPREBEL), which will contribute to providing a more thorough conceptualization of neo-traditionalism.

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[7] *We wish to note that neo-traditionalism sees the 'normative order' as being shaped by liberalism; as Melito (2021a) argues: neo-traditionalism is a "counter-hegemonic project" against the liberal Western hegemony (p. 23).*

Tradition and Modernity

Before delving deeper into neo-traditionalism, it is important to address the concepts of tradition and modernity, as they are at the base of the concept of neo-traditionalism. Tradition is typically associated with social practices that celebrate specific norms and values embedded in the past and includes "widely accepted rituals or other forms of symbolic behavior" (Scott & Marshall in Benczes et al, 2020, p. 3). Modernity is typically presented as the dichotomy of tradition, where values, space and time are in constant change and progress. There have been different approaches to the idea of tradition throughout history; some argued that traditional values are a burden to our minds (Marx, 1852), and others argued that modern societies lack traditional values, rendering societies impersonal and heterogeneous (Scott & Marshall, 2005). Enlightenment and modernisation theories advanced in the 1950 and 60s by lumières such as Inkeles argued that societies were moving towards modern values, leaving behind traditionalism. Modernisation theories also suggested that non-western societies have been rejecting traditional values and adapting to modern cultures.

The dichotomy between modern and traditional further encouraged studies on invented tradition or on identity framing, which typically "refers to tradition in search for identity deeply rooted in the past" (Benczes et. al, 2020, p. 3).

Neo-traditionalism as a Concept

Based on what tradition means, traditionalism then is the preservation of tradition, in face of the challenges posed by modernity; thus, the main goal of traditionalism is to protect the authenticity of culture, assuming that it "provides stable, permanent and non-relative values to guide the society" (Benczes et. al, 2020, p. 5). Neo-traditionalism on the other hand, is slightly different, as it embraces a dimension of time. Neo-traditionalism is seen as a strategy that has the goal to "return to what is claimed to be 'tradition' after a period of disruption" (Benczes et. al, 2020, p. 5). The attempt is to resume those values and social behaviors that were lost in the period of disorder and were replaced by other values imposed by external agents (e.g. colonizers) or processes of contemporary globalization. Both ideologies (traditionalism and neo-traditionalism) are adopted in situations where the "established" traditional values compete with an alternative modern and more progressive way of living (Benczes et. al, 2020, p. 5).

In this thesis, we follow the strand of neo-traditionalism that draws inspiration from post-colonialism: in former colonies, it was used as a strategy to reject foreign (typically Western) cultural influence and to create a new identity that reinvigorates old traditions (Friedman, 1994; Rata, 2007). There is another strand of neo-traditionalism applied in sociology (Jowitt, 1983; Walder, 1986), typically "employed to describe the mixture of modern and traditional elements in communist countries" (Melito, 2021a, p. 5), but we are going to use the post-colonial approach to make different use of the concept. This decision is based on the current conflict between neo-traditionalist and liberal worldviews that is escalating in Poland. Post-colonial studies view "tradition" as a perpetrator of the authentic cultural reality of a people, that in order to be preserved, must not be deprived by Eurocentric modernisation. Accordingly, this strand of neo-traditionalism assumes that a people's authentic culture was disrupted due to a period "of domination by more powerful 'others'" (Benczes et. al, 2020, p. 6). Neo-traditionalism is typically used in politics as a populist instrument to gain support from the masses, "in name of the value of their tradition, against 'elites', who are globalised, cosmopolitan" (Benczes et. al, 2020, p. 6).

Neo-traditionalists argue that neo-traditionalism is a strategy for providing collective security, especially in situations of changing realities (economic, political and cultural). In these rapidly changing situations, ontological security (a feeling of certainty and belonging in a familiar world) is disrupted. These situations can be sudden changes like migration, wars, sudden political shifts, or economic crises; they can also be slower changes. Either way, these periods of change are argued to deprive people of their sense of security, meaning and comfort. Neo-traditionalists argue that a solution is (traditional) culture; culture provides people with the instruments that create a sense of security and comfort in a world that makes sense. Therefore, tradition can be a solution to restore the meaning that has been disrupted by transformations.

Neo-traditionalism in Central Europe

In the context of post-communist Central and Eastern Europe, neo-traditionalism is strongly linked to populism. Countries like Poland and Hungary are the clear-cut example of neo-traditionalism in Europe, and how neo-traditionalism is fostered by populist parties.

Neo-traditionalists argue that neoliberalism has weakened the security built up throughout years of preserving cultural heritage. After 1989, Central and Eastern Europe found

itself faced with a set of unknown politics, ideologies and behaviours, such as relativism, secularism, liberal concepts of family, pluralism, and openness (Melito, 2021a). As a response to what has become the "liberal hegemony" (Melito, 2021a, p. 23), countries have become increasingly supportive of populist right-wight politics. Populist and right-wing parties today use the narrative of tradition as a proposed solution to escape the loss of economic and so-called ontological security (Benczes et. al, 2020).

The CEE populist argument holds that both communism and Western liberalism are the cause for destroying tradition in Central and Eastern Europe, as both were active enemies of tradition (Benczes et. al, 2020). While in the communist period, religion, for example, was systematically prohibited in the Soviet Union. Today, in the neo-liberal context, religion is replaced by secularism and science. The end of communism, after all, did not allow the full return of pre-communist traditions and religious values, because of the cosmopolitan and liberal ideology. Right-wing populists often compare a) the Soviet supranational communist society to b) Western liberal cosmopolitan society as types of societies that both have disrupted the "traditional concept of ethnic, culture-based nation to be transformed into a modern type of society" (Benczes et. al, 2020, p. 7). Populists responded to the deprivation of national sovereignty and identity with neo-traditionalism.

The POPREBEL research project explained neo-traditionalism in the context of CEE, where populists are backlashing against liberalism. The research group argues that neo-traditionalism in CEE is composed of three main elements:

- **Rejection of communism:** Currently, some of the right-wing post-communist countries in Central Europe (i.e., Hungary and Poland) use the narrative that they are the first to be "truly anti-communist and to be a real alternative to communism" (Benczes et. al, 2020, p. 8).
- **Rejection of post-communist politics:** The Polish case is a clear example of this. Current populist parties deny the legitimacy of previous communist and post-communist governments, accusing the latter of mismanaging the transition from their communist predecessors. This rejection is normally a result of economic deprivation and political distrust, likely associated with the aftermath of communism (Benczes et. al, 2020).

- **Rejection of liberal and progressive 21st-century modernity:** While CEE countries desired to join the EU, right-wing populists argued that in order to detach from the communist legacy, the CEE must "rise from their knees", independent of the West (Benczes et. al, 2020, p. 8).

The dichotomic polarisation between East and West (i.e. traditional and pure East vs corrupt and liberal West) has been used in discourse by right-wing populist parties in the post-communist region (e.g., Poland and Hungary), to gain popular support and to attract powerful allies.

To summarise, neo-traditionalism is a response generated by the perceived disruption of traditional values. The context in which neo-traditionalism is born is one where "established" traditional values compete with an alternative modern and more progressive way of living (Benczes et. al, 2020, p. 5). The preservation of traditional values gives a sense of security to a community, as well as an understanding of the world and a sense of being safe in their community. In addition, "the prefix neo- suggests that this discourse is not simply linked to traditions; it also points to its reactionary character against the current form of liberalism" (Melito, 2021a, p. 40). Finally, we want to emphasise that neo-traditionalism does not encourage a return to a pre-modern agrarian community. Instead, it is a mobilising strategy - present in the three dimensions mentioned above (private, religious, political) - that refers to tradition as a source of stable values and practices that can provide a feeling of belonging to a homogenous and secure society (Benczes et. al, 2020, p. 9). The figure below provides a visual representation of the main points of neo-traditionalism.

Neo - Traditionalism
Main Points

Desire to restore **collective ontological security** (ontological security - a feeling of certainty and belonging in a familiar world).

Nostalgia for the past (history and values)

Rejection of

Communism, which has destroyed tradition (religion was systematically prohibited in the Soviet Union).

Post-communist politics

Liberal and progressive 21st-century modernity

Discontent about the replacement of **secularism over religion**
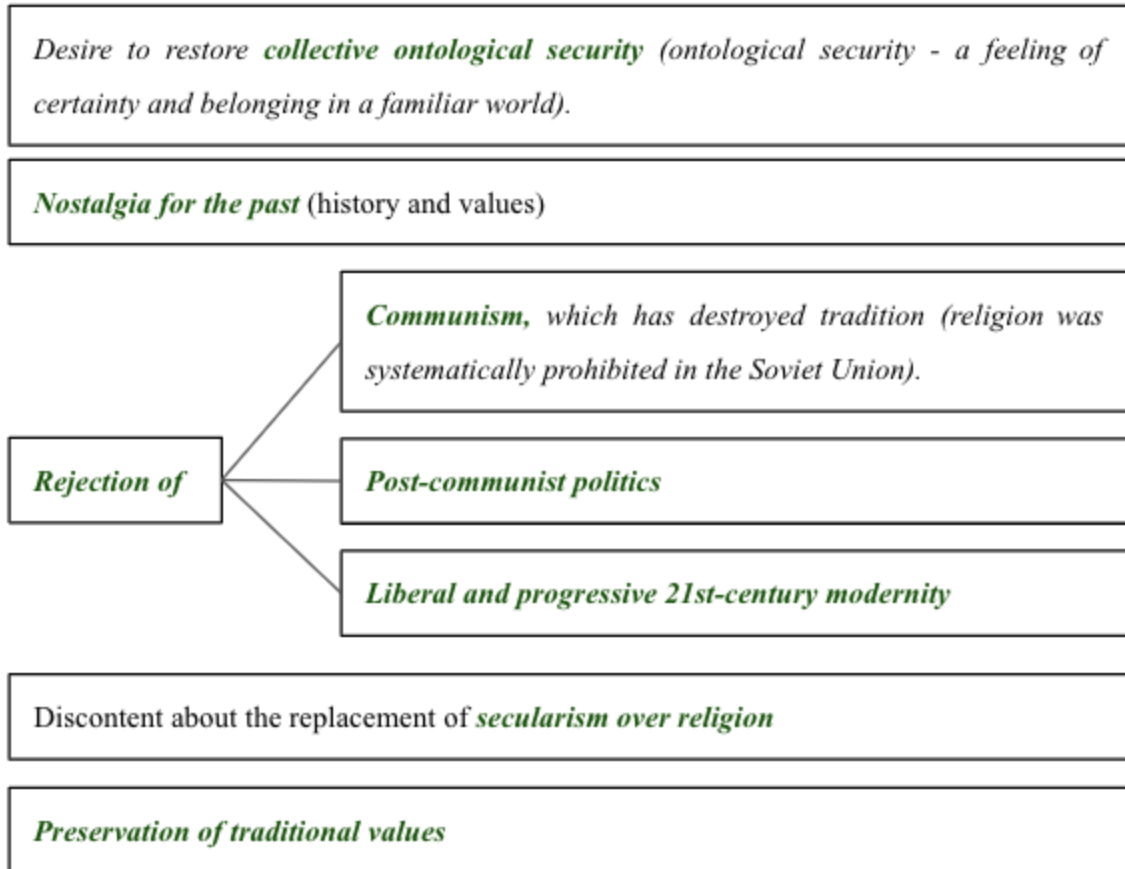
Preservation of traditional values

Figure 3. Neo-traditionalism Main Points.

The Connection between 'Imagined Communities', Neo-traditionalism and Constructivism

As a conclusion to our Theory section, we wish to briefly describe the relationship between the three concepts in this section. This is to avoid the assumption that they are equal and similar when each concept actually has a separate but important function in this project.

The concept of 'imagined communities', as a national identity theoretical concept, allows us to assess and understand national identity frames on a discursive level. By using 'imagined communities', we can comprehend the discursive codes and themes extracted from the speeches analytically, and more importantly, understand them as the discursive codes Polish politicians used to frame up an idea of Polish national identity.

'Neo-traditionalism' we argue is not a theoretical concept but a set of political values that can be grouped up and understood as one ideal. We have described the background for the concept and what it entails so that we might be able to detect how Polish politicians use national identity discourses defending or contesting neo-traditionalist features.

Finally, the theory of constructivism functions as a 'background theory' that underlays the project as a whole. As explained in its section, constructivism in an International Relations context is about how the balance of power is framed and understood on the diplomatic stage, which is our main reason for including the theory. By keeping constructivism in mind, we can understand what the reasoning for Polish politicians producing national identity might be, and what the end goal of it may be.

In conclusion, the three elements in this Theory section function as the 'How', 'What' and 'Why' of our thesis - 'imagined communities' shows us how national identity can be framed; neo-traditionalism is what we argue the framed national identity defends or contests; and we can understand why this would be necessary by following constructivist thought patterns. With these three elements, we believe we have all we need to properly analyze, understand and interpret the data from the speeches chosen; save of course for the discourse theory, which will be described in the next section.

METHODS

This section provides a detailed understanding of the analytical tools and methods of Qualitative Discourse Analysis and coding that we introduced in the Methodology section, see p. 18. This Methods section is divided into 3 segments; the first is a general overview of **Qualitative Discourse Analysis**, the second goes into further detail explaining the **Coding Method** we follow, and lastly an overview of some **Limitations** worth considering.

We base our understanding of QDA, coding, and themes on the writings of Marshall and Rossman (in Khokhar et al., 2018), Gibbs (2008) and Saldãna (2008). Khokar et al. (2020), write the article *Theory Development in Thematic Analysis: Procedures and Practice* which summarizes Marshall and Rossman's QDA approach with clarity and provides examples that helped us better understand how to apply the same approach to our thesis. Gibbs's (2007) book, *Analyzing Qualitative Data* helped us explore deeper into the mechanics of codes, coding and categorization. Finally, Saldana's (2008) article *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*, provided us with a simplified coding manual, adding to the understanding and explanation of the aforementioned authors.

Qualitative Discourse Analysis

According to Marshall and Rossman, QDA is "a process in which themes and relationships are established by identifying statements or phrases" (Marshall and Rossman in Khokhar et al., 2018, p. 424). Within the methodological approach of QDA, there are several more specific strategies, yet we chose thematic analysis, which is, in other words, "breaking down the data to generate themes" (ibid) also known as coding (Marshall and Rossman in Khokhar et al., 2018, p. 424). We chose to focus on the thematic aspects of the speeches because we believe it gives us an inside into the neo-traditionalist values that Polish politicians are defending or contesting, while showing us how their arguments are framed.

There are several reasons why we chose to use coding. First, a "fundamental purpose of coding [...] is data reduction, organization and essential data exploration [and] analysis" (Khokhar et al., 2018, p. 425). As we have a lot of speeches to sift through, it makes sense to compress the most important details from them in an organized manner. Coding allows us to define, categorize and justify our interpretations in a way that many other discourse theories

would not be able to. Our goal is to understand how the qualitative discursive codes in the speeches give us an insight into the national identity framed by Polish politicians speaking in Cases 1, 2 and 3. We hope that through coding, we are able to see not just how one person or group frames national identity discourses, but how opposing politicians and parties can serve to do so as well, despite presenting opposing arguments and viewpoints. We believe that coding allows us to do just that in a way that makes the invisible connections between framed ideas in the speeches easier to see and process.

Coding Method

When generating codes in the analysis section, we will follow a similar approach as the figure below (which is inspired by Gibbs in Khokar et al., 2020, p. 426).

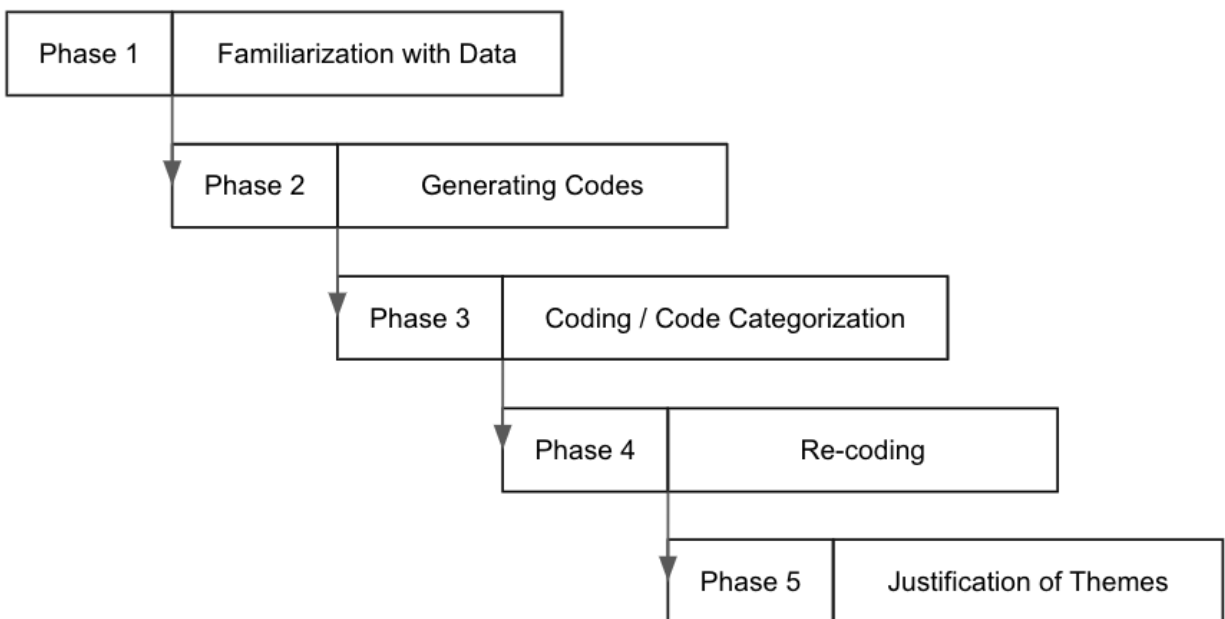| Phase 1 | Familiarization with Data |
Phase 2	Generating Codes
Phase 3	Coding / Code Categorization
Phase 4	Re-coding
Phase 5	Justification of Themes

Figure 4. Model-based on Gibbs in Khokar et al (2020, p. 426)

Phase 1: The first step of this thematic analysis process is to collect data such as "words, documents, pictures and observations" (Khokhar et al., 2018, p. 424). As mentioned in the Choice of Data section (see p. 21), our chosen data is speeches by Polish politicians in debate

settings at the European Parliament. At this phase, the data is read and its context is understood, see Background on Cases 1, 2 and 3 (see pp. 22-26).

Phase 2: Having collected the data, the next stage is data processing, where one must collect codes. There are many definitions of what a code is, one such definition is that a code is "most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based [...] data" (Saldana, 2008, p. 3). However, since coding is "not a precise science, it's primarily an interpretive act" (Saldana, 2009, p. 4), we decided to open the definition of codes to also include quotes, labels, keywords, concepts, topics. We will assign and collect codes inductively, meaning that as we read the data collected, and the speeches, we assign codes. We do not use predefined codes.

Saldana (2009) notes that in the process of coding, the researcher is actually moving through several different coding processes. As the researchers are gathering codes from their material, they are actually 'decoding' the meanings within the material so that they can be re -organised (Saldana, 2008, p. 4). When the codes are being labeled, the researchers are technically "encoding" them, as we use the new terms, words and sentences to assign new meanings to the meanings found within the material (Saldana, 2008, p. 4). The lexical units (quotes, labels, keywords, concepts, topics) that have been encoded to new labels (codes) can be found throughout the speeches in Appendix A, where we indicated which part of text refers to the code.

When assigning and collecting codes, we also use the help of some questions suggested by Charmaz (in Gibbs, 2008). We do not use these religiously, but more of an unofficial guide, and therefore, we will not discuss these questions further.

- What is going on?
- What are people doing?
- What is the person saying?
- What do these actions and statements take for granted?
- How do structure and context serve to support, maintain, impede or change these actions and statements? (Charmaz in Gibbs, 2007, p. 42)

For more clarity, we provide an example below from the data we analyzed:

"… in Poland, there's never been a penalty for homosexuality, but that was the case in Western Europe. Maybe your traditional record is worse, you now want to teach Poland your new culture, but our culture didn't produce any form of fascism, I think we need to have common sense defended here." (Jaki, 2021a)

The code examples are noted in colors:

- *Anti-LGBTQI*
- *West vs East*
- *Western Patronizing*
- *Fascism, historical reference, enemy*
- *Common sense*

For the purpose of providing clarity throughout the rest of this thesis, codes will be italicized and themes will be bolded.

The codes above are what we discovered within the excerpt. There are some topics that are simple to find (for the purpose of this thesis we call them topic codes), such as 'Fascism' and 'Common Sense', while others are more interpretive codes (for the purpose of this thesis we call them interpretive codes) such as 'West vs East' and 'Western Patronizing', and there are also some labels (for the purpose of this thesis we call them label codes) such as anti-LGBTQI. It is important to keep in mind that a mix of all these types of codes will be found throughout the speeches, and that it is not necessarily important what type of code it is, but that one can provide a justification for it.

It is very possible that others may not agree with these codes, or that others may be found. However, as mentioned before, assigning and collecting codes is not a "precise science" and is very interpretive (Saldãna, 2008, p. 4). To alleviate this problem, we have collected codes in three rounds; each of the three writers of this thesis collected their own, as we have three people going through this stage, we believe it does not make our analysis biased and does not skew the results. It is important to note that codes and coding are not the same things as

codifying. Codes are labels, indexes, keywords, concepts, topics and so on, while coding is the act of organizing the codes in categories and/or themes, the latter is a later stage.

Phase 3: Once every member of this research group has collected codes, we begin the next stage of coding (see p. 51 for all the codes collected). This stage, which we also refer to as code categorization, is when we "decode, analyse and interpret the collected [codes] in order to answer the research question(s) and achieve objective(s) of the study" (Khokhar et al., 2018, p. 424). According to Khokar et al., (2018), "during the coding process researchers began realizing a number of similar and dissimilar codes appear which need to be clusters and categorized for further refinement and sub-categorizing" (p. 425). We look at codes that can fit into a broader category/theme, and/or have some sort of a relationship. We wish to note that academic literature on this methodological approach uses the words 'themes' and 'categories' interchangeably, but we will use the term theme(s) when referring to a collection of codes.

The way in which we place the codes into themes is by understanding the meaning of each code in relation to its context, and we collect them by themes, based on their meaning. For more clarity, we provide an example below from the data we analyzed. Taking the following codes: *Threats to Poland, Security, Security against Russia, Defense, Migration, Russia, War, Safety, Borders of the Union, Anti-Russian Aggression, Common Security, Defense Potential, Security of the Union, Polish Security is EU Security*, we categorized them into the theme of **Defense**. Once again, the methodological approach of coding is interpretative and open for debate, however, as we are three going through this process, we argue that this has lowered the bias and does not hinder the results of this research thesis.

Phase 4: Having completed the first 3 phases, we return to coding again. The term 'coding' may imply that it is a one-way process that can be done once as an analysis. However, a crucial element of the coding process is the concept of re-coding. As Saldana (2008) notes, "coding is a cyclical act" that requires you to reevaluate your codes, themes and categories again and again until the final result begins to form a complete picture of the meanings in the material (p. 7). As the analyst moves through their second, third, or more cycle of coding, they reinterpret the data they have collected using the knowledge they now hold of the source material. The goal of this process is to "[break] the data apart in analytically relevant ways in order to lead toward further

questions about the data" (Coffey and Atkinson in Saldana, 2008, p. 7). By doing so, the analyst can wring out more questions and perhaps more answers to those questions, until they end up with a satisfactory set of themes.

Phase 5: Since coding is an interpretive phenomenon, we make sure to provide readers a brief understanding of the themes, put them into context and supplement it with direct quotes from the speeches to justify the themes.

Limitations

Once again, we wish to stress that as independent students and writers, we observe and detect codes and compile them into themes in a way that reflects our own biases. We realize that many of the codes we look for are colored by our own preconceptions about the world, Poland, the European Union, political conduct and more. Moreover, we realize that we found some codes because we are specifically looking for them to answer our research question. Some codes may have been skipped or simply missed because we did not consider them relevant for the thesis. This is a factor of coding that is necessary and expected; as with any qualitative analysis, we have to rely on our own worldviews (liberal leaning) and sense for what is important in the material, and acknowledge that this colors the analysis. As such, we cannot argue that the codes we find are 'the codes used by Polish politicians in the EP to frame Polish National Identity', but we *can* say that they are 'codes found and assembled by three political science students, which are attributed to Polish politicians' speeches in the EP to frame Polish national identity. On a final note, as gathering meaning from the speeches was the main goal of this thematic discourse analysis, we did not find quantitative approaches relevant (for example, word frequency).

ANALYSIS

With a complete understanding of the methodology and methods used, we move into the Analysis. To reiterate, in the Analysis, we first use Qualitative Discourse Analysis to detect a series of discursive codes from the three debates in which Polish politicians speak in the European Parliament. Once we have the discursive codes, we organize the codes into themes, providing us with a compiled discursive map.

We assess our findings through the lens of Benedict Anderson's 'imagined communities' and his concept of national identity. Our goal is to see if the concept of national identity serves to help us understand the themes we found in the previous section, and if so, how it does so. Through the use of Benedict Anderson's theoretical concept, we intend to see how Polish national identity is framed by the Polish politicians, and also what they frame to be 'not Polish'. We contextualize the themes and discourse used in relation to Anderson's arguments for how and why national identity is produced to prove the usefulness and universality of the concept, in other words how the themes are used in framing Polish national identity in the 'imagined community'.

Finally, we assess the themes in relation to the concept of neo-traditionalism as well, to see if the themes found in the cases defend or contest neo-traditionalist features presented by Melito (2021a). Here, our goal is to understand if Polish political discourse defends or contests neo-traditionalist features, as that would allow for a more in-depth understanding not only of Poland's current political climate but the political climate in many similar countries, which can also be considered neo-traditionalist. By seeing the functionality, as well as the successfulness of the theory (whether or not it is applicable and relevant to this thesis) we are able to provide reflections of the development of neo-traditionalism in the Discussion section so that we might add to the academic literature surrounding it.

Part 1: Discourse Analysis and Codes

This first section provides an overview of the codes categorized in themes. A fair description of each theme is provided for understanding, but also to justify the context of the codes and why they belong in the theme(s) they are placed in. It is important to note that some themes and codes are very much interrelated, and therefore, some codes may appear in more than one theme. A complete list of codes can be found below (see Table 1). We want to note that throughout the

analysis we do not bring in all the quotes and/or codes because they have a meaning that is already covered by other quotes, as to avoid redundancy.

As noted in the Methodology and Theory sections (see p 18; p. 27), these themes are crafted by combining codes into thematically similar groups (which are called 'themes' in the literature and within this thesis). They are grouped based on the imagery they invoke in the listener and/or reader (in this case the writers of this thesis). It is worth noting that these codes may fit into several themes and that certain codes and even themes were excluded from the Analysis despite the fact that they were noticed. The general interpretive nature of this Analysis has been noted in the Methodology and Theory sections and is worth reiterating here; the themes and the codes that made them were detected by the three authors of this thesis, and relies on our perception of the speeches, the discourse within them, our perception of the Cases and the situation in Poland in general.

Defense	History	Democracy	Economy
- *Threats to Poland* - *Security* - *Security against Russia* - *Defense* - *Migration/Immigration* - *Russia* - *War* - *Safety* - *Borders of the Union* - *Anti-Russian Aggression* - *Common Security* - *Defense Potential* - *Security of the Union* - *Polish Security is EU Security*	- *Second World War* - *Communism* - *Anti Communist Sentiment* - *History of Polish Statehood* - *Iron Curtain* - *Polish Communist Past* - *Past Achievements* - *Solidarity*	- *Democracy* - *EU Values* - *Equality* - *Inequality* - *Rule of Law* - *National law* - *Freedom*	- *Economic Integration* - *Economic Inequality* - *Economic growth* - *Economic numbers* - *Energy Crisis* - *Climate Crisis/Issues* - *Globalization* - *Four fundamental freedoms*
Poland's Relationship with the European Union	**Left vs Right**	**Change**	**State Sovereignty**
Positive - *Poland in the EU/Poland and the EU* - *Belonging in the EU* - *Common Future* - *Economic Integration* - *Poland's Contribution*	**Right** - *Conservative* - *Far-Right* - *Infringing media freedom* - *Infringing freedom of expression* - *Patriarchal Poland*	- *Change* - *Polish Future* - *Development* - *Stagnation*	- *Rights of the State* - *EU Tyranny* - *Separation of Power* - *Independence* - *EU omnipotence and omniscience* - *National law* - *Constitution*

- *Common Project, Ground* - *Strong Europe* - *Reciprocity, EU and Poland; Vice-Versa* - *European Community Responsibility* **Negative** - *Poland against EU* - *Breach of EU Values* - *Polexit* - *EU Tyranny - EU omnipotence and omniscience* - *EU Weakness* - *Bruxelles Occupiers* - *Deterioration in the EU*	- *Right Dictat* - *Classic Family Unit* - *Tradition* **Left** - *Leftist Takeover* - *Western Patronism* - *West Europe* - *Radical Left* - *Leftist views* - *Leftist Madness* - *Indoctrination* - *New culture* - *Leftist dictat* - *Progressive* - *Multiculturalism*		- *Poland's Sovereignty over health policy* - *Responsibility of Member State*
Values	**Human Rights**	**Chaos**	**Poland as a Victim**
- *EU Values* - *Human dignity* - *Solidarity* - *Ethical* - *Common Values* - *Principles* - *Family* - *Freedom* - *Tradition*	**LGBTQI rights-related codes:** - *Equality* - *Liquidity of genders* - *LGBT Rights* - *LGBT free zone* - *Poland against LGBT* - *Right to defend families* - *Political Correctness* - *LGBT Freedom Zone* - *Ideological officers* - *Leftist ideology* - *Ideological propaganda* - *Classic family unit* - *Fundamentalists Orthodox* **Abortion-related codes:** - *Abortion* - *Trauma (of abortion)* - *Death culture (abortion)* - *Assassination (abortion)* - *Negative (abortion)* - *Abortion is not a right* - *Death sentence* - *Family life right* - *Jesus' presence in the child* - *Life as sacrosanct* - *Pope Paul the Second* - *Pro-life*	- *EU lawlessness* - *Social unrest* - *Anarchy* - *Madness* - *Absurd ideas* - *Conflict* - *Legal Chaos*	- *Silencing Opposition* - *EU Tyranny* - *Poland under Attack/Victim*

	- *Protection of life* - *Protection of the foetus* - *Nightmare of abortion* - *Abortion ban as a barbarity* - *Patriarchal Poland* **Women's rights-related codes:** - *Women's rights* - *Women's dignity* - *Reproductive issues (Opposition)* - *Women's rights trampled* - *Support for Polish women* - *Women's rights* - *Understanding for women*		

Table 1. Collected codes, organized by Themes.

Themes

Defense

The theme of **Defense** deals with codes that relate to security, protection of borders and safety from outside threats. The codes for this theme are:

- *Threats to Poland*
- *Security*
- *Security against Russia*
- *Defense*
- *Migration*
- *Russia*
- *War*
- *Safety*
- *Borders of the Union*
- *Anti-Russian Aggression*
- *Common Security*
- *Defense Potential*
- *Security of the Union*
- *Polish Security is EU Security*

The theme of **Defense** is common in Case 1 but is indirectly present in Case 2 and 3 as well. Though one could argue that Cases 2 and 3 would have many images and frames of **Defense** in them, we will instead focus on those frames in other themes. The **Defense** theme is highly political in nature and serves to question the balance of power as it is framed and imagined by the speaker (see Constructivism, p. 34), re-aligning the reader or listener's focus unto what the speaker perceives to be the most important threat on an international or national level to Poland.

The theme of **Defense** is understood as physical and practical security, meaning militaristic and economic stability, and freedom from outside forces imposing control over Poles. The issues of 'defending certain rights' that come up in Cases 2 and 3 are dominated by frames about attacks on culture and rights, and thus about protecting human rights and life (i.e., against

abortion). This means that in Cases 2 and 3, there are no references to defense and protection in a physical sense as a people, and so will not be featured in the theme.

For Case 1, the theme of **Defense** is often invoked by both PiS-supporters and their opposition, but for slightly different reasons. Prime Minister Morawiecki's speech in response to the allegations by the Commission, in particular, uses the theme in a direct way, referencing "aggressive, Russian policy, which is capable of going to war in order to block neighbouring us countries from choosing the European path", but also uses the theme in an indirect way, as "challenges that are crucial to our common future" (Morawiecki, 2021). Unique among the speeches is Morawiecki's use of the theme of **Defense** in relation to economic struggles, presenting a situation where changes in oil prices could "shake Europe in the coming weeks" (Morawiecki, 2021). Alternatively, the theme of **Defense** serves to present Poland's role as a part of the eastern border of the EU; the codes of *Borders of the Union, Security of the Union* and *Security against Russia* all impress an idea of Poland as an eastern bulwark of the Union, which also serves to make present Poland as a crucial part of EU Security (i.e through the code *Polish Security is EU Security* and *EU Security*). Morawiecki often equates defenses with the protection of the European Union as a whole, repeatedly noting the concept of "common defense" in the speech (Morawiecki, 2021), but also uses the theme to create a securitization around Poland and Russia's borders. He argues that "it is Poland that gives Europe security acting as a barrier together with Lithuania and Latvia to protect [the EU] borders", setting up an image of the eastern nations in the EU as defenders of the interior (Morawiecki, 2021).

In other areas, the theme of **Defense** theme is used to emphasize the frailty of Polish society and borders. The codes of *Threats against Poland, Security against Russia,* and *Anti-Russian Aggression* are all related to Polish safety and security, and are often called upon to remind the listener or reader of the dire consequences that may be in Poland's future, should politicians in the EU Parliament make a decision that endangers the country. Russia is framed as a threat that is attempting "to block neighboring countries from choosing the European path" (Morawiecki, 2021). In the speeches, Russia is frequently presented as a 'boogeyman'; an outside force that does not act politically but just threatens Poland. However, the code *'Migration'* is occasionally used to securitize the issue of immigration into Poland as well. Though it was not the most common code, it is used to argue that immigration is "an organised attack cynically using migration from the Middle East to destabilise [Poland]", securitizing the

issue of people moving into Poland as a ploy from Poland's enemies to weaken it internally (Morawiecki, 2021). Moreover, the code *Defense* is present when Morawiecki (2021) suggests more spending on building security against "hybrid dangers, to cyber threats", further showing PiS' priority of securitization.

This use of **Defense** is also used in opposition to Morawiecki and PiS, but for different reasons. MEP Andrzej Halinki presents a Poland under attack from PiS, framing a "real face of Poland" that Morawiecki tarnishes in the EP (2021). Halinki also argues that PiS "[attacks] Poland from the nationalist position", which serves to ruin "the safety and security [that] is in the community, in safe Europe" (2021). Instead of presenting a Poland that is threatened by outside forces, Halinki uses the theme of **Defense** to argue that Poland is attacked from within, by its own politicians, and that that, in turn, risks the safety of the entirety of the European Union. MEP Bogusław Liberadzki (2021) concurs, using a quote of Mannfred Weber's to argue that Poland's role in the Union remains the same, but that the current Polish government presents a threat to both the Union and Poland itself. Bartosz Arłukowicz argues similarly, saying that Morawiecki is "[stealing Poles'] children's future", which will "play into the hands of Putin and put at risk the achievements of our parents and grandparents" (2021).

In conclusion, the theme of **Defense** is predominantly used to frame the idea of a Poland that is beset by threats at its borders. However, the goal of the theme often seems to play up Poland's role as a defender of the European Union's eastern borders. The theme serves two goals - to present Poland as a stalwart ally to the EU, that serves as a buffer to Russia and immigration waves from the Middle East and to frame the idea of a hardy Poland that has survived and remained stable despite the threats against its safety. Together, it makes Poland seem both strong and resilient, and indispensable to the EU overall as a part of the eastern border to Russia.

History

The **History** theme encompasses references to the past in relation to Poland. The codes related to this theme are:

- *Second World War*
- *Communism*
- *Anti Communist Sentiment*
- *History of Polish Statehood*
- *Iron Curtain*
- *Polish Communist Past*
- *Past Achievements*
- *Solidarity*[8]

The codes relate to two different historical eras; the Second World War and its effect on Poland, and the Cold War and life under the communist regimes controlled by the Kremlin. The theme of **History** relates itself to the past and makes use of common imagery to get the listener or reader to connect historical events with present or future events. Codes like *Communism, Iron Curtain* and *Polish Communist Past* can be used to bring back memories of a very different Poland, in which the Polish people were not in full control of their own government, or can remind the listeners of the Russian Federation's past as the Soviet Union. The speakers using these codes almost always refer to them negatively, showing a strong anti-communist sentiment on both sides of the political scale. Codes like *Second World War* and *Past Achievements* can allow the speaker to frame the idea of Poland as a survivor, a soldier in the World War, or as a success story in a large, destructive world conflict. It can also remind the reader or listener of the actions of other countries during the World War. The codes that form the **History** theme are gathered largely from Polish political speakers attempting to frame Poland as a surviving but strong nation after the Second World War, and as a country that has grown out of communism but is now free of its influence.

The theme of **History** comes up in all three Cases; often as a measurement of time, but also as a way to compare and contrast Poland under and after communism. Many speakers relay

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[8] Here, 'Solidarity' refers to the civic organization formed during communist rule of Poland.

the role Poland had during World War 2. Morawiecki proudly discusses Poland's past as a nation that fought for "the freedom of Europe and the world […] at the cost of great sacrifice" (2021). According to him, these sacrifices were made on the front lines against both Soviet and German forces in the Second World War, but also on a national level, when the civic organization Solidarity helped overthrow "totalitarianism - the cruel communist system" (Morawiecki, 2021). In his speech, Morawiecki uses the history of Poland as a supporter of freedom in the 20th century to note that Poland is being treated poorly in the present, a sentiment that his predecessor Beata Szydlo shares (see **Poland as a Victim**, p. 87). She asks the Parliament why "Poland is being treated this way [referring to the accusations of court-packing]", when modern Poles' "forefathers have given their lives for other nations", presenting Poland as a valuable ally who helped save Europe from totalitarianism, but is being discarded now for being inconvenient (Szydlo, 2021). To support this notion, Morawiecki argues that other nations sacrificed as Poland did and that not " all of them" are allowed "to benefit from them", which creates a clear historic divide between European nations that sacrificed and were commended for it, and those who sacrificed but were not commended for it (Morawiecki, 2021).

Another relevant code is *Anti Communist Sentiment*, which is presented both by the opposition and the PiS. Poland is represented as a country that has been suffering the communist past, both economically and politically (e.g., "the cruel communist system" (Moraviecki, 2021), "responsible for Poland's communist past" (Szydlo, 2021)).

Szydlo (2021) also uses Poland's history to frame an image of the internal enemies that Poland struggles with. She describes them (the MEPs that oppose PiS in the Parliament as "responsible for Poland's communist past or […] responsible for the theft that took place during [the] privatisation", connecting present-day politicians with political 'enemies' of modern Poland from the past (Szydlo, 2021).

The opposition, for their part, often paints the image of an EU formed by common values and ideals, but that those days are soon to be over. Cimoszewicz (2021) argues that the Polish Constitutional Court is contributing to this negative development, as does Marek Belka (2021).

In Case 2, **History** is brought up by Andrzej Halick (2021) from the Civic Platform party to imply that Poland has been for long time built on support and tolerance of minorities, while Patryk Jaki argues that Poland never had any legal penalties for homosexuals, but that "that was the case in Western Europe" (2021a). Jaki continues this argumentation by implying that the

Western nations are hoping to atone for a history of anti-LGBT sentiment by accusing other nations like Poland of having such a sentiment in the present day (2021a).

The theme is used argumentatively; either to argue for the speaker's party being in the right due to past actions or to dismantle arguments from 'western' powers as patronising and demeaning. The sacrifices of the Polish people are often brought up, usually to defend (and arguably to divert) from arguments against the speaker within the Parliament. To conclude, the theme of **History** is generally used to justify present-day policies based on Poland's past achievements. Both PiS and opposition party members frame the idea of a Poland that formed a strong sense of right during the Second World War and under communist leadership, a sense of right that pervades today and supports their view of Poland. Multiple times, the codes related to communism express a strong anti-communist sentiment.

Democracy

The **Democracy** theme encompasses references that entails a democracy, such as democratic values. The codes related to this theme are:

- *Democracy*
- *EU Values*
- *Equality*
- *Inequality*
- *Rule of Law*
- *National law*
- *Freedom*

The theme of **Democracy** is strongly discussed in Case 1 by both PiS politicians and their opposition in the sense of political democracy. There is a general agreement on the code *democracy*, especially in Case 1, in the sense that all Polish politicians state in one form or another that Poland is a democracy. However, there is less agreement within the codes *Rule of Law* and *National Law*, specifically in Case 1. Cases 2 and 3 also have occurrences of the theme of **Democracy**, but in the social context in connection to social freedoms and equality for the LGBTQI community and women's rights on abortion. Due to the nature of Cases 2 and 3, being

that they focus on LGBTQI and abortion rights, there are opposing interpretations of the code of *equality* and *freedom* on these topics.

All the speakers state in one form or another that Poland is a democracy. At the beginning of his speech in Case 1, Morawiecki makes it very clear that Poland is a "are a proud country. Poland is one of the countries with the longest history of statehood and democracy" (Morawiecki, 2021). Opposition parties to PiS also claim that Poland is "a model of democracy and rule of law" (Włodzimierz, 2021), and that Poland is a country "which works for democracy" (Spurek, 2021b). It is clear that all Polish politicians have a sense of pride that Poland identifies as a *democracy* and that Poland's future is a continuation of democracy.

They also agree on the relationship between Poland, the European Union and democracy. On several occasions, Morawiecki's (2021) speech includes this relationship, for example, he stated that "Poland recognizes itself to be along with European Union principles of democracy". Here the codes *democracy* and *EU values* are used to demonstrate what Poland recognizes itself to be. We see this another time when the Prime Minister says "the main principle which we profess in Poland and which is the basis of the European Union is the principle of democracy" and that "[Poles] signed up to respect for EU values". This usage of the code *EU values* and *democracy* creates a discourse that affirms the alignment of Poland's values with the EU's values (see **Poland's relationship with the European Union**, p. 65). Opposition politicians also agree with this alignment; for example, Liberadzki (2021) states "90% of Poles are in favor of remaining in the European Union because they support these values" - these values being "human rights, democracy, equality and solidarity" Liberadzki (2021). However, this code is also used by PiS opposition parties to argue that the Polish government is not upholding what they agreed to when they joined the European Union, which is to follow the EU laws and values. This is seen when Cimoszewicz (2021) states "Europe needs a Poland that respects shared principles and values", or Łukacijewska (2021a) argues "we signed up to respect for EU values", yet "the problem is that your government is breaching the Polish Constitution and breaching EU values".

While most Polish speakers' discourse leaned toward agreeing Poland is a democracy, they did not necessarily agree on the role of the Rule of Law and National Law. Many PiS politicians believe that the National Law/Constitution presides over EU law, hence the context of Case 1, "Union law precedes national law […] But the Constitution remains the supreme law" (Morawiecki, 2021). We notice that due to this argument, the code *equality/equal* is utilized

defensively to express unfairness. Morawiecki (2021) states "standards and rules - which should always be equal for everyone", "the set of rules of the game must be the same for everyone", "we cannot remain silent when our country […] is attacked in an unfair and biased manner" and Jaki (2021b) states that "upholding the rule of law is important, but more important is equality." Here Jaki, a member of a party with similar views as the PiS, uses the code of '*equality*' to point out that others are doing things but only Poland is getting the backlash for it. It is once again used by Beata Szydlo (PiS) who asks the Parliament: "Why is Poland being treated this way? We thought we were joining the countries who respected the principles of the founding fathers of community, sovereignty and equal treatment" (2021). Right-wing and PiS speakers use the code of *equality/equal* for expressing unfairness the most. They take a defensive position, feeling attacked (see **Poland as a victim**, p. 87). At the same time, Morawiecki (2021) uses the code of *democracy*, in a defensive way too. On the debate of the Rule of Law crisis, he argues "We are being paternalistically lectured about democracy […] that our democracy is supposedly 'young'". This demonstrates that Morawiecki believes Poland is a democracy, but others argue him on that point, hence needing to take a defensive position.

As mentioned previously, the codes *equality/inequality*, *freedom* and *EU values* are also utilized in the social context within Cases 2 and 3. For example, throughout Adamowicz's (2021a) speech, the code is used several times, "the equality of women", "equal treatment of women or LGBTQI people" and "high time that equal and dignified treatment of every human being be firmly demanded". The way the codes are used here points to another contradiction, although all politicians agree Poland is a democracy, there are some crucial democratic values that are being threatened, such as equality and freedom of LGTQ+ communities and women's rights to abortion. As there is a complete section on human rights, we do not go further into detail here. (see the theme of **Human Rights** p. 78).

To summarize, the theme of **Democracy** is used widely throughout the three cases, with the political aspect significant in Case 1, and with the social aspect more predominant in Cases 2 and 3. Through the speeches, the codes *democracy* and *EU values* demonstrate an understanding and agreement of Poland being a democracy, Poland's values being that of EU values and hints at the relationship between Poland and the EU. However, the codes *equality* and *inequality* are often used in a defensive manner by right-wing speakers expressing unfairness. The codes *National Law* and *Rule of Law* demonstrate a disagreement between Polish politicians because

the right-wing argues that National Law is above EU law, whereas the left-wing does not agree with that. Once more, the codes *equality* and *inequality* and *freedom* are used in another understanding, that regarding social and human rights, more specifically the inequality and consequences of the LGBTQ+ community and Women's rights on abortion.

Economy

The theme of **Economy** deals with codes that refer to economic matters in Poland. The theme has been formed by gathering the following codes:

- *Economic Integration*
- *Economic Inequality*
- *Economic growth*
- *Economic numbers*
- *Energy Crisis*
- *Climate Crisis*
- *Globalization*
- *Four fundamental freedoms*

The theme of **Economy** is strongly brought up by the PiS party in Case 1 and only once is present in Case 2. We find no instances where the theme of **Economy** was present in Cases 3. This is perhaps due to the nature of the Cases 2 & 3, which are focused on human rights (i.e., LGBTIQ and abortion), and consequently, there is no natural or direct connection with economic matters. Overall, the theme is brought up by attributing both positive and negative connotations related to economic matters. All the significant references to the Polish economy are made by Prime Minister Morawiecki, a member of the PiS in Poland, and once by MEP Beata Szydło (PiS).

Economic integration was not only brought up by Morawiecki when discussing the benefits to Poland from EU integration (because of trade in the common market), but also when addressing the benefits brought to the EU thanks to its accession to the EU. In fact, Morawiecki claims that the country has broadened opportunities for European companies and entrepreneurs. By saying this, Morawiecki is presenting Poland as a member of the EU, arguing that Poland did

not enter the EU empty-handed and that it has greatly contributed to the common project especially thanks to its economic value (which also enforces the theme of **Poland's relationship with the European Union**, see p.65) (2021). Similarly, the Polish PM portrays a Poland that promotes economic growth through the enforcement of the *four fundamental freedoms*, which are the funding principles of the European Single Market: freedom of goods, services, capital and people (Morawiecki, 2021). Another way of emphasizing Poland's positive role for EU *economic growth* is by addressing Poland's promotion of the Recovery Fund[9], to fight against the shortcomings of the EU's economy (Morawiecki, 2021). Morawiecki refers to the *energy crisis*, *climate crisis*, and *debt crisis* as the shortcomings of the EU's economy, which Poland is concretely trying to fight (2021).

Last but not least, is the code of *globalization*. *Globalization* is almost portrayed as a threat. It is brought up in the speech while talking about Poland's mission (an almost glorious-like mission) of generating economic growth - a mission that will make sure that people are not *vulnerable to globalization* (Morawiecki, 2021). By claiming this, Morawiecki (2021) acknowledges that globalization may have some negative effects on Poland if the country does not keep up with the speed of globalization. One of the shortcomings of globalization could be the "outflow of dividends[10]" and "interest profits" from CEE countries to Western Europe (Morawiecki, 2021). This also emphasises the (economic) gap between Central European and Western countries, something Morawiecki aims to diminish, also through Poland's contributions to the EU (Morawiecki, 2021). The gap between Left vs Right is also addressed in the **Left vs Right** theme (see p. 69).

Overall, the fact that the opposition parties never bring up the economic theme throughout the speeches shows that more than others, PiS is strongly invested in economic growth, perhaps becoming its major focus. The strong focus on the economy is not surprising, considering that PiS embraces the principles of economic interventionism, whereby a state is expected to intervene in the economy within market economy bounds. In fact, we see some of the aims of economic intervention in Poland as promoting economic growth, and addressing

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[9] *The Recovery Fund, also called "NextGenerationEU" is a temporary recovery instrument to help the immediate economic and social damages caused by the COVID19 pandemic. The fund is worth more than €800 billion (European Commission, 2022b).*
[10] *Dividend refers to a reward, cash or otherwise, that a company gives to its shareholders*

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economic failures; for example, all of these goals are objects of the Recovery Fund promoted by the country.

In relation to the national identity frame of Poland, the theme of **Economy** is a discursive tool repeatedly used by the Prime Minister to shine a light on Poland's economic role in the EU: a Poland that allows Europe to be strong and ambitious (Morawiecki, 2021). This discourse stresses that the nation of Poland not only has benefitted from the accession to the EU but has greatly contributed to the economic development of the Union, opening great possibilities for "German, French, Dutch companies" and entrepreneurs (Morawiecki, 2021). In other words, the PiS focuses on how great Poland is economically. This shows an attempt by the PiS to make the EU accept Poland's exceptional status of being a country that contributes greatly to the EU economically. Finally, the fact that economic references are barely made by opposition groups is not to be underestimated; it shows that politicians from other parties prefer to advocate for political, social and human rights issues in Poland, rather than on economic matters. This may be either because they do not see Poland as a great contributor to the economic integration in the EU, or because they see Polish political and social rights as backsliding, and regard these as matters that need to be prioritized in a political context like the EU; by addressing political and social issues, perhaps the opposition aims at presenting Poland as weak in (democratic) values such as rule of law, freedom of sexuality and gender equality.

Poland's Relationship with the European Union

The theme of **Poland's relationship with the European Union** deals with codes that refer to either positive or negative connotations towards the European Union, in other words, pro-EU or anti- EU sentiment. The theme has been formed by gathering the following codes:

Positive

- *Poland in EU*
- *Belonging in the EU*
- *Common Future*
- *Economic Integration*
- *Poland's Contribution*
- *Common Project*
- *Common Ground*
- *Strong Europe*
- *Reciprocity, EU and Poland; Vice-Versa*
- *European Community Responsibility*

Negative

- *Poland against EU*
- *Breach of EU Values*
- *Polexit*
- *EU Tyranny - EU omnipotence and omniscience*
- *EU Weakness*
- *Bruxelles Occupiers*
- *Deterioration in the EU*

To a large extent, all parties and speakers use codes that signal a positive relationship with the European Union and European integration. The codes, *Poland and EU/Reciprocity* are found very often throughout Case 1, which is due to the nature of the topic of the case. The code

Poland and EU' is used to signify a few things, a) Poland's membership and belonging (also the code *belonging in the EU)* and b) a united effort and future (also the code *common future*). For example, in the Prime Minister's (2021) speech, he very often uses the code *Poland and EU,* "I say 'we' every time", "on these matters we spoke with one voice", "... in Poland, this trust in Europe remains at its highest level" to really imprint on Poland's positive connected relationship with the EU. When Moraweicki (2021) states, "Not just for the future of Poland, but for the future of the Union as a whole", the code *reciprocity* is utilized, signally once again, a double path relationship between Poland and the EU.

This code is connected to that of *belonging in the EU*, for instance, Morawieicki (2021) states, "over 85% of Polish citizens say clearly: Poland is and remains a member of the European Union" and "we belong here and we are not going anywhere". Other PiS politicians such as Szydlo (2021) also bring up these codes when saying "And that's what Poland wants and that's why Poland will stay in a developing European Union". The opposition agrees as well; for example, Halicki (2021b) states, "Poles decided about it and Poles will keep deciding about our place in Europe".

As mentioned before, the code *Poland and EU* and the code *belonging in the EU* are connected, and so is the code *common future* and *common project.* This is because being a part of such an organization, means its members align their projects and future together. For example, the Polish Prime Minister states "... Poland's contribution to our common project" and Halicki states "we will protect Poland in the EU [...] we really care about our common future." (2021, 2021b). This *common future* can be connected to the code of *'European Community Responsibility'*, because together all the Member States have a *common project* and *common future,* which means they share together a common responsibility. Biedron uses this code clearly when stating, "... citizens of this community, this European community, we all have responsibility" (2021b).

The codes *Poland's contribution* and *Economic Integration* relate to one another as well. The EU and Poland benefit from Poland's *economic integration* and *Poland's contribution*. The code *Economic Integration* is only used by the Prime Minister, for example, he says "integration is a civilisational and strategic choice", "Poland benefits from integration mainly because of trade in the common market", "the process of economic integration has broadened opportunities for companies from my country, but it has also opened great possibilities for German, French …"

(2021). Once again, both sides of the Polish speakers agree on the positivity of Polish economic integration and Poland's contribution for the EU and its Member States, but also for Poland, signaling the code of *reciprocity* as well.

Lastly, the code *strong Europe*, which is found just a couple times throughout the three Cases, demonstrates a positive desire to make Europe and/or the European Union a strong united entity. Poland's Prime Minister uses the code when he states "We want to make Europe strong, ambitious and courageous again" and again, "I want a strong and great Europe", even the opposition use this code, for example, Kohut states, "patriotism means a strong Poland in a strong EU" (2021, 2021b).

On the other side of this theme, there are also codes that connote negativity towards the relationship between Poland and the EU. Firstly, just as there is the code *Poland and the EU*, there is also the code *Poland against the EU*, which is not used as often as the positive version of it is used. There are a lot of instances of the code *Poland against the EU'* in the Prime Minister's speech, for example, he states "This does not mean that Poles today are not experiencing doubts and anxiety about the direction of change in Europe'", "Are there really any equality in the extremely different rulings and decisions made by Brussels and Luxembourg [referring to the EU institution]" and "it is unacceptable to impose one's decisions on others" "far reaching words against certain Member States". These statements were made referring to what PiS members call the unfair judgment of the Rule of Law debate. The use of the code 'Poland against the EU' and 'Poland in the EU' further demonstrate Poland's contradictory position on several matters, and if not contradictory then, it hints at the polarization in Poland.

In relation to the Rule of Law, Case 1, all opposition speakers agree that PiS and the Polish Prime Minister are 'breaching EU laws and values', further souring Poland's relationship with the EU and its Member States. For example, Łukacijewska (2021a), states "the problem is that your government is breaching the Polish Constitution and breaching EU values", Kalinowski (2021) states as well "you want to be able to rule without scrutiny, without an independent Judiciary, and that is a breach of the founding principles of the European Union". The code *'breach of EU values/laws'* is used mostly by the opposition in a frustrating tone; it expresses concern that if PiS and the Prime Minister do not follow EU values and laws, they could be expelled by the EU, leading to the code '*Polexit*'. Opposition speakers use the code '*Polexit*' in an provocative way, saying that PiS and the Prime Minister do not want a Polexit but their

actions show otherwise; for example, Miller (2021) states "Today, we yet again heard that the authorities don't want Polexit. The problem is that they are talking about membership of the European Union that doesn't exist". Liberadzki (2021) also follows suit when saying "consequences of pursuing this path and moving towards this exit", demonstrating the inconsistency of PiS and the Prime Minister's discourse of staying in the EU. PiS argues that Poland is definitely in the EU and that the EU "will not kick out Poland of the European Union". The Prime Minister also uses the code '*Polexit*' labeling it a fairy tale, "not the politically motivated fairy tales about Polexit".

Although PiS speakers and the Prime Minister do not wish for Poland to leave the EU, they do sometimes call the European Union weak, using codes such as *'EU weakness',* and *'Deterioration in the EU'* to humiliate the EU and weaken its position. Legutko (2021b) states how "over the last decade, the EU has turned out to be unable to restrain itself and respect the limits imposed by the principles of conferral, subsidiarity and proportionality" (code *Deterioration in the EU*).

Up until now, the codes connoting against the EU were non-dramatic; however, the codes *'EU tyranny', 'EU omnipotence and omniscience', 'Bruxelles Occupiers'* are quite harsh. As suspected, they are mostly used by PiS speakers. The Prime Minister demonstrates the code '*EU tyranny'* and *'tyranny of the majority'* when he states "No, my dears - if you want to make Europe into a nationless superstate, first gain the consent of all European countries and societies for this". This negatively claims that the EU's power is extensive. Legutko (2021b) brings up these codes, as well as the code of '*EU omnipotence and omniscience'* when arguing "we are afraid of European lawlessness, of the tyranny of majority, of abuse of power and of the cavalier use of the Treaties". The codes *Bruxelles Occupiers* and *Bruxelles Dictatorship* are understood as extreme language that PiS speakers use to defend their position in regards to Case 1, Rule of Law. These terms are used to invoke the idea of an army or dictator controlling Poland against its people's wishes, framing the EU as having extensive power over the EU member states which it is not allowed to use.

To conclude this section, the codes collected demonstrate the relationship the different Polish political speakers described of Poland and the EU. To a large extent, both sides have an understanding that Poland benefits in its membership within the European Union, and vice versa, that Poland's contributions are beneficial for the EU. In saying this, however, PiS aligned

speakers are wary of the EU's power over its Member States, and bring up the fear of EU omnipotence and omniscience through their discourse. They often remind the EU that a Member State's affairs and laws are priority over the regional (EU) laws, and that the EU should respect Poland's sovereignty.

Left vs Right

The theme of **Left vs Right** deals with codes that refer to how each side of the political spectrum views the other, while also including a couple of codes that describe how they define their own political side. The theme has been formed by gathering the following codes:

Right

- *Conservative*
- *Far-Right*
- *Infringing media freedom*
- *Infringing freedom of expression*
- *Patriarchal Poland*
- *Right Dictat*
- *Classic Family Unit*
- *Tradition*

Left

- *Leftist Takeover*
- *Western Patronism*
- *West Europe*
- *Radical Left*
- *Leftist views*
- *Leftist Madness*
- *Indoctrination*
- *New culture Leftist dictat*

- *Progressive*

- *Multiculturalism*

The purpose surrounding these codes is that they are used to point fingers or discuss the other political side of the spectrum. The theme of Left and Right is very common throughout the three cases. These codes give us insights into how each party views the other, which brings out the mechanism of 'us' versus 'them'. This is quite useful for understanding the framing of national identity, because one can see how polarized the political situation in Poland is. Political stances from different parties diverge widely from the center, causing public discontent. For example, while the ruling majority enacted the abortion ban, several parties and a vast number of Polish people were strongly in disfavor of it.

The codes under the category Left, which at present is the opposition to PiS, are portrayed (by PiS) as *radical left*, run by *leftist dictat* with *leftist views* which are *leftist madness*. This is made very clear by Legutko (2021a), who states "this is ideological madness [...] you are the radical left". The *madness* code is used to refer to l*eftist views*, in this case, "ideological madness" and "absurd ideas about some kind of liquidity of genders" (Legutko, 2021a). Legutko (2021a) a PiS member uses the code *progressive* in a negative way, "Western Europe is simply engaging in an ideological propaganda"*,* this signifies that progressive ideologies are a threat in the eyes of the PiS.

Moreover, the code of *leftist views* is connected to the code of '*indoctrination*'; for example, Legutko (2021a) states "this indoctrination cannot be allowed in schools". The right sees the 'leftist views' on the LGBTQ+ community and abortion as *indoctrination*, as a *new culture* leading towards a *leftist takeover*. Legutko (2021a) brings about the code of *leftist takeover* when he states "Donald Tusk following suit, becoming more and more radical and trying to enforce their leftist views." Jako (2021) also demonstrates this when he states "you now want to teach Poland your new culture". The code *new culture* is closely linked to that of *indoctrination* as well as *Western Patronism*. Several times throughout the three cases, right wing speakers bring about the code of *Western Patronism* in reference to the liberal left; for example, the Prime Minister stated "We are being paternalistically lectured about democracy [...] about how we should shape our own homeland". Through the codes describing the Left, we can see a dislike and a fear in their ideologies and political patterns. The Right uses extreme codes such as

Leftist takeover and *leftist dictat* to not only demonstrate disagreement with the Left, but also instill a fear of the Left as well as *West Europe*.

The code of *multiculturalism* is used by the Left when describing themselves. Kohut (2021a) states that *"multiculturalism"* is "just as beautiful is the idea of European integration". This demonstrates that the Left presents a Poland that advocates for multiculturalism; we argue that the right would see this as the threat to their homogeneous culture and traditions.

While the Right has portrayed the Left as seen above, the Left portrays the Right as *far right*, *conservative*, *patriarchal Poland* run by *Right Dictat*. The codes *conservative* and *Patriarchal Poland* are clearly used when referring to topics contradictory to religion, such as abortion and the LGBTQ+ community. Biedron (2021a), states "... Poland became a patriarchal overly religious country where women are stripped of their voice and reduced to a role of the incubator"; codes *patriarchal Poland* and well as *conservative* are used to argue how PiS has turned Poland into a patriarchal country that has extreme conservative laws and rules on women's rights and abortion. The code *conservative* can be connected to that of *Classic Family Unit* and T*radition*. However, these codes are used by the Right themselves; for example, the Prime Minister states in his opening speech, "Poland has a long democratic tradition", demonstrating how Poland's traditions align with democracy, but perhaps also trying to show how they distance themselves from being called *far right, conservative* and so on. He uses the code *tradition* another time when stating "*I want a strong and great Europe. [...] A Europe that respects the culture and traditions from which it has grown"*. Here the Prime Minister is arguing for an EU that allows the Member States their own set of culture and traditions, demonstrating how important traditions are to his right-wing government.

There are several mentions of the code *Classic Family Unit*, but from the PiS members. For example, Brudziński (2021) states "the special protection of the family based on marriage between a man and a woman is guaranteed by the Polish Constitution"; he states it in a way that accuses the Left and the EU of not protecting the family, unlike Poland's PiS suggests otherwise. He continues this argument by stating that "the European Union has no exclusive competence in family matters", suggesting that when it comes to the *Classic Family Unit*, Poland protects the family, and the EU has no place in family matters. Legutko (2021a) also agrees with this when he states, "it is our right to defend families, we cannot have this right infringed upon".

Speaking of infringing, the Left uses the codes *infringing media freedom* and *infringing freedom of expression* a few times throughout all cases, referring clearly to the cover-ups and misuse of the PiS controlled media organizations. Halicki (2021b) uses this code when he states, "you are infringing it, you are infringing the freedom of media, the freedom of expression"; also Spurek (2021b) claims media freedom to be a problem in Poland ("Polish problems, the judiciary, LGBTI, women's rights, media freedom") as does Cimoszewicz (2021) arguing that "there is almost no independent media". These codes create an image of the Right that is dictatorship/authoritarian-like. The Left uses the code *Right Dictat* whenever referring to Jaroslaw Kaczyński, Belka (2021) strongly states that "the only dictat is Poland is Jaroslaw Kaczyński". Kohut (2021b) uses this code as well when he is referring to the Prime Minister as "a dictatorship of dark forces".

To conclude this section, the codes used under the theme of **Left vs Right** are used by speakers to describe the other political parties. We have seen that the Right describes the Left as *radical left*, run by *leftist dictat* with *leftist views* (*leftist madness*). Moreover, the Left describes the Right as *far right*, *conservative*, *patriarchal Poland* run by *Right Dictat*. This theme demonstrates the high polarization within the Polish political entity.

Change

The theme of **Change** deals with codes that refer to developments for Poland and in relation to the EU. The theme has been formed by gathering the following codes:

- *Change*
- *Polish Future*
- *Development*
- *Stagnation*

Though the theme of **Change** is rare in the speeches, it is often used in an accusatory fashion. The theme is used prominently by Beata Szydlo, former Prime Minister of Poland and member of PiS, in response to EU criticism raised against Poland in Case 1. She argues that "Poland has changed" compared to the EU, which she accuses of stagnating (Szydlo, 2021). She argues that the Poles "still believe in those ideals; we still believe in that kind of European Union, and that is

why we believe in a need for change", presenting an EU that is stagnating and unable to live up to the values it is built upon (Szydlo, 2021). She contrasts this with the EU, which she believes has not changed at all, while Poland "[conducts] ambitious social programs, investment programs; we have extraordinary economic numbers - and what has changed [in the EU]? Nothing!" (Szydlo, 2021). This argument serves to turn the blame around; blaming the EU for being behind the times, instead of on Poland for breaking EU law.

The theme of **Change** is also prominent in Case 2 and 3, though often in an indirect way. As Case 2 deals with arguments against the progressive LGBT movement, and in Case 3, against breaking Catholic doctrine by allowing abortions. The discourse used in these cases often centers around outside forces attempting to change Poland's attitude towards LGBT individuals or abortion. Ryszard Legutko accuses "western Europe" of "engaging in ideological warfare […] to change our language through political correctness" (2021a), while Wiśniewska (2021) and Mazurek (2021) argue that the only reason abortion is on the docket is because of a left-wing bias within the European Parliament. PiS argues that Poland and the international community have "legal protection for life, both before birth and after birth", that "the right to life is sacrosanct as indeed the Polish Constitutional Court has stated and ruled" (Wiśniewska, 2021). The opposition response to this are that perhaps the EU/Polish laws on abortion and LGBT issues should be revised. Sylvia Spurek suggests that "we need political decisions, perhaps we are trying to change the Treaties" in response to the creation of LGBT free zones in Poland (2021a), while Adamowicz (2021a) argues that the debate and discussion surrounding non-heteronormative people should be changed to reflect the rights of all members of the EU. (see **Human Rights** p. 78)

The theme of **Change** is used differently by the two sides. By the PiS-aligned speakers, the theme is used to frame the idea that outside forces are attempting to change Poland against its will, to become more like the western nations, but also a nation that is changing within - though in a way that runs opposite with the western nations in the EU. In their words, Poland is a nation that does not need to change on a cultural or social level but is changing politically to better reflect its conservative values, as to better protect the classic family unit, the rights of unborn infants and to maintain control of their own courts.

Their opposition uses the theme to suggest that while they want the current government of Poland to change their approach to the three cases, they would rather that EU law changes to allow them to address these issues. They frame a European Union that is in need of a judicial and legal overhaul so that it can protect its women and LGBT people from persecution and control in the member states. This implies a wish for indirect, legal change to Poland's own constitution. This constitution is repeatedly brought up as being the legal background for not stopping the LGBT free zones and protecting its anti-abortion policies, and so is a significant obstacle for the opposition when problematizing those same things.

Overall, the theme of **Change** can be seen as the distilled version of the stances that the PiS-aligned and opposition speakers take in the three Cases; the PiS-aligned speakers defend conservative values while arguing for illiberal changes to their judicial system, while the opposition asks for a stop to those changes for the sake of keeping Poland within the legal baseline that the western nations of the EU subscribe to.

State Sovereignty

The theme of **State Sovereignty** deals with references to Poland's (and similar EU states') right to their sovereignty and self-determination, especially in relation to the EU as a supranational organization. The codes for this theme are:

- *Rights of the State*
- *EU Tyranny*
- *Separation of Power*
- *Independence*
- *EU omnipotence and omniscience*
- *National law*
- *Constitution*
- *Poland's Sovereignty over health policy*
- *Responsibility of Member States*

The codes in this theme convey Poland's relationship with the EU and other states on a political level. Many of the codes, such as *national law*, *constitution*, *independence* and *rights of the state* concern the state's level of independence and self-determination when dealing with the EU, while others like *responsibility of member states* invoke what responsibilities the member states of the EU have within the Union.

The speeches invoke these codes when the relationship between the EU and Poland is brought about on a political level, though we note that, in many cases, the theme is used in conjunction with other themes like **Poland's relationship to the European Union** (see p. 65). From a first cursory look, the two themes seem similar, the main difference being that the theme of **State Sovereignty** is about how Poland's right to self-determination is being upheld or overridden within the EU, while Poland's Relationship to the European Union deals with Poland as a part of the EU itself.

This theme also deals with accusations of misconduct from the EU; the codes of *EU Tyranny* and *EU Omnipotence and Omniscience* are often used in an accusatory manner to imply overreach from the EU in Polish affairs, imagined or otherwise.

The theme of **State Sovereignty** is almost exclusively used by Polish speakers on the defense; Morawiecki, as an example, states that *"Union law precedes national law - to the level of the statutes and in the areas of competence granted to the Union … but the Constitution remains the supreme law"* (2021), a notion he repeats again and again in the later parts of his speech. His colleague Ryszard Legutko is somewhat more intense, often invoking the theme by accusing the EU of overreach and dictatorial conduct, accusing it of being "strongly partisan, ideological and arrogant" (2021). Here, he frames an unhinged Union attempting to maintain control of Poland through any means necessary, claiming that it functions by a "might is right" ideology (Legutko, 2021b).

Other speakers respond to the PiS-aligned politicians by noting that Poland's own laws are being broken by other Polish politicians in positions of power, which gives the EU the right to respond and criticize. Belka (2021), Sikorski (2021) and Miller (2021) are together in criticizing the PiS' choice of language against the EU, claiming that using terms like "Occupiers from Bruxelles" (Miller, 2021) shows an unnecessary hostility to the EU, while reminding them that it is a situation of their making that has caused the Union to respond so strongly. In this case, the theme of **State Sovereignty** is instead used to imply that Poland has its sovereignty

preserved according to EU law, but, since it is in breach of that same law, the EU has the right to challenge and criticize Poland.

In conclusion, the theme of **State Sovereignty** is used by members of PiS and its allies to argue that the European Union is overstepping its legal authority when it criticizes Poland's policies. The theme is used to frame Poland as a separate entity from the EU, with the right to enact policy on a national level regardless, which also conjures an image of a Poland that follows the international laws that it had agreed to when it joined the EU - regardless of whether or not it actually does so. Their opponents for their parts argue the opposite, that the EU is fully within its right to problematize Poland's actions because they infringe on EU law.

Values

The theme of **Values** deals with codes that refer to principles and values that are either EU values or Polish values. The theme is especially present in Case 1, as most codes in this theme regard political values and principles. However, some of the codes in the theme relate to more social topics, like freedom, human rights and religion. These codes are more present in Case 2 and 3.

The theme has been formed by gathering the following codes:

- *EU Values*
- *Human dignity*
- *Solidarity*
- *Ethical*
- *Common Values*
- *Principles*
- *Family*
- *Freedom*
- *Tradition*

The most recurrent codes of this theme are *Principles* and *EU values*. To read where *EU values* are found throughout the speeches, see the theme of **Democracy** (p. 59).

Despite the code *Principles* overlapping with the one *EU values* (in the sense that it also refers to EU values), *Principles* is mostly used by PiS, as opposed to *EU value*s. Morawiecki (2021) refers to the *principles* of the Polish Constitution ("principles of independence, immovability, and the stability and certainty of the right to a court) to defend from the accusations that blame Poland for its decline in judicial independence. Similarly, Morawiecki (2021) argues that "The principles of conferral, subsidiarity and proportionality [...] were thrown overboard*"* when the EU condemned Poland for breaching the rule of law. Only one instance of "*Principles*" was found in the texts by the opposition, and it was used to criticize Poland's government for not respecting "shared [EU] principles".

Moreover, the code *tradition* is present in the theme **Values**, as well as in the theme **Left vs Right**, when PiS argues for an EU that allows the Member States their own set of culture and traditions, demonstrating how important right-wing traditions are to the part

Other codes that belong to the theme of **Values** are *human dignity*, *family*, and "*freedom*". We see these codes as relative to the topic of human/social rights and are used both by PiS and opposition. *Human dignity* is present when the opposition discusses that women's rights (e.g. abortion) are basic values in the EU, and as such, should be respected; we placed the code *human dignity* both in this theme and in the theme of **Human Rights**, just like the code *family* overlaps with the themes of **Human Rights** and **Left vs Right**. Once again, the code *family* refers to the classic family structure, based on marriage between a man and a woman. The code *freedom* is mostly used by PiS members to portray Poland as a country "that loves freedom and solidarity", as a country that enjoys "Freedom of movement of goods, services, capital and people" (Morawiecki, 2021). The opposition uses this code once to claim that "freedom of media, the freedom of expression" are being infringed by the government (Halicki, 2021b).

Some other codes in the theme **Values** are used by the different speakers to refer to the Polish traditional values: *Solidarity* (which overlaps with the code *freedom*), *Christianity* (which overlaps with the **Human Rights** codes: *Jesus's presence in child*, *Pope Paul the Second*, *Life as sacrosanct*). The code *Christianity* is present in Cases 2 and 3, but we will not analyze it again, since the codes that it overlaps with have been done in the **Human Rights** section (see p. 78).

In conclusion, the theme of **Values** reoccurs in speeches both by the PiS and opposition parties. By using this theme, both parties frame the national identity of Poland according to their ideals and stances. On one hand, the PiS uses codes like *EU Values, Freedom, Principles* to

frame the idea of Poland as a nation that has certain principles and values, principles that according to the PiS are not taken into account by the EU. On the other hand, the opposition uses the same codes to make the opposite argument. Interesting enough, the opposition describes that the original Polish national identity, grounded on values like *freedom*, *solidarity*, and *human dignity*, is being reshaped by the current PiS-led government, which strongly believes in other values like *Christianity*, classic family values (code: *family*) and immovability (in the context of courts). Finally, it seems that the two counterparts attempt to frame two different national identities; PiS does this by blaming the EU for not acknowledging Poland's national identity and Constitution, and the opposition does this by blaming the Polish government for disregarding EU values and principles.

Human Rights

The theme of **Human Rights** conveys the codes that relate to women's rights, the right to abortion, and LGBTQI rights. To make this theme more systematic and avoid having a very long and confusing analysis, we divided the codes into three sub-themes: *LGBTQI rights-related codes, Abortion-related codes, and Women's rights-related code*s.

LGBTQI Rights-related codes

- *Equality*
- *Liquidity of genders*
- *LGBT Rights*
- *LGBT free zone*
- *Poland against LGBT*
- *Right to defend families*
- *Political Correctness*
- *LGBT Freedom Zone*
- *Ideological officers*
- *Leftist ideology*
- *Ideological propaganda*

- *Classic family unit*

- *Fundamentalists Orthodox*

Abortion-related codes:

- *Trauma (of abortion)*

- *Death culture (abortion)*

- *Assassination (abortion)*

- *Negative (abortion)*

- *Abortion is not a right*

- *Death sentence*

- *Family life right*

- *Jesus' presence in the child*

- *Life as sacrosanct*

- *Pope Paul the Second*

- *Pro-life*

- *Protection of life*

- *Protection of the foetus*

- *Nightmare of abortion*

- *Abortion ban as a barbarity*

- *Patriarchal Poland*

Women's rights-related codes:

- *Women's rights*

- *Women's dignity*

- *Reproductive issues (Opposition)*

- *Women's rights trampled*

- *Support for Polish women*

- *Women's rights*

- *Understanding for women*

Considering the subjects of debates in Case 2 and Case 3 (subject of Case 2 was LGBTQI Freedom Zone; the subject of Case 3 was the Abortion Ban), it was inevitable that the theme of **Human Rights** would be present throughout the two speeches. Regarding Case 1, we found a number of references to **Human Rights**, yet those references were mainly brought up by the opposition parties (e.g. Spring Party, Democratic Left) when addressing that the current Polish government does not respect the rights of LGBTQI and women nor does it respect the rule of law.

LGBTQI-related codes:

Most codes related to the topic of LGBT(QI) were found in Case 2. This is not a surprise, considering that Case 2 deals with the Declaration of the EU as an LGBTIQ Freedom Zone. The code *LGBT rights* was mostly present in sentences made by the opposition parties. Some of these are: "Calling the EU a freedom zone for the LGBTQ persons, this is just the start" by Sylwia Spurek (2021a) from the Spring Party, or "the equality of gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transsexuals are not 'minority rights'"(Adamowicz, 2021a). Similarly, the code "*LGBT freedom zone*" is almost exclusively used by politicians from the opposition who advocate for LGBT rights: "we are declaring the entire European Union an LGBTQI freedom zone" by Kohut (2021a), who is part of the New Left, and "A zone free of any human being is a zone free of humanity"(Adamowicz, 2021a). These phrases all show support and advocate for LGBTQ+ rights.

The code *LGBT right* is present only once in the speeches by PiS members: PiS' Legutko (2021a) uses the lexical unit "freedom zone for common sense" to flip the script against the EU and the opposition, as he argues that the "EU should be a freedom zone for common sense", accusing the EU of lying about what the Polish government is doing against the LGBT people. Legutko (2021a) also denies the creation of *LGBT free zone* arguing that it is "simply not true". By saying this, Legutko (2021a) wants to dismantle the idea "that Poland is hostile to homosexual" (encoded in Poland ag*ainst LGBT*), portraying a picture of Poland that fosters freedom, while the EU is portrayed as the enemy to freedom of speech. Legutko (2021a) stresses

that the EU has introduced *censorship* by "trying to change our [Polish] language through political correctness" (code: *Political Correctness*).

As for the code *LGBT Rights*, the code *Equality* (in the sense of gender equality) is mainly addressed by the opposition: "Everyone should enjoy equality [...] No one should be excluded" (Spurek, 2021a), referring to the LGBT community. However, one speech by PiS addresses *Equality* - we would argue, in a convenient way. Brudzińsk (2021) from the PiS, argues that the EU "respects the equality of Member States before the Treaties as well as their national identities, inherent in their fundamental structures [...] (Article 4(2) TEU)", after having claimed that the Polish Constitution guarantees the protection of the family, "based on marriage between a man and a woman". In other words, Brudzińsk (2021) stresses the fact that the traditional family structure (based on marriage between a heterosexual couple) is part of Poland's national identity, and as such, it must be respected on grounds of Article 4(2) TEU. Also related to the support of traditional family structure is the code of *Classic family unit*, present in the following sentence: "marriage is defined as a union between a man and woman" (Legutko, 2021a). Once again, this was said by a member of PiS.

Other significant codes relative to the sub-topic LGBT(QI) are: *Ideological officers*, *Leftist ideology*, and *Leftist propaganda* (Legutko, 2021a). These codes express the PiS' sentiments against liberal and left-wing values. These references are brought about by Legutko when discussing how children are being taught about sexuality and gender. To contextualize, *Ideological officers* is used to refer to teachers or other institutional figures "who turn up in schools and tell them about absurd ideas about some kind of liquidity of genders" (Legutko, 2021a). The way Legutko (2021a) uses the expression "absurd ideas about some kind" to describe *liquidity of genders* undermines gender fluidity, accusing it of being an absurdity. Similarly, *Leftist ideology* and *Leftist propaganda* are codes used by Legutko (2021a) to accuse and describe the "liberal or 'Western Europe' way" of educating and spreading awareness on sex and gender, something that infringes "the right to defend families" (code: *Right to defend families*). Once again, this excerpt seems like a condemnation of modern Western educational approaches, something also present in the theme of **Left vs Right** .

Abortion-related codes

These codes are most present in Case 3, considering that the debate is about the Abortion Ban in Poland, a matter that especially affects women. Having examined and read the codes into context, we can say that there are two main stances; a) abortion should not be a right, and b) abortion should be a right. While all codes that support stance a were found in sentences by the opposition, the codes that reinforce stance b were present in phrases said by PiS members.

The following excerpts contain codes that embed stance a: "abortion is not and never will be something which is remotely positive. [...] And it is a trauma" (code: *Trauma*), "[abortion] is not a human right" (code: Abortion is not a right) (Wiśniewska, 2021); *nightmare of abortion,* "we can just assassinate [children]" (code: *Assassination*), "death culture that you celebrate" (code: *Death culture*) (Kloc, 2021). MEP Kloc from PiS (2021) appeals to all the women who have had babies and tells them: "in a few years' time your children will say to you, thank you, mommy, thank you for bringing me into the world" (code: *pro-life*), clearly expressing a pro-life stance in regards to abortion. The *pro-life* code is also found in: the "protection of life" (Mazurek, 2021); *"a fetus and a newborn are entitled to protection",* used when referring to the UN's policy on legal protection for life (Wiśniewska, 2021). The reference to a well-respected international organization such as the UN (especially known for fostering human rights, dignity and equality) may be a discursive tool to increase the credibility of the speaker's words, suggesting that protecting an unborn child follows the UN's policy on legal protection for life.

Within the codes that support stance a) abortion should not be a right, we found several references to the doctrines and values of Christianity. All references to Christianity are made by PiS members. The codes are: "*Jesus Christ's presence in the unborn child*", *Pope Paul the Second* (Mazurek, 2021); *Life as sacrosanct* (Wiśniewska, 2021). The first reference to Jesus Christ comes from Wiśniewska when she paraphrases a speech by *Pope Paul the Second* who said that Jesus Christ identifies with the weakest human beings. The "weakest" refers to the unborn child, who is "the most fragile and incapable of protecting himself" from right violations (Mazurez, 2021). In this way, Mazurek (2021) is using Christian beliefs to claim that abortion should not be a right because as children are the most fragile beings, they cannot protect themselves from their rights being violated. Perhaps the intention of MEPs Mazurek and Wiśniewska (both from PiS) was to mobilise the religious and moral sensibilities of people in order to get their support for the anti-abortion stance.

Having put into context the codes that support stance a), abortion should not be a right, we now demonstrate how other codes discursively support stance b, abortion should be a right. An important finding is that the codes with pro-abortion meaning are all mentioned by the opposition and not once by PiS. The following excerpts contain the codes that have pro-abortion meaning: *[abortion is a] family life right* (code: *Family life right*) (Spurek, 2021c); "This is barbaric" (code: *Abortion ban as a barbarity*) (Biedron, 2021b) is used when accusing the abortion ban as barbaric; *a death sentence* is used to describe the privation of abortion as a sentence of death to some women (Biedron, 2021b) (code: *Abortion as a death sentence)*.

There is one instance of an MEP making a religious reference when speaking of the Polish parliamentarians who supported the abortion ban: The fundamentalists Orthodox, akin to the Taliban, won't stop there *(*code: *Fundamentalists Orthodox*) (Biedron, 2021b). Here, MEP Biedron makes an analogy between the majority in the Polish Parliament (i.e., PiS) and the Taliban. This is a strong accusation, considering that the Taliban can be defined as extremists who sought to establish a religious government by following a strict interpretation of the Sharia law. The following excerpt makes a religious reference too: "Poland became a patriarchal overly religious country where women are stripped out of their voice" (code: *Patriarchal Poland*) (Biedron, 2021b). Here, MEP Biedron portrays Poland as a country dominated by patriarchy and religion, and where women's voices are not heard.

Women's rights-related codes

The analysis of the texts has shown that women's rights is a recurrent sub-theme not only in Case 3, but it is also present throughout Cases 1 & 2. Starting from Case 3, we see the sentence "understanding for the situation of Polish women" (code: *Understanding for women)* (Lukacijewska, 2021b), where Lukacijewska calls the EU and Polish MEPs for more empathy towards women in Poland, especially regarding "health and reproductive issues" (code: *Reproductive issues*); Spurek (2021c) claims that "Polish women [...] demand respect for their dignity" (code: *Women's dignity*) while speaking of the right to abortion. Another code related to women's rights is "women's rights trampled" (Biedron, 2021b), used by Biedron (The Left Party) when talking about Poland's treatment of women's rights. The same MEP also stresses that women's rights have been backsliding since the accession of Poland to the EU. All codes that relate to women are supportive of women's rights and are exclusively present in speeches by the

opposition. We spotted the code *support for Polish women* in the following excerpts: "it is critical for us to show them that [...] we support them" (Lukacijewska, 2021b); "help us to give some support" (Lukacijewska, 2021b); "moral obligation towards those women" (Biedron, 2021b).

Case 1 also presents the code of *women's rights*. Spurek (2021b) from the Spring Party, claims that Poland could win a Guinness world record for all Polish issues brought up to the EU, addressing "LGBTI, women's rights, media freedom" as well as that "women in Polish villages [should have] access a doctor, a gynecologist". Biedroń (2021b) from the New Left claims that PiS leader Jarosław Kaczyński "persecute[s] women". Similarly, Adamowicz (2021a) from Civic Platform argues that women's rights must be respected and that "no Czarnek, no Duda of this world - has the right to decide who is and who is not human". MEP Adamowicz accuses politician Czarnek and President Duda (both involved in PiS) of taking away basic human rights.

To conclude, the data suggests that across all three sub-themes (LGBTQI, abortion, and women's rights) there is a substantial division in how the speakers portray Poland's national identity in relation to human rights. On one hand, PiS holds conservative stances on abortion and LGBTQI rights. This is a conclusion based on the anti-abortion stances in the speeches (e.g., *protection of the fetus*, *life as sacrosanct*), the code on traditional family structures (i.e. *classic family unit*), the negative stance against sex education in school (contained in *gender fluidity*, *leftist propaganda*). What these politicians seem to do is portray a Poland that celebrates traditional family values and gender roles, being supportive of Christian doctrines and morals, while accusing the more progressive and open stances on sex and gender-related topics as absurd propaganda from the West. The codes related to the religion in the PiS speeches are significant for understanding what type of national identity the PiS is framing. Generally speaking, the Roman Catholic doctrine on abortion may determine or at least justifies the abortion ban. This may explain the religious references made by Mazurek (2021) and Wiśniewska (2021). By addressing religious values to a political international audience, they present a national identity of Poland that is influenced by and embedded in Christian values and morals - values that influence human behaviors including in political settings.

On the other hand, the MEPs from opposition parties (Civic Platform, the Spring Party, New Left) seem to reframe the Polish national identity that has been tainted by the PiS and other

conservative parties. Throughout their speeches, the opposition greatly shows support for abortion, LGBTQI, and women's rights. It also seems that these MEPs want to create distance with the PiS, showing that their stances are not aligned with that of PiS. In terms of national identity framing, this demonstrates the opposition's intention to publicly disacknowledge and reject the conservative ideas that dominate Poland's national policy, as an intention of restoring the Polish national identity, by painting it with progressive and more liberal values. In other words, the data shows a strong polarization between the two political sides, one that runs through the conservative right, and one through the moderate and left.

Chaos

The theme of **Chaos** deals with codes that conjure imagery of anarchy, loss of control and madness. The theme has been formed by gathering the following codes:

- *EU lawlessness*
- *Social unrest*
- *Anarchy*
- *Madness*
- *Absurd ideas*
- *Conflict*
- *Legal Chaos*

This theme is not so much used to describe Poland or the EU, but rather to invent circumstances surrounding them and the three Cases. Of the three Cases, Case 2 features most of the references to this theme.

The code of *EU Lawlessness* is often brought up or implied in Case 1, which can be argued to be natural, since the Case deals with disagreements surrounding certain laws and agreements between the EU nations and the EU itself. Morawiecki equates the issues with immigration and border friction with Russia to the east as issues that cause "social unrest", colouring Poland as a country in crisis, tested on several angles (Morawiecki, 2021). After not invoking the theme for several paragraphs, Morawiecki (2021) returns to it by asking the listeners: "Does anyone of you really want to introduce anarchy, confusion and lawlessness in

Poland?" (code: *Anarchy*), equating their political opponents in the European Parliament with Russian aggression and immigration as possible threats to the stability of the country.

Case 2 features by far the most mentions of the codes of *Madness* and *Legal Madness* than the other two Cases, and they are almost predominantly used by PiS-aligned speakers in relation to the accusations against the LGBTQ+ free zones in eastern Poland. Legutko argues that the concept of fluid genders and non-heteronormative are "ridiculous stories" that left-aligned parts of Europe would force Poland to tell in schools, and that this is a conflict that the 'Left' is interested in starting (2021a). This, he argues, is "ideological madness", and is not just illegal but is forcing certain mad ideas onto Polish people (children especially) (Legutko, 2021a). Here, the theme is used to imply that the supposedly 'left-wing ideology' of LGBTQ+ is madness, and trying to enforce it on other people is even more so. As is often the case, the opposition uses the theme in contrast to the PiS-aligned speaker, arguing that the PiS party makes "Poland ridiculous every single day" with their actions, presenting the LGBTQ+ free zones as crazy and undignified in return (Kohut, 2021a).

Overall, this theme is only used sparingly, and usually only by select speakers. The theme is used to imply a lack of sane rationality by some speakers, adding a sense of chaos and lack of control to their opponent's arguments. Other speakers, such as Prime Minister Morawiecki (2021) manages to use the theme to frame the idea that opposing Poland could lead to further unrest and chaos within the borders of the country, making them an enemy of Poland politically. Morawiecki uses the theme of **Chaos** almost as a threat, proposing that opposing Poland makes the opponents complicit in any lack of control that the government might have. Using this theme, Morawiecki actually implies that Poland's political allies will be seen as opponents, should they decide to continue arguing against their policies.

Poland as a Victim

The theme of **Poland as a Victim** deals with codes that are used by PiS MEPs, to portray Poland as a victim of the EU. The theme is especially present in Case 1. The theme has been formed by gathering the following codes:

- *Silencing Opposition*
- *EU Tyranny*
- *Poland under Attack*
- *Poland as a Victim*
- *Occupiers from Bruxelles*

The code *EU Tyranny* overlaps in the themes of **State Sovereignty** and **Left vs Right**. It is used by Prime Minister Morawiecki (2021) to accuse the EU Parliament of establishing "a tyranny of the majority that controls everything, from administration to the distribution of the key political positions". Similarly, *Occupiers from Bruxelles* are used by PiS speaker Miller (2021), the Prime Minister's Advisor, to accuse the EU and the Member States of dictating and having extensive power over the EU countries.

The code *Silencing Opposition* is also very much repeated by Morawiecki (2021) throughout Case 1. It is present in his claim that "[the European Parliament] has no understanding for dissent and therefore surrounds the dissenting groups with a cordon sanitaire, which is quite an effective way of neutralising the opposition". Here, Morawiecki blames the EU for shutting the voices of the opposition. Similarly, the sentence "Polish MEPs who attack their own fatherland", describes Poland as the victim of political attacks by its own co-nationals (Szydło, 2021), as well as in the phrase "our country - including in this Chamber - is attacked in an unfair and biased manner" (Morawiecki, 2021). The code *Poland under attack* is also present when discussing that the EU is treating Poland differently than other countries, countries that are also acting according to their constitution (Spain, Germany, Romania and France have constitutions that are "higher than the EU") (Jaki, 2021b). This demonstrates the frustration against the EU's measures

According to the PiS, Poland not only is attacked by individual Polish MEPs but also by the EU Commission as an institution through "financial blackmail" and "politicians

blackmailing", Morawiecki, 2021 (code: *Poland under attack*). Last but not least, the sentence "tomorrow there will be another chapter of Poland-bashing because of our abortion law" (code: *Poland under attack*) (Legutko, 2021b) puts the focus on Poland as being heavily attacked for one of its laws.

In conclusion, we argue that throughout Case 1, the theme of **Poland as a Victim** was recurrent, especially when Morawiecki was speaking. This can be understood as a relevant discursive tool used by him, considering the expected impact of a Prime Minister's speech over an international audience such as the European Parliament. We believe that the strong presence of this theme in the Prime Minister's speech is a way of presenting the national identity of Poland (which includes its political reputation and political stances) as being under attack and victimized by the EU and by its own people (opposition Polish MEPs).

Conclusion on Themes and Codes

As we have seen in this section of the Analysis, the speakers within these three Cases refer to various discursive codes, which can be organized into themes of understanding and reference. In general, the speakers agree that Poland has a vital role within the EU and do not see the EU as an opponent, even if they do not agree with the other member states and the accusations levied against the PiS-led government. Poland is frequently framed to be a proud member of the EU, who values freedom, equality and the European community as much as any other EU nation. However, what these values actually mean tend to differ depending on the speaker; the PiS-aligned speakers tend to put freedom and equality into an international political context, arguing for freedom and equality in relation to the rest of the EU. Meanwhile, the opposition speakers tend to argue for freedom and equality for the Polish people, especially LGBTQI and women, but also legal equality. Another point of contention is the 'rule of law', which is frequently invoked by either side. Again, their interpretation of it differs; PiS-aligned speakers argue for the rule of law as a bid to use legal frameworks to defend their actions, while opposition speakers argue that PiS has broken both international and national laws.

It is worth noting the element of religion throughout the PiS-aligned speakers; in Cases 2 & 3, they draw on Christian morals to contest abortion, and LGBTQI rights. We believe that the reason why Christianity is not brought about in Case 1 is because of the subject: compared to

human rights issues, the topic of Rule of Law Infringement is harder to justify or contest through the use of arguments based on morals or religion.

Another general theme framed for Poland as an embattled nation. Through the themes of **History** and **Defense**, Poland is imagined as a country that has a past with other political forces attacking or subjugating it, and who still defends the EU from outside threats to its center. This is also used to accuse other speakers, in particular the opposition and the EU overall, of trying to control Poland, discursively connecting those past incidents with the present day issues. The themes of **State Sovereignty** and **Poland as a Victim**, in particular, are often invoked to argue that Poland is treated unfairly and lesser by their accusers. Using these themes together, the PiS-aligned speakers frame a Poland that was, and still is, under attack by other nations who do not want a politically independent Poland, but one that falls in line and only acts according to other nations' values.

Finally, Poland is framed to be a conservative nation by design by the PiS-aligned speakers. The question of whether abortion should be legalized or LGBT-free zones should exist is often followed by an explanation that both are within the legal boundaries of the Polish constitution and the EU treaties that Poland has signed. When that argumentation is deflected, PiS-aligned speakers tend to argue that western, liberal politicians cannot leave Poland alone because they represent a fundamentally different way of living from their progressive worldview. Poles are framed as a people that follow their own laws to the letter, and generally agree with PiS' conservative values. Opposition speakers attempt to counter this image by defending the rights of non-heteronormative persons and women, though not be arguing that it is generally Polish to have those rights.

In conclusion of this section, Poland is framed to be a nation like many others in the EU; one that respects and loves the values it is founded on, and who wishes a productive future as a part of it. However, it is also presented as a nation that is being treated unfairly by the EU and by other member states, as if it is not equal to other member states. Effectively, this turns Poland into a victim of western, liberal forces who take offense because the Polish people want to live life as Poles have always done. The figure below provides a visual representation of the framed national identity from the Polish politicians' discourse.
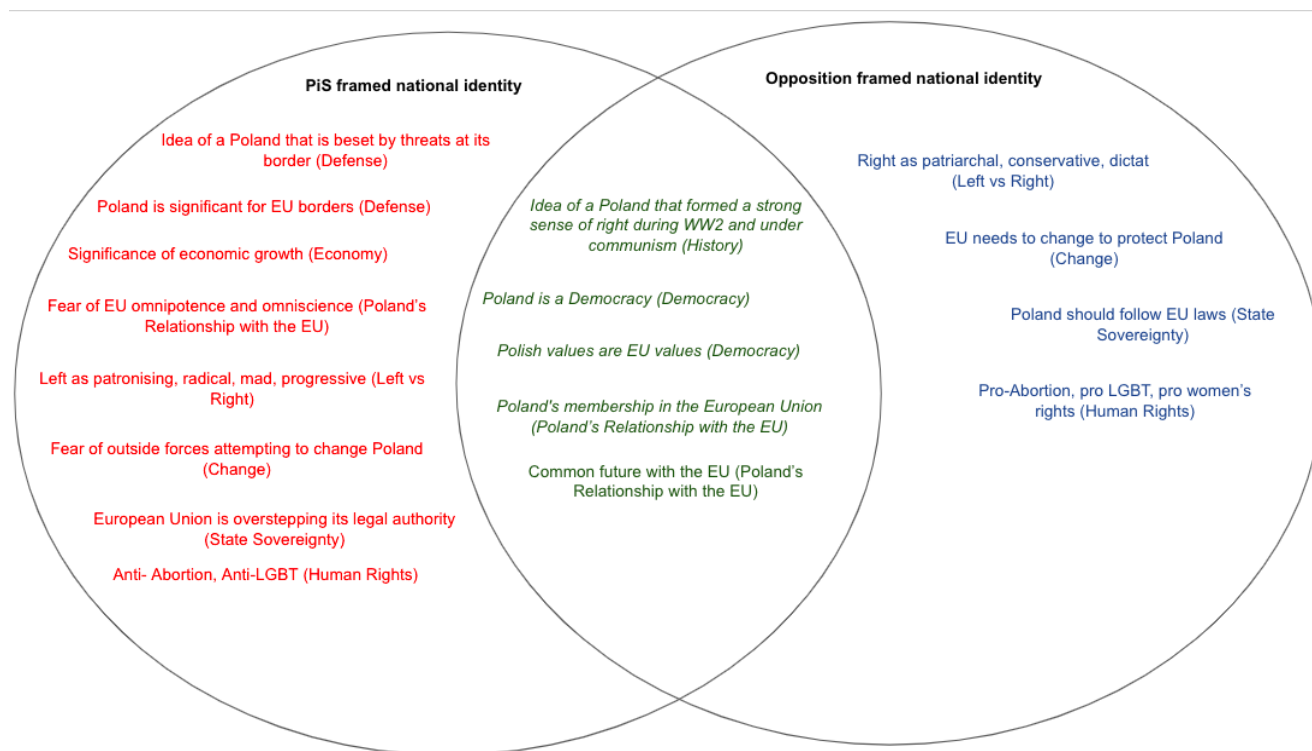
Figure 5. Common discursive position between PiS-aligned and opposition speakers.

Part 2: Contextualizing the data with the lense of 'Imagined Communities'

In this section we wish to interpret the data from Part 1: Discourse Analysis and Codes through the understanding of the concept of national identity as described by Anderson's 'imagined communities' (see Theory section, p. 28). Our goal is to see what the speakers frame as the national identity in accordance with the concept of 'imagined communities', and if so, prove where this can be seen.

To reiterate, Anderson (1991) argues that the 'imagined community' is defined by being "imagined", "limited", "sovereign" and a "community" which is framed discursively by elites to create a sense of 'Us' versus 'Everyone Else' (pp. 6-7). This is done to create a sense of safety for the elites, as it defines a specific cultural group and territory that effectively belongs to the people that are defined as a part of their national community. To avoid marginalization from other powers on the international stage, they frame an 'imagined community' of like-minded people (and often enforce this like-mindedness on dissenters). This is to make it clear that this community is indelible and that it will have consequences if other powers attempt to circumvent,

take over or hurt it. National identity serves to control internal affairs as well; it is a way for elites to shape the behavior of the nation's citizens and enforce similarities among them, making it easier to argue for and create laws that govern all of them, despite their differences. The figure below is a visual summary of Anderson's (1991) main points that this section analyses.

'Imagined Communities' Anderson (1991)
Main Points

'Imagined'	*They exist because people imagine them to exist, without knowing for sure that they do exist.*
'Limited'	*The imagined community is also "limited, because even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations" (Anderson, 1991, p. 7). That is why we have us vs them.*
'Sovereign'	*To remain free, the imagined community needs to be sovereign and free from outside influences, so the people within it can live in accordance with their common imagined history and culture.*
'A Community'	*Which is a "deep, horizontal comradeship" that assumes all members have a connection with one another, regardless of social standing and minor differences (Anderson, 1991, p. 7).*
'Historic Events'	Nationalist movements always connect to historic events and the notion of 'national heroes', which become "pearls strung along a thread of narrative" (Anderson, 1991, p.109).

Figure 2. 'Imagined Communities" Main Points.

The multiple speakers in the debates all contribute to the idea that Poland is 'imagined', although mostly indirectly. Of course, all speeches (and by extension, all themes) show evidence that the speakers frame a version of Poland, though the exact nature of what kind of Poland it is, varies. One topic which all speakers agree on can be found within the theme of **Democracy** (see p. 59). As we have noted in its section, even opposing speakers tend to agree on the idea that Poland is and should remain a democracy, regardless of its relationship with the EU. There is also a common reverence for the values of the EU in most speakers' speeches - though the two

sides seem to disagree more strongly on these values in Cases 2 and 3. This frames a common idea of a 'democratic Poland' that distances itself from the times when Poland was under the undemocratic rule, like during the Cold War when the country was ruled by a communist party. Every mention of communism and Poland's communist past is also negatively portrayed and even used to accuse a political opponent at one point, which shows the effort used to distance Poland from its communist past.

Many speakers often mention the 'rule of law', which refers to the political rights of Poland and the EU in relation to each other, and to Poland's own constitution. The code and the themes connected to it (predominantly the **Democracy** theme) are often brought up to create the idea of a Poland that follows both its own rules, but also the laws of the international community which is the EU. This is arguably to create the imagery of a dependent country that is reliable in international affairs, but given that all three Cases featured the PiS-dominated ruling government of Poland being accused of misconduct and more, it may also be to shore up the imagery of Poland as a rule-breaker or rebel nation. In many speeches, Poland is framed as being out of line and as breaking treaties it agreed to itself, which may be why many of the accused speakers use the code 'rule of law' - to argue that Poland was 1) in the right, legally and ethically, and 2) that their accusers are attempting to define Poland as something it is not.

On the subject of defending the imagery of Poland, the theme of **Defense** plays to the imagined identity of Poland as an 'old soldier'; a country that has seen much fighting and war in the last hundred years, and that has suffered under nazism and communism at different times. In almost all Cases, this historic imagery is used to show that Poland is a country that willingly gave much to Europe, at a great cost to itself. Imagery of sacrifice, loss of lives and prosperity is used to show that the Poland of the past was a team player willing to sacrifice for Europe, which is then used to argue that PiS's opponents should be careful when they accuse Poland of being self-centered, unhinged or against EU's values. As Anderson (1991) notes, "dying for one's country [...] assumes a moral grandeur which dying for the Labour Party, the American Medical Association, or perhaps even Amnesty International can not rival", because it implies that you sacrificed for a community that is a keystone of your identity from birth (p. 144). Many speakers invoke this 'moral grandeur' to imply a strong, proud tradition of sacrifice and fighting for what is right for Poland. Speaking of values, the theme of **Values** and **Poland's Relationship with the**

EU are both used to argue that Poland is staunchly for the EU's values of freedom, equality and more, and that Poland values those ideals as much as any other EU nation.

One particularly interesting part of the speeches were the opposition's attempts to distance themselves from the actions of PiS and their allies, often arguing that they do not represent Poland as they see it and that no one but PiS truly agree that they are doing the right thing for the country. Here, we see evidence that the opposing speakers recognize that they may be discursively connected to PiS' actions due to the fact that they share their nationality with them. To combat this, they do their best to differentiate the Poland that is being accused and problematized, and the Poland that they want to be true; the Poland that disagree with PiS, dislike their actions, the LGBTQI-free zones and the anti-abortion rethoric. This is evidence that the speakers understand that the idea of Poland can be discursively framed, and that it is imagined to be a certain way, depending on the speaker. It also shows the concept of elites framing national identity in action; as defined by Anderson, one of the core functions of the 'imagined community' and national identity building at large is for elites to form a favorable idea of a nation that they are important leaders of (Anderson, 1991). As we have seen in these speeches, speakers do their best to downplay any aspect of the nation of Poland that is not favorable to them, while playing up the aspects they want the listener to consider important for Poland. Whether these aspects are true and proven matters less; it is most important that the reader or listener takes these aspects as facts, despite the fact that they are imagined.

Ironically, the speeches show limited evidence of the 'limited' aspect of the 'imagined community'. The three Cases are not inherently about belonging, so there is little need to define Poland as a limited community. The few cases where the 'limited' aspect of the country is brought up in the speeches tend to be related to immigration, which is securitized as a threat to Poland in the same vein as Russian border tensions. Implicitly, the issue presented by immigration is that immigrants are not a part of Poland, so they have no position within the 'limited' community that Poland is imagined to be.

Poland as a 'sovereign' nation is somewhat a given; most of our preconceived notions on nations are that each is a sovereign entity who has the right to govern itself as it sees fit. However, as 'imagined communities' deals with these exact conceptions and how they are perceived, we still dive into the themes, codes and speeches to find evidence of Poland being framed as a sovereign community. This is also extra important for the purposes of this thesis, as

all three Cases deal with an outside actor (the EU and its Member States) accusing the Polish government of various misconducts. This means that an outside force is attempting to impose itself on Polish political affairs, something that a 'sovereign' community would not accept; were it not for the fact that Poland is a member of the EU and so are bound to certain common treaties. As we have seen in Part 1: Discourse Analysis and Codes, these treaties and Poland's constitution are the focal point of the speeches.

Obviously, the theme of **State Sovereignty** helps frame the idea of a sovereign Poland. As noted in its section, the PiS-aligned speakers tend to emphasize the importance of the Polish constitution and the Polish government's right to act on its own, stating that the EU simply wishes to exert a level of control over the country that it should not be allowed to have. The opposition speakers do not disagree with them, but note that Poland's own laws are being violated by the PiS-led government, which makes their point moot. The EU and the opposition have the right to criticize the government as long as it shows an unwillingness to follow the laws that it was elected by. After all, it is these laws that allow Poland to be a sovereign country at all.

Poland and the EU is expounded upon in the theme called Poland's Relationship with the EU. Much of this theme is used to frame the idea that Poland is a loyal member of the EU and always will be one. Much is said about the pride the speakers put in being a part of the EU, and the worth that they put into it. However, these arguments are often brought up in relation to the accusations levied against PiS, and are used to imply that Poland is being treated unfairly within the EU, compared to other Member States. The PiS-aligned speakers follow this argumentation to frame a scenario where Poland's sovereignty is being treated as less important than other countries' sovereignty, due to not falling in line for a supposed western-dominant culture. These arguments, combined with the theme of **Human Rights**, **Poland as a Victim** and **Values**, create an imagery of Poland being mistreated for not being liberal and progressive, which makes the EU fail to respect their sovereign rights.

On the other side of the discussion are the opposition speakers, who, in contrast with the PiS-aligned speakers, argue that Poland does not have the right to pack the Polish courts, to make LGBT-free zones or to control whether Polish women can have abortions or not. The main difference is that they do not argue against Poland's sovereignty; they argue that the current Polish government misrepresents the Polish people's interests and misapplies Polish laws. This does not directly argue against the idea of the 'sovereign' aspect of the imagined community,

which in itself is a support of it; despite PiS's misconduct, the opposition is not against the idea of an independent Poland; they simply argue that Poland should behave in accordance with the EU's values and with Poland's own constitution.

Finally, Poland is framed as a 'community' in the speeches. The theme of **History** is, as Anderson (1991) also argued, important for national identity, as it can be used to design a historic line of events and great leaders that can be traced to the present, anchoring the current people of a nation to victories and great historic events that they are not technically a part of (p. 109). As mentioned in Part 1: Discourse Analysis and Codes and the 'imagined' part of this section of the analysis, the theme of **History** is used to conjure the idea of a stalwart Poland that defends the EU, and implicit in that idea is that the Polish people are the ones actually doing the protecting. Similarly, when Poland is framed as a nation that supports the EU values of equality and freedom while rejecting fascism and communism, it is also implicit that it is the Polish people that do these things; after all, any nation, or 'community', is made up of people who are imagined to share values, at least to some extent. The theme of **Values** describes the values that Polish people are imagined to agree on; equality, freedom and more. However, this theme also shows a discrepancy in what values Poles universally agree on. The conservative, PiS-aligned speakers frequently invoke the values of equality and freedom as core Polish values, but their opposition notes that this equality does not extend to non-heteronormative people (due to the LGBT-free zones) or to women (who do not have the right to abortion). In response, the PiS-aligned speakers argue that the Polish values of freedom and equality are 'freedom to live a conservative, Christian lifestyle', and 'equality between the progressive, liberal nations and the conservative, traditional nations within the EU', our interpretation.

The discursive struggle to control these topics and their meanings are an underpinning of Cases 2 and 3 in particular. Both sides claim to be supporters of certain values as described in the previous paragraph, but work hard to assign their own meanings to it, as a way to connect themselves to the generally-accepted 'liberal' values that the EU is founded on. However, certain values are unique to either side. The concept of LGBTQ+ rights is almost exclusively connected to Poland by opposition speakers, who argue that non-heteronormative Poles have just as much right to be considered Polish by the constitution as heteronormative. On one side, the PiS-aligned speakers attempt to argue that Poland has no legal background against LGBTQ+ persons. However, the attempt is not convincing, considering the public evidence on it - the existence of

the debates in Case 2 and 3 would not exist if that was the case. On the other side, the PiS-aligned speakers tend to emphasize the values of the traditional family in many speeches, arguing for the sanctity of a Poland where the union of a man and a woman is important.

A similar discursive struggle happens within the theme of **Left vs Right**. Here, both sides engage in a battle to dub the other side either a part of a supposed 'radical left', an ideological group that seeks to circumvent and destroy what makes Poland Polish, or as right-wing fundamentalists seeking to control every Pole and demand they live as they do. For this reason, we do not wish to delve too deeply into this subject since much of the theme deals with how the two sides attempt to frame the other as an opponent. However, we do want to describe the fact that both sides are actively attempting to frame other Poles as being outsiders who circumvent the true Poland.

As with the 'limited' aspect of the 'imagined community', this is represented by the two sides attempting to control how Poles are seen. For PiS-aligned speakers, Poland is traditional, conservative and Christian - a country that supports the traditional family unit of a man and a woman, and protects life even before birth. For the opposition, it is important to counter this imagery by reminding the audience that Poles can be in need of abortions, can be non-heteronormative and may not be religious, and yet still be Poles. The opposition has the additional obstacle of having to frame a Polish identity against representatives of the Polish government, who, by election, can be considered the party that represents Poland the most. In both cases, the PiS-aligned speakers and opposition attempt to create a 'community' discursively, and struggle against their fellow elites in making their own image of Poles the most recognized one.

Finally, Case 3 features a line of arguments against abortion that hinges on religious belief. We were surprised to find that religious codes were not as present as we thought they would be. However, we argue that this may be due to the choice of data (in Case 1 - the Rule of Law Infringement can hardly be justified through religious arguments)

In conclusion, the speeches analyzed in this thesis display evidence that the various speakers are actively, although perhaps unconsciously, framing a national identity of Poland in accordance with Anderson's 'imagined community' theoretical concept. The speeches display attempts at

framing an image of a Poland that wishes for a strong Europe and European Union, while wishing to be free of outside interests and cultural standards. They show a distinct sense of place for Poland, which is framed as an indelible part of the EU, both as a believer in the values of the Union, but also as one of its defenders and most important Member States on the eastern border to Russia. Despite this enthusiasm, Poland is also framed to be a state under siege by a so-called 'liberal hegemony', where various, often western, forces wish to introduce cultural, legal and social standards into the country - many of which are rejected by the conservative speakers on the grounds of sovereignty. The left-leaning speakers counter this image by arguing for a more tolerant, open and progressive Poland where non-heteronormative people and women are free to live as they please, inequality with the rest of the country. Both sides connect the present with historic imagery of the Second World War, of years of suffering under communist rule and of rebellion against tyranny; proudly proclaiming that Poland was and is one of the youngest democracies in Europe.

Our analysis found that Poland was frequently designed as both an 'imagined' and 'community' that is 'sovereign'. We found less evidence that Poland was framed to be 'limited', although it is possible that the three Cases chosen for the thesis were the cause for this, as neither in particular dealt highly with belonging to Poland.

Part 3: Contextualizing the data with the lens of Neo-traditionalism

We started this thesis by learning about neo-traditionalism (Melito, 2021a; Melito, 2021b). Despite neo-traditionalism being very relevant in current political studies, there are only a handful of studies that cover neo-traditionalism in Poland. For this reason, we decided to apply this theoretical concept to Polish discourse in an EU context, hoping to discover some interesting findings. This section uses the lenses of neo-traditionalism to interpret the findings collected from Part 1 of this Analysis, with the overall intention of contributing to the literature on National Identity in Poland.

Before delving into this section, we remind the reader of the key points of neo-traditionalism. First of all, neo-traditionalism can be understood as a country's strategy to "return to what is claimed to be 'tradition' after a period of disruption" (Benczes et. al, 2020, p. 5); a disruption that not necessarily is abrupt, but can be gradual. The attempt is to resume those

values and social behaviors that were replaced by other values imposed by external agents (e.g. Western 'elites', liberalism, globalized and multicultural values). Drawing on the existing literature (Melito, 2021; Benczes et. al, 2020), we collected the key points that characterize neo-traditionalism:
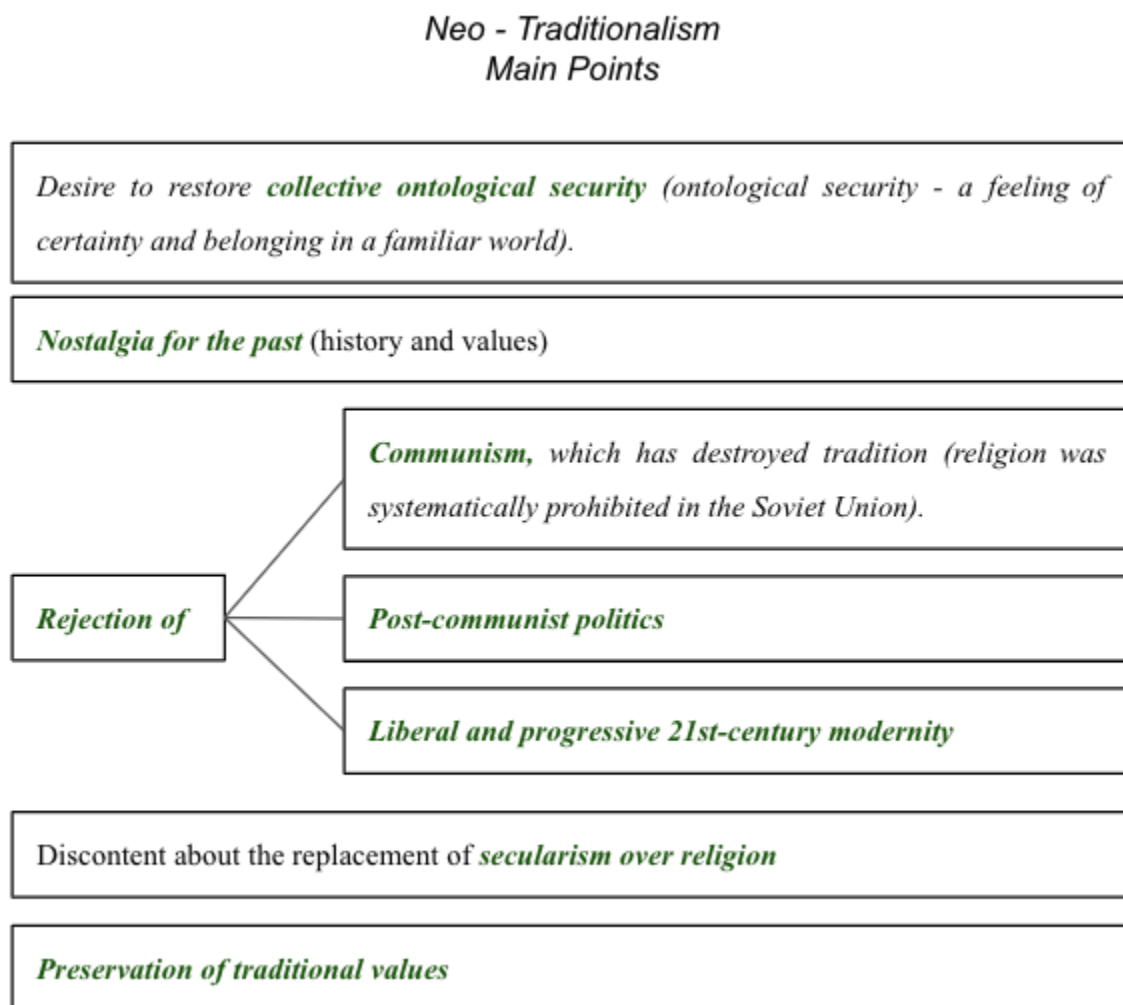
Neo - Traditionalism
Main Points

Desire to restore **collective ontological security** (ontological security - a feeling of certainty and belonging in a familiar world).

Nostalgia for the past (history and values)

Rejection of
- **Communism,** which has destroyed tradition (religion was systematically prohibited in the Soviet Union).
- **Post-communist politics**
- **Liberal and progressive 21st-century modernity**

Discontent about the replacement of **secularism over religion**

Preservation of traditional values

Figure 3. Neo-traditionalism Main Points.

We base this part of the analysis on the above-mentioned key points. We look through the key characteristics of neo-traditionalism and see if they can be placed into context of the themes. In a nutshell, the discourse analysis demonstrated that the seven key points were mainly present in speeches delivered by PiS members, and that there was no significant evidence that politicians from the opposition expressed any of the neo-traditionalism key points in their speeches.

The first key characteristic of neo-traditionalism is 'desire to restore collective ontological security'. For a better use and contextualisation of this characteristic, we add to Melito's original definition of ontological security, describing it also as "cultural integrity, physical security and health" of a society, based on our literature review (Polynczuk-Alienus, 2021, p. 772). The 'desire to restore collective ontological security' is expressed throughout the theme of **Defense**, which mainly deals with codes that relate to security, protection of borders and safety from outside threats. Despite security and defense being addressed mainly to physical safety, we argue that ontological security is a sense of mental stability, health and cultural integrity that also derives from feeling physically safe, because it gives people a sense of certainty of feeling comfortable in their own country. The speakers used the codes to create an image of Poland that, on one hand, succeeds in maintaining (ontological) safety, protecting the country from external attacks at its borders, and on the other hand, still perceives threats like Russia. To clarify, on one hand, Poland is presented as a country that serves as a bulwark of the Union, crucial for providing EU Security (through the code *Polish Security is EU Security)* and on the other hand, the PiS emphasizes how frail Poland's society and borders are (in the codes *Threats against Poland, Security against Russia,* and *Anti-Russian Aggression*). In this way, Polish MEPs create a double picture of Poland's physical security, one that is strong, and one that is still under threat. We wish to remind the reader that neo-traditionalism argues that situations of change (like military threats, and economic crises, and even globalization) disrupt a community's sense of belonging in a familiar world, because of sudden changes in the community's environment, causing instability and damaging the ontological security otherwise provided by tranquil and environments. In the speeches, PiS members mostly talk about Poland as a physically safe country, where there may be eventual physical threats (by Russia). However, what may also be a threat to Poland's economic security and stability is the energy crisis. An underlying threat, yet not physical, is globalization and the so-called 'liberal hegemony' that carries *leftist madness* and ideology.

While attempting to look for the neo-traditionalist 'desire to restore collective ontological security' through the themes collected, we found some evidence in the theme of **Change**. As mentioned, neo-traditionalism views change and disruption as challenges to ontological security. The theme of **Change** refers to ideological or political changes in the country. Cases 2 and 3 deal with PiS' narratives that disapprove of progressive and liberal stances on LGBTQI, abortion, and

family structures, implying a fear of any kind of disruption of the societal traditional norms. While on one hand, the politicians in PiS fear changes in society, opposition parties do not perceive progressive shifts as threats to the community's ontological security - on the contrary, they encourage a progressive shift to ensure that also minorities feel 'ontologically' safe and familiar within the community. Moreover, the politicians in PiS describe language changes (through the code *political correctness*) and the introduction of sex education in schools as 'Western Europe' absurdities that infringe conservative societal norms. Along the same lines, the theme of **Chaos** expresses the desire of PiS politicians to protect the collective ontological security posed under threat by the "ideological madness" enforced on Polish people by 'left-wing ideology', as well as by "EU lawlessness" (Legutko, 2021a). Linked to the theme of **Chaos** is the theme of **Poland as a victim**, because the PiS describe the left-wing ideology and the "*ideological madness*" in Poland as both causes of anarchy/chaos, but also as an attack on Poland (Legutko, 2021a). Moreover, the theme of **Poland as a victim** presents the worry of PiS' leaders in regards to the EU's accusations and financial measures. These measures can be understood as disruptive events that in neo-traditionalism, typically lead to a desire for restoring the country's ontological security (Benczes et. al, 2020). Finally, the sub-theme 'negative' in the theme **Poland's relationship with the EU** also expresses the PiS' recognition of the EU as a threat to its ontological security, due to its "*deterioration*" (Wiśniewska, 2021); a deterioration in morals, values, and social structures.

Another key element in neo-traditionalism is the 'Rejection of liberal and progressive 21st-century modernity'. This is strongly linked to the 'Desire to restore collective ontological security', as both deal with rejecting changes that may disrupt the sense of belonging in a familiar world. While 'Desire to restore collective ontological security' refers to security (which may be "cultural integrity, physical security and health" (Polynczuk-Alienus, 2021, p. 772), 'Rejection of liberal and progressive 21st-century modernity' does not deal with physical security, as it refers mainly to rejecting new ideologies, social and cultural values that may disrupt that sense of belonging. themes that invoke the neo-traditionalist 'Rejection of liberal and progressive 21st-century modernity' are the **Left vs Right** and **Human Rights**. These two themes are evidence that PiS rejects liberal and progressive values, as opposed to the opposition parties that fight for liberal values. In fact, the themes of **Left vs Right** and **Human Rights** perfectly picture the polarization that is present amongst Polish politicians, both at the EU level

and at the national level. All PiS-aligned speakers fundamentally disagree with the political and ideological stances suggested by the opposition parties. Evidence of this can be found in the way Morawiecki (2021) talks about Western values (code: *Western Patronism*), claiming that the EU paternalistically lectures Poland about democracy (when in reality, the EU rightfully claims that Poland does not respect the EU Treaties, see p. 22).

Another example of the neo-traditionalist 'Rejection of liberal and progressive 21st-century modernity' are the codes *radical left*, run by *leftist dictat* with *leftist views*. These codes express disapproval of the left and liberal elite, accusing it of disrupting the 'authentic Polish culture' and way of life (Melito, 2021b). Similarly, Legutko's claim that 'Western Europe is engaging in ideological propaganda' (2021a) captures the essence of the neo-traditionalist 'Rejection of liberal and progressive 21st-century modernity', using the derogatory term 'propaganda' to refer to the openness and acceptance of minorities of many Western contexts. Indirectly, this includes the argument that traditional ways of life are posed under threat by modernisation; a modernisation that is the cause of new 'alien' ways of life imposed by the "contemporary process of globalization" (Benczes et. al, 2020, p. 3). The refusal by the conservatives to accept any type of pluralism or multiculturalism is very clear in the accusation by Jaki (member of United Poland) against the European Commission: Jaki accuses the Commission of producing "form[s] of "fascism" (Jaki, 2021a), referring to the Commission's measures like Article 7 TEU[11] against Poland; measures taken because the LGBT-free zone was seen as an infringement of the Rule of Law. More evidence of 'Rejection of liberal and progressive 21st-century modernity' are codes in **Left vs Right** theme: *Indoctrination* and *new culture* refer to teaching kids about sex education in a negative way, as if 'liberal leftist views' were indoctrinated to children. Overall, the themes of **Human Rights** and **Left vs Right** (divided in sub-themes 'LGBTQI', 'Abortion' and 'Women's rights') contain the conservative stances by PiS-aligned speakers. Proof of this are the codes on anti-abortion, the negative stance on sex education in school (contained in *gender fluidity*, *leftist propaganda*) and the religion-related codes.

Linked to the neo-traditionalist 'Rejection of liberal and progressive 21st-century modernity' is another essential element of neo-traditionalism: 'Preservation of traditional

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[11] *Article 7 allows the suspension of certain rights from a Member State, based on a member breaching the rules of the European Union (European Commission, 2021).*

values'. Tradition is understood by neo-traditionalism as a sort of ideological and cultural code that encompasses familiar symbols and values that are maintained across time and are not negotiated (Benczes et. al, 2020), as opposed to new 'progressive values'. As mentioned in the theory, tradition is believed to be a crucial part of society that must be preserved and "shared by all, and provides comfort and security to those afraid of the change" (Benczes et. al, 2020, p. 5).

The data demonstrating the neo-traditionalist 'Rejection of liberal and progressive 21st-century modernity' and the 'Desire to recollect ontological security' in Poland, also implies a desire to preserve traditional Polish values. We argue that the reason why Polish politicians strive to maintain traditional symbols and values is that they are afraid that new values may disrupt their collective sense of comfort and security. Thus, 'Rejection of liberal and progressive 21st-century modernity' is a method for both preserving 'traditional values' and restoring 'collective ontological security', which neo-traditionalists argue to be in danger. The narrative of 'Preservation of traditional values' is expressed by PiS in the **Left vs Right** theme; it is present for example when PiS claims that Europe must respect "the culture and traditions from which it has grown" (Morawiecki, 2021). PiS defines itself as pro-EU but on the condition that Polish traditions and cultures are respected and taken into account, especially when making policies.

The attempt to preserve 'traditional values' in neo-traditionalism is connected to the 'Discontent about religion being replaced by secularism', a crucial characteristic of neo-traditionalist ideology. Tradition not only is a solution for restoring the sense of security lost due to political and ideological transformation, but it also provides society "simple answers to difficult, complicated questions, gives moral directions" and releases society from "bearing responsibilities for the consequences" of free choices (Benczes et. al, 2020, p. 3). Similarly, collective identity acquires meaning and legitimacy through religious blessing, rituals and ancient roots (Benczes et. al, 2020). Keeping this in mind, we found several religious references by the PiS throughout the speeches of Case 3. All religious references were made when discussing anti-abortion stances. The PiS speakers talk about the codes *Jesus' presence in the child* and *Life as sacrosanct*, with the intention of immortalizing the role of religion in ethical matters like abortion. Abortion and LGBTQI rights are understood as unethical rights, and as such, they should not be a right. The codes related to religion in the PiS speeches are significant for understanding how strongly religion is desired to be a part of Poland's identity. In contrast, the opposition accuse Poland of being "overly religious" and blame the PiS for being

fundamentalists, "akin to the Taliban" (Biedron, 2021b); once again, this demonstrates the level of political polarization. We see the PiS' religious references as evidence of their worry about entirely losing the religious values and traditions that once were widely shared by the Polish community. The worry is caused by new ways of life brought about by globalisation and the EU - ways of life that include various minorities (sexual, religious and other) that are increasingly visible in the public. Once again, what previously seemed to be stable, homogenous and certain, "including religious doctrine and family structure", is increasingly becoming contested and relative (Benczes et. al, 2020). Religious references were mainly present in case 3; we believe that this is because of the choice of data: Case 1 (the largest piece of data) on Infringement of Rule of Law is hard to dispute or defend through religious arguments.

Another important finding from the analysis is the role of time in the speeches; the dimension of time is brought about by past events and 'nostalgia for the past'. 'Nostalgia for the past' is a crucial characteristic of neo-traditionalism. This element is especially present in the theme of **History**, which encompasses references to the past. The theme includes nostalgic and glorious references to past events, representing Poland as a strong country that survived WW2 and has brilliantly grown out of communism. On one hand, the theme allows the speakers to frame the idea of Poland as a survivor, as a success story in a destructive world conflict (codes: *second world war* and *past achievements)* and as a country with long democratic tradition and "tradition of 'Solidarity'" (Morawiecki, 2021)*.* On the other hand, the theme manifests the negative sentiments against the "cruel communist system" (code: *polish communist past)*, where Polish people were not in control of their own government (Morawiecki, 2021).

Furthermore, the neo-traditionalist 'Nostalgia for the past' present in the **History** theme, is inevitably linked to the last two other neo-traditionalist characteristics: a) Rejection of Communism and b) Rejection of Post-Communism. There is multiple evidence that both politicians in PiS (PM Morawiecki and MEP Szydło) and in the opposition reject communism (MEPs Lukacijewska, Halick). Communism is presented as a negative force that has caused damage to Poland's development, but from which Poland has grown strong. We argue that another reason for which Communism is strongly rejected is that any form of culture, including religion, was systematically prohibited under Communist rule. Although we have no evidence of b) Rejection of Post-Communism in the speeches, we have evidence elsewhere that the PiS government accuses the post-communist government for mismanaging the transition from their

communist predecessors. An example of this ("Rejection of Post-Communism") can be found in the background events of Case 1 (Rule of Law infringement). Among other developments, the EU condemns PiS' policy on lowering the age of retirement of judges in the Supreme Court, as it is an infringement of EU law. The PiS' argument behind this change is "to fight corruption and replace judges whose careers date back to the communist era" (BBC News, 2019). This argument not only implies an anti-communist stance, but also a rejection of the Post-Communist judicial system.

Overall, the s show evidence that the ruling party PiS and its aligned parties (e.g., United Poland) carry neo-traditionalist narratives. We can conclude so, based on the presence of all seven different key points of neo-traditionalism in the texts. To wrap up, PiS-aligned speakers recurrently address the rejection of 'leftist values' claimed to derive from Western culture (or what Melito (2021a) calls 'liberal hegemony'). This rejection is the result of a desire to maintain a sense of security and belonging in a familiar Poland - a Poland that used to prioritize religious values and that had well-established norms. Moreover, PiS and United Poland wish to be part of the EU, yet not at the expense of Polish culture and values ('preservation of traditional values'). The general discontent about secularism over religion derives from the worry of losing collective identity - once acquired through religious blessing, rituals and traditional roots. Finally, we identify a neo-traditionalist character in the narratives that perpetuate 'Nostalgia for the past' and 'Rejection of communism'. The former expresses pride and nostalgia of a strong Poland that managed to survive WW2 and Communism, and the latter reveals a clear anti-communist sentiment, due to the mismanagement of post-communist politics.

DISCUSSION

Having analysed the data collected, the Discussion section provides reflections for the development of 'imagined communities' and neo-traditionalism, and general limitations to this thesis.

Accusation as a method in Parliament discourse

As a result of the code collecting and codifying, we gathered various themes as described previously in this thesis. However, we were surprised to discover that some of the codes we found pertained linguistic methods and tones, and not necessarily a framed world view or way of portraying arguments. 'Accusation', which we argue not to be a theme but more of a discursive tone, is featured in the following codes:

- *Lies*

- *Inventing Laws*

- *Divided on what the Facts are*

- *Diversion (action)*

- *Shame*

- *Silencing Opposition*

- *Breach*

These codes are recurrent in speeches from both PiS-aligned speakers and opposition speakers. The code of *lies* was almost omnipresent in speech after speech, though mostly in Case 1, where the details of the corruption within the Polish Constitutional Court became disputed and was represented (and misrepresented) in various ways to promote the idea that the opposition was lying about the facts, or were *inventing laws*. Beata Szydlo (2021) states that "it's time to stop the lies; it's time to stop the falsehoods [the opposition] have propagated" in response to Morawiecki's defense speech. She repeats the claim and argues that the opposition is misrepresenting Poland and the Polish government for self-serving reasons, rather than see the case in a neutral light.

The *inventing laws* code was often used to assume that the opposition were arguing from the basis of regulations that did not exist, often used by PiS-aligned speakers to imply that their

opposition wanted to control Poland unduly. Similarly, Ryzsard Legutko (2021b) invokes the code we dub *silencing opposition*, arguing that the European Parliament "surrounds the dissenting groups [PiS and Allies] with a cordon sanitaire, which is quite an effective way of neutralising the opposition".

In terms of the code *lies*, the opposition accuses the PiS-aligned speakers of "[lying] to us here in this chamber" and feeding it "a sequence of lies and half-truths" (Belka, 2021). Magdalena Adamowicz, a member of the party 'Civic Platform' specifically states what the lies are:

"... It is not true that the constitutional court can pick and choose among CJ EU rulings on which ones to implement and which ones to put in the bin. It is a falsehood; a cynical falsehood that other countries' courts have ruled similarly in the PiS tribunal." (2021b)

In Case 2, a few speakers aligned with PiS use the code of *diversion* to note that the western nations have experience with mistreating LGBT and other non-heteronormative peoples in the past, shifting focus away from Poland's LGBT free zones and to their accusers. Patrik Jaki (2021a) argues that "[westerners] now want to teach Poland your new culture, but our culture didn't produce any form of facism". Instead of answering the accusations against them, the speakers attempt to divert attention to the western nations' history of oppression.

These codes appear often in the speeches and were important to find for us, since they allowed us to understand the speeches as a series of responses and discussions that surround the same Cases. The tone of Accusation shows us something about how speakers in the European Parliament use accusations and call-outs to control the flow of the discussion. In almost all cases where the theme is invoked, it is used to control and direct the discussion to supposed lies, mistakes and mishaps made by the opposition, which in turn serves to validate the speaker's own position indirectly.

More relevant for our thesis is the way this theme was used to frame identity - not necessarily Polish national identity, but the identity of the speaker and their position. Frequently, the opposition politicians were accused of being liars and of misdirecting the discussion, which in turn downplays their oratory skills. This imagery effectively frames the idea that their whole

background is based on lying and misrepresenting information. The accusing speaker benefits from debates, as their own position, party and argument is the only natural unit to compare the accused to - and in comparison, they will often appear more trustworthy and honest.

In conclusion, the tone of accusation gave insight into how political speakers in this forum can use accusations to control the flow of discussion. In addition, it indirectly makes the speaker appear more honest and trustworthy, since, by comparison, they would be more true to their word than the ones they accuse of lying. Knowing this, we can reflect on the many layers of frames that happen within just one speech; though we emphasize one specific layer, it is worth noting that more than just national identity is being formed by political speakers.

Usefulness of Neo-traditionalism

The theoretical concept of neo-traditionalism has been essential for answering the research question of this thesis: *How do Polish politicians frame national identity discourse to defend or contest neo-traditionalist values at the European Parliament?*. We started this thesis with the knowledge that neo-traditionalist tendencies are present in contemporary Polish politics according to Melito (2021). The existing literature on neo-traditionalism spurred us to take it further and see first-hand how, in the EU Parliament setting, Polish politicians use national identity discourses to defend or contest neo-traditionalist values. We concluded that there is a large polarization in how national identity is framed by politicians and that the polarization lies in the ideological stances that divide left and right-wing parties.

By now, it is clear that the right-wing parties are the ones that carry all the neo-traditionalist elements that we gathered. PiS addressed a "Desire to restore collective ontological security", understood as a feeling of certainty derived from "cultural integrity, physical security and health" (Polynczuk-Alienus, 2021, p. 772). 'Nostalgia for the past' was also present in PiS and United Poland's discourse, when addressing how Polish values and history are important and should be kept alive. Both PiS and the opposition expressed a 'Rejection of Communism'; we believe this is because the Communist order prohibited practices that used to be the roots of Polish tradition (e.g., religion in Poland was systematically prohibited). 'Rejection of Post-communism' was not present in the speeches directly, but it was present in the background of Case 1, as PiS leaders specifically replaced judges whose careers date back to the communist era. The feature that was most present throughout the speeches was

the 'Rejection of liberal and progressive 21st-century modernity', which we argue to be the essence of neo-traditionalism. This is based on the idea that liberal and progressive modernity ideologies disrupt the traditional values of Poland, and also relates to the neo-traditionalist element of 'Preservation of traditional values'. Finally, we expected to find more evidence of the right's 'Discontent about replacement of secularism over religion'; while there is evidence of this in Case 3, as the case deal with more ethical and moral issues (family, women's rights, abortion), Case 1 debates the Rule of Law, which is not something that can be justified or contested through arguments that are moral- or religion-based.

Limitations of literature on neo-traditionalism

By testing neo-traditionalism throughout this thesis, we can argue that the existing literature on neo-traditionalism is rather complete, in the sense that it takes into account all the different aspects that neo-traditionalism focuses on (history, culture, (physical) security, religion, political systems and sense of belonging).

In saying this, however, literature on neo-traditionalism does not deal with the aspect of international or regional relations, despite Poland's relations with the EU being an aspect of international relations and a substantial element of contention in neo-traditionalism. We suggest that the literature should explore the different settings and the actors involved. For example, in the regional forum of the European Parliament, we argue that there is a liberal left-leaning majority, so PiS would not make their neo-traditionalist values visible, for fear of being ostracized by the mostly-liberal European Parliament. This is an aspect of international relations that Constructivists would understand as an example of normative international values that moderate the power balance in international fora, and will be discussed in a later section of this Discussion (see p. 114). With this in mind, we suggest that future literature on neo-traditionalism gives more attention to the power balance in different settings, be it regional or international.

Lack of 'People vs Establishment' discourse

The literature by Melito (2021a) (see Literature Review, pp. 9-12) presented PiS as predominantly populist, yet as different from other populist parties in how it addressed the elite (Melito, 2021a). Typically, what characterizes populist parties is the 'people vs establishment'

dichotomy, where the (elite) establishment[12] is framed as the enemy. Keeping in mind that PiS is a far-right populist party, one expects that the party delivers a 'people vs establishment' discourse. Yet this time, the people's enemy is not the typical establishment, or a set group of politicians that has been in power for longer and is well-known for its stagnant politics. In fact, here, the people's adversary is the liberal and modernist elite, something no longer related to old stagnant politics, but on the contrary, related to ideological and political progress. This is no surprise, considering the conservative stances that are embedded in neo-traditionalism; after all, it would be contradictory if neoliberalist PiS would be against the old 'establishment' that has been consistently involved in party politics (whether they be elected officials, whether they be interest group leaders). What PiS is against here, is the progressive and modernist 'elite', which can be argued to be seen as the enemy that disrupts all established traditions and norms. Overall, this reflection further suggests two findings:

- **Rejection of liberal and progressive 21st century modernity is one of the most prominent elements of neo-traditionalism in PiS' discourse:**

  The above-mentioned element of neo-traditionalism was overall the most prominent element brought up by PiS in all three Cases. We argue that this is because of the setting the debates were delivered in. We hypothesize that in a left-leaning setting, the rejection of liberal and progresive modernity is not prominent, whereas, in right-leaning settings most parties would agree on anti-liberal and progressive values.

- **The PiS may be the embodiment of the traditionally understood 'elite' in populism:**

  Here, we argue that traditional populist parties typically carry a 'people vs elite' narrative, central in populist parties. It was not evident from the speeches that the PiS delivered a typical 'people vs elite' narrative, where the 'elitist establishment' would be a set of politicians that had been in power for a longer period, and was well-known for its stagnant politics as well as conventional social, political and economic principles of a society. Instead, we argue that PiS frames the 'establishment' as the liberal and modern elite, an elite that tries to impose 'leftist ideologies' onto the people. The narrative created

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[12] *In the traditional understanding, we see the 'elitist establishment' as a set group of politicians that has been in power for a longer period, and is well-known for its stagnant politics as well as for conventional social, political and economic principles of a society.*

by PiS pictures the values and needs of the 'people' of Poland as being underplayed by the liberal elite. Finally, we argue that PiS may be the embodiment of what is traditionally understood as the 'establishment elite'; an elite that stands for conventional social, political and economic principles of a society, an elite that prioritizes its own interests at the expense of other groups (LGBTQI, immigrants, foreign countries). To conclude, the elite identified by PiS is very different from the traditional populist understanding; the liberal elite prioritizes the interests of minority groups and has progressive social, political and economic principles of a society.

Usefulness of 'Imagined Communities'

Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (1991) proved instrumental for our understanding of the concept of national identity in an imagined community. Needing a definition of national identity, Anderson (1991) provided a relevant understanding, emphasizing that national identity and nationality exists while being extremely difficult to define properly. This meant that we could be more flexible with the usage of 'imagined communities' in a way that may be different from what the concept was initially designed for. 'Imagined communities' was utilized as a way to determine how Polish national discourse within the three Cases framed national identity discursively. As we have demonstrated, except for the 'limited' aspect, Polish identity is framed within Anderson's characteristics of an imagined community; it is framed to be a 'sovereign', 'imagined' 'community'; with a group of individuals who have the right to self-determination based on an imagined common culture and history, which forms a community.

A difficulty to our use of the concept came from the forum we chose. The European Parliament is a space with certain discursive standards, and with a general recipient in the rest of the Parliament members. 'Imagined communities' is not explicitly a discourse-adjacent concept, but it does assume that discourse shapes national identity framing. For that reason, we noticed that the framing of Polish national identity took a particular form within the EU; often, the role of the rule of law, EU values and other international buzzwords took precedence, while other topics that we expected to see more of, like religious views, were not as common as we thought they would be. One reason for this might be that the Case 1 debate is not something to be discussed through religion or morals. Another reason for this is that the recipients of the speeches are MEPs from other countries, who are not necessarily expected to empathize with religious

values. Were we to continue to study this topic, we would be interested in seeing how Polish identity is shaped in other international contexts, such as in meetings between heads of state and what role the settings play.

As a final note on 'imagined communities' as a theoretical concept, we found it to be an interesting take on the concept of national identity; one that was rooted in individual perception of the past and present. Instead of assuming the existence of national identity by accepting borders, languages and more as 'always-has-been' elements of the human condition, Anderson took us into a different mindset, by understanding how identity was shaped before nationality as we know it existed. The way he equates the role of religion with nationality gives a whole new meaning to the latter for students of political studies. For the purposes of this thesis, it allowed us to understand the idea of national identity as both a commonly-accepted set of ideals and values, and as assumptions that are up for debate, and which can be framed to understand the history and present of a nation.

The role of religion in Polish political discourse

As noted before, Anderson argues that nationality took over the role that religion used to play as the main identifier for the individual. This made Poland an interesting choice for us, as the country is commonly known for its Christian values and the importance of the Church within the community. It was a surprise that religion played a relatively minor role in the debates. Religious beliefs were brought up in Case 3, but for the most part, the PiS-aligned speakers argued for their positions on a legal basis, stating that the Polish government has the right to act as it does because the Polish constitution defends it. Rarely are these issues constructed to be a religious issue; if anything, the debates are made into an issue with liberal values being forced on Poland.

Moreover, we found it interesting that the problematization of the debates tended to focus on how Poland, as a nation, was being attacked by the EU. To us, this shows evidence that Anderson was correct in arguing that nationality takes precedence over almost all other identifiers for the individual, as the speakers present the issues in the debates as national, rather than religious issues. One exception to this could be the opposition speakers, who frame the safety of LGBTQI and women as more important than the Polish constitution. Though we see evidence of large communities being built by these groups across borders, we also see that these arguments are made to be a question of nationality still; the opposition speakers tend to argue

that not only is PiS ethically wrong for their treatment of those groups, but also that they are against the nature of the Polish identity.

Limitations of Imagined Community

The role of Elites and their ability to frame national identity

We have approached 'imagined communities' (and the concept of national identity overall) as an imagined entity one can frame and shape, but, as mentioned briefly in the theory section, it is worth noting that this is rarely a controllable process. We argue the identity of a nation is not just created by political and cultural elite, but formed by years of construction and framing by the entire populace of an 'imagined community'. However, people in visible positions (such as politicians) tend to be able to convey their framing of national identity better than the average citizen. As media seek out cultural and political elites, their messages are more visible, and often travel much further.

Though national identity cannot be fully controlled by any political elite, we do argue that elites have another relationship to it than the average citizen. Where for the average Pole it would be harder to frame the country as being pro- or anti-immigration, a politician in a political debate or an actor at a talk show has the advantage of cameras and interviewers capturing them and their position for the world to hear. This means that, as much as a constructivist-leaning concept like 'imagined community' argues that the process of identity framing is communal, we still believe it is elites who have the last word. Anderson tends to agree, arguing that the elites of the past started constructing national identities for their domains by picking and choosing a language of the nation, then assigning historic events to that language and the people that speak it, and finally connecting that to the present people the elites rule. This would not be possible by individuals on their own, and is only arguably possible for large groups to do if they come together in non-governmental organizations or similar groups to have similar levels of clout to elites (Anderson, 1991).

EU as an 'imagined community'

As a result of this thesis, it was made clear that there are more imagined spaces in play than just Poland. The most obvious community would be the European Union, which serves as the other

political space in this thesis, after Poland. However, while one can argue that the EU is itself an 'imagined community', it is important to note that Anderson's understanding of the theoretical concept does not support this interpretation, at least not in the 1991 version of his book on the same subject. While it is clear that the EU functions as an imagined community of sorts, it does not hold the role that Anderson argues religion used to as a main identifier for the individual. For this reason, we do not demonstrate the relationship between the two imagined communities, and maintain our focus on just the Polish imagined community.

One can argue that members of the EU would support and fight for it, and patriotism for it certainly does exist. However, the EU does not inspire people to the level of the nation, and we argue that this is by design - the EU is not a community made up of people as much as it is a community made up of nations, which are made up of people. Without the nation as the main actor and acting unit, the EU would not exist as it does. As such, in Anderson's definition, the EU does not qualify as an actual 'imagined community'; while certainly a community imagined to exist by its members, it does not inspire nationality the same way a nation does. It does not endorse one 'national' language, or commission art that portrays heroes and historic events - though it certainly both has a history and certain heroes that its members find inspiring, it is not above the history of the person's own country of origin.

All that said, of course we could not argue that the EU is not a community that is imagined to exist, and is constructed and framed by its various member states and their citizens. What we can say is that Anderson's definition of the 'imagined community', as it is, does not consider it an imagined community, which shows that Anderson's definition lacks a way to understand belonging to multiple communities; such as to the EU, but also the international bonds between interest groups of people with a similar identity (such as LGBT groups or Black Lives Matter), religious bonds or even political connections across borders (as we have seen with conservative groups across the globe). We do not fault Anderson for lacking this aspect within his national identity theoretical concept, but we do note that his approach lacks a way to assess identifiers other than nationality. As it stands, the EU fits in a definition grey area; it can be considered an 'imagined community' with membership, tradition and values, but not in a way that fits with Anderson's nationalistic understanding of the term.

Constructivism and its role in EU debates

As we have seen and analyzed in this thesis, Polish politicians debate the Cases by addressing EU values, such as freedom, equality, European community etc. Both PiS-aligned and opposition speakers invoke the idea of pan-European ideals, and are presented as an inarguable part of being a member of the EU. The previous sections on neo-traditionalism in the context of Poland touched on how the PiS-aligned speakers avoid strong showings of neo-traditionalist values. This can be explained from a Constructivist standpoint. As explained in the Constructivism section of the Theory (see p. 34), normative power structures and the values in them limit what political actors can argue for in international settings. As we have argued, PiS-aligned speakers appear to underplay their neo-traditional values, such as Christian values, anti-immigration, etc., which can be argued to be because those values are non-dominant in the European Parliament. Instead, they play up Poland's dedication to EU values, to freedom and to democracy, as well as a large emphasis on rule of law and legality. This is done by both sides, though as we have noted previously, their interpretation of those values differ based on what they use them for (as demonstrated throughout Part 1 of the Analysis, pp. 54-90).

We argue that the neo-traditionalist discourse has two goals. The most obvious is to protect neo-traditionalist values, and equate them with Polish values (making them one and the same), which we have covered elsewhere. The second is to signal to other neo-traditionalist groups and nations that Poland is neo-traditionalist, and wants that to be respected. By introducing the neo-traditionalist elements under the guise of being a part of the normative power structure, the PiS-aligned speakers manage to make their arguments and opinions appear more legitimate; especially since they argue that the EU should respect them, implying that they are worth respect. In this way, neo-traditionalist values are presented as a 'dog-whistle'; a term that describes discourse that is meant to be heard by certain groups, and not by others. In this case, the certain groups are other neo-traditionalists in the EU, and Poland tells them, very clearly, that Poland is an EU country, it is neo-traditional, and that is also normative and legitimate.

In the 'imagined communities' context, the speakers manage to reproduce and frame Poland as a country that deserves independence and international respect, while maintaining a certain sense of place and history that identify them as Polish. One aspect of international relations that Constructivism (like most IR theories) describes is the balance of power, which Constructivists argue stem from perception and from discourse; it is not something that can be

proven to exist in reality. In that sense, Anderson's 'imagined communities' aligns with the latter argument - arguing that the main reason why nationalities were created was to establish domains that were sovereign and apart from one another. In writing this, 'imagined communities' assumes that people across the globe respect the fact that 'nationality' means something; that it is in some way sacred, and should not be tampered with. If this is the case, 'imagined communities' also implies that it accepts the Constructivist idea that the balance of power is discursively constructed - otherwise, there is no way that nationalities can be framed and presented to other groups of people.

Having said this, we argue that 'imagined communities', as a theoretical concept, owes much to the theory of Constructivism, and that it would not function as a theory without the assumption that Constructivism is in some way true.

LIMITATIONS

As in most academic research projects, this thesis is not without limitations. This section explains some of the relevant limitations, their effect on this project, and lastly, future considerations to avoid such limitations.

Firstly, the data gathered was limited to three Cases. Although the three Cases provided debates on several topics, giving us a holistic overview (Rule of Law, LGBT Free Zones, and Anti-Abortion law), at the same time it proved a slight limitation. Some of the elements of neo-traditionalism and 'imagined community' may not have been detected due to lack of more data, unfortunately due to limited time and space we could not analyze more than 3 Cases. The major problem with the choice of cases was revealed when analyzing Case 1 (Rule of Law infringement); this is because the Rule of Law infringement could not be justified or contested through moral- or religion-based arguments necessarily. In future projects we would expand the intake of data which would lead to a broader variety of arguments demonstrating neo-traditionalist and 'imagined community' elements.

In addition, we believe some meaning may have been lost due to the live translations made by the European Union employees. Although we believe the effect of this limitation was not severe to this thesis as we looked at general topics and themes, we recommend that future

projects have a translator to assist, or the language or nation of choice should be one that is shared with at least one writer.

Lastly, the discourse analysis method this thesis used, proved to be more difficult than expected. Firstly, the codes were inevitably biased due to the world views of the writers, that being more liberal leaning. Being immersed in the thesis may have also tinted our glasses to seeing codes relevant to this project. Secondly, the use of interpretive codes were difficult as the authors of this thesis interpreted things differently or using different language, which was then difficult to organize. Nonetheless, we did manage to agree on the codes and the themes found proved relevant and meaningful for this thesis, but a different discourse analysis method would be recommended, perhaps that of framing.

CONCLUSION

Having completed the analysis of this thesis and discussed several reflection points, we can now present some answers to this thesis's research question: *Research Question: How do Polish politicians frame national identity discourse to defend or contest neo-traditionalist values at the European Parliament?*.

Based on the QDA analysis of the three Cases of European Parliament debates, we conclude that the way Polish politicians frame Polish national identity is highly polarized. This also means that there is a strong polarization in how the politicians respond to neo-traditionalism and its values. On one hand, a political narrative is carried out by PiS-aligned speakers defending neo-traditionalist values, and on the other hand, the opposition argues for a progressive political stance that contests neo-traditionalist values. Based on the key characteristics of neo-traditionalism, we see that PiS-aligned speakers advocate for neo-traditionalist values: a 'desire to restore collective ontological security' was present when addressing physical security, economic security, and sense of stability. 'Nostalgia for the past' was also present in PiS-aligned discourse, when addressing how Polish values and history are important and should be kept alive. Both PiS and the opposition expressed a 'Rejection of Communism'; we believe this is because the Communist order prohibited practices rooted in Polish tradition (e.g., religion in Communist rule was systematically prohibited). 'Rejection of Post-communism' was not present in the speeches directly, but was present in the background of Case 1 (Rule of Law

infringement), as PiS leaders specifically replaced judges whose careers dated back to the Communist era. Finally, a consistent feature was Pis-aligned speakers' 'Rejection of liberal and progressive 21st-century modernity', which we argue to be the essence of neo-traditionalism.

Overall, the narrative created by PiS and the aligned parties frames Poland as a country with an exceptional status because of its great contribution to the EU (mostly economically), and as such, the EU must accept its national sovereignty over EU law. On the other hand, the narrative created by the opposition suggests that the EU's exceptional status should justify taking more measures against Poland's breach of EU law.

We conclude that while the neo-traditionalist discourse has the goal to restore Polish traditional values, the second is to signal to the EU Parliament audiences that Poland is neo-traditionalist, and as such requires respect. We also came to understand this through the reflections brought about by Constructivism as an IR theory. By introducing the neo-traditionalist elements under the guise of being a part of the normative liberal power structure, the PiS-aligned speakers make their arguments and opinions appear more legitimate.

While assessing how Polish national identity is framed when defending neo-traditionalist arguments, we also worked to describe how the national identity concept 'imagined communities' fits into the cases we chose. As we have demonstrated, except for the 'limited' aspect, Polish identity is framed within Anderson's characteristics of an imagined community; it is framed to be a 'sovereign', 'imagined' 'community'; with a group of individuals who have the right to self-determination based on an imagined common culture and history, which forms a community. We also found that 'imagined communities' as a concept and neo-traditionalism have common features; both work with an idealized version of a nation's past, and both assume that certain groups of people fit in the nation, and some do not. Both concepts presuppose that national identity is shaped over time, and that nationality has a role in discursively defending the rights and traditions of a nation.

Though they cannot be used the same way, they both imply that there is political reasoning in framing power structures within international fora. We base this on a Constructivist approach, which we believe demonstrates the theory's academic usefulness in understanding EU politics. Neo-traditionalism centers around maintaining ontological security for a nation, which presupposes that the meaning of a nation can be framed by social and cultural change coming

from both within and without. We argue that Constructivism seeks to understand the same phenomenon. Within Constructivism, the normative power structure shapes international society; and neo-traditionalism argues that the hegemonic position of liberalism needs to be removed and replaced. In conclusion, we argue that the normative power structure addressed by Constructivism overlaps with the liberal Western hegemony that neo-traditionalism seeks to replace.

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