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**Debate, values, identity**

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Dear Readers,

the articles in the presented issue of the journal „Przegląd Zachodni” (Western Review) address both the present day and the turbulent history of the twentieth century. Each essay stands on its own, but their common thread is an interchange of ideas in public debate – both parliamentary and intellectual – as well as issues of identity and its representations in collective consciousness. Three decades have passed since the historical turning point that shattered Europe’s divides and ushered in an era of remarkable prosperity. The current debate, however, is taking place against the backdrop of developments that are converting the previous stability right before our eyes into the fragility of today and the unpredictability of tomorrow. The international community is being put to the test by prolonged deadly wars, while massive migrations change the image of societies and have an impact on the functioning of governmental institutions. A three-decade perspective also implies a generational transition, and as a result, a different understanding of past events and present concerns.

Europe must constantly reflect on its identity, hence – among other issues – the question of the concept of Central and Eastern Europe. Rigorous democratic mechanisms are needed to validate the performance of European Union institutions, which is especially vital in the context of the accession of further countries, with Ukraine leading the way. The prevailing imbalance between security and freedom generates the temptation to call democratic values into question, raising legitimate worries about media freedom and similar issues.

In this anthology, we blend these extremely relevant concerns with historical studies. On a micro scale, the legacy of the Pomeranian Kosznejderia and the dramatic decisions related to the German National List (*Deutsche Volksliste*), as well as the tough problems relating to the areas merged into Poland after World War II, highlight the issues of identity established over centuries that can be so easily destroyed or lost. The myths that shape collective identity may suffer a similar fate, as evidenced by the articles on the variously perceived (or exaggerated) myth of the leader (Stepan Bandera) and a political squandering of such a myth (Aung San Suu Kyi).

We are glad to present to you yet another special issue of „Przegląd Zachodni” (Western Review) containing articles originally published in Polish in the quarterly of the Institute for Western Affairs.

Natalia Jackowska

