

## **Abstract**

### *Dynamics of Polish Patriotism after 1989: Concepts, Debates and Identities*

In Poland, patriotism as a political concept has a special place of importance in intellectual and, more broadly, public debates. This does not only refer to the frequency of its use and invocation. Across the political and intellectual spectrum, the variety of the meanings of patriotism contributes to and in certain respects constitutes political debates. Perhaps the most striking about contemporary arguments is how political and intellectual actors employ the term in order to define the boundaries of the political realm itself, national identity, and in turn who should be disallowed from participating in Polish political life more generally. This use of patriotism, as a concept that aims at stating terms of inclusion/exclusion, is one of the most striking. However, it does not detail the full breadth of meanings and uses of patriotism in Poland after 1989. In its broadest articulation, my dissertation aims at explaining the different uses of the concept of patriotism. It will assess whether contemporary public debate about patriotism bears direct relation to prior patriotic traditions and definitions in Poland (e.g. republican, romantic, or realist). My dissertation seeks to clarify the concept, its antecedents and effects, which has been much discussed and debated, but not systematized through social science (political sociology and political science) or even historical studies.

In order to develop an understanding of the concept of patriotism and of its ambiguous uses in the Polish context my work begins by developing a contemporarily oriented conceptual history. As the German scholar Reinhart Koselleck writes, “without common concepts there is no society, and above all, no political field of action” (1985: 74). If correct, Koselleck’s proposition indicates at least the importance of concepts for social and political activity, and by implication offers basic insight into the importance of the concept of patriotism to Polish political life. However, concepts are often times ambiguous, controversial, and develop out of a longer historical process (Palonen 1997: 65). This assumption motivates research focused on the contemporary meaning of patriotism set in relation to or as part of a broader conceptual history. My project will focus on (temporally) different occurrences of what can be called the discourse on patriotism; from this it explains the reasons for continuities or discontinuities in the aforementioned patriotic traditions. This step not only allows contemporary definitions of patriotism to be understood in a broader context, it will also enable me to elaborate a typology and systematization of the different usages of the concept, or even to suggest possible revisions to previously defined understandings of patriotism (Walicki 1991, 1999). In addition to the tools of conceptual history that Koselleck et al provide, this research project will include a longitudinal analysis of the debate about patriotism that occurred in Poland after 1989.