

ELECTION BRIEFING No 22 EUROPE AND THE SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2005 POLISH PARLIAMENTARY AND PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

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Key points:

- Although the elections were held on separate days the two campaigns ‘contaminated’ each other and for the most of the time the presidential overshadowed the parliamentary.
- The dominant campaign issue was probity in public life and parties competed on their ability to tackle corruption effectively.
- The traditionalist-conservative Law and Justice party and its presidential candidate Lech Kaczyński came from behind to win impressive victories by framing the election as a choice between two competing visions of a ‘social/solidaristic’ and ‘liberal’ Poland.
- Although the liberal-conservative Civic Platform and its leader Donald Tusk achieved the best results by a liberal party and presidential candidate in a post-1989 election, opinion polls had suggested they would both win.
- The elections saw record low turnouts in both the parliamentary (40.57%) and presidential (49.74% and 50.99%) elections.
- The bitter and polarised election campaigns prevented the formation of a centre-right coalition and led to a minority Law and Justice-led government dependent on the radical and agrarian parties.
- Although European issues played virtually no role in the campaign, they emerged as major issue of concern subsequently with the formation of a government led by a Eurosceptic party, and dependent for its majority on parties even hostile to the EU.

Background/Context

The communist successor Democratic Left Alliance party (SLD) won the previous September 2001 parliamentary election and, in coalition with the smaller Labour Union (UP), fell just short of an overall majority in the Sejm, the more powerful chamber of the Polish parliament. It went on to form a government led by former communist official Leszek Miller in coalition with the successor to its erstwhile

communist satellite, the Polish Peasant Party (PSL). The Democratic Left Alliance returned to office with high expectations that it would represent a significant improvement on the previous, deeply unpopular centre-right Solidarity Electoral Action (AWS) government led by the hapless Jerzy Buzek. However, the new government enjoyed virtually no post-election honeymoon and its approval ratings declined rapidly. This was due to an accumulation of problems: stubbornly high levels of unemployment which meant that, when it came, economic recovery did not filter down to ordinary Poles and produce a tangible 'feel good'; continued in-fighting within the government and between premier Miller and the Democratic Left Alliance-backed President Aleksander Kwaśniewski; and the government's incompetent handling of certain key policy areas, such as health service reform, which suggested that it was as, if not more, ineffective than its discredited predecessor. In March 2003, the Peasant Party was forced out of the coalition following its failure to back the government in a crucial parliamentary vote, leaving Miller to head up a minority administration dependent on independents and small parliamentary fractions for its Sejm majority.

However, the Democratic Left Alliance still retained an opinion poll lead because the fragmented and ineffective opposition, particularly the two main centre-right parties - the liberal-conservative Civic Platform (PO) and more traditionalist-conservative Law and Justice (PiS) party - failed to project themselves as a credible alternative. In spite of its minority status, the government was also fairly secure in office because the Polish Constitution made it difficult to remove an incumbent premier by requiring a so-called 'constructive vote of no-confidence' in favour of a named successor. It was also able to win key parliamentary votes because the Democratic Left Alliance had a disciplined and cohesive parliamentary caucus and could generally rely on the support of enough independent deputies fearful that bringing down the government would herald an early election in which they would almost certainly lose their seats.

The situation began to change following the outbreak of the so-called 'Rywin affair' which came to light at the end of 2002. This centred on allegations that individuals linked to the Democratic Left Alliance, including media mogul and film producer Lew Rywin, demanded payment from the newspaper publisher Agora in return for favourable changes to the government's media regulation law. The televised public hearings of the special parliamentary commission set up in January 2003 to investigate the allegations revealed close links between Rywin and senior media figures associated with the Democratic Left Alliance and drew in numerous government officials, including Miller himself. The Rywin affair was followed by a succession of further, high profile sleaze allegations linking government ministers and party officials with corruption and cronyism. Another parliamentary commission was set up in 2004 to investigate allegations made by a former Treasury minister that Miller had used the security services to arrest the president of PKN Orlen, Poland's largest energy company, to block a deal to supply it with Russian oil. All of this had an extremely damaging effect on the Democratic Left Alliance's already battered public standing and, at the end of 2003, the party lost its opinion poll lead to Civic Platform. The latter benefited enormously from the presence of its parliamentary caucus leader, Jan Rokita, as one of the most effective and high profile members of the Rywin commission.

Although the liberal Donald Tusk became Civic Platform's sole leader in June 2003 (the party having been previously led by a triumvirate), and eventually their presidential candidate, it was Rokita who emerged as its most high profile figure and important political strategist, spearheading efforts to re-profile the party as more socially conservative and with a stronger national-patriotic discourse. The latter was exemplified by a change of tone in the party's approach to European issues, particularly its opposition to the new voting provisions contained in the EU constitutional treaty encapsulated in Rokita's slogan 'Nice or Death'. Meanwhile, the more traditionalist-conservative Law and Justice party also consolidated its position when its honorary chairman Lech Kaczyński - the popular justice minister in the previous Solidarity-led government and twin brother of the party's founder and leader, Jarosław Kaczyński - won a stunning victory in the October 2002 election for the post of mayor of Warsaw, making him the centre-right's most obvious challenger for the presidency. The clerical-nationalist League of Polish Families (LPR) also survived the withdrawal of support from the influential fundamentalist Catholic broadcaster Radio Maryja with its popularity unscathed, while the young and extremely ambitious Roman Giertych began to emerge as the party's main spokesman, particularly following his prominent role in the parliamentary commission investigating the Orlen affair. Among the agrarian parties, the defection of nearly half of Self-Defence's (Samoobrona) parliamentary caucus had little discernible impact on its level of support, suggesting that it was the party's controversial leader Andrzej Lepper who 'defined' it for most of its voters. On the other hand, the Peasant Party saw its support slump, initially as a result of its association with the deeply unpopular Miller government and subsequently when it found it difficult to develop a distinctive profile in opposition, even placing a question mark over its future survival as a parliamentary party.

By the start of 2004, the Democratic Left Alliance was in a deep crisis as the Miller government became the most unpopular post-1989 administration with approval ratings of only 5-10%. This fear of electoral meltdown precipitated the first major split on the Polish centre-left since 1989 when, in March 2004, 33 Democratic Left Alliance and Labour Union deputies led by the Sejm speaker Marek Borowski broke away to form a new party, Polish Social Democracy (SDPL), thereby depriving the government of its *de facto* parliamentary majority. As a result, Miller agreed to stand down as premier on May 2, the day after Polish accession to the EU.

Following Miller's resignation, Kwaśniewski entrusted his one-time economic adviser Marek Belka with the task of forming a new government. Although Belka was essentially a non-party technocrat he had also served twice as Finance Minister in Democratic Left Alliance-led governments. Belka secured parliamentary approval for his government on his second attempt in June when Polish Social Democracy changed its original stance and decided to support his administration. Belka attempted to present a fresh image and assert his independence from the Democratic Left Alliance. However, his government retained virtually all of the key ministers from the previous Miller administration and, although it never plumbed its predecessor's depths of unpopularity, Belka never really develop any significant momentum.

Belka presented his new cabinet as a one-year interim government of experts and, strongly supported by Kwaśniewski, promised to bring the parliamentary election date forward from autumn to spring/summer 2005. In fact, Belka used the May 2005

dissolution debate to break formally with the Democratic Left Alliance and join a new pro-EU, pro-reform political movement called the Democrats (Demokraci). This party was formed earlier that year on the basis of the liberal Freedom Union (UW) party, in an attempt to open up to a new centre-left electorate and draw away 'centrist' voters from Civic Platform, following the latter's adoption of increasingly conservative and national-patriotic rhetoric.¹ The Democratic Left Alliance had also originally promised to support an early election but, as polls showed the party hovering dangerously close to the 5% threshold for securing parliamentary representation (8% for electoral coalitions), it changed its political calculations and voted to block the dissolution motion. Although Belka resigned anyway, Kwaśniewski, persuaded him to continue as caretaker premier for a further five months; as accepting his resignation would probably have led the election to be held during the summer holiday period. In the event, Kwaśniewski announced that the parliamentary election would take place on September 25. At the same time, Democratic Left Alliance Sejm speaker Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz set the date for the first round of the presidential election on October 9, with a second round run off to be held two weeks later on October 23 between the two leading candidates if no one secured more than 50% of the vote.

The parliamentary/presidential (spring-summer) campaign

Although the elections were held on separate days, the two campaigns ran very much in tandem and inevitably 'contaminated' each other. In spite of the fact that the president's constitutional powers were actually quite limited, for most of the time it was the presidential campaign that overshadowed the parliamentary one in terms of media coverage. This also meant that the parliamentary campaign was the most personalised and leader-dominated since 1989 and benefited parties associated with visible and popular candidates, particularly those where the party leader was standing for the presidency or the presidential candidate and party were, in effect, indistinguishable, such as: Lech Kaczyński and Law and Justice, Donald Tusk and Civic Platform, and Andrzej Lepper and Self-Defence. On the other hand, it was very damaging for parties with lacklustre presidential candidates such as Maciej Giertych of the League of Polish Families,² or where the candidate was only loosely associated with the party supporting them, such as the Henryka Bochniarz for the Democrats.

The main shifts in party support during the early part of the parliamentary campaign in the spring and summer were closely linked to major developments in the presidential campaign. Law and Justice benefited from Kaczyński's high profile presidential campaign launch, in the style of a US political convention, in the week immediately prior to Easter that effectively began the long election campaign. Not only did Kaczyński gain momentum as the first to formally declare his candidacy, but the fact that political activity was completely suspended following the death of Pope John Paul II just over a week later gave other parties and candidates little time to respond. As a result of this, Law and Justice drew level with Civic Platform in the polls and Kaczyński began to eclipse the earlier presidential front runner Professor

¹ The Freedom Union and its predecessors supplied three of Poland's first four post-communist premiers (Tadeusz Mazowiecki, Jan Krzysztof Bielecki and Hanna Suchocka) and it was Solidarity Electoral Action's junior government coalition partner but failed to secure re-election in 2001.

² Maciej Giertych was chosen specifically because he had the same name as, but would not overshadow, his more charismatic son Roman who was too young to stand for presidency this time.

Zbigniew Religa, an independent centre-right member of the Senate who was Poland's most trusted politician. In fact, like other, apparently popular, non-party candidates in previous presidential polls, Professor Religa faded rapidly when confronted with a bruising election campaign.

Then, having been virtually written off by some commentators, the Democratic Left Alliance received a huge boost at the end of June when Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz, the party's respected speaker of the Sejm, reversed his earlier decision and decided to re-join the presidential contest. Cimoszewicz's superbly choreographed re-entry was managed to give the impression that he was a figure above the party fray who had changed his mind due to a groundswell of popular support and he immediately overtook Kaczyński as the new front-runner. Although Cimoszewicz was formally a non-party candidate, his election committee included a number of prominent Democratic Left Alliance members and association with his campaign contributed to a sense that the party was engaged in a process of atonement for past mistakes. This renewal process already appeared to have begun in May when the party elected 31-year old agriculture minister Wojciech Olejniczak as its new leader. Olejniczak stamped his authority on the party quickly by removing the most unpopular members of its old guard from the candidate lists to the Sejm, most notably former premier Miller. Cimoszewicz's re-entry and emergence as front-runner also led to a slump in support for Borowski, the Social Democrats' presidential candidate and main electoral asset, helping the Democratic Left Alliance pull ahead of its rival on the centre-left with whom they had been running neck-and-neck up until then.

The beginning of August saw Civic Platform once again pulling ahead of Law and Justice in the parliamentary campaign following a surge in support for Tusk. This was largely due to Tusk's effective campaigning during the relatively quiet summer period particularly the fact that he was the only presidential candidate to travel to Belarus (in his capacity as Sejm deputy speaker) to express solidarity with the former leadership of the Polish community in that country that had been deposed and expelled from their offices by the authorities in that country. Tusk also benefited from a big slump in support for Cimoszewicz, who lost ground as the novelty of his campaign launch wore off and then became involved in a damaging controversy following his admission, when appearing before the Orlen commission in July, that he had failed to declare shares that he owned in the company. Cimoszewicz claimed that this was simply an oversight but then one of his former assistants, Anna Jarucka, said that she had been instructed by him to remove the reference to Orlen shares and then re-submit his declaration. Cimoszewicz vigorously denied this and no criminal charges were levelled against him as it emerged subsequently that the document that Jarucka produced before the commission, apparently instructing her to amend the declaration, may well have been a forgery. Nonetheless, the fall-out from the 'Jarucka affair' deprived Cimoszewicz of momentum at a critical stage in the campaign and fatally undermined his efforts to present himself as a politician of high ethical standards. His campaign never really recovered and, although he continued to enjoy around 15-20% support in the polls, he eventually withdrew from the presidential race ten days prior to the parliamentary election.

Interestingly, the effect of Cimoszewicz's withdrawal was to change the dynamics of the campaign and re-focus it onto socio-economic issues where there was a clear divide between the liberal Civic Platform and more economically interventionist Law

and Justice party. Indeed, Law and Justice ran a superb campaign during the last few days of the parliamentary election and re-framed it as a choice between the Civic Platform's vision of a 'liberal' Poland, which they argued would primarily benefit the better off, and their more egalitarian concept a 'social' or 'solidaristic' Poland, which was more in tune with most Poles' views on socio-economic issues. This was exemplified by Law and Justice's very effective TV advertisement, purporting to demonstrate the effects of Civic Platform's flagship policy to introduce a unitary 15% 'flat tax', that showed the contents of a child's bedroom, a fridge and a pharmacy disappearing.

Not surprisingly, until the last two weeks of the parliamentary election campaign, the dominant issue was probity in public life and parties competed with each on their on their ability to tackle corruption and offer 'clean government'. The Law and Justice party was founded primarily as an anti-corruption and law-and-order party, which gave it particular credibility on this issue. This was encapsulated in the party's slogan of building a 'Fourth Republic', a conservative project based on a radical critique of post-1989 Poland as corrupt and requiring far-reaching moral and political renewal.³ Similarly, as noted above, one of the main reasons why Civic Platform was able appeal beyond its core liberal electorate and increase its public support significantly was Rokita's high-profile role on the Rywin commission in which he was portrayed as an equally uncompromising scourge of corruption. However, the fact that the election inevitably focused on the liberal Tusk as the party's presidential candidate rather than the conservative Rokita as premier-designate, meant that it adopted a somewhat less radical tone on this issue during the campaign.

A core element of the appeal of the radical-populist parties, Self-Defence and League of Polish Families, was always the fact that they articulated popular disenchantment with the whole post-1989 political order that they portrayed as corrupt and out of touch with the concerns of ordinary Poles. Meanwhile, as noted above, Polish Social Democracy attempted to present itself as a 'new left' untainted by scandal, while a core theme of the Democratic Left Alliance's campaign was that the party was renewing itself and breaking with the unacceptable practices associated with the Miller government. Similarly, Cimoszewicz's initial attraction was that he was a 'clean hands' politician of the centre-left, and a major reason why his campaign faltered was because the 'Jarucka affair' destroyed this image.

Interestingly, moral-cultural issues such as Church-state relations and abortion, that had played such an emotive and significant role in Polish elections during the 1990s - and which, together with attitudes towards the communist past, provided the basis for the main axis of party competition and voter alignments in post-1989 Poland - were almost entirely absent from this campaign. For sure, the clerical-nationalist broadcaster Radio Marjya, which was very influential with Poland's sizeable 'religious right' electorate, mobilised its listeners to stop the Civic Platform by voting for the Law and Justice party and the League of Polish Families; and then, even more unambiguously, campaigned in favour of Kaczyński and against Tusk in the presidential campaign. However, although many individual clergymen may have had an instinctive sympathy towards the traditionalist-conservative-traditionalist and

³ Politicians and intellectual milieu associated with both Law and Justice and Civic Platform developed this critique and the slogan was apparently first used by sociologist Paweł Śpiewak, who was elected as a Civic Platform deputy in 2005. However, it came to be associated primarily with Law and Justice.

clerical parties, the Catholic Church hierarchy did not play an active role in the election and Polish bishops made a point of meeting with both Kaczyński and Tusk in the final stages of the presidential campaign.

Similarly, attitudes towards the communist past did not surface as a major campaign issue, although at one stage it seemed that they might. The issue of lustration (vetting individuals for their links with the communist-era security services) had certainly been a very high on the political agenda earlier in the year. When the presidential election appeared to be developing into a bi-polar contest between Cimoszewicz and Kaczyński, the ‘historic’ post-Solidarity/ex-communist divide looked like it could once again emerge as a very significant one. However, following Tusk’s surge of support at the end of July and Cimoszewicz’s slump and eventual withdrawal, the ‘historic’ divide receded into the background, given that both main parties and presidential candidates emerged from the Solidarity movement.

The parliamentary election results

As **Table 1** shows, Law and Justice’s successful framing of the election as a choice between ‘liberal’ and ‘social/solidaristic’ visions of Poland was clearly a success and the party emerged as the narrow, but clear, election winner with 26.99% of the vote and 155 seats, ahead of Civic Platform with 24.14% and 133 seats. Although bitterly disappointed by its narrow defeat, particularly given that in early September opinion polls indicated that the party was heading for an overwhelming victory, in many ways the result was also a relatively good one for Civic Platform. The party was able to increase its share of the vote substantially and, in historic terms, this was the best result by a liberal party in any post-1989 Polish election, reflecting its ability to construct a broader conservative and national-patriotic appeal that went well beyond its ‘core’ support.

Table 1: September 2005 Polish parliamentary election to the Sejm

	Votes	%	2001 (%)	Change (%)	Seats
Law and Justice	3,185,714	26.99	9.50	+17.49	155
Civic Platform	2,849,259	24.14	12.68	+11.46	133
Self-Defence	1,347,355	11.41	10.20	+1.21	56
Democratic Left Alliance	1,335,257	11.31	41.03*	-29.72	55
League of Polish Families	940,762	7.97	7.87	+0.10	34
Polish Peasant Party	821,656	6.96	8.98	-2.02	25
Polish Social Democracy	459,380	3.98	-	-	-
Democrats	289,276	2.45	3.10**	-0.65	-

Source: Polish State Electoral Commission (<http://www.pkw.gov.pl/gallery/33/40/33402.pdf>)

*In coalition with the Labour Union

**As the Freedom Union

The radical-populist parties, Self-Defence (11.41% and 56 seats) and the League of Polish Families (7.97% and 34 seats), retained broadly the level of support they achieved in 2001. In fact, both parties ran poor campaigns and these results fell well below their earlier expectations. Nonetheless, in spite of this they were still able to hold on to their relatively high levels of core support.

Although the party lost three quarters of its 2001 share, 11.31% and 55 seats was actually a relatively good result for the Democratic Left Alliance. New leader Olejniczak clearly did enough to hold on to the party's hard core ex-communist electorate while simultaneously project a message of renewal. The party also enjoyed explicit backing from Kwaśniewski who, although he was formally a non-party figure, remained by far the most popular and influential political figure on the Polish centre-left. Polish Social Democracy's campaign was almost entirely focused on promoting Borowski as its presidential candidate. This was effective when Borowski was the only serious contender on the centre-left, but support for him and his party support slumped when Cimoszewicz re-entered the race in June. Cimoszewicz's subsequent, second withdrawal in September came too late for the party to recover any ground. The 'renewed' Democratic Left Alliance had emerged as the dominant centre-left party and Social Democracy failed to secure parliamentary representation winning only 3.89% of the vote.

Although it was the party's worst result in any post-1989 election, the Peasant Party's 6.96% of the vote share and 25 seats was better than expected given that most polls suggested that it would not even cross the 5% threshold. This result was probably due to the fact that it had a strong grassroots organisational network able to mobilise the party's residual core rural-agricultural electorate. In the context of a turnout of only 40.57%, a record low for any post-1989 parliamentary election, this was enough to ensure its parliamentary survival.

The Democrats polled a very disappointing 2.45%, even failing to achieve the 3% required to secure state party funding. Their appeal to disillusioned, 'centrist' liberal Civic Platform voters came across as too dry and technocratic in a campaign dominated by the emotive issue of moral and political renewal. The party's attempt to transcend the 'historic divide' by recruiting premier Belka from the Democratic Left Alliance simply ended up associating it with a discredited and unpopular government and confusing their core supporters.

The (post-parliamentary) presidential election campaign

Prior to the election, it was generally expected that the new premier would be the leader of whichever of the two centre-right parties won the most seats in the Sejm. Consequently, following Law and Justice's election victory, Civic Platform attempted to force Jarosław Kaczyński to accept the premiership, hoping that concerns about the two highest elected state offices being occupied by twin brothers would damage Lech's presidential hopes. This forced Jarosław to resign his prime ministerial ambitions and nominate the less high profile and more consensual Law and Justice deputy Kazimierz Marckinkiewicz for the premiership instead. This manoeuvre allowed Lech Kaczyński to build on the momentum created by Law and Justice's parliamentary election success arguing that only a victory for him would allow the party to fully implement its 'Fourth Republic' project. Kaczyński also reprised the argument that his candidacy represented 'social solidarity' while the liberal economic reforms supported by Tusk only benefited those who had emerged as 'winners' from the capitalist transformation. For his part, Tusk argued that his victory was necessary in order to prevent a concentration of power. He also developed a more aggressive tone to his rhetoric and members of his Warsaw campaign team began attacking Kaczynski's record as the mayor.

In the event, as **Table 2** shows, Tusk finished ahead of Kaczyński in the first round by 36.33% to 33.1%, although this was much closer than polls had predicted. The narrowing gap between the two candidates gave Kaczynski's campaign a sense of momentum and feeling that Tusk's lead could be overturned easily. Lepper finished third scoring an impressive 15.11% share of the vote, showing that he had an even stronger personal appeal than his party among a sizeable segment of the Polish electorate. Given the lack of alternatives on the centre-left following Cimoszewicz's withdrawal, Borowski scored a respectable 10.33%; again demonstrating the size of the residual left-wing electorate. Although an increase on the parliamentary election two weeks earlier, 49.74% was the still lowest ever turnout in a post-1989 presidential election.

Table 2: October 2005 Polish Presidential election

	1st round	%	2nd round	%
Lech Kaczyński (Law and Justice)	4,947,927	33.10	8,257,468	54,04
Donald Tusk (Civic Platform)	5,429,666	36.33	7,022,319	45,96
Andrzej Lepper (Self-Defence)	2,259,094	15.11		
Marek Borowski (Social Democracy)	1,544,642	10.33		
Jaroslaw Kalinowski (Peasant Party)	269,316	1.80		
Janusz Korwin-Mikke	214,116	1.43		
Henryka Bochniarz (Demorats)	188,598	1.26		

Source: Polish State Election Commission (<http://www.pkw.gov.pl/>)

During the first week of the second round campaign Kaczyński faced a severe crisis when it emerged that one of his key strategists, Jacek Kurski, had wrongly suggested in a newspaper interview that Tusk's grandfather had volunteered to join the Wehrmacht during the Second World War. Kurski went on insinuate that this might help to account for Tusk's allegedly pro-German foreign policy sympathies. It emerged subsequently that this allegation was untrue and, although Law and Justice responded quickly by firing Kurski and expelling him from the party, the Kaczyński campaign lost momentum and polls appeared to show Tusk's lead widening.

However, during the final week of the campaign Kaczyński quickly regained the initiative by, once again, framing the election as a choice between 'liberal' and 'social/solidaristic' visions of Poland and re-iterating that he would work constructively with the new government to build a Fourth Republic. While Kaczyński had a clear message on which he focused relentlessly, Tusk abandoned his more aggressive first round tactics and ran a weak and anaemic second round campaign. In particular, Tusk never developed an effective response to Kaczyński's central charge that his programme represented a 'liberal experiment' from which only the well-off would benefit. While Kaczyński received enthusiastic backing from the Solidarity trade union and Radio Maryja, Tusk was much less active at mobilising his potentially supportive milieu. Ironically, the fact that both Kwaśniewski and former President and Solidarity legend Lech Wałęsa endorsed Tusk, simply re-inforced the notion that his candidacy represented a continuation of the post-1989 order when the electorate's appetite was clearly for radical and decisive change. Kaczyński's pledge not to re-nominate Leszek Balcerowicz, architect of Poland's post-1989 economic transformation and Poland's number one liberal bogeyman, for a further six-year term

as President of the National Bank of Poland, was clearly aimed at mobilising the Self-Defence vote. In the event, Kaczyński obtained Lepper's endorsement and more than 80% of the Self-Defence leader's first round voters supported him in the second round. By contrast, Tusk received only lukewarm support from Borowski and none from the Democratic Left Alliance. As **Table 2** shows, Kaczyński emerged as the decisive second round winner by 54.04% to 45.96% on a 50.99% turnout, a slight increase on the first round.

The (non-)impact of European issues

Poland's relations with the EU barely featured either in party programmes or their election campaigns more generally. In fact, it was originally assumed that European issues would play a more significant role because, at one stage, it appeared that the Polish referendum to ratify the EU constitutional treaty would be held together with the first round of presidential election. Supporters of the treaty proposed ratification by referendum because it was extremely unlikely to secure the two thirds parliamentary majority required, given that all of the main opposition parties were implacably opposed to the treaty; except for Civic Platform which was delaying adopting a position on the issue.⁴ Polls also indicated that Eurosceptic and anti-treaty parties were likely to increase their representation after the 2005 election, making parliamentary ratification even more difficult. On the other hand, opinion polls suggested that the Polish public was solidly in favour of the treaty. In order to surmount the problem of securing the minimum 50% turnout required to make the referendum legally binding, Kwaśniewski and most (although not all) supporters of the treaty, therefore, favoured combining the referendum and presidential election.⁵ However, the pro-treaty camp became increasingly concerned as polls taken in Poland after the strong rejections of the treaty in France and the Netherlands showed a sharp fall in the number of those supporting ratification. Consequently, following the decision of the June EU summit to, in effect, suspend ratification, Kwaśniewski postponed the proposed October referendum. The fact that Europe did not become a campaign issue came as a considerable relief to the main centre-right parties, especially Civic Platform, given that they were potentially divided on the issue and appeared to be out of step with the majority of Poles. The centre-left parties and the Democrats, on the other hand, were equally disappointed as the referendum could have focused attention on to an issue where they appeared to be in tune with public opinion; and, in the case of the Democratic Left Alliance, distract attention from questions of corruption and probity in public life.

All the main parties made some reference to European issues in their programmes and election literature, although the degree to which they did so varied considerably. At one extreme, the Law and Justice party's 144-page programme was the most

⁴ Civic Platform originally opposed the draft treaty on the grounds that the new voting provisions contained within it were much less favourable to Poland than those contained in the Nice treaty. However, the party was also broadly supportive of the European integration process and, in the event of a referendum, would have come under intense pressure to change its stance to avoid being isolated on the European centre-right. On the other hand, adopting a pro-treaty position would have involved both losing face and alienating the party from Law and Justice (which was unambiguously opposed to it) that everyone at the time assumed would be its future coalition partner.

⁵ Presidential elections were the only post-1989 polls in which more than 50% of Poles consistently turned out to vote.

comprehensive and detailed, devoting sixteen pages to foreign affairs and six specifically to EU relations. Kaczyński also made a brief reference to EU issues in his presidential election programme. One of the five sections of the Democratic Left Alliance's election programme was titled 'More Europe in Poland, more Poland in Europe', while its (separate) election manifesto mentioned EU accession as one of the previous government's key achievements. The League of Polish Families and Maciej Giertych, on the other hand, launched a campaign to oppose introduction of the euro to replace the Polish złoty and one of its national campaign leaflets devoted a third of its coverage to EU issues including: opposition to the EU constitutional treaty, criticism of Poland's allegedly poor EU accession terms; and praised the work of the party's MEPs. However, the party's anti-euro campaign never received any national media coverage and none of the ten slogans that the party put up on its website as representing its 2005 'programme' referred to European issues. The Democrats, who had high hopes that Europe would become an election issue given that they had a distinctive appeal as the most pro-EU of the opposition parties, devoted one page of its twenty-nine page programme to European issues under the slogan 'Europe is our Home'.

The Peasant Party's programme included a short section on the EU, highlighting the fact that its representatives in the previous government had helped to secure a improved deal for Polish farmers in the accession negotiations, especially former party leader and the party's presidential candidate Jarosław Kalinowski in his capacity as agriculture minister. In June, Polish Social Democracy launched its 'Wrocław Declaration' with the slogan 'Yes to the Constitution, Yes to Europe' and one of Borowski's five 'election pledges' was for a 'Strong Poland in Europe'; although the analogous five pledges made by the party did not refer to European issues.

On the other hand, in its election declaration, Self-Defence devoted only one sentence to EU issues where it criticised the Poland's EU accession terms. At the other extreme, the 'programme' section of Civic Platform's website simply contained a link to the party's 2001 election programme until the last couple of weeks of the parliamentary campaign. Eventually, stung by criticisms from Law and Justice about its lack of policies, the party then began to refer enquirers to Rokita's personal website which contained a series of short, thematic policy statements. Unfortunately, the link to the statement on 'foreign policy' never worked on the (numerous) occasions that this author visited this site, both during the election campaign and subsequently!⁶

There was also evidence of the 'Europeanisation' of party programme in the way that some parties made links to the EU in policy areas that, prior to Polish accession, might have been regarded as primarily or solely in the realm of domestic politics. Mentions of the EU were, for example, made in sections of party programmes covering: agriculture (Law and Justice, Civic Platform, the Peasant Party and the Democrats), the economy (Law and Justice, Civic Platform and the Democratic Party), regional policy (Law and Justice and the Peasant Party), education (Law and Justice), public security (Law and Justice) and transport (Civic Platform).

⁶ See: <http://www.janrokita.pl/>. Subsequent requests by the author to both the party and Rokita's office for a hard copy of the party's foreign policy programme failed to elicit any response.

European issues were a little more prominent during the four-week presidential campaign, given that foreign policy was felt to be an important part of the president's remit. Both Kaczyński and Tusk visited Brussels for photo-opportunities with EU Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso. Earlier, Tusk used the fact that Civic Platform had more widespread contacts with European centre-right parties, particularly through its membership of the European People's Party, to invite German Christian Democrat leader Angela Merkel and the French Gaullists' putative presidential candidate Nicolas Sarkozy to support his campaign. He hoped, thereby, to portray himself as part of the coming generation of European centre-right leaders. Tusk also used his European People's Party contacts to organise a meeting in the European Parliament for Andzelika Borys, the deposed leader of the Union of Poles in Belarus, which attracted considerable media coverage. For his part, Kaczyński implied that Tusk's desire for international acceptance meant that he would be insufficiently robust in defending Poland's interests abroad; arguing that he, in contrast, would never become a 'plasticine president'. He also criticised Kwasniewski for spending too much time back-slapping foreign leaders to allegedly little tangible benefit and made it plain that that he would give greater priority to domestic issues.

Conclusions/Future Prospects

The 2005 Polish presidential and parliamentary elections, therefore, saw both the Law and Justice party and its presidential candidate come from behind to win impressive victories. Although both Civic Platform and Tusk achieved the best results by a liberal party and presidential candidate in a post-1989 Polish election, they ended up disappointed as opinion polls suggested that they would both emerge victorious. The radical-populist Self-Defence and the League of Polish Families failed to make any significant advances on 2001 but held on to their share of the vote and Lepper achieved a more impressive presidential vote, allowing him to emerge as an important power broker in the second round run-off. While the Democratic Left Alliance suffered a massive slump in support compared with 2001, the party did much better than expected. Polish Social Democracy presidential candidate Borowski achieved a respectable result but his party failed to secure parliamentary representation and the Democratic Left Alliance will be the focus for centre-left opposition in the new Sejm. The Peasant Party achieved its worst result in any post-1989 parliamentary election, but defied predictions that it would not cross the 5% threshold. Interestingly, given Poland's extremely high levels of electoral volatility and party instability, the new parliament will comprise the same six major parties that dominated the previous one.

The bitter and polarised election campaign played a critical role in poisoning relations between the two main centre-right parties, particularly the fact that the presidential campaign continued for a further four weeks after the parliamentary vote. This prevented the formation of the coalition government that virtually all commentators (including this one!) had taken for granted. A Law and Justice-led minority government was formed instead. In fact, with the exception of its core areas of interest (the so-called 'power ministries' responsible for internal affairs, justice and the security services), Law and Justice allocated most of the key government posts, particularly the economics ministries, to non-party technocrats or individuals only loosely associated with the party. This was partly to re-assure foreign governments and investors who were concerned at Western media reports that Law and Justice was an economically irresponsible and nationalist-populist party.

At the time of writing, the new government appears to be fairly secure in office enjoying the support of the incoming president and an effective majority in the Senate (the less powerful second chamber). There is also the possibility that, in time, some Civic Platform deputies may be persuaded to defect to the pro-government ranks. On the other hand, with its only certain parliamentary support being the 154 Law and Justice deputies, well short of the 231 required for a Sejm majority, the new government is dependent upon the radical and agrarian parties for a parliamentary majority. Moreover, the fact that, in spite of the fact that he is the Law and Justice party's unquestioned leader and most important political strategist, Jarosław Kaczyński is not a member of the government could act as a de-stabilising influence.

Although Polish relations with the EU played virtually no role in the election campaign, possible changes to Poland's European policy trajectory emerged as a major issue of concern subsequently. This stemmed from the fact that in the past the Law and Justice party had been extremely critical of proposals to 'deepen' European integration and weaken the role of nation-states. The party's MEPs are, for example, members of the Eurosceptic 'Union for a Europe of Nations' grouping in the European Parliament. While not ruling out future Polish adoption of the euro, Law and Justice made it clear that it did not see this as a priority, while in one of his first declarations as president-elect Kaczyński pledged to make it subject to approval by a referendum. He also announced that his first foreign visits as president would be to Washington and the Vatican rather than Brussels. Anxieties about the new government's European policy were re-inforced by the fact that for its parliamentary majority it would be dependent upon parties such as Self-Defence and the League of Polish Families, which have even more critical of, indeed sometimes openly hostile to, Poland's EU membership. In order to assuage these fears premier Marcinkiewicz appointed Stefan Meller, a non-party career diplomat whose previous postings included Paris and Moscow, as his foreign minister. Finally, it is important to bear in mind that, like all the main Polish parties, Law and Justice has what it terms a 'solidaristic' vision of Europe, based on a large EU budget involving sizeable fiscal transfers from richer to poorer regions and states. This puts Law and Justice at odds with other Eurosceptic parties such as the British Conservatives and the Czech Civic Democrats whose approach to European integration is also strongly inter-governmentalist, but also much more minimalist.

This is the latest in a series of election and referendum briefings produced by the European Parties Elections and Referendums Network (EPERN). Based in the Sussex European Institute, EPERN is an international network of scholars that was originally established as the Opposing Europe Research Network (OERN) in June 2000 to chart the divisions over Europe that exist within party systems. In August 2003 it was re-launched as EPERN to reflect a widening of its objectives to consider the broader impact of the European issue on the domestic politics of EU member and candidate states. The Network retains an independent stance on the issues under consideration. For more information and copies of all our publications visit our website at <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/sei/1-4-2.html>.