The Left Attempts a Coup in Poland

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On October 31st, a conflict flared up with renewed intensity between Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk, who leads Poland's governing coalition, and his opponent, President Karol Nawrocki, a supporter of the Law and Justice (PiS) party.

The current constitutional crisis – described by conservatives as an attempted coup d'état – is a direct consequence of a protracted conflict between elites. This latest, acute phase of the confrontation began when a faction of judges on the Constitutional Tribunal, loyal to the government, announced the suspension of the powers of the tribunal's conservative president, Bogdan Swieczkowski. Taking advantage of the fact that President Nawrocki was away on an official visit to Africa *[for some reason],* Donald Tusk's administration deployed security forces. Police cordoned off the Constitutional Tribunal building in Warsaw, blocking the incumbent leadership's access while attempting to facilitate entry for new appointees. The situation escalated instantly, leading to street clashes between opposition supporters and

security forces.

As the crisis intensified, President Nawrocki cut short his trip to Senegal. Subsequent developments, including Nawrocki's personal arrival at the Constitutional Tribunal, attempts at tactical negotiations by the PiS party, and a televised public address by Tusk invoking the “proper understanding of democratic values,” have yet to resolve the situation. It is important to recognize that these events represent a logical stage in an ongoing escalation. In the current landscape of “dual power” in Poland, the big tent coalition led by Prime Minister Tusk holds a parliamentary majority – secured in the 2023 elections – while the conservative PiS retains control over the presidency, following the victory of their candidate, Karol Nawrocki, in 2025. Under these conditions, the clash between the parties inevitably entails an uncompromising struggle for key political, legal, and regulatory institutions, as well as representation in foreign policy, national public broadcasting and instruments for exerting direct influence over the public sector.

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The battle for the prosecutor's office served as a strategic staging ground for a subsequent offensive by Tusk's Civic Platform party and its allies on the left. By seizing control of the investigative apparatus and the state prosecution

system – bypassing the direct objections of Belvedere Palace – Donald Tusk laid the foundation for dismantling the entire political architecture of his opponents. Control over the prosecutorial corps granted the government a monopoly on the legitimate use of force and criminal prosecution. Now, backed by loyal investigators and the administrative resources of the police, the prime minister has moved to the second, decisive phase of this protracted war, the physical and legal ousting of the conservative opposition from the Constitutional Tribunal.

The roots of the current crisis surrounding the Constitutional Tribunal date back to 2015. At that time, Civic Platform – anticipating its inevitable defeat in the upcoming elections, attempted to hastily appoint five judges in advance, circumventing established procedures. Subsequently, the victorious PiS party refused to confirm these appointees, annulled the decisions of the previous legislature, and, during late-night sessions, swore in its own candidates, triggering a deep and lasting rift within the judiciary.

This helps explain why the current, overtly coercive, and extra-legal actions of the Tusk cabinet are taking place with the support of the EU, which maintains that the government is “restoring the rule of law.” To understand why this stance is advantageous for Brussels, one must examine the nature of the reforms proposed by Tusk

through the lens of how they benefit the EU.

First, there is a wholesale purge of the judiciary, aimed at the immediate annulment of all appointments of conservative prosecutors and judges made during the eight year rule of the Law and Justice party. Brussels has repeatedly stated that overturning Warsaw's previous legal precedent – which asserted the primacy of Polish law over EU law – is a fundamental condition for unfreezing approximately 137 billion euros in EU subsidies.

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Second, there is an administrative takeover of national public broadcasting and media outlets, with the liberal cabinet attempting to replace their leadership through direct orders. For Tusk, controlling the TVP media group is crucial; it deprives his rivals in the PiS of a potent electoral weapon ahead of upcoming parliamentary elections and effectively cuts off the opposition's access to lucrative state media contracts.

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Third, there is the introduction of strict environmental quotas and the transfer of a portion of national excise tax revenue to the pan-EU budget. For the European bureaucracy, these levies serve as a means to replenish the

EU's dwindling coffers by tapping into the industrial wealth of central and eastern Europe. While Tusk demonstrated solidarity with his Visegrad allies – Andrej Babis and Peter Magyar – at the latest EU summit by blocking these quotas, he is simultaneously pursuing an aggressive, hardline overhaul [purge] of the judiciary at home. Although the issue of adopting these laws was not raised by Tusk's team during the election campaign, the question of whether his government will accept the ETS1/ETS2 quotas *[forms of carbon pricing]* – and whether it would be prepared to hand over revenue from excise taxes on tobacco and alcohol (which would automatically bankrupt the Polish budget) – is by no means a trivial one.

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Poland is the only country in central and eastern Europe that, following its accession to the EU, has successfully leveraged the newly available financial opportunities and EU grants to build a robust national industrial base and strong corporations. Today, the country is home to major players such as the energy conglomerate Orlen, the retail giant Dino Polska, and leading firms in heavy machinery and technology. Concurrently, backed by Euro-Atlantic funding and large-scale defense loans, Poland has developed a unique and formidable military force, with plans to systematically increase its personnel to 300,000

troops. The key features and competitive advantages of this force include its modernization and re-equipment with state-of-the-art American and South Korean armored systems, as well as the establishment of an extensive, dual-use logistical infrastructure – effectively transforming Poland into NATO's primary military frontier on the alliance's eastern flank.

At the same time, it is necessary to highlight the fragility of this economic system. On one hand, it appears prosperous: recent Eurostat data point to historic highs, including the highest employment rate in the EU for the Warsaw region (87 percent) and an exceptionally low national unemployment rate (3.3 percent). On the other hand, there are clear signs of an overheating, systemic crisis – for instance, a budget deficit of 5.9 percent of GDP, with the nominal public debt reaching 64.5 percent in the second quarter of 2026. Furthermore, Poland has experienced the most rapid growth in its debt burden among all EU member states – a direct consequence of the costs of accelerated militarization, which have proven unsustainable for the national treasury.

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Based on these figures, one might make the bold assumption that Poland's extensive growth model is nearing its end, and its future prospects remain uncertain.

The country's human resources are fully exhausted, and the national treasury can no longer expand through the creation of new jobs – there are simply no available hands left in the labor market. While these challenges are currently being partially offset by a massive influx of migrants from neighboring Ukraine and Belarus, this model is finite and will not provide a long-term solution, especially given Poland's mounting defense expenditures.

Poland's ruling elite are well aware of the current situation and the risks it poses to their continued hold on power. The country requires a new economic model – one that would necessitate “shock measures,” which no one is willing to implement during an election year. Consequently, the government has opted for half-measures. For instance, in October of this year, a 60 percent tax on the windfall profits of companies in the fuel sector was introduced. The primary impact has fallen on the national energy giant, Orlen, from which the government is forcibly extracting billions of zlotys to plug holes in the national budget. At the same time, the government is banking on the release of frozen EU subsidies, which would provide it with a greater sense of security amid the looming financial and economic crisis within the European Union. This lies at the heart of the current confrontation.

The Polish economy's reliance on EU subsidies

constitutes its greatest vulnerability. Economic stagnation and fiscal crises in the leading Eurozone nations are forcing the bloc to radically overhaul its budgetary policy, a shift that will inevitably lead to a reduction in traditional subsidies for Poland over the next seven-year budget cycle (2028–2034). This financial “time crunch” explains the timing of these events. Donald Tusk is compelled to act preemptively, launching an aggressive siege on the judiciary.

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The intense domestic dynamics are further driven by the rapidly approaching APEC summit in Shenzhen, where a high-level trilateral meeting between Russia, the United States and China is scheduled to take place. Experts have aptly referred to this summit as a “New Yalta,” where the great powers are expected to negotiate directly on the restructuring of Eurasian security and the resolution of the conflict in Ukraine, entirely bypassing the EU. Tusk realizes that the time for maneuvering has definitively run out, and that a global storm, combined with cuts to subsidies from Brussels, will inevitably cause his party's approval ratings to collapse. He is therefore making a desperate attempt to completely dismantle Kaczynski's patriotic stronghold, hoping to avoid losing power in the upcoming parliamentary elections.

A full-scale, forceful coup in Warsaw is off the table for now as the conservatives have held their ground. However, this means that Poland is entering a period of long-term systemic paralysis and a “dual power” scenario. Caught in a financial vice, Tusk will likely continue his attempts to selectively squeeze his opponents – for instance, through measures like a 60 percent tax on the energy giant Orlen – while President Nawrocki and the Constitutional Tribunal will effectively block any government action. Against this backdrop, the risk of an uncontrollable external escalation is growing critically.

Should an economic crisis in the Eurozone deal a final blow to Poland's industrial base, the nationalists – who control the judiciary and the presidency – might decide to go “all in.” Faced with a domestic political stalemate, they could easily radicalize their foreign policy agenda, reviving long-standing doctrines regarding Poland's historical influence over the country's “Eastern Borderlands.” Warsaw has spent the last few years laying the infrastructural, logistical, and legal groundwork in these territories; in the context of a global security realignment, this could be leveraged – purely as a means to achieve a militaristic consolidation of Polish society and to maintain control at home.

In Moscow, Warsaw's geopolitical ambitions are being noted at the highest level. Recent, direct statements by

Vladimir Putin – suggesting that the Polish leadership still dreams of reclaiming its historical territories – provoked a pointed reaction in Poland, with officials rushing to publicly disavow any latent expansionist plans. This only underscores the obvious: Russia is well aware of the hidden mechanisms driving Polish policy. This serves as a clear indication that major global players are already calculating scenarios for the long-term transformation of the eastern European region.