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## Impact of Cross-European Socio-Cultural Influences on the Historiographical Literature of Early Modern Europe: A Comparative Study of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Absolute Monarchies

**Lopamudra Ghosh**

Bachelor of Arts (BA) in History Honours,  
Kabi Joydeb Mahavidyalaya,

Affiliated to the University of Burdwan (West Bengal, India)

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### **Abstract:**

*The objective of this research paper is to offer a fundamental historiographical discourse on the comprehensiveness of the cross-European socio-cultural influences on the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and to analyse the associated impacts on formulating the historiographical literature of early modern Europe. This research paper explores how cross-European socio-cultural influences and European identities dominated the historiographical literature of early modern Europe, how cultural assimilation within the cross-European cultural contexts shaped the conditions for the birth of a multicultural Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, as in contrast with states ruled by absolute monarchies. The research paper presents a comparative historiographical analysis by comparing the dynamics of multinationalism in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth with that of the economic, socio-cultural, and political environments in the states ruled by absolute monarchies. It also deliberates on what is presently absent in the contemporary historiographical literature of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Therein, the findings of this research constitute a significant starting point for future research on cross-European socio-cultural influences that dominated early modern historiography of Europe in general and of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in particular.*

**Keywords:** *Absolute Monarchies; Cross-European Socio-Cultural Influences; Cultural Assimilation; Dynamics of Multinationalism; Early Modern Europe; Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.*

### **Introduction:**

#### **What are Cross-European Socio-Cultural Influences?**

Cross-European socio-cultural influences are mainly defined by the subjective socio-cultural, political, economic, and legal philosophies adopted and promoted across the continent of Europe. Owing to their subjectivity, they are therefore perceived as *not* empirically European. These influences focus not only on the exclusionary nature of European national identities, but also emphasize on the inclusionary aspects of cross-European national identities. Cross-European socio-

cultural identities are often characterized by the White and the Christian heritage, and that all those who do not meet this condition are generally not considered as part of it.

In a cross-national European study of youth, Fleischmann and Phalet (2018) discovered that British, German, Dutch, Swedish, Baltic, and Belgian socio-cultural identities are comparatively less strongly endorsed by the European minority as opposed to the majority of the European youth. The study also found that Muslim youth in Europe are characterized by the lowest levels of socio-cultural cross-European identification. Thus, it can be concluded that religious ancestry is also a fundamental constituent of cross-European socio-cultural identity because European citizens who do not identify themselves with a Christian heritage are also less identified with their respective European cultural heritage than their counterparts who share Christian ancestry.

Fleischmann and Phalet (2018) also discuss cross-national differences in minority identification in Europe, which propose that some national identities such as the British, the French and the Dutch are more inclusive of Muslim socio-cultural identities than others such as the Belgian and the German. Hence, the differences in religious heritage and polarization of socio-cultural influences across Europe also play an important role in explaining these cross-European variations in socio-cultural identification.

### **Dominance of the Cross-European Socio-Cultural Influences on the Historiography of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth: A Fundamental Historiographical Discourse:**

This research has discovered the impacts of the cross-European socio-cultural influences on the early modern historiography of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. It is an evocative conclusion to cross-European cultural psychology that, for many years, the early modern historiography of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth has highlighted clear differences between individualistic, characteristic and collectivistic historical philosophies. There also coexists a clear difference between independent and interdependent factors influencing the fundamental historiographical discourse of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. In that reasoning, early modern historiography of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth would have embraced an all-inclusive approach that would fit the assumptions made by the literature on the dynamics of Europe's cross-cultural influences. However, the fundamental historiographical discourse of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, that is independent of any literature on the dynamics of Europe's cross-cultural influences, has always been culturally individualistic whereby promoting the unique dimensionality of socio-cultural growth in Poland-Lithuania from 1569 to 1795.

The unique dimensionality accounts to various reasons, the most obvious being the fact that the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was one of the largest and the most populous countries of the European continent during the 16<sup>th</sup> and the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. This was also one of the reasons why the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth attracted large-scale migration of refugees from England,

Scotland, Italy, and the Balkan peninsula. Moreover, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was characterized by economic, socio-cultural, administrative, legal, and political machineries that were later adopted by modern nation states (such as the United Kingdom) to promote high levels of ethnic diversity. A historiographical literature dominated by cross-European socio-cultural influences would provide a rather subjective description of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth's unique economic, socio-cultural, administrative, legal, and political machineries; and would also emphasize on the levels of discretion exercised by the modern nation states whilst implementing these machineries in their economic, political, cultural and legal frameworks.

I would like to start by raising the very open question of whether it is at all relevant to associate cross-European socio-cultural influences with the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth which, by itself sustained a multi-ethnic population of approximately 12 million in the year of 1618. Despite the presence of large differences between cross-cultural values of medieval Europe and that of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, they both complement each other by sharing a discrete model of European selfhood characterized by obligation to fellow countrymen and also democratic principles. Hence, the socio-cultural values gifted to Europe by the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth must play an integral role in formulating the historiography of medieval, early modern, and modern Europe.

Such an interaction between the historiography of cross-European socio-cultural influences and that of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, would also pave the way for a second renaissance in Europe as the interaction would emphasize on considering the *national self* as unique, and would also present the inimitable identities of individual nation states in a decontextualized manner i.e., with an approach that is independent of objective contextual information.

The political system of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was a distinctive fundamental system which was also the precursor to modern concepts of democracy, federalism, and judicial review. The legislature (*Sejm*) which was controlled by the nobility (*Szlachta*) was characterized by enacting strict and robust checks and balances upon absolute monarchical power. This specialization of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth must be acclaimed with a distinctive cross-European value profile that is resilient with the national selfhood of uniformly valuing legislative, executive and judicial relationships. The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth has always been strongly committed to the harmony-egalitarianism relationship, rather than the mastery-hierarchy relationship. It is this commitment to harmony and egalitarianism rather than to individualism and collectivism that distinguishes the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth from the rest of the European continent and from other cultures in the world.

Thus, it is undoubtedly true to state that cross-European socio-cultural values share certain characteristic features, but significant levels of diversity and uniqueness must be highlighted when it

comes to formulating the historiography of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth with regard to typical European economic, political, administrative, legal, and socio-cultural values associated with the mastery-hierarchy and the individualism-collectivism framework.

Although the two constituent states of the Commonwealth, viz., Poland and Lithuania were officially and practically regarded as equal, cross-European socio-cultural influences on the historiography of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth have always presented Poland as the dominant partner in the union. Lithuania was as dominant as Poland because it was only through the ethnographic, economic, political, and socio-cultural contributions of Lithuania that the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth emerged as the most politically robust Union which embraced the highest levels of ethnic diversity in the European continent. Thus, there is urgent need to rewrite the historiography of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth to explain to the world the influence of the Polish-Lithuanian identities on the establishment of early modern, modern, and post-modern political, economic, legal, administrative, geopolitical and socio-cultural institutions of democracy, egalitarianism, free open market economy, liberalism, pragmatism, pluralism, judicial review, and multinationalism.

### **Impacts of Cross-European Socio-Cultural Influences on the Historiographical Literature of Early Modern Europe: Was the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth a Special Case?**

It is against the background of the typical cross-European identities and values that disidentification of evolving nation states (such as the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth) can sometimes be regarded as non-European too. Early modern historiography of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth has a special place in the overall historiographical discourse of early modern Europe because the evolutionary elements of the early modern Polish-Lithuanian society explain the socio-cultural consequences of accumulation of wealth, and also the economic disparities of the citizenry from the two member states, Poland and Lithuania. The historiographical literature of early-modern Europe has always associated the idea of economic disparity with concepts which disidentify Europe from cross-European socio-cultural values.

Of interest from a cultural psychology perspective, undue importance to the historiography of absolute monarchies led to this disidentification, because historians interpreted political, legal, administrative, economic, psychological, and socio-cultural disparities as signs of Europe losing fundamental values which, they thought, would suppress the interest of the world in knowing about absolute monarchies. The loss of interest would eventually provide the intellectual support from the global community for the ever-growing sovereignty of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and could also trigger the re-establishment of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth for a second time.

It is not far-fetched to contemplate that disidentification of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth from Europe's absolute monarchies might have occurred when historians perceived

Europe to abandon its characteristic values of egalitarianism, rule of law, democracy, and commitment to nation states. The disidentification might have also occurred when absolute monarchies, racism, and colonialism of Europe were perceived to threaten the unique sense of European self in favour of culturally decontextualized European economic and political interests.

Cross-European socio-cultural influences significantly contribute in the formulation of the historiography of early modern Europe which, in turn, fails to recognize the profound improvements in many realms of the Polish-Lithuanian society. Among the most important include the advancement of science as a formalized practice, growth of technological frameworks, establishment of capitalist economies, and the creation of secularized civic institutions of politics, law, economy, and administration. All these began to develop in a nascent form in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth which was also the cradle of early modern Europe's new economic civilization characterized by the rise and dominance of the economic theories of mercantilism, proto-industrialization, neomercantilism, and interventionism. The dominance of cross-European socio-cultural influences on the historiography of early modern Europe has failed to recognize the grandeur of such human endeavour in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and has always associated the early modern period with the decline and eventual abandonment of economic theories such as feudalism and serfdom in nation states ruled by absolute monarchies.

Such a dominance has presented a shadowed historiography of the contributions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in scientific discoveries and circumnavigation of the Earth, and has also understated the role played by the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in establishing official European diplomatic ties with the Americas, South Asia, and the East Asia.

The early modern historiography of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth must also be rewritten to portray the subsequent rise of global systems of international economic, socio-cultural, and intellectual exchange in the Polish-Lithuanian society which played a significant role in the development of capitalism and therefore, historians can conclude that the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth has been the flagbearer of Europe's earliest phase of globalization.

Until the 1960s, historians of early modern Europe captivated their attention chiefly on the great leaders, absolute monarchies and their theologies of the 16<sup>th</sup> and the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. However, the growing interest of the world in the new social history of Europe has shifted the historiographical dynamics of early modern Europe by converging the inclusive dynamic forces of the European culture towards the social history of European nation states and not just towards their respective political and economic histories. Such an approach has largely benefited the process of formulating the early modern historiography of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

Although 17<sup>th</sup> century Europe was a witness to unusually ugly wars, elements of peaceful coexistence and diplomatic synchronicity were gifted to Europe by the Polish-Lithuanian

Commonwealth. Such elements have been disproportionately treated in a rather subjective manner because of the overarching dominance of cross-European socio-cultural influences which justify absolute monarchies, racism, hierarchy, colonialism, and Europe's expansionist policies.

Hence, the new social history of Europe especially that of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth must embrace all aspects of the Commonwealth's great intellectual, scientific, artistic, economic, political, administrative, legal, and socio-cultural achievements. Such a holistic approach would then characterize the early modern period of Europe's history as a period not marked by frivolity in the conduct of international relations, but rather as a period marked by an intensification of the states' mechanisms to control human relations in general and the relations between nation states and the citizenry in particular.

The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth sheltered more than 11 million refugees who were forced to flee Prussia and its surrounding areas during the Thirty Years' War from 1618 to 1648. This also triggered for the first time in Europe's early modern history, political, economic, diplomatic, and socio-cultural convictions to outweigh Europe's core geopolitical stereotypes.

### **Birth of the Multinational Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth: Analysis of the Impacts of Cultural Assimilation in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in Comparison with States Ruled by Absolute Monarchies:**

As noted earlier, much of the research on attitudes toward ethnic diversity in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth originated from cross-European socio-cultural contexts, it is therefore clear that multinationalism in the Commonwealth was born as a by-product of cultural assimilation within the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth during the 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Previous research on the origins of ethnic diversity and multinationalism in Europe have focused more on pluralistic ethnographical attitudes in the European countries which were once absolute monarchies. Their focus is on the attitudes of the majority ethnic groups towards multinationalism, cultural assimilation, and refugee migration in Europe brought about by refugees from South Asian, East Asian and North African countries.

Early modern historiography of Europe also unveils an abstract framework which embraced the rise of multiculturalism in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The historiographical findings are not replicated, which the authors explain by the fact that multiculturalism in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth has been largely abandoned in the centuries succeeded by the fall of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Thinking concretely about multiculturalism, early modern historiography of Europe should answer how the growth of multiculturalism in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth should be observed by the rest of the world. Such an impartial observation of the early modern historiography of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth must never evoke elements of polarization and marginalization which may lead to prejudice across both Poland and Lithuania, thus

replicating the previous historiographical findings.

This research paper makes it clear that historiographical findings related to the Commonwealth's attitudes towards ethnic diversity, multinationalism and multiculturalism, do not always need to be associated with cross-European socio-cultural contexts and core European identities because the degree of cultural diversity in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth has always depended much more on the Commonwealth's sovereign state machineries than on any other historical circumstance.

This research article would also shed light on one of the fiercest debates about acculturation in early modern Europe: the societal impact on religiosity of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Relying on previous historiographical survey data from the Eurobarometer and the European Social Survey reports, this research has discovered that the societal level of religiosity in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth contributed to the rising levels of acceptance of religious identities and theological expressions which were the intellectual and spiritual by-products of European cultural assimilation in the Polish-Lithuanian society.

The findings of this research also support the assumption that the high level of societal religiosity (which is measured as the percentage of people in the Polish-Lithuanian society who professed to believe in God) in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was a decisive and contributory factor in the religious acculturation of the entire continent of Europe.

It was the Polish-Lithuanian society which associated Europe with greater acceptance of religious identities and theological expressions. Notably, this relationship holds true only when a host of societal variables such as religious denominational traditions, the size of the minority religious groups, levels of religious diversity and religious tolerance, are proven to be accountable to one another in the Polish-Lithuanian society.

In addition to providing historiographical evidences on the links between societal levels of religiosity and acceptance of various religious identities in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, this research article also presents a comparative historiographical discourse on the degree of variations in the acceptance of religious identities and theological expressions across European societies ruled by absolute monarchies.

Secularized parts of Europe, such as France, Germany, Belgium and Denmark, were more prospective towards supporting the rising levels of acceptance of religious identities and theological expressions across the European continent, whereas countries such as Italy, Spain, England, and Portugal, where religion occupied a more objective place in the society, were marked by opposition against the rising levels of religious tolerance in Europe.

Thus, the findings of this research propose that, when it comes to religious tolerance with regard to societal influences on religiosity, cross-European socio-cultural influences failed to

establish a homogeneous group of religious societies in early modern Europe, and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was no exception to this.

As the findings of this research suggest, the variability of attitudes towards the Commonwealth's diverse expressions of religious symbols and acts may demonstrate the wide-ranging religious variability in the early modern Polish-Lithuanian society. Such a degree of variability may not always be associated with core European religious identities and may also sometimes challenge the process of how cross-European religious identities were made to fit within Eurocentric national identities of absolute monarchies.

### **Dynamics of Multinationalism in Early Modern Europe: Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth Versus Absolute Monarchies:**

High levels of ethnic diversity and relative religious tolerance were guaranteed in the Polish-Lithuanian society by the Warsaw Confederation Act of 1573. Although the degree of religious freedom varied over time, the Commonwealth's Constitution of 1791 acknowledged Roman Catholicism as the dominant religion and the freedom of religion was also granted with it. Unlike absolute monarchies, Roman Catholicism was just regarded as the dominant religion and not as the state religion of the Commonwealth. Thus, it can be subjectively concluded that the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was essentially a secular state.

The Constitution of 3 May 1791 was the first of its kind in the entire continent of Europe because of the following notable features:

- i. The Constitution eliminated the '*Liberum Veto*' which was a parliamentary device by which any member of the *Sejm* could force an immediate end to the current session. Abolition of such elements of political factionalism contributed to the growth of ethnic diversity and multinationalism in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth unlike any other nation state of Europe which was then run by absolute monarchies.
- ii. The Constitution of 3 May 1791 was the first of its kind in Europe to provide for a separation of powers among legislative, executive and judicial organs of the government. Such a cutting-edge innovation in the administrative machinery of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth attracted the intellectual citizenry and homeless refugees from all across Europe to settle in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Moreover, this administrative innovation also allowed the Commonwealth to regain its position as a key European power when it was invaded from all sides by its neighbours.
- iii. The Constitution of 3 May 1791 also implemented the democratic principle of '*Popular Sovereignty*'. Through the application of this democratic principle for the first time in Europe, political rights were substantially extended to not only be exercised by the nobility but also by the bourgeoisie. By the implementation of the democratic principle of '*Popular*



*Sovereignty*, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth ensured that the authority of its state and that of its government are created and sustained by the consent of its people, through their elected representatives, hence the people of the Commonwealth were considered as the source of all political power. Unlike any other nation state which was then ruled by absolute monarchies, the substantial extension of political rights and the implementation of the democratic principle of *'Popular Sovereignty'* attracted refugees from all across Europe and Eurasia to settle and acquire citizenship of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth during the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

- iv. The Constitution of 3 May 1791 adopted numerous political, economic, administrative and legal measures to increase the rights of the peasantry settled in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. This saved the Commonwealth from plunging into economic paralysis, and also made grounds for the Commonwealth to stabilize its internal affairs and enhance its political, military and economic might.
- v. For the first time in the history of Europe, the Constitution of 3 May 1791 adopted several measures to increase the societal levels of acceptance of different religious identities and theological expressions which were gradually becoming popular among Europeans. It also adopted policies to appease the sentiments of Roman Catholic refugees, and officially condemned apostasy from the Roman Catholic faith. During the Counter-Reformation period, the Polish-Lithuanian society was known for its nearly unparalleled levels of religious tolerance, as it peacefully sheltered coexisting Roman Catholic, Jewish, Orthodox Christian, Protestant, and Muslim (*Sufi*) communities. It can also be added that although 16<sup>th</sup> century Poland was divided several times on the pretext of religion, it was the first state in Europe that exemplified religious tolerance.

Unlike the usual trajectory towards multinationalism pursued by absolute monarchies, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth's journey to multinationalism was famous for its quasi-democratic political system which was the rarest of its kind in early modern Europe.

Historiographical evidences also suggest that the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was culturally more diverse than the Kingdom of Poland. The fact that Lithuania was a melting pot of several cultures and religions, can be justified by the empirical data that the inhabitants of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania were collectively known as *'Litvins'* regardless of their nationality, with the exception of Jews residing in Lithuania who were acclaimed as *'Litvaks'*.

Although the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was immensely multicultural throughout its existence, there are also evidences that suggest that the political, administrative, legal, economic and socio-cultural fabric of the Commonwealth failed to root out elements of polarization and marginalization during the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. During the period of the Catholic Reformation,

elements of Polonization and Counter-Reformation were somewhat effective in decreasing the cultural diversity of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. By the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Lithuanian language, culture and identity became substantially vulnerable; and the Commonwealth's name was changed to "*Commonwealth of Poland*" in the year of 1791.

Among other notable cultural achievements, it must be highlighted that the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth gave birth to the famous Christian sect of the *Polish Brethren*. The members of this sect were later known for becoming the antecedents of British and American Unitarianism.

Established in 1364, Krakow's Jagiellonian University was one of the most eminent scholarly and scientific centres in the Commonwealth. Together with the Jesuit Academy of Wilno which was established in 1579, the educational innovations in the Commonwealth gave birth to political philosophers such as Andrzej FryczModrzewski (1503-1572), Kazimierz Siemienowicz (1600-1651), Martin Kromer (1512-1589), Adam Adamandy Kochanski (1631-1700), and Stanislaw Staszic (1755-1826), who helped pave the way for the development of political synchronicity and multinationalism in the Commonwealth.

Although prevailing cross-European socio-cultural influences substantially impacted the contemporary trends of art and music in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Commonwealth's minority ethnic groups, foreigners as well as native folk cultures significantly contributed to the growth of artistic and cultural versatility in the Polish-Lithuanian society. Both foreign and domestic music composers played an active role in the growth of musical versatility in the Commonwealth.

The socio-cultural and religious influences of Poland-Lithuania coexisted and complemented each other throughout the existence of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The robust and inclusive multi-ethnic demographic system of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was the most important socio-cultural element that saved the fragile equilibrium of the Commonwealth's government from disruption as power increasingly slipped away from the central government to the nobility. When offered with episodic opportunities to succeed the throne, the *szlachta* revealed their preference for foreign candidates who, they thought, would not be able to consolidate a strong and long-lasting Polish-Lithuanian empire. This policy often provoked the succession of the Polish-Lithuanian throne to the hands of monarchs who either proved to be completely ineffective or were subjected to constant incapacitating conflicts with the aristocratic nobility.

With a few exceptions such as Stefan Batory from Transylvania (1576-86), the monarchs of foreign origin were prospective of subordinating the interests of the Commonwealth to the political interests of their own country and ruling house. This was significantly visible in the policies and initiatives of the first two elected kings from the *Swedish House of Vasa*, whose prejudiced politics triggered the Commonwealth's conflict with Sweden, which in 1655 culminated into the war known

as *Deluge*. The *Deluge* marked the end of the Commonwealth's Golden Age and is known to have initiated the Commonwealth's decline.

### **Research Gap: What is Presently Missing in the Contemporary Historiographical Literature of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth?**

The findings reported in this research paper suggest a number of areas for future research on decorticating cross-European socio-cultural influences and their implications on the social historiography of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. For example, while the historiographical literature of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth links characteristic theological expressions and nation states across borders by focusing towards better understanding of what constitutes one form of shared European culture and identity, little is known about the socio-cultural differences and political cum historical synchronicity between different regions of Europe which were equally responsible for the growth of multiculturalism and ethnic diversity in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

According to previous historiographical research on the early modern history of Europe, it seems judicious to emphasize that Northern, Eastern, Southern and Western European cultures greatly differ in their values, socio-cultural ethos, legal philosophies, belief systems, and political and economic attitudes (e.g., House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004; Schwartz & Sagiv, 1995). Yet, methodical investigations and specialized research on individual European national and regional cultures are still outstanding.

Moreover, the most appropriate and contemporary issue to investigate involves the values, socio-cultural ethos, legal philosophies, belief systems, and political and economic attitudes governing the Eastern European cultures, which have lately joined the European Union. Relatedly, it is now the right time to ask why there is a re-emergence of national isolation and protectionism in these post-communist cultures, and what role can Poland and Lithuania play in solving the re-emergence of national isolation, international refugee crisis, and protectionism.

It is also somewhat favourable to explore how the increasing expressions of nationalism in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth triggered and inspired the growth of nationalistic schools of thought in other parts of Europe, such as in Italy, France, England or Germany.

Similarly, much needs to be explored about the synergies between the Polish-Lithuanian culture and the cultures of the Balkans, which have experienced strong influences of both the Ottoman and the Habsburg empires, and still face the ramifications of a recent war.

Additionally, little is known about the psychosocial elements born in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth that determined and inspired the resurgence of widespread regional independence movements throughout Europe, from Catalonia and Corsica in the South to Scotland in the North. Another understudied issue is the perception of European identities by refugee individuals who are

multicultural by virtue of migration (e.g., Moroccan Germans) or through living in multilingual and multinational states (e.g., Scottish in the United Kingdom, or Flemish in Belgium). The perceptions of these individuals and their unique experiences of cultural juxtaposition might lend themselves to develop representational ideas about what it means to be European when viewed from a more ethnically diverse perspective (Benet-Martínez, Lee, & Leu, 2006).

Little is known about the impact of cultural juxtaposition on the origin of national disidentification across the European continent in general and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in particular. Research on cross-cultural European social psychology can provide critical insights into these questions by examining how the Polish-Lithuanian culture is multifaceted, diverse and inherently linked to Europe's demographic diversity, democratic roots and modern economic structure.

Further research should also focus on the role of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the origin of Europe's egalitarian schools of thought. Such research could also explain the Commonwealth's commitment to other nation states during a period when economic inequality was increasing across Europe with significant implications on the subjective well-being and mental health of European citizens.

Although economic inequality is an incipient research topic in European social psychology (e.g., Croizet, Goudeau, Marot, & Millet, 2017; Rodriguez-Bailon et al., 2017), very little research is conducted on this topic from a cross-cultural European perspective with a special focus on the cross-European socio-cultural influences dominating the economic historiography of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. This is quite surprising given the vibrant transformations in attitudes towards inequality across Europe (Pew Research Centre, 2014).

Further research should answer the question whether economic inequality has been perceived the same way in cultures that adhere to more meritocratic principles, such as the United Kingdom, as it has been observed in cultures in which familial social class background is more important, such as Russia, France, Germany, Poland and Lithuania.

Moreover, while primary efforts have already been made to explore the psychological processes that explain the cross-cultural links between economic inequality and life satisfaction (Cheung, 2016; Sands, 2017), further research is needed to answer how national cultural heritage of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth intersected with social and economic inequality in early modern Europe.

In conclusion, previous historiographical research on cross-cultural relations in early modern Europe (as elsewhere) has rarely implemented a cultural psychological perspective. Although the historiographical literature proposes important assumptions about what happened when members of different groups or cultures interacted, cultural psychological research is still needed to provide

important content, explanation and meaning that can describe these intergroup processes for specific cultures such as the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

Furthermore, cultural psychological research needs to blend with historiographical research to explain how mainland-Europeans (inhabiting the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth) with their emphasis on egalitarianism, democracy and solidarity perceived Anglo-Europeans who perhaps held stronger beliefs in meritocratic principles of hierarchy. Such an approach could then be useful to answer whether these socio-cultural and intellectual differences, at least in part, amplify further differences and inequality in the distribution of economic support in less advantaged countries of Europe.

### **Conclusion:**

The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth has a long history. Although the idea of a Polish-Lithuanian culture, with its distinct languages, philosophical, social and legal ideas, can be sketched back to the age of Antiquity, the idea of a unified Polish-Lithuanian economic, legal, administrative, socio-cultural and political space is a post-Second World War construct. The findings of this research can only be the starting point for future historiographical research that accompanies the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth along its journey into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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