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RAISON D'ÉTAT – RESEARCH CHALLENGES

Article is divided in two main parts. The first encompasses the research issues and challenges encountered by political scientists dealing with reason of state (*raison d'état*). These may be grouped into three classes. The first is associated with challenges in terms of definition, the second includes theoretical issues, and the third methodological questions. The second part of this article answers the question why is *raison d'état* worth researching as a category of contemporary Polish political thinking? While researching *raison d'état*, we encounter three main challenges: etymological and definitional, theoretical, and methodological. The first group of challenges is of an etymological and definitional nature. The second group of challenges is of a theoretical nature. These are associated with difficulties in the specification of the objective, subjective, spatial and time scope of the *raison d'état*. The third group of challenges includes the methodological challenges associated with the selection of the research approach. We may differentiate three main methodological approaches (normative, declarative and the realistic one). Despite numerous difficulties and challenges, the issue of *raison d'état* is a research area worth consideration. There are several reasons why this area should be studied (the attractiveness of *raison d'état* as a scientific category in political science, the usefulness and validity of studying *raison d'état* which may be corroborated by the relevance of this research category and the Polish specificity of the understanding of reason of state).

Keywords: reason of state, political thought, methodology

1. INTRODUCTORY NOTES

The concept of *raison d'état* is widely used in political journalism, official statements, and political and governmental documents. *Raison d'état* is a multidimensional concept, which results from simplified and often popular opinions regarding what *raison d'état* is, and what it is not. The *raison d'état* domain is often mistakenly identified with rationally calculated and legally protected State secrets, which involve mostly its defence, security policy, special services or economic secrets. Conceptual chaos, intuitive judgements and popular ideas seem to be the reason which discourages political scientists and analysts from deepened and systemic research into this political category.

This article is divided in two parts. The first encompasses the research issues and challenges encountered by political scientists dealing with this research category. These may be grouped into three classes. The first is associated with challenges in terms of definition, the second includes theoretical issues, and the third methodological questions. The second part of this article answers the question why is *raison d'état* worth researching as a category of contemporary Polish political thinking? *Raison d'état* – one of the basic

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notions of Polish foreign policy and Polish thinking about the State – is far from popular in Western Europe, and is even treated suspiciously or generating negative connotations.

2. RESEARCH ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

While researching *raison d'état*, we encounter three main challenges: etymological and definitional, theoretical, and methodological. The first group of challenges is of an etymological and definitional nature. This is associated with the definition of the *raison d'état*, and the main issues in this research area result from an improper understanding of the elements of *raison d'état* such as reason and State, which are archaic for many contemporaries. Undoubtedly, *raison d'état* as a whole is characterised by its complex structure².

Without any doubt, the *raison d'état* category belongs to the so-called group of essentially contested concepts. A contested concept – a term introduced by Walter B. Gallie, points to the contents of something so abstractive, ambiguous and undefined that its full meaning may be captured only by means of a concept which admits various ways of thinking, namely various notions of a given concept. Therefore, the notion is always an explanation and interpretation of the given concept³.

Raison d'état is most often defined as “the State-well-being perspective” or otherwise “State well-being” or, in accordance with G. Machiavelli “the priority of State interests over other standards”. Some researches define the concept of *raison d'état* in the category of “the permanent and superior interests of society and the nation forming a given State, without which the achievement of other goals that a given community is willing to achieve would be impossible”. In accordance with Z. J. Pietraś, “*raison d'état* is a historically changing system of the basic foreign and domestic interests of the State, which are achieved in uncompromised manner”⁴.

Ryszard Stemplowski presented an interesting exemplification of the *raison d'état* notion (as a standard for decision makers). In the opinion of Stemplowski, the notion of the *raison d'état* (particularly for EU Member States) is the “doctrinal postulate for the conducting of State policy - by the executive authority of constitutionally defined managerial competences in this area”, which reflects the identity of the sovereign and its

² D. Armitage, *Edmund Burke and reason of state*, “Journal of the History of Ideas” 61/4 (2000), p. 617–634; R. Stemplowski, *O konstytucyjnym pojęciu prowadzenia polityki*, „Przegląd Sejmowy” 2007/4, p. 237.

³ The notion of ‘reason of state’ starts circulating in Europe in the sixteenth century, at the peak of a moral and political crisis. Enshrined in the writings of Machiavelli, the notion mirrors the separation between political virtues and practices meant to solve conflicts and safeguard states. Throughout its history, the concept has changed as to adapted to a remarkable diversity of political forms. It played a fundamental role in the definition of modern sovereignty and in the constitution of nation-states. L. Catteeuw, *The Reason of State: a European heritage. National and transnational levels*, Council for European Studies, <http://councilforeuropeanstudies.org> (last viewed: 12.07.2014); W.B. Gallie, *Essentially contested concepts*, „Proceedings of the Aris-totelian Society” 1956/1, p. 167–198. Cyt za: R. Stemplowski, *Wstęp*, [w:] *Kryterium etyczne w koncepcji racji stanu*, ed. A. Krzynówek-Arndt, Kraków 2013, s. 7.

Authors of articles published in a book titled *Kryterium etyczne w koncepcji racji stanu* made a successful attempt to specify the concept of *raison d'etat* by the ethical criterion.

⁴ Z.J. Pietraś, *Racja stanu w polityce zagranicznej państwa*, [w:] *Racja stanu. Historia, teoria, współczesność*, ed. E. Olszewski, Lublin 1989, s. 42.

vital interests, based on the hierarchy of goals and measures for their achievement, including the goals non-negotiable with foreign entities (as well as the goals to be achieved in the EU); and the materialisation of constitutional principles and values, and is subject to systematic updating and is publicly justified⁵.

The constitution plays a vital role in the establishing of the national interest. It does not, however, define any specific category of overriding interests, nor does it outline their precise hierarchy. When analysing the Polish constitution in terms of the national interest, three general conclusions can be drawn, i.e. (1) the traditional category of the national interest is the most clearly manifested in the foreign policy and international relations of the State, although it also emphasises the internal-policy objectives, identifying both its weaknesses and strengths; (2) the constitution safeguards the traditional categories determining the vision of the national interest i.e. independence, sovereignty, democratic-system values, and the democratic concept of human and civil rights; (3) this fundamental Act of law identifies international cooperation as a new form of protecting the Polish national interest⁶.

The analyses of *raison d'état*, which appeared in political-science literature (Polish and foreign) allow the definition of its different interpretations. The following definitions of *raison d'état* are the most popular: (1) the reason for having a sovereign State; (2) functioning in accordance with realistic principles; (3) the necessity of using special measures; (4) ensuring the security of the State and its citizens; (5) searching for objective principles and determinants of foreign policy; (6) the justification of unethical actions of the authorities or the public; and (6) the "clash" between ethics and politics.

The cited definitions have one thing in common. First of all, they associate *raison d'état* with the State as its basic and the only carrier; secondly, they unanimously suggest that it is the question of the most important values and needs, although not defined. However, this would be impossible, mostly due to the highly individualised nature of this category and its variability in time and space⁷.

The second group of challenges is of a theoretical nature. These are associated with difficulties in the specification of the objective, subjective, spatial and time scope of the *raison d'état*. The scientists agree that the *raison d'état* includes the basic, superior, most important or universal interests of the State. Undoubtedly, the "vital" State interests include its existence, security, internal organisation and national identity, as well as stability and developmental perspectives. This notion means that *raison d'état* includes only part of the most important national interests. Kazimierz Łastawski defined *raison d'état* as the value reflecting the actual nationwide interests. Moreover, Łastawski points to the volatility of the implementation context of these interests, as well as the impact of *raison d'état* on the State strategy⁸.

A detailed specification of interests encompassed by *raison d'état* is difficult to be made for many reasons, among which methodological orientation is very important. The scientists appreciating the realistic paradigm prefer "definite" interests referring to the

⁵ R. Stemplowski, *O kryterium etycznym w koncepcji racji stanu*, [w:] *Kryterium etyczne...*, s. 15.

⁶ A. Bałaban, *Polska racja stanu w świetle Konstytucji z 2 kwietnia 1997 roku*, [w:] *Konstytucyjny ustrój państwa. Księga jubileuszowa Profesora Wiesława Skrzydły*, red. T. Bojarski, E. Gdulewicz, J. Szreniawski, Lublin 2000, s. 42.

⁷ Zob. K. Łastawski, *Racja stanu w Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej*, Warszawa 2000, *passim*.

⁸ Idem, *Polska racja stanu po wstąpieniu do Unii Europejskiej*, Warszawa 2009, s. 27–28.

State, mostly national security, territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence. On the other hand, the admirers of the liberal (idealistic) approach are willing to perceive also other values also, such as freedom, human rights, standards of living, etc. This means that we don't have one, inter-subjective definition of *raison d'état*⁹.

It is necessary to prepare a catalogue of interests and values forming *raison d'état* postulated by various currents of political thought. The fact that a particular *raison d'état* of a selected State is easier to be analysed from the historical perspective has resulted in a lack of studies treating *raison d'état* as a category of political thought.

In accordance with the findings by Ryszard Zięba, Polish literature presents differences in thinking about the time range of *raison d'état*. Some accentuate the durability and long-term nature of the interests and values represented by *raison d'état*. Some scientists assume that *raison d'état* is relatively stable, and evolves after changes in the distribution of forces in the State or evident reshuffles on the international area. The third approach accentuates the historical variability and evolution of interests forming *raison d'état*. In this context, *raison d'état* has a definite time perspective, and includes the interests important in given times¹⁰.

It should be stressed that *raison d'état* is defined by the ruling authorities. This is connected with another challenge – there is the issue of the superficial identification of *raison d'état* by the examination of the traces and testimonies of political thought. The studies should be enriched by the recognition of political practice and the actual achievement of the assumed goals of domestic and foreign policy.

The third group of challenges includes the methodological challenges associated with the selection of the research approach. The definition of *raison d'état* depends on the methodology applied by the scientists in their studies. According to Ziemowit Jacek Pietraś, we may differentiate three main methodological approaches. The first one – normative, when politicians and scientists formulate the future and desired objective scope of *raison d'état*, namely the basic interests and goals of the State. The second one – declarative, when scientists analyse the political declarations of the central authorities of the State. This is an empirical approach examining declarations, and, thereby, voiced concepts. This research attitude leads to the conclusion that *raison d'état* forms a system of the most important political justifications for actions taken or intended to be taken. The third methodological position is called the realistic one. This is represented by the scientists, who do not limit themselves to an analysis of political declarations and programmes, but make the effort to reconstruct *raison d'état* on the basis of concrete actions by the State. They conclude that *raison d'état* forms a historically changing system of the basic, foreign and domestic interests of the State pursued in uncompromised way. The last approach seems to be the most useful and ensures the full recognition of the notion of *raison d'état*. However, it should be remembered that the dynamics of

⁹ R. Zięba, *Przewartościowanie pojmowania racji stanu na przykładzie Polski*, [w:] *Polska racja stanu*, red. S. Hattłas, Warszawa 2010, s. 97. Eugeniusz Ponczek wrote about axiological determinants of reason of state. E. Ponczek, *Aksjologiczny wymiar polskiej racji stanu*, [w:] *Demokracja, liberalizm, społeczeństwo obywatelskie. Doktryna i myśl polityczna*, ed. W. Kaute, Katowice 2004, s. 406.

¹⁰ R. Zięba, *op. cit.*, s. 94.

international relations still requires the politicians to conduct continuous analysis and formation of new opinions, each time based on the changing reality¹¹.

In political studies, *raison d'état* may be analysed in two ways. 1) As the only one and valid standard or directive for the activities of the State authorities (an analysis of State documents, strategy and legal Acts reflecting *raison d'état* is necessary). 2) As a category of political thought – each political party has its own way of defining and formulating the concept of *raison d'état* (an analysis of not only testimonies of political thought but also its traces, i.e. the decisions taken by politicians who were active in the political arena or participated in governing are necessary to identify the issue to the fullest-possible extent). In the second approach, the recognition of the elements forming *raison d'état* in the political thoughts of a given party shall undoubtedly be challenging, because politicians willingly use final notions, usually taken arbitrarily, such as “*raison d'état*” or “the national interest”. At the same time, *raison d'état* is an argument in political debate – everyone who is of a different opinion is treated as a dilettante or a betrayer. Regardless of the level of political debate, the general question which should be answered by politicians is: what should we change in Polish social reality to achieve the goals recognised as strategic ones, namely securing the realisation of *raison d'état*?

The *raison d'état* policy almost always is an attempt to make the postulated values a reality. The situation is different when *raison d'état* is perceived mostly from the ideological and propagandist perspectives. In accordance with this way of thinking, in a democratic State, among other things, it is the opinions of the electorate that impact on the formulation of *raison d'état*. Therefore, the replication of opinions regarding the manner of achievement of the vital state interests is more justifiable than a normative analysis. This perspective is a source of proposals to reject the concept of *raison d'état* as the propagandist and ideological category useless in scientific analysis, and replace it with the notion of interest more useful in scientific analysis¹².

Considering all the previous findings, we should argue that political-science studies on *raison d'état* should not be limited only to the foreign policy, security and prestige of the State at the international level (the external domain). The belief that the notion of *raison d'état* corresponds only and exclusively, or even mostly, to foreign policy, is a misconception. The State means the country¹³. Other dimensions should be also considered – those relating to domestic policy, by which *raison d'état* may be achieved – the area of values, national identity, social well-being, economic solutions or even historical policy¹⁴.

¹¹ Z.J. Pietraś, *op. cit.*, s. 39–40; A. Rzegocki, *Optymizm nie zastąpi nam racji stanu*, Tezeusz.pl, <http://www.tezeusz.pl> (last viewed: 18.05.2014).

¹² R. Stemplowski, *Wstęp*, [w:] *Kryterium etyczne...*, s. 9.

¹³ Idem, *O konstytucyjnym pojęciu prowadzenia polityki...*, s. 247.

¹⁴ Zob. H. Domański, *Racja stanu a interesy narodu*, „Nauka” 2004/3, s. 7–25; W. Roszkowski, *Jaka powinna być polityka historyczna?*, [w:] *Polska racja stanu...*, s. 177; E. Ponczek, *Polityka wobec pamięci versus polityka historyczna: aspekty semantyczny, aksjologiczny i merytoryczny w narracji polskiej*, „Przegląd Politologiczny” 2013/2, s. 12–14.

3. WHY CATEGORY OF *RAISON D'ÉTAT* IS WORTH STUDYING?

Despite numerous difficulties and challenges, the issue of *raison d'état* is a research area worth consideration. There are several reasons why this area should be studied. First of all, we should agree with Ryszard Stemplowski that *raison d'état* is a very important standard, because it refers to central-government authorities as “the postulate of specific conceptualisation, namely the modelling of activities in the form of the administration of the State policy; it functions as the theoretical element of social practice”. Moreover, it particularises the hierarchy of policy goals and measures to achieve them, including the goals negotiated with foreign entities¹⁵.

Secondly, the usefulness of studying *raison d'état* may be corroborated by the relevance of this research category. Despite the dynamic development of globalisation processes and the transformation of traditional domestic policy (e.g. the phenomenon of “post-policy”), it should be stressed that the categories of *raison d'état* and the national interest still form an important determinant of political debate¹⁶. Although the processes of the globalisation and internationalisation of international life and the regionalisation of economic and political processes are having an increasing impact on the policy of individual countries, there are still national states that require the shaping of conditions for the achievement of their *raisons d'état*.

The issue of *raison d'état* is even more up to date, as some forecasts suggested by the scientists did not prove correct. Contrary to forecasts popularised in the 1990s, the 21st century will be the post-national era, and the “end of history” did not take place either. On the contrary, we are witnessing the rapid growth in importance of the issue of the State as an player in international relations, and challenging the supremacy of the State as compared to other phenomena taking place in the international relations. Despite transformations in the area of the tasks and functions of the State, the State is the most important link in international order.

The issue of sovereignty is perceived as being in the background of discussions about integration with the European Union recently held in Poland. Polish citizens are particularly sensitive about this matter – and they have historically-justified reasons. But this does not change the fact that the traditional understanding of sovereignty today – in conditions not only of membership in the EU but also of the progressive processes of globalisation – requires quite significant re-evaluations. Sovereignty understood as full independence from the external environment is losing its foundations. Its contemporary sense seems to be more accurately expressed by definitions pointing to subjectivity and abilities of States to achieve their *raisons d'état*. The European Union more often talks about collective or commonly achieved sovereignty. Yet President Charles de Gaulle used to say that international relations and alliances are not entered into to weaken sovereignty – but to actually strengthen it¹⁷.

¹⁵ R. Stemplowski, *O kryterium etycznym w koncepcji racji stanu*, [w:] *Kryterium etyczne...*, s. 15.

¹⁶ K. Kałużna, R. Rosicki, *O interesie narodowym i racji stanu – rozważania teoretyczne*, „Przegląd Polityczny” 2013/1, s. 126.

¹⁷ There are several factors that contributed to the return of pro-state thinking. Krzysztof Szczerski indicates it. Zob. K. Szczerski, *Analiza neogeopolityczna (neo-geo)*, [w:] *Podmiotowość geopolityczna: studia nad polską polityką zagraniczną*, red. K. Szczerski, Warszawa 2009, s. 16–17.

Undoubtedly, in the conditions of European integration, we are dealing with the re-valuation of *raison d'état*. However, this does not change the fact that *raison d'état* is still the principle of the primacy of the updated, vital and non-negotiable interests of the Republic of Poland. In the process of integration, it can be transformed into a principle that takes into account the co-defining by Poland and the achievement of the common objectives referring to both Poland and the whole structure of the European Union. The debate about *raison d'état* was revitalised due to the draft of the Constitutional Treaty for the EU. The establishment of the EU as a political commonwealth favours convergence and the simultaneous development of national and ethnic cultures, and therefore it is also in the interests of peripheral States, i.e. more poorly developed Member States of the EU, including Poland. The paradox is that although the notion of *raison d'état* is one of the most important issues, the contents of *raison d'état* are not the subject of a continuous decisive process conducted by the governing authorities that pursue policy, but rather a result of the permanent process of social construction and reconstruction. This paradox might be a feature of democracy. The official definition of *raison d'état*, or only particular interests, might be an instrument of pursuing policy of the Cabinet and parliamentary monitoring of its functioning, and postulates corresponding to contents of these notions – an important factor of public debate in the country and the EU¹⁸.

In the Third Republic of Poland, the idea of *raison d'état* is still vivid and seems to be current as long as the Polish State shall exist. The global economic crisis as well as the war between Russia and Georgia of 2008 strengthened the way of thinking in terms of the national interest. Questions about the basic assumptions of foreign policy were renewed, which led to a strong dispute in the public debate about Polish *raison d'état*, in particular in the context of membership of Poland in the EU¹⁹. Poland is one of the few States where in the field of contemporary political journalism, political debates and works in the area of social sciences the notion of *raison d'état* is commonly used or even abused.

Thirdly – the attractiveness of *raison d'état* as a scientific category in political sciences is confirmed by its positive connotations being a characteristic feature of the Polish contemporary meaning of *raison d'état*. As opposed to the majority of contemporary European countries, this notion is treated positively and often appears side by side with “the well-being of Poland” or “the national interest”²⁰. For centuries, this notion was nearly absent in the language of politics and political thinking. It gained popularity at the end of the 19th century, and particularly in the 20th century. The term, which in majority of countries is associated with Machiavellism, absolute power or supremacy of the interests of the State over the well-being of the citizens and with justification for the reprehensible acts of the authorities – in Poland is understood as something positive.

In many Western Europe countries, *raison d'état* brings negative associations with the assignment of excessive prerogatives to the State and its leaders, which – especially after the liberation of the political domain from religious and ethical connotations, which is occurring in contemporary times – is resulting in numerous

¹⁸ R. Stemplowski, *O konstytucyjnym pojęciu prowadzenia polityki...*, s. 252.

¹⁹ P. Musiałek, *Wstęp*, [w:] *Główne kierunki polityki zagranicznej rządu Donalda Tuska w latach 2007–2011*, ed. P. Musiałek, Kraków 2012, s. 5-6.

²⁰ A. Rzegocki, *Polska racja stanu w ostatnim dwudziestolecu (1989–2009)*, Ośrodek Myśli Politycznej, <http://omp.org.pl> (last viewed: 21.10.2014).

examples of power abuse. The basic interest of the State was the main justification for bad or even criminal acts, and belief in higher purpose, namely the well-being of State, silenced the voice of conscience strong in the “classical” tradition. Actually, the notion of *raison d'état* has been contemporarily abused so many times that it is not surprising that it evokes such negative connotations in many countries²¹.

Fourthly – there is a need to illustrate the Polish specificity of the understanding of *raison d'état*. The Polish specificity of understanding the importance of the national interest should be underlined. Here, we should pay attention to specificity of the countries located in Central and Eastern Europe, which regained sovereignty (the main category of *raison d'état*) after 1989, liberating themselves from the supremacy of the Soviet Union – in this case, the significance of the national state and its interests is more important than in Western Europe. The category of *raison d'état* was used in Poland not only by politicians – realists, what was the feature of Western Europe, where *raison d'état* is strictly connected with *Realpolitik*²².

In the case of Poland, the notion of *raison d'état* is not reserved only for a realistic review of the international reality, and the biggest Polish politicians and theorists referring to the notion of *raison d'état* very often also repeated the principles of morality or justice and thought that their importance was invaluable in international relations. Therefore, they often modified their realism with elements of an idealistic approach to international relations²³.

The idea of *raison d'état* in Poland shared the features of the traditions of Western Europe as well as specific Polish values visible in freedom ideas and reluctance to submit to strong State authorities. The Polish tradition of thinking about *raison d'état* encompasses various elements, although republican elements were dominant. With the background of the development of Western European countries, Poland avoided the model of the strong, absolutist State. Polish historical experiences and roots revealed that the Republic of Poland for ages cultivated ideas of freedom and at the same time was characterised by an aversion to strong State authorities. This is confirmed by the fact that the idea of *raison d'état* worked out in the Polish background shared a lot of elements characteristic of the tradition of Western Europe. The conditions for achievement of *raison d'état* were variable²⁴.

4. FINAL REMARKS

While researching *raison d'état*, we encounter three main challenges: etymological and definitional, theoretical, and methodological. The first group of challenges is of an etymological and definitional nature. The second group of challenges is of a theoretical nature. These are associated with difficulties in the specification of the objective, subjective, spatial and time scope of the *raison d'état*. The third group of challenges

²¹ A. Rzegocki, *Najważniejsze definicje i główne obszary znaczeniowe racji stanu*, Ośrodek Myśli Politycznej, <http://omp.org.pl> (last viewed: 22.09.2014).

²² R.H. Wagner, *War and the State. The Theory of International Politics*, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor 2007, s. 59, 100.

²³ A. Rzegocki, *Optymizm nie zastąpi nam racji stanu*, Tezeusz.pl, <http://www.tezeusz.pl>, (last viewed: 18.05.2014).

²⁴ K. Łastawski, *Polska racja stanu po wstąpieniu...*, s. 10.

includes the methodological challenges associated with the selection of the research approach. We may differentiate three main methodological approaches (normative, declarative and the realistic one).

Despite numerous difficulties and challenges, the issue of *raison d'état* is a research area worth consideration. There are several reasons why this area should be studied. Firstly – *raison d'état* is a very important standard, because it refers to central-government authorities and particularises the hierarchy of policy goals and measures to achieve them, including the goals negotiated with foreign entities. Moreover, each state in its action and activity on the international scene is guided by reason of state, expressing its main interests. Secondly, the usefulness of studying *raison d'état* may be corroborated by the relevance of this research category. Despite the dynamic development of globalisation processes, the categories of *raison d'état* and the national interest still form an important determinant of political debate. Thirdly – the attractiveness of *raison d'état* as a scientific category in political sciences is confirmed by its positive connotations being a characteristic feature of the Polish contemporary meaning of *raison d'état*. Fourthly – there is a need to illustrate the Polish specificity of the understanding of *raison d'état*. The idea of *raison d'état* in Poland shared the features of the traditions of Western Europe as well as specific Polish values visible in freedom ideas and reluctance to submit to strong State authorities.

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RACJA STANU – WYZWANIA BADAWCZE

Artykuł jest podzielony na dwie zasadnicze części. Pierwsza – odnosi się do problemów i wyzwań badawczych, które napotykają politolodzy, zajmując się racją stanu jako kategorią badawczą. Można je ująć w trzy grupy. Pierwsza jest związana z wyzwaniami natury definicyjnej, druga obejmuje problemy teoretyczne, trzecia – metodologiczne. W drugiej części artykułu zawarta jest odpowiedź na pytanie: dlaczego warto badać rację stanu jako kategorię współczesnej polskiej myśli politycznej? Wskazano na specyfikę i oryginalność pojmowania racji stanu przez polskie elity polityczne oraz jej aktualność w XXI w. W badaniach politologicznych rację stanu można traktować dwojako. Po pierwsze – jako jedyną i obowiązującą normę, dyrektywę w działaniu władz państwowych. W dokonaniu podstawowych ustaleń empirycznych przydatna będzie analiza dokumentów państwowych, strategii, aktów prawnych odzwierciedlających rację stanu danego państwa). W drugim ujęciu racji stanu – jako kategorii myśli politycznej – należy kierować się przekonaniem, że każda partia na swój sposób definiuje i formułuje własną koncepcję racji stanu. Niezbędna będzie analiza nie tylko świadectw myśli politycznej, ale też jej śladów, czyli decyzji podejmowanych przez polityków, którzy byli aktywni na arenie politycznej bądź uczestniczyli w sprawowaniu władzy. Ponadto wyzwaniem dla badacza niewątpliwie będzie rozpoznanie, które elementy składają się na rację stanu w myśli politycznej danej partii, gdyż politycy chętnie uciekają się do pojęć ostatecznych, zazwyczaj pojmowanych arbitralnie, jak „racja stanu” lub „interes narodowy”. Racja stanu jest jednocześnie argumentem w debacie politycznej – każdy, kto ma inne zdanie, jest traktowany jako „dyletant” lub „zdrajca”. Niezależnie od poziomu debaty politycznej, pytanie, na które muszą odpowiadać politycy, brzmi: co należałoby zmienić w polskiej rzeczywistości, aby zrealizować cele uznawane za strategiczne, czyli te, które gwarantują realizację racji stanu?

Słowa kluczowe: racja stanu, myśl polityczna, metodologia.

DOI:10.7862/rz.2015.hss.24

Przesłano do redakcji: listopad 2014

Przyjęto do druku: lipiec 2015