
OPINION: OPAQUE POLAND

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There is a political storm brewing in Brussels: The European Commission and Poland are irreconcilably at odds over the EU member's planned judicial reforms. The EU is threatening the ultimate sanction: legal proceedings that could lead to Poland being kicked out of the club that promises so much wealth. An involuntary "Pexit."

Poland's government has responded in typically insulted fashion, as we have grown accustomed to from Jaroslaw Kaczynski, the head of the ruling Law and Justice Party (PiS). Blackmail is the talk of the town in Warsaw. The political crisis the EU keeps slipping towards is about as useful as a hole in the head.

The European Commission is interested in shoring up its credibility as guarantor of rule of law in Europe. The Polish government, still supported by a majority of voters despite all the loud protests, is looking to save face. A good nationalist cannot allow Brussels to rain on his parade.

Does the EU want another crisis?

Given the tensions with candidate nation Turkey and the chaos of Brexit, it remains to be seen if EU members states have the political will to confront the unruly Brussels-haters in Warsaw.

A triggering of Article 7 of the Lisbon Treaty, which allows the EU to defend its values against a member state, would quickly reveal how isolated Poland is. Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban remains vocal in his support for his beloved illiberal ally Poland.

However, the nationalist unity is tied to money; it would quickly crumble should the EU's net contributors make good on their threats and use financial means to bring the yobbish recipient states Poland, Hungary and others to their senses.

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The question no one can properly answer in Brussels is a simple one: Why is Poland making such a fuss and what do they really want from the EU?

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The fact that the party calling itself "Law and Justice" would have done away with exactly that with its judicial reforms is not the brainchild of the European Commission.

The independent constitutional experts who comprise the Venice Commission, which advises the

Council of Europe, have warned Poland it is endangering the rule of law. For its own part, Poland commissioned a report, which it ignored when the conclusion was unsatisfactory.

There is no doubt that the Polish government is in the wrong. Why then such a struggle against the European Commission and supposedly evil powers in Brussels?

With or without Poland

Is this about a few Polish politicians' inferiority complex? Is Kaczynski really so trapped in conspiracy theories and the deep sadness for his late, twin brother, Lech, the former president who died in a plane crash in 2010? Is it domestic politics that buoys support for the nationalist conservatives? How can a man who helped bring down a communist dictatorship be so fixed on muzzling opposition and accruing power? Is a mini-Trump in the works in Poland?

If the EU really is as terrible as the Polish government claims perhaps it really should contemplate a "Pexit." In March for the EU's 60th birthday in Rome, Prime Minister Beata Szydlo could hardly bring herself to reaffirm the Union's future as she carried on about a better Europe that needed to be achieved.

What "better" might look like, she did not say. If that means a Polish Europe, one of limited democracy, freedom and separation of powers, our response with the European Commission must be loud and clear: No, thank you. Not like that.

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