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Russian and Polish conservatism: a biopolitical perspective

This paper addresses Polish and Russian national identity projects as they are being developed by Putin and the ruling PiS party since they came into power in 2012 and 2015 correspondingly. I understand both discourses as biopolitically and illiberally conservative due to their emphasis on traditional and religious values in relation to body-constrain policy on family planning, gender and sexual issues, migrants, workforce, etc. Such policy measures are produced by the governments' concerned about fostering life of the population through various institutions and practices to produce a disciplinary and consolidated society, aggregated into a single collective body. Seen from the biopolitical perspective, a set of these regulatory mechanisms, applied to the whole population, contains a great deal of totalizing effect, which one could realize in radicalization of far-right and nationalist forces in Poland and amplification of militarist rhetoric in Russia. In my paper I compare Russian and Polish biopolitical policies raising questions about nodal points of Poland's and Russia's collective identities and their "points of suturing" into European normative order. In particular, I address different types of contemporary Polish discourses on the national identity in 2015-2017 as exemplified by debate on memory (the case of the "Smolensk tragedy" in 2010), the refugee crisis of 2015, and gender and body issues (the anti-abortion campaign). In case of Russia I focus on recent public debates about family, (homo)sexuality, education and others.