
POLAND'S 'RUSSIAN ROULETTE' WITH THE EU

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Like many destructive conflicts, Warsaw's war with Brussels was never supposed to happen.

A former Polish diplomat who followed rule of law issues said that when the nationalist Law and Justice (PiS) party was presenting its first judicial reforms after winning power in 2015: The aim wasn't to get into a fight with the European Commission.

Rather, the party's battle to almost immediately exert control over the judicial system was a domestic political initiative with its roots in PiS's previous and brief 2005-2007 stint in government. Party leader Jarosław Kaczyński blamed the courts for undermining his radical political program with pettifogging separation of powers ideas that undermined what he saw as his party's democratic right to rule thanks to winning elections — a concept he called legal impossibilism.

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