

I am, to say the least, highly critical of Angela Merkel's disastrous policy on the refugees (as well as many other of her and Germany's policies, such as on nuclear power, global warming etc) but the idea that she is a "Putin's bitch" and a Stasi belongs in exactly the same place as the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion". Therefore I am not going to bother to make any further comments on this.

I agree with a lot of what Akos Magyar writes about the EU. Indeed, as a British citizen I supported Brexit and I described my reasons here <http://www.mimuw.edu.pl/~akoz/History/BrexitAndMe.pdf> In fact, I did not mention the refugee issue since I considered it largely a consequence of other more basic ones. However, there are some factually incorrect statements in his comments, which I think should be addressed. I will only concentrate on the case of Poland but a lot of it applies to the other former Soviet block member countries now in the EU.

Firstly, it is simply untrue that the current governments "enjoy massive electoral gains and popularity". For example the current government in Poland received 37.58% of the vote in the last election, which gave it Parliamentary majority only because of the electoral system which requires a threshold of 5% for single parties and 8% for coalitions. Current opinion polls show the support for anti-government parties is about equal or somewhat larger than that for the governing PiS. Only on the single issue of accepting refugees (or migrants) from the Middle East does the current government enjoy substantial majority support. What is more significant is that the EU as an institution is far more popular in these countries than their own governments are. In fact, the EU (which is not the same as "EU policies") is much more popular in Poland (72% favorability) and Hungary (61%) than in any Western European Country (e.g. 50% in Germany, 38% in France). In fact, no party openly opposed to Poland's EU membership is represented in the Parliament and it is unlikely that such a party could at this time win enough support to qualify. Both the Government and the opposition are well aware of this and this why the liberal opposition attempts to turn every conflict between PiS and itself into one between Polish nationalists and the EU (and why a mass of EU flags is the most striking feature of all opposition rallies) are the most knowing well that if the Polish public believes that Poland's EU membership is at stake it will overwhelmingly side with the EU.

However, it is also true that public support for Poland's membership of the EU does not imply support for the policies pursued by the EU elites. There are a number of reasons for Polish support for EU membership, chief among them: the historical Polish tendency to identify with the West, security concerns and the undoubted economic success of the last decade. On the other hand, there is only lukewarm support for the EU's social agenda, anxiety about the EU's lack of "backbone" in standing up to Putinism (this strongly distinguishes Poland from Hungary) and overwhelming opposition to any idea of allowing the creation of a significant Muslim presence in Poland (which is the true cause of the hostility to the idea of admitting refugees from Syria). The reasons for this have nothing to do with history and the Ottoman Empire but are very recent.

Contrary to myth, Polish historical experience of dealing with Islam (and the Ottomans) was on the whole positive and as a result, until only a few years ago, Muslims were perceived with less hostility in Poland than in almost any country in Europe. Following the first and second Chechen wars Poland accepted a large number of Chechen refugees, without any public opposition. There are streets in Poland named after Dzhokhar Dudayev, the first president of the independent Chechen Republic.

One reason for the difference in this respect between Poland and the Balkan states or Hungary is that Poland never experienced Ottoman conquest and Muslim rule. When the Ottoman Empire was at the peak of its power, so was the Polish-Lithuanian state and although there was a great deal of struggle between the two, but it always took place far from the heartland of Poland and was never seen as an existential threat. The nobility that dominated the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was pacifistic and often isolationist and saw the main threat in the expansion of royal power rather than in an external enemy. In fact the biggest effect of wars and peaceful contacts with the Ottomans was on the appearance of the Polish nobles, who imitated the style of Ottoman dress, weapons, furniture etc. Another significant historical fact was that the Ottoman Empire was the only state that refused to recognize the partitions of Poland, and provided refuge to Poles who had fought against Russia in various uprisings after the partitions, even in the face of Russian threats of war in 1848. Some of these refugees, notably general Józef Bem, a hero of both Poland and Hungary, actually converted to Islam to be able to serve in the Turkish military against Russia.

Poland's historical experience with a Muslim minority was also unlike that of most other European countries. Since the 14-th century Lithuania and then Poland had a small Muslim minority, the Lipka Tatars. These Tatars, descended from warriors who arrived with Genghis Khan, were given land in the Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth and were considered a part of the nobility. In returned they have served in the Polish military until WWII. They rebelled once in the 17-th century and switched to the Ottoman side but having discovered that their treatment was much worse under the Ottomans, they asked to be allowed to back into the Commonwealth service. This was granted and they famously fought in the battle of Vienna in 1683 on the Polish side, wearing a sprig of straw in their helmets to distinguish them from the Tatars fighting on the Ottoman side. Their descendants still live in Poland numbering about 15,000 although many emigrated to the US at the beginning of the 20th century. The Tatars contribution to Poland's history is quite well known and in 2010 a monument was unveiled in Gdansk to commemorate it.

The reason for my mentioning all this history is to make the a point that should be obvious: contrary to the common myth, the anti-islamist feelings strongly present in today's Poland are not the result of any historical experience or xenophobia left over from the communist era but are a recent development entirely due to awareness of recents events in the West and around the globe. Attempts to cover up the relationship between the spread of islamism (both in terrorist and in "peaceful" versions) and the presence of large and growing and largely unassimilated Muslim populations in Western Europe have only backfired . In fact, in countries used to communist propaganda any "political correctness" will always backfire since once people realize that some truth is being withheld from them, they assume that most

of what they are told is also a lie. Although Poland does not have a modern democratic tradition, Poles have a very strong attachment to freedom and especially to freedom of expression. All attempts to restrict it or to impose conformism of thought and speech of the kind that prevails today in most of the EU are bound to fail here.