



**An anti-establishment backlash that
shook up the party system?**

**The October 2015 Polish
parliamentary election**

Aleks Szczerbiak

University of Sussex

A.A.Szczerbiak@sussex.ac.uk

SEI Working Paper No 140

The **Sussex European Institute** publishes Working Papers (ISSN 1350-4649) to make research results, accounts of work-in-progress and background information available to those concerned with contemporary European issues. The Institute does not express opinions of its own; the views expressed in this publication are the responsibility of the author.

The **Sussex European Institute**, founded in Autumn 1992, is a research and graduate teaching centre of the University of Sussex, specialising in studies of contemporary Europe, particularly in the social sciences and contemporary history. The **SEI** has a developing research programme which defines Europe broadly and seeks to draw on the contributions of a range of disciplines to the understanding of contemporary Europe. The **SEI** draws on the expertise of many faculty members from the University, as well as on those of its own staff and visiting fellows. In addition, the **SEI** provides a one-year MA course in European Governance and Policy and opportunities for MPhil and PhD research degrees.

<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/sei/>

First published in June 2016

by the **Sussex European Institute**

University of Sussex, Falmer,

Brighton BN1 9QE

Tel: 01273 678578

Fax: 01273 678571

[Email: sei@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:sei@sussex.ac.uk)

© **Sussex European Institute**

Ordering Details

The price of this Working Paper is £5.00 plus postage and packing. Orders should be sent to the Sussex European Institute, University of Sussex, Falmer, Brighton BN1 9QE. Cheques should be made payable to the University of Sussex. Please add £1.00 postage per copy in Europe and £2.00 per copy elsewhere. See page 38 for a list of other working papers published by Sussex European Institute. Alternatively, **SEI** Working Papers are available from our website at: <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/sei/publications/seiworkingpapers>.

Abstract

The October 2015 Polish parliamentary election saw the stunning victory of the right-wing opposition Law and Justice party which became the first in post-communist Poland to secure an outright parliamentary majority, and equally comprehensive defeat of the incumbent centrist Civic Platform. In addition to the fact that the outgoing ruling party could no longer rely on invoking the 'politics of fear', the main factor accounting for this was widespread disillusionment with the country's ruling elite. The election also saw the broad 'post-transition' socio-demographic and ideological divide and Law and Justice-Civic Platform duopoly continuing to dominate party competition. However, there were some indications of greater party system fluidity and question marks over who would emerge as the main representative of the anti-Law and Justice side of this divide.

An anti-establishment backlash that shook up the party system?
The October 2015 Polish parliamentary election

Aleks Szczerbiak
University of Sussex
a.a.szczerbiak@sussex.ac.uk

The Polish parliamentary election held on October 25th 2015, the eighth since the emergence of multi-party politics in 1989, saw the stunning victory of the right-wing Law and Justice (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość: PiS) party, the main opposition grouping which became the first in post-communist Poland to secure an outright parliamentary majority, and equally comprehensive defeat of the centrist Civic Platform (Platforma Obywatelska: PO), the country's ruling party since 2007. The election also the emergence of two new entrants into parliament: the 'anti-system' right-wing Kukiz '15 grouping and liberal 'Modern' (Nowoczesna) party. While the agrarian Polish Peasant Party (Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe: PSL), Civic Platform's junior coalition partner, scraped over the threshold for parliamentary representation, this was also the first post-1989 election when no left-wing parties were elected to the legislature.

This paper seeks to explain the election outcome and examine what it means for the future of the Polish party system. It begins by setting out the background to the election, surveying the main developments in party politics during the 2011-15 parliament. Section two examines the election campaign before section three moves on to analyse the results. Finally, section four looks at what lessons can be drawn from the election about the long-term trajectory of Polish politics, particularly whether or not the party system is becoming more fluid and unstable following a period of apparent consolidation around the two large electoral blocs which formed the basis for what might be termed the 'post-transition' divide?

The paper argues that, in addition to the fact that Civic Platform could no longer rely on its previously highly successful strategy of mobilising passive anti-Law and Justice voters through invoking the 'politics of fear', the main factor accounting for the opposition's stunning victory was widespread disillusionment with the country's political establishment and ruling elite. The election saw the broad 'post-transition' divide and the Law and Justice-Civic Platform duopoly continuing to dominate party competition and structure the party system in terms of the ideological and cultural divisions and socio-demographic constituencies that the two sides represented. However, there were also indications that the election could herald long-term changes in the Polish party system, and question marks over who would emerge as the main representative of the anti-Law and Justice side of this divide.

Polish party development in the 2001-15 parliament

The September/October 2005 parliamentary and presidential elections¹ saw the collapse of the so-called 'post-communist divide' between the ex-communist and post-Solidarity

¹ For more on the 2005 elections, see: Radosław Markowski, 'The Polish Elections of 2005: Pure Chaos or a Restructuring of the Party System?' *West European Politics*, Vol 29 No 4, September 2006, pp814-832; Frances Millard, 'Poland's politics and the travails of transition after 2001,' *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol 58 No 7, November 2006, pp1007-1031; and Aleks Szczerbiak, "'Social Poland Defeats "Liberal Poland"?: The

electoral blocs that had dominated and appeared to provide structural order to the Polish party system during the 1990s.² This was exemplified by the slump in support for the communist successor Democratic Left Alliance (Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej: SLD), following the earlier the implosion of the right-wing Solidarity Electoral Action (Akcja Wyborcza Solidarność: AWS) electoral alliance in the 2001 parliamentary election.³ Since then, Poland appeared to show signs of increasing party system stabilisation around the duopoly comprising Civic Platform and Law and Justice; the two post-Solidarity parties which emerged victorious in 2005 and formed the basis of what might be termed the ‘post-transition divide’. This bi-polar divide not only endured but strengthened and went on to structure and dominate Polish politics over the next decade. The consolidation of the party system around it could be seen in the increasing share of the vote won by these two parties and, as discussed below, declining levels of electoral volatility. As Table 1 shows, the combined share of the vote (and seats) won by the two largest parties increased from 51.13% (and 62.6% of seats) in 2005 to 73.62% (81.52% of seats) in 2007 and remained high at 69.07% (79.13% of seats) in 2011.

Table 1: Party fragmentation in post-1989 Poland

	1991	1993	1997	2001	2005	2007	2011	2015
Number of parties elected to the Sejm	29	6	5	6	6	4	5	5
Share of votes won by two largest parties (%)	24.31	35.81	60.96	53.72	51.13	73.62	69.07	61.67
Share of seats won by two largest parties (%)	25.52	65.87	79.35	61.09	62.60	81.52	79.13	81.09

Source: Radosław Markowski and Mikołaj Cześnik, ‘Polski system partyjny: dekada zmian instytucjonalnych i ich konsekwencje,’ in Radosław Markowski, ed. *System Partyjny i Zachowanie Wyborcze: Dekada Polskich Doświadczeń*. Warsaw: ISP PAN. 2002, pp.17-47 (20); and author’s calculations.

In the October 2011 parliamentary election Civic Platform, led by prime minister Donald Tusk, became the first incumbent party since the collapse of communism in 1989 to be re-elected for a second consecutive term.⁴ However, the party was to find its second term much more problematic following a series of crises that seriously dented its carefully cultivated image as more competent, knowledgeable and professional than its political opponents. During its first term the Tusk government was often criticized for failing to undertake more decisive, but potentially unpopular, fiscal and structural measures. However, the re-elected Civic Platform administration was forced by financial markets, credit rating agencies and the

September-October 2005 Polish Parliamentary and Presidential Elections’, *Journal of Communist Studies and Transitional Politics*, Vol 23 No 2, June 2007, pp203-232.

² See: Mirosława Grabowska. *Podział postkomunistyczny: Społeczne podstawy polityki w Polsce po 1989 roku*. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar. 2004.

³ See: Aleks Szczerbiak, ‘Poland’s Unexpected Political Earthquake: The September 2001 Parliamentary Election,’ *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*. Vol 18 No 3, September 2002, pp41-76; and Frances Millard, ‘Elections in Poland 2001: electoral manipulation and party upheaval,’ *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*. Vol 36 No 1, March 2003, pp69-86.

⁴ See: Aleks Szczerbiak, ‘Poland (Mainly) Chooses Stability and Continuity: The October 2011 Polish Parliamentary Election’, *Perspectives on European Politics and Society*, Vol 14 No 4, December 2013, pp480-504.

EU to promise a more decisive long-term reform programme.⁵ In particular, the government pushed through a highly controversial reform of the pension system increasing the retirement age to 67, from the previous level of 65 for men and 60 for women, that was opposed by 80-90% of the public.⁶ This, in turn, made the Tusk administration extremely wary of pushing ahead with other radical reforms,⁷ particularly any which affected the agricultural sector, fearing that this could damage public support and create tensions with its coalition partner.

The Peasant Party was an unusually loyal governing partner and, in spite of the inevitable occasional tensions and strains, the coalition was much more cohesive and stable than any of its predecessors. The party appeared to have drawn lessons from earlier periods as a member of coalition governments during the 1990s and early 2000s when it often distanced itself from the main ruling party whenever its poll ratings declined or the government encountered difficulties. In its coalition with Civic Platform, on the other hand, the party pursued a very different strategy: while occasionally signalling its independence and disagreement with certain government policies, when it came to actual voting in parliament it invariably supported Civic Platform's plans, making a virtue of its predictability and self-consciously projecting itself as a constructive and moderating force.⁸ A change of leadership at the end of 2012 - when, promising to broaden the party's base of support beyond its rural-agricultural core, challenger Janusz Piechociński narrowly defeated incumbent Waldemar Pawlak,⁹ and then took over from him as deputy prime minister and economy minister - did not really change the dynamics between the two governing parties; other than the fact that the new leader was perceived by some to be less effective than his predecessor.¹⁰

Civic Platform was also weakened by a series of scandals involving allegations of cronyism and lack of competence, together with a growing sense of government exhaustion and drift with ministers appearing to spend too much of their time on crisis management. Moreover, with the economy sluggish and unemployment remaining high Poles became increasingly gloomy about their future prospects. The government's policy of introducing reforms by 'small steps', which critics referred to dismissively as 'the politics of warm water in the taps', had worked fairly well while the economy was performing strongly but began to come unstuck when the tempo of growth slowed. As a consequence, support for Civic Platform and the approval ratings of both the government and Mr Tusk, who was previously one of the party's most important electoral assets, slumped to their lowest levels since it took office.¹¹

At the same time, divisions and tensions within the ruling party both contributed to and were exacerbated by the sense of crisis, reaching a peak in summer 2013 when Mr Tusk was challenged for the leadership by Jarosław Gowin, a leading figure from the party's socially conservative wing. The prime minister had sacked Mr Gowin as justice minister in April 2013 after they fell out over same-sex civil partnerships and in-vitro fertilisation, although his

⁵ See: Paweł Jabłoński, 'Ratingowy dyktat dla premiera', *Uważam Rze*, 30 January-5 February 2012.

⁶ See: CBOS. *Opinie o zmianach w systemie emerytalnym*. CBOS: Warsaw. June 2012.

⁷ See: Igor Janke, 'Bardzo mała stabilizacja', *Rzeczpospolita*, 14 March 2012.

⁸ See: Janina Paradowska, 'Tańce ludowe', *Polityka*, 15-21 February 2012.

⁹ See: Krystyna Naszkowska, 'PSL zaskoczył wszystkich. Piechociński zmieni ludowców', *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 18 November 2012.

¹⁰ See: Kamila Baranowska, 'Pogubiony Janusz, przyczajony Waldek', *Do Rzeczy*, 12-18 August 2013.

¹¹ For analysis of Civic Platform's difficulties see: Mariusz Janicki, 'Lanie ciepłej wody', *Polityka*, 8-14 May 2013; Renata Grochal, 'Spektakularny zjazd Tuska. Premier, który tak zręcznie uwodził Polaków, zaczął irytować?' *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 24 May 2013; Bronisław Wildstein, 'Cy PO przetrwa wybory?' *Do Rzeczy*, 2-8 September 2013; and Eliza Olczyk, 'Wszystkie grzechy partii władzy', *Rzeczpospolita*, 23 November 2013.

leadership challenge focused primarily on economic issues claiming that Mr Tusk had abandoned the party's original free market ideals. Mr Gowin secured a significantly better than expected result (20% of the votes) and in December 2013 launched a new political grouping, Poland Together (Polska Razem: PR), which claimed to be returning to Civic Platform's economically liberal and socially conservative roots.¹² As discussed below, under Mr Tusk's leadership, Civic Platform turned from being a centre-right liberal-conservative party into an ideologically eclectic centrist grouping which some critics dubbed a values-free 'post-political party of power'.

For its part, immediately after the 2011 election Law and Justice - the main opposition grouping led by Mr Tusk's predecessor as prime minister Jarosław Kaczyński, which governed Poland between 2005-7 - found itself embroiled in a bitter struggle to retain the loyalty of its core electorate against 'Solidaristic Poland' (Solidarna Polska: SP), a breakaway grouping led by former party deputy chairman Zbigniew Ziobro.¹³ However, although Mr Ziobro was, after Mr Kaczyński himself, probably the best-known and most popular politician among right-wing voters it soon became clear that Solidaristic Poland would not emerge as a serious challenger. At the same time, the ongoing sense of government crisis opened up a window of opportunity for Law and Justice, which gauged accurately that the public was looking for more decisive political action to alleviate the poor economic situation. Having seen off the challenge on its right flank, the party capitalised on the increasing unpopularity of the Tusk administration and landed some heavy blows by simply but effectively criticising its apparent failures and focusing its core message onto 'bread and butter' socio-economic issues.¹⁴ Mr Kaczyński's party had previously made several efforts to tone down its more aggressive and confrontational rhetoric and downplay its signature issues of corruption and reform of the Polish state. The latter were part of the so-called 'Fourth Republic' project, a radical critique of post-1989 Poland as corrupt and requiring far-reaching moral and political reform, which came to be associated with the controversial 2005-7 Law and Justice governments.¹⁵

However, the party invariably ended up returning to the confrontational tone that appeared to come more naturally to Mr Kaczyński, particularly when it seemed to countenance assassination as a possible cause of the April 2010 Smoleńsk tragedy. This was a plane crash in which the then Law and Justice-backed Polish President Lech Kaczyński, Jarosław's twin brother, and 95 others were killed while on their way to commemorate the 1940 Soviet massacre of Polish officers in the Katyń forest in western Russia. While the Smoleńsk issue became an effective means for Law and Justice to build strong emotional links with and mobilise its core supporters, putting it at forefront of political debate often made the party

¹² See: Piotr Zaremba, 'Gowin - Gracz czy wisienka na torcie?' *W Sieci*, 2-8 September 2013; and Dominika Wielowiejska, 'Green-PiS Gowina, Wiplera i Kowala', *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 9 December 2013.

¹³ See: Janina Paradowska, 'Ziobryści czekają mówiąc', *Polityka*, 21-27 March 2012

¹⁴ See, for example: Mirosław Czech, 'Obietnice Kaczyńskiego', *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 28 May 2013; and Piotr Zaremba, 'New Deal Kaczyńskiego', *W Sieci*, 24 February-2 March 2014.

¹⁵ The concept was first developed by political scientist Rafał Matya in a niche conservative journal at the end of the 1990s, although it actually came to prominence in public discourse when used by the Civic Platform-linked sociologist (and future parliamentary deputy) Paweł Śpiewak. See: Rafał Matya, 'Obóz Czwartej Rzeczypospolitej', *Debata*, 1998, No 3; and Paweł Śpiewak, 'Koniec złudzeń', *Rzeczpospolita*, 23 January 2003.

appear obsessive and extreme, alienating more centrist voters and distracting potential supporters from the party's critique of the Tusk-led government's other shortcomings.¹⁶

In fact, although from mid-2013 onwards Law and Justice started to open up an opinion poll lead of around 5-10%, figures released towards the end of that year suggested that the Polish economy was re-bounding faster than expected. Moreover, the ruling party experienced a brief comeback following the escalation of the Ukrainian crisis in February 2014. Mr Tusk portrayed his government as playing a key role in determining the international response to the crisis, as a consequence of which Civic Platform finished narrowly ahead in the May 2014 European Parliament (EP) election with 32.1% to 31.8% for Law and Justice.¹⁷ However, this came to an abrupt halt in June 2014 when the ruling party was hit by its most serious political scandal following the outbreak of the so-called 'tape affair'.¹⁸ The weekly news magazine 'Wprost' published secret tape recordings of private meetings involving government ministers, including the interior and foreign ministers, and other prominent public figures such as the head of the National Bank of Poland. Although they did not appear to reveal any illegal actions, the transcripts drew popular anger at the crude language used by public figures and cynicism while discussing state matters over expensive meals in high-end Warsaw restaurants at the taxpayers' expense. Following the outbreak of the scandal, Law and Justice once again opened up an opinion poll lead of more than 10% and signed a wide-ranging co-operation agreement with Solidaristic Poland and Poland Together hoping to avoid a repeat of the EP election when the two small right-wing parties syphoned off voters and narrowly deprived Mr Kaczyński's grouping of victory.¹⁹

The political situation was once again transformed in August 2014 when Mr Tusk was elected President of the EU Council. Civic Platform was able to present this as a great success to a public which was still overwhelmingly pro-EU and proud of the appointment of Poles to any senior European posts, however symbolic. At the same time, Mr Tusk was succeeded as prime minister and acting Civic Platform leader by Ewa Kopacz, the speaker of the Sejm, the more powerful lower chamber of the Polish parliament. Although Mrs Kopacz lacked her predecessor's gravitas and charisma, Civic Platform strategists took full advantage of the fact that she was relatively unknown to most voters (in spite of holding the second most senior state office and having been health minister between 2007-11) to 're-invent' her. Mrs Kopacz claimed to offer pragmatism and practical solutions to people's everyday problems in place of ideological divisions,²⁰ while Law and Justice struggled to adjust its strategy and message given that, for a long time, it had argued that Mr Tusk personified the shortcomings and pathologies of the Civic Platform administration.²¹ The combined effects of

¹⁶ See, for example: Piotr Zaremba, 'Nikcemna ulga Polaków', *Rzeczpospolita*, 7-9 April 2012; and Cezary Michalski, 'Triumf i schyłek religii smoleńskiej', *Polityka*, 9-15 April 2014.

¹⁷ See: PKW. *Wybory do Parlamentu Europejskiego: zarządzona na dzień 25 maja 2014r.* <http://pe2014.pkw.gov.pl/pl/> (accessed 8 June 2014).

¹⁸ See: Piotr Skwieciński, 'Czy Tusk zaliże rany?' *W Sieci*, 30 June-6 July 2014; and Bronisław Wildstein, 'III RP, czyli degeneracja', *Do Rzeczy*, 14-20 July 2014.

¹⁹ See: Agata Kodzińska, 'Ziobro i Gowin na skrzydłach u Kaczyńskiego. Wiemy, co obiecał im prezes', *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 19 July 2014.

²⁰ See: Kamila Baranowska and Wojciech Wybranowski, 'Jak zrobić premiera', *Do Rzeczy*, 13-19 October 2014; and Renata Grochal, 'Zmiana warty w Platformie. Jaka będzie partia Kopacz', *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 10 November 2014.

²¹ See: Wojciech Szacki, 'Znikający cel', *Polityka*, 10-16 September 2014; and Piotr Semka, 'PiS ma zgryz', *Do Rzeczy*, 6-12 October 2014.

Mr Tusk's appointment and Mrs Kopacz's 'new opening' gave Civic Platform a popularity boost which appeared to wipe out the damage inflicted by the 'tape affair'.²²

In the November 2014 local elections Civic Platform actually won the largest number of seats and retained control of 15 out of 16 regional assemblies due largely to Law and Justice's lack of coalition potential and the unexpectedly high vote for the Peasant Party, which secured a stunning 23.7% its best ever result in a post-1989 poll.²³ However, it was Law and Justice that finished ahead in the overall share of regional vote (albeit extremely narrowly by 26.7% to 26.4%), the only local government tier where elections were fought on party lines, providing the party with its first, symbolically important victory in a nationally contested election following seven successive defeats in local, parliamentary, presidential and European polls since 2005. Moreover, the regional elections were over-shadowed by allegations that: the results were unreliable given large numbers of invalid ballot papers²⁴ and major discrepancies with exit poll findings that over-estimated Law and Justice's vote share by nearly 5% and under-estimated the Peasant Party's by almost 7%, the largest ever divergence recorded in a Polish election.²⁵

The biggest game changer, however, was the May 2015 presidential election. The Civic Platform-backed incumbent Bronisław Komorowski was extremely popular, starting the campaign with personal and job approval ratings of over 70%,²⁶ and appeared odds-on favourite to secure re-election, possibly even in the first round of voting (a second round run-off was required if no candidate secured more than 50%). A key element of the ruling party's electoral strategy was, therefore, to use Mr Komorowski's widely-anticipated resounding victory to create a wave of popular enthusiasm that would carry Civic Platform through to the autumn parliamentary election. However, Mr Komorowski saw his poll ratings slide during the course of a weak and complacent campaign that appeared to be based on the assumption that his popularity would translate automatically into electoral support and, in one of the biggest electoral upsets in post-communist Polish politics, was defeated by Law and Justice candidate Andrzej Duda by 51.6% to 48.5%.²⁷

The campaign

Mr Duda's victory and Mr Komorowski's shock defeat dealt a massive blow to Civic Platform, leaving its electoral strategy in tatters and, given the relatively short gap between the two elections, changed the dynamics of the parliamentary poll as Law and Justice pulled ahead by around 10%. Civic Platform's response involved Mrs Kopacz trying to convince

²² See: Piotr Skwieciński, 'Polityka w emocjonalnej flauście', *W Sieci*, 13-19 October 2014.

²³ See: Paweł Majewski, 'Rewolucja w polskiej polityce, ale wszystko zostaje po staremu', *Rzeczpospolita*, 23 November 2014.

²⁴ A record 17.9% of the votes cast were declared invalid; in previous regional polls the numbers ranged between 12.1%-14.4%. See: Marcin Pieńkowski, 'Polacy nie potrafią stawiać krzyżyków? Drastyczny wzrost nieważnych głosów', *Rzeczpospolita*, 23 November 2014.

²⁵ See: Aleks Szczerbiak, 'Poland's disputed local election results have raised questions about the reliability of the Polish electoral process', *LSE EUROPP blog*, 3 December 2014, <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2014/12/03/polands-disputed-local-election-results-have-raised-questions-about-the-reliability-of-the-polish-electoral-process/> (accessed 4 December 2014).

²⁶ See: CBOS. *Oceny instytucji publicznych*. CBOS: Warsaw. February 2015, p3; and CBOS. *Zaufania do polityków w lutym*. CBOS: Warsaw. February 2015, p3.

²⁷ See: PKW. *Wybory Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej 2015*. http://prezydent2015.pkw.gov.pl/325_Wyniki_Polska (accessed 1 June 2015).

voters that she was in touch with their concerns, launching a government roadshow with mobile cabinet meetings held in Poland's provincial cities.²⁸ While these appeared unconventional (sometimes even comical) they did at least give the impression of an active prime minister trying to engage with the public, and surveys suggested that Mrs Kopacz was personally quite popular with Poles admiring her determination and resilience.²⁹ Moreover, conscious of the need to avoid coming across as resting on its laurels, Civic Platform argued that it was time for ordinary Poles to benefit more directly from the country's economic success and see a visible improvement in their living standards. The centrepiece of this new approach was an apparently radical overhaul of the income tax and social security system that involved scrapping separate social security and health premiums and introducing new unified personal taxes, ranging from 10% for the poorest families to 39.5% for the wealthiest.³⁰ However, the tax reform plan was presented in a rather vague and incoherent way and lacked credibility given that many voters saw Civic Platform's record in office as being characterised by programmatic timidity.³¹

Another important element of Civic Platform's campaign strategy was trying to mobilise passive anti-Law and Justice voters by generating fear of an opposition victory. Invoking the 'politics of fear' - and portraying itself as the most effective bulwark against an allegedly confrontational and authoritarian style of politics that many voters, rightly or wrongly, associated with Law and Justice and its combative leader - had been a staple of all Civic Platform's successful election campaigns and large sections of the ruling party became used to the idea that they could win elections by simply tapping into this sentiment. This could be seen in Civic Platform's attempts to repeat its previous manoeuvre of inviting politicians from rival political groupings to join its candidate lists, with prominent political 'transfers' this time including: Ludwik Dorn, interior minister and deputy prime minister in the 2005-7 Law and Justice-led governments, and former Democratic Left Alliance leader Grzegorz Napieralski.³²

However, for various reasons Civic Platform's anti-Law and Justice message was not as effective this time around, particularly among a younger generation of voters who had no (positive or negative) memories of the 2005-7 governments. Firstly, Law and Justice made a conscious effort to 'de-toxify' its image, by giving a higher profile to less well-known, second-rank politicians likely to appeal to centrist voters; for example, making the party's emollient deputy leader Beata Szydło (who was Mr Duda's campaign manager) its prime ministerial nominee rather than Mr Kaczyński.³³ The Law and Justice leader had an extremely dedicated following among the party's core supporters but was a polarising figure and one of the country's least trusted politicians. Secondly, as part of a programme of what it termed 'good change' ('dobra zmiana'), Law and Justice set out a series of attractive (if potentially very costly) pledges to: reverse the Civic Platform government's deeply unpopular decision to increase the retirement age; introduce additional child benefits for poorer and larger families; and raise tax-free income thresholds.³⁴ In doing so, it tapped into

²⁸ See: Michał Szuldrzyński, 'Kopacz minimalizuje straty', *Rzeczpospolita*, 21 July 2015; and Barbara Fedyszak-Radziejowska, 'Platformy gra w podróbki', *W Sieci*, 31 August-6 September 2015.

²⁹ See: Renata Grochal, 'Premier się stara, a Platforma śpi', *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 30 September 2015.

³⁰ See: Renata Grochal, 'Ratunkowy plan PO', *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 14 September 2014.

³¹ See: Michał Szuldrzyński, 'Spóźniona rewolucja Platformy', *Rzeczpospolita*, 13 September 2015; and Renata Grochal, 'Platforma chce skierować kampanie w stronę gospodarki', *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 14 September 2014.

³² See: Renata Grochal, 'Wylinięły listy to za mało, by pokonać PiS', *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 4 September 2015.

³³ See: Kamila Baranowska, 'Fenomenon Szydło', *Do Rzeczy*, 12-18 October 2015.

³⁴ See: Ania Dąbrowska, 'Prezes listy pisze', *Polityka*, 2-9 September 2015.

the fact that many Poles living beyond the large urban centres, especially younger voters, were frustrated not to have seen a more substantial increase in their living standards in recent years, even as the country's economy grew;³⁵ paradoxically, at a time when most Poles appeared optimistic about their personal economic prospects.³⁶ Thirdly, Civic Platform undermined its anti-Law and Justice message by recruiting a number of prominent individuals who were closely associated with the 'Fourth Republic' project (such as Mr Dorn) to stand on to its candidate lists.³⁷

Civic Platform also found itself on the defensive because of widespread disillusionment with the country's political establishment and a strong prevailing mood that it was time for change.³⁸ For example, a June 2015 CBOS survey found that 72% of respondents were dissatisfied with Poland's political system compared with 23% who were satisfied (and only 1% very satisfied).³⁹ A key element of this was scepticism towards the outgoing government's triumphalist rhetoric about its apparent achievements and the broader success of post-communist transition. This was particularly the case with younger voters, many of whom were increasingly disillusioned by what they saw as an invidious choice between: moving abroad to take jobs that fell well short of their abilities, or remaining in a country which offered them few prospects for the future.⁴⁰ This anti-establishment feeling was one of the leitmotifs of the election campaign and much of it was directed towards Civic Platform, whom many voters saw as representing an out-of-touch and complacent elite disconnected from the concerns of ordinary people and tainted by scandals.⁴¹ Civic Platform was lulled into a false sense of security following Mr Tusk's unexpected election as EU Council President which, together with Mrs Kopacz's appointment, appeared to wipe out the damage inflicted by the 'tape affair'. However, it came back to haunt the party during the election campaign when controversial businessman and anti-establishment activist Zbigniew Stonoga published thousands of pages of classified documents from the ongoing public prosecutor's investigation into the scandal. This forced Mrs Kopacz to engage in an extraordinary political purge forcing the resignations of the treasury, health and sports ministers together with three deputy ministers and other senior officials including the speaker of the Sejm, her chief policy adviser, and the co-ordinator of the state security services;⁴² but which many, increasingly cynical, voters dismissed as panicky and inauthentic.

Another key element of Law and Justice's strategy was to capitalise on Mr Duda's high public profile.⁴³ Although he was careful not to support Law and Justice overtly, the new President used the various political and constitutional instruments at his disposal to advance the party's policy agenda. In August, in his first major initiative as President Mr Duda proposed holding a referendum on the same day as the parliamentary election on the

³⁵ See: Piotr Gursztyn, 'Polska dwóch prędkości', *Do Rzeczy*, 7-13 September 2015.

³⁶ See: Radosław Markowski and Michał Kornatowski, 'Rewolucja mniejszości', *Polityka*, 3-9 February 2016.

³⁷ See: Michał Szuldrzyński, 'Mało wiarygodne straszenie PiS-em', *Rzeczpospolita*, 28 September 2015.

³⁸ See: Jerzy Baczyński and Mariusz Janicki, 'Polska dla wkurzonych', *Polityka*, 17-23 June 2015.

³⁹ See: CBOS. *Postulaty dotyczące zmian systemowych w Polsce*. CBOS: Warsaw. July 2005, pp1-2.

⁴⁰ See, for example: Rafał Ziemkiewicz, 'Konserwatywny bunt', *Do Rzeczy*, 9-15 June 2014; Piotr Skwiczynski, 'I korek wystrzelił', *W Sieci*, 18-24 May 2015; Andrzej Rychard, 'Dlatego przegrał Komorowski', *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 29 May 2015; and Adam Leszczyński, 'Młoda Polska prawicowa', *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 14 November 2015. Cf: Mariusz Janicki, 'Między buntem a obiadem', *Polityka*, 22-28 July 2015.

⁴¹ See: Janusz Majcherek, 'Po wyborach. Zmiana, wymiana, odmiana', *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 29 October 2015.

⁴² See: Andrzej Stankiewicz, 'Premier zrzuca balast', *Rzeczpospolita*, 10 June 2015.

⁴³ See: Paweł Wroński, 'Czy prezydent wygra PiS wybory?' *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 23 September 2015.

government's unpopular decision to raise the retirement age.⁴⁴ When the Civic Platform-dominated Senate - Poland's second chamber, whose approval was required for referendum initiatives - voted down Mr Duda's proposal he used his right to initiate legislation to submit a draft law returning the retirement age to its previous levels.⁴⁵ Civic Platform knew that it could not mount a full frontal assault on a newly elected head of state with a large popular mandate but sensed the danger that he represented to the party's electoral prospects and tried to undermine Mr Duda as a 'partisan President'. In fact, Mr Duda did not enjoy especially high popularity ratings compared with other Presidents at the beginning of their terms of office;⁴⁶ perhaps not surprisingly, having been plunged into an election campaign he was bound to be perceived as partisan by many Civic Platform supporters. Nonetheless, most Poles appeared willing to give Mr Duda the benefit of the doubt and, as Poland's most trusted politician,⁴⁷ he was still a valuable electoral asset for Law and Justice.

Following the Peasant Party's disastrous presidential campaign, when its deputy leader Adam Jarubas finished sixth with only 1.6% of the vote, Civic Platform's junior coalition partner also struggled in the parliamentary election with a low national media profile and bad publicity surrounding a corruption scandal linked to its parliamentary caucus leader Jan Bury.⁴⁸ Meanwhile, driven by fear that none of them would cross the 5% threshold for securing parliamentary representation, Poland's main left-wing parties contested the election as part of the 'United Left' (Zjednoczona Lewica: ZL), formed as a marriage of convenience of its two main components: the Democratic Left Alliance and liberal-left 'Your Movement' (Twój Ruch: TR), joined by a number of smaller left-wing groupings.⁴⁹ The once-powerful Alliance governed Poland from 1993-97 and 2001-5 but was in the doldrums since its support collapsed in the 2005 election⁵⁰ and in 2011 suffered its worst ever parliamentary election defeat slumping to fifth place with only 8.24% of the vote. A series of disappointing mid-term election results culminated in a disastrous showing in the presidential poll when the Alliance's candidate Magdalena Ogórek finished fifth with a humiliating 2.4%. 'Your Movement' emerged from the anti-clerical liberal Palikot Movement (Ruch Palikota: RP) which was formed in 2010 by Janusz Palikot, a controversial and flamboyant businessman and one-time Civic Platform parliamentarian, and came from nowhere to finish third in the 2011 election with 10.02% of the vote. However, Mr Palikot's party failed to capitalise on its success and Poles grew tired of his erratic behaviour and political zig-zags. Attempting to reinvent his party, by toning down the strong anti-clericalism and social liberalism on which his earlier electoral success was based while placing greater emphasis on free-market economics,

⁴⁴ Together with two other issues on which millions of Poles had signed petitions calling for referendums but which had been ignored by the government: lowering the compulsory school starting age from 7 to 6 and restricting the sale of state-owned forest land. See: Mariusz Janicki, 'Referendum dwa, czyli polityczne trzy po trzy', *Polityka*, 26 August-1 September 2015; and Jan Rokita, 'Dwa referenda', *W Sieci*, 31 August-6 September 2015.

⁴⁵ See: Dominika Wielowiejska, 'Duda nieczysto gra emerytami', *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 22 September 2015.

⁴⁶ See: Piotr Sokołowski, 'CBOS: 39 proc. dobrze ocenia prezydenta Duda', 30 September 2015, <http://www.rp.pl/Kraj/309309865-CBOS-39-proc-dobrze-ocenia-prezydenta-Duda.html> (accessed 1 October 2015).

⁴⁷ See: CBOS. *Zaufanie do polityków miesiąc przed wyborami parlamentarnymi*. CBOS: Warsaw. October 2015.

⁴⁸ See: Katarzyna Naszkowska, 'Najtrudniejsze wybory ludowców od 1989r. PSL bez pomysłu', *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 11 September 2015; and Marcin Pieńkowski, 'U ludowców marazm i zastój', *Rzeczpospolita*, 6 October 2015.

⁴⁹ See: Marcin Pieńkowski, 'SLD do wybory pójdzie razem z Palikotem', *Rzeczpospolita*, 18 July 2015; and Renata Grochal, 'Zjednoczona lewica, ale bez programu', *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 21 July 2015.

⁵⁰ See: Krzysztof Jasiewicz, 'The (not always sweet) uses of opportunism: Post-communist political parties in Poland', *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, Vol 41 No 4, December 2008, pp421-442.

failed to turn Mr Palikot's fortunes around and he finished seventh in the presidential election with a derisory 1.4%.⁵¹

These catastrophic results convinced many of the two left-wing parties' younger leaders that their only hope was to contest the parliamentary election on a united ticket. The United Left's election campaign was moderately successful in containing programmatic and personal divisions between Democratic Left Alliance leader Leszek Miller and Mr Palikot, who were known for their strong personal antipathy, as it pushed younger activists to the fore. These included Your Movement's media-friendly joint leader Barbara Nowacka who emerged as the coalition's main spokesman. However, Ms Nowacka failed to live up to her initial promise and, in a televised leaders' debate in the week running up to polling day, was overshadowed by Adrian Zandberg, a charismatic leader of the new radical left 'Together' (Razem) party,⁵² which was formed in May and refused to join the electoral alliance arguing that the parties comprising it had discredited the Polish left.⁵³

One event that many expected to play a significant role in the campaign but failed to do so was the September referendum on replacing the country's current list-based proportional electoral system with UK-style single-member constituencies (known by the Polish acronym 'JOW': jednomandatowe okręgi wyborcze). Mr Komorowski called the referendum in May as a panic move in the run up to the presidential election second round run-off to win over supporters of the charismatic rock star and social activist Paweł Kukiz. Running as an independent right-wing 'anti-system' candidate, Mr Kukiz - for whom electoral reform, which he saw as the key to renewing Polish politics, was a signature issue and main focus of his earlier social activism - came from nowhere to finish a surprise third and pick up more than one-fifth of the first round votes.⁵⁴ Opinion polls conducted immediately after the presidential election showed Mr Kukiz to be Poland's most trusted politician and his (then as-yet-unnamed) grouping running in second place, behind Law and Justice but ahead of Civic Platform. However, he squandered this political capital as his grouping, which adopted the name 'Kukiz '15', descended into a series of bitter rows and splits causing its electoral support to plummet.⁵⁵ These blunders overshadowed attempts to mobilise for the referendum which was expected to provide Mr Kukiz with a major boost but ended in fiasco with a derisory 7.8% turnout.⁵⁶ Instead, helped by Mr Duda, Law and Justice re-focused debate onto the government's pension reforms by, as noted above, proposing an additional referendum to be held on election day.

Although the election campaign was dominated by domestic issues it also coincided with the summer build-up of the European migration crisis which emerged as an important question dividing Poland's parties. The issue was a problematic one for the Civic Platform-led government given Poles were keen to avoid the kind of cultural and security problems that many of them felt West European countries experienced through admitting large numbers of

⁵¹ See: Marcin Pieńkowski, 'Sieroty po Palikocie muszą ułożyć sobie życie no nowo', *Rzeczpospolita*, 22 September 2015.

⁵² See: Paweł Wroński, 'Efekt Zandberga', *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 21 October 2015.

⁵³ For more on 'Together', see: Anna Dąbrowska, 'Razem, ale osobno', *Polityka*, 24-30 June 2015. For a good analysis of the weakness of the United Left's election campaign, see: Rafał Ziemkiewicz, 'Bez liderów, bez programu - bez sensu', *Do Rzeczy*, 12-18 October 2015.

⁵⁴ See: Marek Cichoński, 'Paweł Kukiz czyli rokosz w XXI wieku', *Rzeczpospolita*, 23 June 2015.

⁵⁵ See: Wojciech Wybranowski, 'Kukiz spada ze sceny', *Do Rzeczy*, 31 August-6 September 2015; and Piotr Gursztyn, 'Muzyczna przystawka', *Do Rzeczy*, 14-20 September 2015.

⁵⁶ See: Wojciech Szacki, 'Koncertowa wtopa', *Polityka*, 9-15 September 2015.

Muslim migrants, who were seen as difficult to assimilate and embedding violent extremists within their communities. For example, a February 2015 CBOS survey found 44% of Poles negatively inclined towards Muslims (the largest proportion of any religious group) and only 23% positive (33% were indifferent).⁵⁷ On the other hand, the Kopacz government came under growing pressure - both domestically from the liberal-left media and cultural establishment, and internationally from Brussels and other EU member states - to participate in a Europe-wide burden sharing plan and, as a consequence, eventually agreed to accept 7,000 migrants over two years as part of the relocation scheme agreed at the September European Council meeting.⁵⁸ Law and Justice argued that this figure was unrealistic because family members would be able to join initial arrivals and that it was naïve to believe that it would not be used as a precedent to force Poland to take in additional migrants in the future. Civic Platform, in turn, argued that it was Poland's duty to take in people fleeing for their lives and argued that the opposition was promoting xenophobia and could lead to the country being isolated within the EU. Law and Justice responded by warning that, by accepting large number of migrants who did not respect Polish laws and customs, there was a serious danger of Poland making the same mistakes as many West European countries and that the EU should concentrate on providing aid to refugee camps in the region.⁵⁹

In fact, the party that focused most on the migration issue was the right-wing Coalition for the Renewal of the Republic Freedom and Hope (Koalicja Odnowy Rzeczypospolitej Wolność i Nadzieja: KORWiN). This was the latest project of Janusz Korwin-Mikke, a veteran eccentric who had contested every national election since 1989 and was notorious for having articulated some of the most controversial views in Polish politics. Mr Korwin-Mikke finally achieved success when he was elected to the EP in May 2014 as leader of the Congress of the New Right (Kongres Nowej Prawicy: KNP) party, which came from nowhere to finish fourth with 7.2% of the votes.⁶⁰ In January 2015 Mr Korwin-Mikke left the Congress to form his own party⁶¹ but finished fourth in the May presidential poll securing a disappointing 3.26%. Although the core of Mr Kowin-Mikke's political ideology had always been radical economic liberalism, social conservatism and Euroscepticism, in this election his party's main campaign theme was opposition to the 'Islamisation' of Poland.⁶²

Results

As Table 2 shows, the election saw a stunning victory for Law and Justice which increased its share of the vote by 7.69% compared with 2011 from 29.89% to 37.58%, winning 235 seats in the 460-member Sejm, making it the first political grouping in post-communist Poland to secure an outright parliamentary majority. At the same time, Civic Platform suffered a crushing defeat and - although its vote share did not fall below the psychologically important 20% mark, and it finished well ahead of the other groupings - the party saw its vote share fall by 15.09% from 39.18% in 2011 to only 24.09% and number of seats decline from 207 to 138.

⁵⁷ See: CBOS. *Postawy wobec Islamu i muzułmanów*. CBOS: Warsaw. March 2015, pp3-4. See also: Joanna Klimowicz, 'Polacy boją się muzułmanów. Najbardziejziej najmłodszy', *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 22 September 2015.

⁵⁸ See: Anna Słojewska, 'Polska "za". Przymiemy ok. 7 tys. Uchodźców', *Rzeczpospolita*, 22 September 2015.

⁵⁹ See: Łukasz Warzecha, 'Imigranci i Polskie wybory', *W Sieci*, 28 September-4 October 2015.

⁶⁰ See: Grzegorz Rzeczkowski, 'Korwinada', *Polityka*, 28 May-3 June 2014; and Piotr Skwieciński, 'Korwin, czyli problem PiS', *W Sieci*, 2-8 June 2014.

⁶¹ See; Paweł Majewski, 'KORWiN od zera', *Rzeczpospolita*, 23 January 2015.

⁶² See: Michalina Mikulska, '"Nie" dla imigrantów w spocie partii KORWIN', *Rzeczpospolita*, 30 September 2015.

Table 2: October 2015 Polish parliamentary election results to the Sejm

	2011		2015		% Change
	%	Seats	%	Seats	
Law and Justice (PiS)	29.89	157	37.58	235	+7.6
Civic Platform (PO)	39.18	207	24.09	138	-15.09
Kukiz '15			8.81	42	+8.81
Modern (Nowoczesna)			7.60	29	+7.60
United Left (ZL)*	19.11	67	7.55		-11.56
Polish Peasant Party (PSL)	8.36	28	5.13	16	-3.23
Coalition for the Renewal of the Republic Freedom and Hope (KORWiN)			4.76		+4.76
Together (Razem)			3.62		+3.62

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

*Comprising the Democratic Left Alliance, Your Movement, the Polish Socialist Party (Polska Partia Socjalistyczna: PPS), Labour Union (Unia Pracy: UP), Greens (Zieloni) and Polish Labour Party (Polska Partia Pracy: PPP). The 2011 figures are the combined votes and seat totals for the Democratic Left Alliance and Your Movement.

As Table 3 shows, Law and Justice performed particularly strongly among older (47.1% of over-60s) and less well-educated voters (55% of those with only a primary or junior high education), those living in rural areas (45.4%), together with workers (45.4%), farmers (52.3%), the unemployed (43.1%) and retirees and pensioners (47.7%). However, the party actually won the largest share of the vote in virtually every demographic group, including those that had previously been Civic Platform bastions of support. These included: younger voters (25.8% to Civic Platform's 14.6%) and students (23.9% to Civic Platform's 13.2%), the better educated (29.1% of those with a higher education to Civic Platform's 26.8%) and those living in larger towns with 200-500,000 inhabitants (31.1% to Civic Platform's 29.8%) and cities with more than half-a-million (30% to Civic Platform's 28.4%). Indeed, having won 55.2% of the vote among 18-19 year old voters and 50.7% of 20-24-year olds in 2007, as Table 3 shows in this election Civic Platform actually finished fourth among 18-29 year olds, among whom anti-establishment feeling was particularly widespread, behind not only Law and Justice but also Kukiz '15 and Mr Korwin-Mikke's party. The only occupational groups where Civic Platform secured a (bare) plurality of the vote were entrepreneurs (28.8% to Law and Justice's 28%) and directors and managers (28.7% to Law and Justice's 25.8%).

In recent elections, there was also a clear geographical divide between the two main parties in Poland's 'historic' regions: Civic Platform won in the Northern and Western regions, that were either part of the so-called 'recovered territories' that had been part of Germany before the Second World War or had been in the Prussian Empire before the First World War; while Law and Justice dominated in the Southern and Eastern regions that were part of the Russian and Austro-Hungarian Empires before 1918.⁶³ In this election, however, while the overall patterns of support remained broadly the same, Law and Justice actually secured the largest share of the vote in 14 out of 16 regions; Civic Platform was only able to win a plurality of votes in Pomerania and Western Pomerania.⁶⁴

⁶³ See, for example: Krzysztof Jasiewicz, "'The Past Is Never Dead': Identity, Class, and Voting Behaviour in Contemporary Poland", *East European Politics and Societies*, Vol 23 No 4, October 2009, pp491-508.

⁶⁴ See: Wojciech Szacki, 'Całkiem inna mapa', *Polityka*, 28 October-2 November 2015.

Table 3: Voting profile of party supporters in the October 2015 Polish parliamentary election (%)

	Law and Justice	Civic Platform	Kukiz '15	Modern	United Left	Polish Peasant Party	KORWiN	Together
Voting by age								
18-29	25.8	14.6	19.9	8.5	3.9	3.8	16.8	5.2
30-39	29.5	24.1	12.1	11.6	6.4	5.0	4.7	5.7
40-49	37.2	25.9	7.4	8.9	7.4	6.0	2.6	4.0
50-59	45.6	23.3	4.7	6.4	8.3	6.2	1.8	3.2
60+	47.1	28.2	2.0	4.1	10.5	5.0	0.6	1.9
Voting by education								
Primary/junior high	55.0	15.4	6.7	2.0	4.2	6.7	6.5	2.3
Basic vocational	51.6	19.7	7.4	2.4	6.1	7.1	2.4	2.5
Middle/college	37.9	23.2	10.0	5.6	8.0	5.2	5.6	3.6
Baccalaureate/higher	29.1	26.8	8.2	12.9	8.1	4.1	5.1	5.0
Voting by place of residence								
Villages	45.4	17.5	9.2	4.9	5.3	9.4	4.4	2.9
<50,000	36.0	25.6	9.2	7.0	7.9	4.6	5.2	3.7
50-200,000	34.7	25.4	9.9	7.9	9.0	3.0	5.0	4.2
200-500,000	31.1	29.8	8.0	9.6	9.7	1.5	5.6	4.1
500,000+	30.0	28.4	5.9	14.0	8.8	1.4	5.1	6.1
Voting by occupation								
Entrepreneurs	28.0	28.8	9.1	14.9	5.5	3.8	5.8	3.3
Directors/managers	25.8	28.7	7.8	16.0	7.3	3.8	5.1	5.0
Administration/services	34.0	24.8	9.2	8.1	8.2	5.2	4.1	5.7
Farmers	52.3	10.9	6.4	1.7	4.6	18.6	2.6	2.0
Workers	45.4	17.3	12.7	3.5	6.0	5.5	4.9	3.6
Students	23.9	13.2	20.2	7.3	4.1	2.9	21.3	5.5
Unemployed	43.1	19.3	12.3	4.6	6.3	4.7	4.8	3.7
Retirees/pensioners	47.7	28.0	2.4	3.6	10.6	4.6	0.6	1.9
Voting by 2011 party								
Civic Platform	10.4	51.4	6.1	14.1	7.0	3.4	2.3	4.7
Law and Justice	89.4	1.2	4.3	0.7	0.7	1.0	1.7	0.8
Palikot Movement	9.1	6.8	23.4	12.6	16.6	2.2	15.1	12.5
Polish Peasant Party	20.0	6.0	5.3	2.5	4.6	57.0	1.6	2.6
Democratic Left Alliance	7.0	8.8	4.9	3.9	64.6	3.9	1.5	5.0
Did not vote	26.0	11.2	22.0	7.5	5.4	4.2	16.3	5.7
Actual	37.58	24.09	8.81	7.60	7.55	5.13	4.76	3.62

Source: Wyborcza.pl. *Wybory 2015. Polska młodzież prawicowa: 66 proc. głosów uczniów i studentów poszło na PiS, Kukiza i Korwina*, 26 October 2015 (<http://wyborcza.pl/1,75398,19087837,wybory-2015-polska-młodzież-prawicowa-66-proc-głosow-uczniow.html#ixzz48uILbngp>) (accessed 26 October 2015).

The other major development was the emergence of two new political groupings that were able to cross the 5% threshold. Mr Kukiz turned out to have enough of a hard core of supporters immune to the kind of gaffes that would have been fatal for more mainstream politicians and were willing to support him as long as he remained a credible fighter against

‘the system’ and, as Table 2 shows, Kukiz ‘15 finished as the third largest grouping in the new parliament winning 8.81% of the vote and 42 seats. As Table 3 shows, as well securing 19.9% of the vote among younger voters and 20.2% among students, Kukiz ‘15 picked up 22% of those who did not vote in the previous parliamentary election. It also won the support of 23.4% of those who had supported Mr Palikot’s party in 2011, more than the number who voted for the United Left (16.6%), in spite of the fact that Mr Kukiz’s grouping was widely recognised as being located on the ‘anti-system’ right.

The other newcomer was the liberal ‘Modern’ (Nowoczesna) grouping, formed in May 2015 by economist Ryszard Petru. Mr Petru’s party steadily consolidated its support by advocating policies such as a ‘flat tax’ of 16% which appealed to voters attracted by the free market philosophy with which Civic Platform was originally associated, but who felt that the ruling party had drifted away from its roots and turned to Mr Petru’s grouping as a more credible liberal alternative.⁶⁵ Although Mr Petru lacked Mr Kukiz’s charisma, and the party’s social base was relatively narrow, as Table 2 shows ‘Modern’ secured enough support from what should have been Civic Platform’s natural electorate among the younger, well-educated and better-off urban voters and entrepreneurs for it to cross the threshold, winning 7.6% of the vote and 28 seats. As Table 3 shows, Mr Petru’s party picked up the support of 14.1% of Civic Platform’s 2011 voters, together with 12.6% of those who had voted for Mr Palikot. It also secured 12.9% among voters with a higher education, 14% of those living in cities with more than 500,000 inhabitants, 14.9% of entrepreneurs, and 16% of directors and managers.

On the other hand, while United Left’s leaders were hoping for a sizeable ‘unity premium’, the grouping lacked its component parties’ name recognition and struggled to develop a distinctive appeal.⁶⁶ As Table 2 shows, it failed to cross the 8% threshold for electoral coalitions, securing only 7.55%, which meant that, for the first time in any post-1989 election, no left-wing parties were represented in the Polish parliament. As Table 3 shows, although United Left was able to retain 64.6% of Democratic Left Alliance voters, only 16.6% of those who supported Mr Palikot in 2011 voted for it and its strongest support was to be found among older voters and retirees and pensioners, suggesting that its core vote comprised those with links to the former communist regime.

At the same time, as Table 2 shows ‘Together’ secured 3.62% of the vote, not enough to obtain parliamentary representation but qualifying the party for state funding and peeling away sufficient support to prevent the United Left from crossing the 8% threshold. As Table 3 shows, Together’s support was spread fairly evenly across different socio-demographic groups, although tended to be skewed somewhat towards: younger, better-educated voters living in urban areas, students, those working in administration and services, and (ironically for a radical left grouping) directors and managers. Although it only picked up 5% of Democratic Left Alliance 2011 voters, 12.5% of Mr Palikot’s supporters voted for the party.

As Table 2 shows, the only other grouping to secure parliamentary representation was the Peasant Party which just scraped over the threshold securing 5.13%, its worst result in any post-1989 election. It was also the victim of the anti-incumbent backlash that was the main leitmotif of the election, and blamed specifically for failing to prevent the government’s

⁶⁵ See: Wojciech Szacki, ‘Taka lepsza Platforma’, *Polityka*, 10-16 June 2015; Witold Gadomski, ‘Nowoczesna Ryszarda Petru jak młode PO’, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 21 September 2015; and Kamila Baranowska, ‘Nowoczesna PO’, *Do Rzeczy*, 21-27 September 2015.

⁶⁶ See: Kamila Baranowska, ‘I po lewicy’, *Do Rzeczy*, 2-8 November 2015.

perceived neglect of rural areas and the agricultural sector. As Table 3 shows, not only did Mr Piechociński not deliver on his pledge to broaden out its socio-demographic base, the party even failed to hold on to much of its previous core electorate: securing support from only 18.6% of farmers and 9.4% of voters living in rural areas, compared with 52.3% and 45.4% respectively for Law and Justice; and only held on to 57% of its 2011 voters (20% of them switched to Mr Kaczyński's party).

Finally, as Table 2 shows Mr Korwin-Mikke's party fell just short of the threshold with 4.76% of the vote. While it hoped to steal Mr Kukiz's thunder and emerge as the main 'anti-system' grouping on the back of opposition to mass Muslim migration, Law and Justice's tough stance limited Mr Korwin-Mikke's scope to mobilise around this issue. Nonetheless, as Table 3 shows, it secured 16.8% of the vote among younger voters, 21.3% among students (compared with only 0.6% among the over-60s and retirees and pensioners), 16.3% among those who did not vote in 2011 and 15.1% of 2011 Palikot Movement voters.

The (beginning of the) end of the 'post-transition' divide?

So what does this election tell us about the long-term trajectory of the Polish party system and what implications does it have for the 'post-transition divide' based on the Civic Platform-Law and Justice duopoly that dominated it for the last decade? Writing in the 1990s at onset of competitive politics in Eastern Europe, Mair foresaw that post-communist party systems in countries like Poland would differ substantially from those in the more established West European democracies in a number of ways, all of which were likely to produce greater instability.⁶⁷ The absence of strong cleavage structures and the impact of this on the nature of the electorate would, he argued, lead to continued flux (and possibly fragmentation) in the format of the newly emerging party systems. Similarly, the context of competition was one in which political elites were more likely to have little organisational loyalty and there were even strong institutional incentives to instability. These included: a lack of developed institutional structures, institutional uncertainties and relatively open structures of competition. The obstacles that arose in the post-communist environment were such that, according to Mair, their party systems were likely to have considerable problems in settling down and might never become consolidated.

Since then, a substantial literature had emerged on the questions of post-communist party system (in)stability and (lack of) institutionalisation and, while there is disagreement about its extent and the direction of change, most accounts have found few signs of consolidation. Comparing the region with Western democracies, commentators have pointed to: continuing higher levels of electoral volatility and more fragmented, fluid and unstable party systems, together with lower levels of party attachment that could provide the basis for stable cleavage development.⁶⁸ Indeed there were question marks as to whether it was possible to identify

⁶⁷ See: Peter Mair. *Party System Change: Approaches and Interpretations*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1997, pp175-198.

⁶⁸ See, for example: Jack Bielsiak, 'Party Competition in Emerging Democracies: Representation and Effectiveness in Post-communism and Beyond', *Democratisation*, Vol 12 No 3, June 2005, pp331-356; Margit Tavits, 'Party systems in the making: the emergence and success of new parties in new democracies', *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol 49 No 2, April 2005, pp283-298; Scott Mainwaring and Edurne Zoco, 'Political Sequences and the Stabilization of Interparty Competition: Electoral Volatility in Old and New Democracies', *Party Politics*, Vol 13 No 2, March 2007, pp155-178; Russell J. Dalton and Steven Weldon, 'Partisanship and party system institutionalisation', *Party Politics*, Vol 13 No 2, March 2007, pp176-196; Jan-Erik Lane and Svante Ersson, 'Party System Instability in Europe: Persistent Differences in Volatility between

‘party systems’, where the formal conditions of ‘system-ness’ (party stability and institutional survival) exist, at all. As Lewis put it writing in 2011: ‘There is little evidence to suggest that institutionalisation has made much headway in the region overall in the past two decades’.⁶⁹

However, as noted above, in Poland the ‘post-transition divide’ which emerged in 2005 not only endured but strengthened, going on to dominate and structure a party system which seemed to be consolidating around this bi-polarity. In addition to the increasing combined share of the vote and seats won by these two parties shown in Table 1, this could also be seen in a substantial fall in the level of aggregate electoral volatility (calculated according to the ‘Pederson index’) from 24.6% in 2007 (and a massive 49.3% in 2001) to only 13.5% in 2011.⁷⁰ In fact, the Civic Platform-Law and Justice duopoly actually emerged conjuncturally - indeed, almost accidentally - and originally the socio-demographic profiles of the two party electorates (and, arguably, many of their policies) were actually very similar;⁷¹ indeed, in 2005 they were seen as natural coalition partners. However, as the divisions between the two party elites widened and deepened, so did the differences between their electorates. They also started to map increasingly onto distinctive and clearly defined socio-demographic constituencies reflecting deeper ideological and cultural divisions within Polish society; in other words, the two sides of the ‘post-transition divide’. Law and Justice voters were older, more rural and religious, and less well-educated, while Civic Platform supporters were younger, more urban, better off, better educated, and more secular.⁷² Indeed, the deep political polarisation and bitterness that characterised the two parties’ on-going rivalry meant that they became constant points of reference for each other, with the existence of (and repulsion from) the other being at the heart of their respective political appeals.

An important factor that appeared to encourage party system consolidation and stabilisation was the Polish state party funding regime that was established in 2001.⁷³ Since then the state became the largest source of income for the main parties at a time when political campaigning was increasingly professionalised, and therefore costly. This development clearly favoured the larger ‘insider’ parties such as Civic Platform and Law and Justice while discriminating against smaller non-parliamentary groupings, potentially blocking the emergence of new entrants and making it increasingly difficult for them to challenge this duopoly. For example, in 2012-15 the annual subventions paid to the main parties were: 17.8 million zloties for Civic Platform and 16.5 million for Law and Justice compared with 7.5 million for the Palikot (later ‘Your’) Movement, 6.4 million for the Peasant Party, and 6.3

West and East?’ *Democratization*, Vol 14 No 1, February 2007, pp92-110; and Margit Tavits, ‘On the linkage between electoral volatility and party system instability in Central and Eastern Europe’, *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol 47 No 5, August 2008, pp537-555.

⁶⁹ See: Paul G. Lewis, ‘Introduction: Europeanising party politics? Central and Eastern Europe after EU enlargement,’ in Paul G. Lewis and Radosław Markowski, eds, *Europeanising party politics? Comparative perspectives on central and Eastern Europe*. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press. 2011, pp1-24 (8).

⁷⁰ See: ‘The 2007 Polish Parliamentary Election’, p1059. The 2011 figure is based on the author’s calculations. However, this remained high by comparative European standards: the average level of aggregative volatility in West European elections between 1960-89 was 8.4%. See: *Party System Change*, p182.

⁷¹ See: ‘Poland’s Unexpected Political Earthquake’, p52.

⁷² See: ‘The 2007 Polish Parliamentary Election’. Jasiewicz identified the two parties’ supporters at opposite ends of a ‘solidarism-liberalism’ continuum which pitted ‘market friendly and inclusive liberals...against the redistributionist populists’. See: “‘The Past Is Never Dead’”, p506.

⁷³ See: Jarosław Zbieranek, ‘The system of financing political parties in Poland - experience and challenges’, in Jacek Kucharczyk and Jarosław Zbieranek, eds. *Democracy in Poland 1989-2009: Challenges for the Future*. ISP: Warsaw, 2010, pp77-87.

million for the Democratic Left Alliance. The estimates for what the parties that were eligible for subventions following the 2015 election would receive between 2016-19 were: 18.5 million per annum for Law and Justice and 15.5 million for Civic Platform compared with 6.2 million for 'Modern' and 4.5 million for the Peasant Party. Of those political groupings who failed to enter parliament but crossed the 3% threshold for subventions the parties comprising the United Left would receive 6.2 million per annum, Mr Korwin-Mikke's party 4.2 million and 'Together' 3.2 million.⁷⁴

However, although the 2015 election saw the Law and Justice-Civic Platform duopoly once again dominating the Polish party system, there were also some indications of greater fluidity and instability which suggested that the dominance of the 'post-transition divide' may have peaked and even be in decline. Firstly, the election saw a substantial increase in the level of aggregate electoral volatility from 13.5% in 2011 to 33%. As Table 1 shows, this was partly due to a fall in the combined share of the vote won by the two largest parties to only 61.67% compared with 69.07% in 2011 and 73.62% in 2007.⁷⁵ The latter was, of course, largely accounted for by Civic Platform's more than 15% drop in support.

The main reason why the Polish party system remained brittle, potentially unstable and vulnerable to implosion was the low level of party institutionalisation and weak links between parties and their supporters. As Table 4 shows, and this election once again confirmed, electoral turnout in Polish parliamentary elections remained extremely low, with barely half of registered voters participating in the 2015 ballot (50.92%), and only three out of Poland's eight post-1989 parliamentary polls have seen a turnout of more 50%. For sure, research has shown that Polish non-voters were not a static body and, except for a hard core, moved in and out of voting,⁷⁶ but this underlying instability suggested that the electorate remained relatively 'open' and available to potential challenger groupings.

According to a 2011-13 survey of 18 countries Poland had the lowest levels of party membership, at only 0.79% as a percentage of the electorate (241,544) compared with an average of 3.45%; and this figure had actually fallen from 1.15% at the end of the 1990s.⁷⁷ This stemmed partly from the fact that Polish parties had made few attempts to develop organic links with and 'encapsulate' their supporters but it was also because Poles had extremely negative attitudes towards parties so that even if party strategists actively sought to

⁷⁴ See: PKW. *Informacja o przewidywanej rocznej wysokości subwencji przysługującej partiom politycznym w związku z wyborami do Sejmu Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej przeprowadzonymi w dniu 25 października 2015 r.*, http://pkw.gov.pl/464_Subwencja_z_budzetu_panstwa/1/3371_Informacja_o_przewidywanej_wysokosci_subwencji_na_dzialalnosc_statutowa_przyslugujacych_partiom_politycznym_w_latach_2016-2019 (accessed 5 May 2016). Even though it secured parliamentary representation, Kukiz '15 was not eligible for state subventions as it did not register as a political party and contested the election as a 'civic committee of voters'.

⁷⁵ Although this was still higher than in any of the other five post-1989 elections and, as Table 1 shows, the share of the seats won by these two parties actually increased slightly to 81.09%, after 81.52% in 2007 the second highest level since 1989.

⁷⁶ See: Mikołaj Cześniak, Paweł Grzelak and Michał Kotnarowski, 'Chwiejni versus kapryśni - niestabilność zachowań wyborczych w Polsce', *Studia Polityczne*, Vol 21, 2011, pp61–86.

⁷⁷ See: Thomas Poguntke et al, 'Party Rules, Party Resources, and the Politics of Parliamentary Democracies: How Parties Organize in the 21st Century', unpublished manuscript, 2015. 2012 World Values Survey data for Poland actually found that 4.2% of respondents said that they were members of political parties but it also found that the number of 'active' members was only 1.1%. Given that the latter figure was in line with previous surveys this was more likely to be the accurate one. See: World Values Survey, *World Values Survey (2010-2014) – Poland 2012*, <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSDocumentationWV6.jsp> (accessed 9 February 2016).

recruit substantially more members their prospects for success would have been slim. For example, a July 2013 CBOS survey found that 69% of respondents felt there was no party that they could vote for with full conviction while only 26% said that there was.⁷⁸ Similarly, the 2014 European Social Survey found that only 8.5% of Polish respondents indicated that they trusted political parties.⁷⁹ A February/March 2014 CBOS survey also found that only 17% of respondents said that they trusted political parties, the lowest level of any Polish institution, while 66% did not,⁸⁰ and only 30% identified with a political party down from 57% in 1998.⁸¹ All of this suggested that Polish parties had not succeeded in rooting themselves solidly in the electorate and, if anything, party identification had actually fallen in recent years.

Table 4: Turnout in post-1989 Polish elections (%)

	Presidential	Parliamentary
1990	60.63(1) 53.40(2)	
1991		43.20
1993		52.13
1995	64.70(1) 68.23(2)	
1997		47.93
2000	61.12	
2001		46.29
2005	49.74(1) 50.99(2)	40.57
2007		53.88
2010	54.94(1) 55.31(2)	
2011		48.92
2015	48.96 (1) 55.34 (2)	50.92

Source: '15 chętnych na jeden mandat,' *Rzeczpospolita*, 8-9 October 2011; and Polish State Electoral Commission (<http://www.pkw.gov.pl/>)

Moreover, while the Polish state party funding regime certainly discriminated in favour of the existing parties, as this election showed this did not mean that there was no scope for new party system entrants. Indeed, the breakthrough of Kukiz '15 and 'Modern', together with the narrow failure of Mr Korwin-Mikke's new party to enter parliament and Together's success in crossing the 3% state party funding threshold, showed how challenger parties could emerge regardless of the barriers (although, as the earlier short-lived success of the Palikot Movement showed, whether and for how long such challengers could sustain this was another matter). In this election, Kukiz '15 was able to enter parliament as the third largest party having spent only 2.9 million zloties on its campaign, and while Mr Petru's party spent a

⁷⁸ See: CBOS. *Jakiej partii potrzebują Polacy*. CBOS: Warsaw. September 2013, pp1-2.

⁷⁹ Based on a scale of 0-10, with 6-10 indicating that they trusted parties. See: European Social Survey, *European Social Survey Round 7 2014*, <http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/data/> (accessed 9 February 2016).

⁸⁰ See: CBOS. *Stosunek to instytucji państwa oraz partii politycznych po 25 latach*. CBOS: Warsaw. May 2014, p2.

⁸¹ See: *Ibid*, p7.

larger sum of 11.6 million this paled in comparison with the 29.7 million and 29.4 million spent by Law and Justice and Civic Platform respectively.⁸²

The 2015 election results highlighted three main areas of potential instability and change in the Polish party system. Firstly, in terms of the continued dominance of the Law and Justice-Civic Platform duopoly and its basis for the ‘post-transition divide’, a huge question mark hung over the future of the former ruling party. As Table 3 shows, the scale of Civic Platform’s collapse could be seen in the fact that it lost to Law and Justice in almost every regional and demographic category, including those where it had once been dominant, with its collapse in support among younger voters being particularly striking. For sure, Civic Platform’s slump was not as catastrophic as some earlier incumbent parties: Solidarity Electoral Action fell from 33.8% in 1997 to only 5.6% in 2001, while the Democratic Left Alliance went down from 41% in 2001 to 11.3% in 2005. Nonetheless, electoral defeat meant that what had become a deeply divided and factionalised party faced a major, possibly even existential, post-election crisis. Moreover, while Civic Platform encompassed a fairly broad spectrum of views, its ideological underpinnings were very weak with its most serious internal divisions revolving around personality-based factions rather than programmatic currents.⁸³ Initially, the party attempted to profile itself as representing a modernising form of pro-market, right-wing liberalism and subsequently incorporated a moderate form of social conservatism, and even some national-patriotic themes. However, as noted above, particularly after it took office in 2007, Civic Platform adopted a deliberate strategy of diluting its ideological profile, downplaying its economic liberalism and social conservatism and projecting itself as a somewhat amorphous modernising, centrist and pro-European ‘catch-all’ party in opposition to the forces of provincial nationalism apparently represented by Law and Justice.

Law and Justice, on the other hand, was much more successful at developing an integrative ideological narrative, initially focused on the so-called ‘Fourth Republic’ project of moral and political renewal. The party proceeded to abandon explicit references to the Fourth Republic and, as noted above, in this election focused more on socio-economic issues. However, the need for the radical reconstruction of the Polish state remained at the heart of a powerful conservative-national project that provided the party with a sense of cohesion and purpose and bound it closely to its core voters. This link was re-inforced strongly by the Smoleńsk tragedy which, together with the concomitant portrayal of Lech Kaczyński as a national martyr, became a touchstone issue for Law and Justice through which it could build even stronger emotional ties with its supporters. In Civic Platform, on the other hand, national and local elites were bound to the party primarily by the access that it gave them to state patronage which did not provide a firm basis for more enduring, long-term organisational stability and made it vulnerable to eventual implosion if it were to face a really serious crisis.⁸⁴

⁸² See: PKW. *Komunikat Państwowej Komisji Wyborczej z dnia 15 lutego 2016 r. w sprawie sprawozdań finansowych komitetów wyborczych uczestniczących w wyborach do Sejmu Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej i do Senatu Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, przeprowadzonych w dniu 25 października 2015 r.*, 15 February 2016, http://pkw.gov.pl/394_Wybory_do_Sejmu_RP_i_do_Senatu_RP_-_2015/1/6911_Komunikat_Panstwowej_Komisji_Wyborczej_z_dnia_15_lutego_2016_r_w_sprawie_sprawozdana_finansowych_komitetow_wyborczych_uczestniczacych_w_wyborach_do_Sejmu_Rzeczypospolitej_Polskiej_i_do_Senatu_Rzeczypospolitej_Polskiej_przeprowadzonych_w_dniu_25_pazdziernika_2015_r (accessed 5 May 2016). The Peasant Party spent 13.1 million zloties.

⁸³ See, for example: Cezary Michalski, ‘Szable premiera’, *Polityka*, 12-18 February 2014.

⁸⁴ See: Marek Migalski, ‘Koniec mitu wielkiej Platformy’, *Rzeczpospolita*, 20 October 2015.

The second source of change in the Polish party system that this election revealed was the emergence of new ‘anti-system’ and liberal political forces, namely: Kukiz 15 and ‘Modern’. Although it won a larger share of the vote and seats than Mr Petru’s party, of the two it was Kukiz ’15 that appeared to have the less promising long-term prospects, and there were serious question marks over its future survival. Mr Kukiz’s extremely eclectic candidates list produced a potentially unstable parliamentary caucus that was liable to fragment as soon as it was forced to confront issues that brought its ideological incoherence to the fore. Moreover, having fallen out with and publicly attacked many of the local government and civic activists who formed the backbone of his presidential campaign, Mr Kukiz came to rely increasingly upon the grassroots organisational support of small radical right-wing parties,⁸⁵ whose deputies were liable to break away and form separate parliamentary groupings, while others were potential defectors to potentially all the other caucuses represented in the Sejm.

On the other hand, ‘Modern’ was a potentially serious challenger for the remainder of Civic Platform’s core liberal (and, possibly, wider anti-Law and Justice centrist) electorate. While Mr Petru was not a hugely charismatic figure, he was a reasonably effective media performer and his small parliamentary caucus contained some articulate and competent members. Moreover, although Mr Petru was active on the political scene for several years, the party’s greatest potential asset was its ‘newness’, which stood in sharp contrast to the more compromised figures associated with Civic Platform. However, ‘Modern’s’ biggest weakness was the relative narrowness of its programmatic appeal: while its liberal socio-economic policies peeled away disenchanted Civic Platform core voters in the parliamentary election they were unpopular with the majority of voters. The same was true of Mr Petru’s links with the large banking corporations which, for many Poles, symbolised the hated political-business nexus (often referred to disparagingly as ‘banksters’) that motivated many of them to vote for anti-establishment parties like Law and Justice and Kukiz ’15.

In addition to the existential struggle that the Peasant Party faced against the challenge from Law and Justice for what was left of its core rural-agricultural electorate, the third major source of party system uncertainty was on the left which, following its electoral catastrophe, faced a period of prolonged marginalisation and soul searching. Its main electoral-strategic challenge was the fact that while various surveys put the number of Poles who identified themselves as left-wing at around 15%,⁸⁶ centre-left parties had struggled to develop an appeal that could bring together socially liberal and economically leftist voters, the two main bases of support that formed the core electorates of most European left-wing parties. The kind of socially liberal voters who tended to be younger and better-off, prioritised moral-cultural issues (and in Western Europe inclined naturally towards the political left), in Poland were often quite economically liberal. The economically leftist electorate, on the other hand, tended to be older, more culturally conservative and inclined to vote for parties of the traditionalist right with a leftist economic appeal, such as Law and Justice.⁸⁷ An April-May 2015 CBOS survey, for example, found that while most Poles supported leftist socio-economic policies such as high levels of social welfare, progressive taxation, employment

⁸⁵ See: Jacek Harłukowicz, ‘Miszmasz na listach Kukiza: narodowcy, ziobryści, Samoobrona’, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 17 September 2015.

⁸⁶ See, for example: CBOS. *Zainteresowanie polityką i poglądy polityczne w latach 1989-2015. Deklaracja ludzi młodych na tle ogółu badanych*. CBOS: Warsaw. October 2015, p6.

⁸⁷ See: Antoni Dudek, ‘Lewica w potraszku’, *Do Rzeczy*, 21-27 July 2014; and Ernest Skalski, ‘Sorry, lewico, taki mamy klimat’, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 14 May 2015.

protection and state ownership, slightly fewer left-wing self-identifiers favoured these policies than did the average (or, indeed, centrist and even right-wing) voter. It was attitudes towards European integration and moral-cultural issues - such as abortion, Church-state relations and same-sex civil unions - that were the strongest determinants of left-wing self-placement.⁸⁸ Interestingly, an October 2015 CBOS survey found that the largest number of left-wing self-identifiers planned to vote for Civic Platform (27%) compared with 12% who opted for the United Left; only slightly more than the number who chose Law and Justice (10%).⁸⁹

Conclusions

The October 2015 Polish parliamentary election saw a stunning victory for the Law and Justice party, which became the first political grouping in post-communist Poland to secure an outright parliamentary majority, and equally crushing defeat for the incumbent Civic Platform. In addition to the fact that the outgoing ruling party could no longer rely on its previously highly successful strategy of mobilising passive anti-Law and Justice voters through invoking the ‘politics of fear’, the main factor accounting for the right-wing opposition’s success was widespread disillusionment with the country’s ruling elite together with a strong prevailing mood that it was time for change. A key element of this was scepticism towards the outgoing government’s triumphalist rhetoric about its apparent achievements and the broader success of post-communist transition among many Poles, especially younger ones, living beyond the large urban centres who were frustrated not to have shared in this. Although the election campaign was largely dominated by domestic themes it also coincided with the European migration crisis which emerged as an important secondary issue providing a boost for Law and Justice.

The Law and Justice-Civic Platform duopoly continued to dominate the Polish party system and the overall skewing of the geographical and social bases of party support remained broadly the same. However, Law and Justice actually secured the largest share of the vote in virtually every demographic group, including those which had traditionally been bastions of support for Civic Platform. There were also some indications of greater party system fluidity and instability which suggested that this duopoly’s dominance was not as striking as before and that Poland might be entering a period of (at least partial) re-alignment. Following its collapse in support, Civic Platform faced a major, possibly existential, post-election crisis. In recent years the party diluted its ideological underpinnings to the extent that many commentators dismissed it as a ‘post-political’ party of power to which its national and local elites were bound largely by access to state patronage. This was not a firm basis for more enduring, long-term organisational stability and made the party vulnerable to implosion. Law and Justice, on the other hand, was much more successful at developing an integrative narrative, initially focused on the so-called ‘Fourth Republic’ idea which, while downplayed rhetorically, remained at the core a powerful conservative-national project of moral and political renewal and radical re-construction of the Polish state. This provided the party with a sense of cohesion and purpose that bound it closely to its core voters; a link re-inforced strongly by the Smoleńsk trajectory which acted as a touchstone issue for party supporters.

⁸⁸ See: CBOS. *Co różni zwolenników lewicy, centrum i prawicy*. CBOS: Warsaw. October 2015.

⁸⁹ See: *Zainteresowanie polityką i poglądy polityczne w latach 1989-2015*, p12.

Following an election in which, for the first time, no parties representing this current were represented in parliament, the marginalised Polish left faced a formidable electoral-strategic challenge to develop an appeal that could bring together socially liberal and economically leftist voters. At the same time, the election saw the emergence of new political forces, namely: the Kukiz '15 and 'Modern' groupings. Mr Kukiz had a hard core of supporters willing to support him as long as he remained a credible fighter against 'the system', but there were doubts over this grouping's future survival. 'Modern', on the other hand, appeared a potentially serious challenger for both the remainder of Civic Platform's core supporters and the broader, more centrist anti-Law and Justice electorate. So while the 'post-transition divide' could continue to dominate and structure the party system in terms of the ideological and cultural divisions and socio-demographic constituencies that the two sides represented, there were question marks over who would emerge as the main representative of the anti-Law and Justice side of this divide.

Working Papers in Contemporary European Studies

1. Vesna Bojicic and David Dyker June 1993
Sanctions on Serbia: Sledgehammer or Scalpel
2. Gunther Burghardt August 1993
The Future for a European Foreign and Security Policy
3. Xiudian Dai, Alan Cawson, Peter Holmes February 1994
Competition, Collaboration & Public Policy: A Case Study of the European HDTV Strategy
4. Colin Crouch February 1994
The Future of Unemployment in Western Europe? Reconciling Demands for Flexibility, Quality and Security
5. John Edmonds February 1994
Industrial Relations - Will the European Community Change Everything?
6. Olli Rehn July 1994
The European Community and the Challenge of a Wider Europe
7. Ulrich Sedelmeier October 1994
The EU's Association Policy towards Central Eastern Europe: Political and Economic Rationales in Conflict
8. Mary Kaldor February 1995
Rethinking British Defence Policy and Its Economic Implications
9. Alasdair Young December 1994
Ideas, Interests and Institutions: The Politics of Liberalisation in the EC's Road Haulage Industry
10. Keith Richardson December 1994
Competitiveness in Europe: Cooperation or Conflict?
11. Mike Hobday June 1995
The Technological Competence of European Semiconductor Producers
12. Graham Avery July 1995
The Commission's Perspective on the Enlargement Negotiations
13. Gerda Falkner September 1995
The Maastricht Protocol on Social Policy: Theory and Practice
14. Vesna Bojicic, Mary Kaldor, Ivan Vejvoda November 1995
Post-War Reconstruction in the Balkans

15. Alasdair Smith, Peter Holmes, Ulrich Sedelmeier, Edward Smith, Helen Wallace, Alasdair Young
The European Union and Central and Eastern Europe: Pre-Accession Strategies March 1996
16. Helen Wallace
From an Island off the North-West Coast of Europe March 1996
17. Indira Konjhodzic
Democratic Consolidation of the Political System in Finland, 1945-1970: Potential Model for the New States of Central and Eastern Europe? June 1996
18. Antje Wiener and Vince Della Sala
Constitution Making and Citizenship Practice - Bridging the Democracy Gap in the EU? December 1996
19. Helen Wallace and Alasdair Young
Balancing Public and Private Interests Under Duress December 1996
20. S. Ran Kim
Evolution of Governance & the Growth Dynamics of the Korean Semiconductor Industry April 1997
21. Tibor Navracsics
A Missing Debate?: Hungary and the European Union June 1997
22. Peter Holmes with Jeremy Kempton
Study on the Economic and Industrial Aspects of Anti-Dumping Policy September 1997
23. Helen Wallace
Coming to Terms with a Larger Europe: Options for Economic Integration January 1998
24. Mike Hobday, Alan Cawson and S Ran Kim
The Pacific Asian Electronics Industries: Technology Governance and Implications for Europe January 1998
25. Iain Begg
Structural Fund Reform in the Light of Enlargement
CENTRE ON EUROPEAN POLITICAL ECONOMY Working Paper No. 1 August 1998
26. Mick Dunford and Adrian Smith
Trajectories of Change in Europe's Regions: Cohesion, Divergence and Regional Performance
CENTRE ON EUROPEAN POLITICAL ECONOMY Working Paper No. 2 August 1998

27. Ray Hudson August 1998
What Makes Economically Successful Regions in Europe Successful? Implications for Transferring Success from West to East
 CENTRE ON EUROPEAN POLITICAL ECONOMY Working Paper No. 3
28. Adam Swain August 1998
Institutions and Regional Development: Evidence from Hungary and Ukraine
 CENTRE ON EUROPEAN POLITICAL ECONOMY Working Paper No. 4
29. Alasdair Young October 1998
Interpretation and 'Soft Integration' in the Adaptation of the European Community's Foreign Economic Policy
 CENTRE ON EUROPEAN POLITICAL ECONOMY Working Paper No. 5
30. Rilka Dragneva March 1999
Corporate Governance Through Privatisation: Does Design Matter?
31. Christopher Preston and Arkadiusz Michonski March 1999
Negotiating Regulatory Alignment in Central Europe: The Case of the Poland EU European Conformity Assessment Agreement
32. Jeremy Kempton, Peter Holmes, Cliff Stevenson September 1999
Globalisation of Anti-Dumping and the EU
 CENTRE ON EUROPEAN POLITICAL ECONOMY Working Paper No. 6
33. Alan Mayhew March 2000
Financial and Budgetary Implications of the Accession of Central and East European Countries to the European Union.
34. Aleks Szczerbiak May 2000
Public Opinion and Eastward Enlargement - Explaining Declining Support for EU Membership in Poland
35. Keith Richardson September 2000
Big Business and the European Agenda
36. Aleks Szczerbiak and Paul Taggart October 2000
Opposing Europe: Party Systems and Opposition to the Union, the Euro and Europeanisation
 OPPOSING EUROPE RESEARCH NETWORK Working Paper No. 1
37. Alasdair Young, Peter Holmes and Jim Rollo November 2000
The European Trade Agenda After Seattle
38. Sławomir Tokarski and Alan Mayhew December 2000
Impact Assessment and European Integration Policy

39. Alan Mayhew December 2000
Enlargement of the European Union: an Analysis of the Negotiations with the Central and Eastern European Candidate Countries
40. Pierre Jacquet and Jean Pisani-Ferry January 2001
Economic Policy Co-ordination in the Eurozone: What has been achieved? What should be done?
41. Joseph F. Francois and Machiel Rombout February 2001
Trade Effects From The Integration Of The Central And East European Countries Into The European Union
42. Peter Holmes and Alasdair Young February 2001
Emerging Regulatory Challenges to the EU's External Economic Relations
43. Michael Johnson March 2001
EU Enlargement and Commercial Policy: Enlargement and the Making of Commercial Policy
44. Witold Orłowski and Alan Mayhew May 2001
The Impact of EU Accession on Enterprise, Adaptation and Institutional Development in the Countries of Central and Eastern Europe
45. Adam Lazowski May 2001
Adaptation of the Polish legal system to European Union law: Selected aspects
46. Paul Taggart and Aleks Szczerbiak May 2001
Parties, Positions and Europe: Euroscepticism in the EU Candidate States of Central and Eastern Europe
OPPOSING EUROPE RESEARCH NETWORK Working Paper No. 2
47. Paul Webb and Justin Fisher May 2001
Professionalizing the Millbank Tendency: the Political Sociology of New Labour's Employees
48. Aleks Szczerbiak June 2001
Europe as a Re-aligning Issue in Polish Politics?: Evidence from the October 2000 Presidential Election
OPPOSING EUROPE RESEARCH NETWORK Working Paper No. 3
49. Agnes Batory September 2001
Hungarian Party Identities and the Question of European Integration
OPPOSING EUROPE RESEARCH NETWORK Working Paper No. 4
50. Karen Henderson September 2001
Euroscepticism or Europhobia: Opposition attitudes to the EU in the Slovak Republic
OPPOSING EUROPE RESEARCH NETWORK Working Paper No. 5

51. Paul Taggart and Aleks Szczerbiak April 2002
The Party Politics of Euroscepticism in EU Member and Candidate States
OPPOSING EUROPE RESEARCH NETWORK Working Paper No. 6.
52. Alan Mayhew April 2002
The Negotiating Position of the European Union on Agriculture, the Structural Funds and the EU Budget.
53. Aleks Szczerbiak May 2002
After the Election, Nearing The Endgame: The Polish Euro-Debate in the Run Up To The 2003 EU Accession Referendum
OPPOSING EUROPE RESEARCH NETWORK Working Paper No. 7.
54. Charlie Lees June 2002
'Dark Matter': institutional constraints and the failure of party-based Euroscepticism in Germany
OPPOSING EUROPE RESEARCH NETWORK Working Paper No. 8
55. Pinar Tanlak October 2002
Turkey EU Relations in the Post Helsinki phase and the EU harmonisation laws adopted by the Turkish Grand National Assembly in August 2002
56. Nick Sitter October 2002
Opposing Europe: Euro-Scepticism, Opposition and Party Competition
OPPOSING EUROPE RESEARCH NETWORK Working Paper No. 9
57. Hans G. Nilsson November 2002
Decision Making in EU Justice and Home Affairs: Current Shortcomings and Reform Possibilities
58. Adriano Giovannelli November 2002
Semipresidentialism: an emerging pan-European model
59. Daniel Naurin December 2002
Taking Transparency Seriously
60. Lucia Quaglia March 2003
Euroscepticism in Italy and centre Right and Right wing political parties
OPPOSING EUROPE RESEARCH NETWORK Working Paper No. 10
61. Francesca Vassallo March 2003
Another Europeanisation Case: British Political Activism
62. Kieran Williams, Aleks Szczerbiak, Brigid Fowler March 2003
Explaining Lustration in Eastern Europe: a Post-Communist Politics Approach

63. Rasa Spokeviciute March 2003
The Impact of EU Membership of The Lithuanian Budget
64. Clive Church May 2003
The Contexts of Swiss Opposition to Europe
OPPOSING EUROPE RESEARCH NETWORK Working Paper No. 11
65. Alan Mayhew May 2003
The Financial and Budgetary Impact of Enlargement and Accession
66. Przemysław Biskup June 2003
Conflicts Between Community and National Laws: An Analysis of the British Approach
67. Eleonora Crutini August 2003
Evolution of Local Systems in the Context of Enlargement
68. Professor Jim Rollo August 2003
Agriculture, the Structural Funds and the Budget After Enlargement
69. Aleks Szczerbiak and Paul Taggart October 2003
Theorising Party-Based Euroscepticism: Problems of Definition, Measurement and Causality
EUROPEAN PARTIES ELECTIONS AND REFERENDUMS NETWORK Working Paper No. 12
70. Nicolo Conti November 2003
Party Attitudes to European Integration: A Longitudinal Analysis of the Italian Case
EUROPEAN PARTIES ELECTIONS AND REFERENDUMS NETWORK Working Paper No. 13
71. Paul Lewis November 2003
The Impact of the Enlargement of the European Union on Central European Party Systems
EUROPEAN PARTIES ELECTIONS AND REFERENDUMS NETWORK Working Paper No. 14
72. Jonathan P. Aus December 2003
Supranational Governance in an “Area of Freedom, Security and Justice”: Eurodac and the Politics of Biometric Control
73. Juraj Buzalk February 2004
Is Rural Populism on the decline? Continuities and Changes in Twentieth Century Europe: The case of Slovakia
74. Anna Slodka May 2004
Eco Labelling in the EU: Lessons for Poland

75. Pasquale Tridico May 2004
*Institutional Change and Economic Performance in Transition
Economics: The case of Poland*
76. Arkadiusz Domagala August 2004
*Humanitarian Intervention: The Utopia of Just War?
The NATO intervention in Kosovo and the restraints of Humanitarian Intervention*
77. Marisol Garcia, Antonio Cardesa Salzmann & Marc Pradel September 2004
*The European Employment Strategy: An Example of European
Multi-level Governance*
78. Alan Mayhew October 2004
*The Financial Framework of the European Union, 2007–2013: New
Policies? New Money?*
79. Wojciech Lewandowski October 2004
The Influence of the War in Iraq on Transatlantic Relations
80. Susannah Verney October 2004
*The End of Socialist Hegemony: Europe and the Greek Parliamentary
Election of 7th March 2004*
EUROPEAN PARTIES ELECTIONS AND REFERENDUMS NETWORK Working Paper
No. 15
81. Kenneth Chan November 2004
*Central and Eastern Europe in the 2004 European Parliamentary
Elections: A Not So European Event*
EUROPEAN PARTIES ELECTIONS AND REFERENDUMS NETWORK Working Paper
No. 16
82. Lionel Marquis December 2004
The Priming of Referendum Votes on Swiss European Policy
EUROPEAN PARTIES ELECTIONS AND REFERENDUMS NETWORK Working Paper
No. 17
83. Lionel Marquis and Karin Gilland Lutz December 2004
*Thinking About and Voting on Swiss Foreign Policy: Does Affective
and Cognitive Involvement Play a Role?*
EUROPEAN PARTIES ELECTIONS AND REFERENDUMS NETWORK Working Paper
No. 18
84. Nathaniel Copsey and Aleks Szczerbiak March 2005
*The Future of Polish-Ukrainian Relations: Evidence from the June 2004
European Parliament Election Campaign in Poland*
85. Ece Ozlem Atikcan May 2006
*Citizenship or Denizenship: The Treatment of Third Country Nationals
in the European Union*

86. Aleks Szczerbiak May 2006
'Social Poland' Defeats 'Liberal Poland'?: The September-October 2005 Polish Parliamentary and Presidential Elections
87. Nathaniel Copsey October 2006
Echoes of the Past in Contemporary Politics: the case of Polish-Ukrainian Relations
88. Lyukba Savkova November 2006
Spoilt for Choice, Yet Hard to Get: Voters and Parties at the Bulgarian 2005 Parliamentary Election
89. Tim Bale and Paul Taggart November 2006
First Timers Yes, Virgins No: The Roles and Backgrounds of New Members of the European Parliament
90. Lucia Quaglia November 2006
Setting the pace? Private financial interests and European financial market integration
91. Tim Bale and Aleks Szczerbiak December 2006
Why is there no Christian Democracy in Poland (and why does this matter)?
92. Edward Phelps December 2006
Young Adults and Electoral Turnout in Britain: Towards a Generational Model of Political Participation
93. Alan Mayhew April 2007
A certain idea of Europe: Can European integration survive eastern enlargement?
94. Seán Hanley, Aleks Szczerbiak, Tim Haughton and Brigid Fowler May 2007
Explaining the Success of Centre-Right Parties in Post-Communist East Central Europe: A Comparative Analysis
95. Dan Hough and Michael Koß May 2007
Territory and Electoral Politics in Germany
96. Lucia Quaglia July 2007
Committee Governance in the Financial Sector in the European Union
97. Lucia Quaglia, Dan Hough and Alan Mayhew August 2007
You Can't Always Get What You Want, But Do You Sometimes Get What You Need? The German Presidency of the EU in 2007

98. Aleks Szczerbiak November 2007
Why do Poles love the EU and what do they love about it?: Polish attitudes towards European integration during the first three years of EU membership
99. Francis McGowan January 2008
The Contrasting Fortunes of European Studies and EU Studies: Grounds for Reconciliation?
100. Aleks Szczerbiak January 2008
The birth of a bi-polar party system or a referendum on a polarising government: The October 2007 Polish parliamentary election
101. Catharina Sørensen January 2008
Love me, love me not... A typology of public euroscepticism
EUROPEAN PARTIES ELECTIONS AND REFERENDUMS NETWORK Working Paper No. 19
102. Lucia Quaglia February 2008
Completing the Single Market in Financial services: An Advocacy Coalition Framework
103. Aleks Szczerbiak and Monika Bil May 2008
When in doubt, (re-)turn to domestic politics?
The (non-) impact of the EU on party politics in Poland
EUROPEAN PARTIES ELECTIONS AND REFERENDUMS NETWORK Working Paper No. 20
104. John Palmer July 2008
Beyond EU Enlargement-Creating a United European Commonwealth
105. Paul Blokker September 2008
Constitutional Politics, Constitutional Texts and Democratic Variety in Central and Eastern Europe
106. Edward Maxfield September 2008
A New Right for a New Europe? Basescu, the Democrats & Romania's centre-right
107. Emanuele Massetti November 2008
The Scottish and Welsh Party Systems Ten Years after Devolution: Format, Ideological Polarization and Structure of Competition
108. Stefano Braghiroli December 2008
Home Sweet Home: Assessing the Weight and Effectiveness of National Parties' Interference on MEPs' everyday Activity
109. Christophe Hillion and Alan Mayhew January 2009
The Eastern Partnership – something new or window-dressing

110. John FitzGibbon September 2009
Ireland's No to Lisbon: Learning the Lessons from the failure of the Yes and the Success of the No Side
EUROPEAN PARTIES ELECTIONS AND REFERENDUMS NETWORK Working Paper No. 21
111. Emelie Lilliefeldt September 2009
Political parties and Gender Balanced Parliamentary Presence in Western Europe: A two-step Fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis
112. Valeria Tarditi January 2010
THE SCOTTISH NATIONAL PARTY'S CHANGING ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE EUROPEAN UNION
EUROPEAN PARTIES ELECTIONS AND REFERENDUMS NETWORK Working Paper No. 22
113. Stijn van Kessel February 2010
Swaying the disgruntled floating voter. The rise of populist parties in contemporary Dutch politics.
114. Peter Holmes and Jim Rollo April 2010
EU Internal Market: Shaping a new Commission Agenda 2009-2014.
115. Alan Mayhew June 2010
The Economic and Financial Crisis: impacts on an emerging economy – Ukraine
116. Dan Keith June 2010
The Portuguese Communist Party – Lessons in Resisting Change
117. Ariadna Ripoll Servent June 2010
The European Parliament and the 'Returns' directive: The end of radical contestation; the start of consensual constraints?
118. Paul Webb, Tim Bale and Paul Taggart October 2010
Deliberative Versus Parliamentary Democracy in the UK: An Experimental Study
119. Alan Mayhew, Kai Oppermann and Dan Hough April 2011
German foreign policy and leadership of the EU – 'You can't always get what you want ... but you sometimes get what you need'
120. Tim Houwen June 2011
The non-European roots of the concept of populism
121. Cas Mudde August 2011
Sussex v. North Carolina: The Comparative Study of Party Based Euroscepticism
EUROPEAN PARTIES ELECTIONS AND REFERENDUMS NETWORK Working Paper No. 23

122. Marko Stojic August 2011
The Changing Nature of Serbian Political Parties' Attitudes Towards Serbian EU Membership
EUROPEAN PARTIES ELECTIONS AND REFERENDUMS NETWORK Working Paper No. 24
123. Dan Keith September 2011
'When life gives you lemons make lemonade': Party organisation and the adaptation of West European Communist Parties
124. Marianne Sundlisæter Skinner October 2011
From Ambiguity to Euroscepticism? A Case Study of the Norwegian Progress Party's Position on the European Union
EUROPEAN PARTIES ELECTIONS AND REFERENDUMS NETWORK Working Paper No. 25
125. Amy Busby October 2011
"You're not going to write about that are you?": what methodological issues arise when doing ethnography in an elite political setting?
126. Robin Kolodny November 2011
The Bidirectional Benefits of Political Party Democracy Promotion: The Case of the UK's Westminster Foundation for Democracy
127. Tapio Raunio February 2012
'Whenever the EU is involved, you get problems': Explaining the European policy of The (True) Finns
EUROPEAN PARTIES ELECTIONS AND REFERENDUMS NETWORK Working Paper No. 26
128. Alan Mayhew March 2012
Reforming the EU budget to support economic growth
129. Aleks Szczerbiak March 2012
Poland (Mainly) Chooses Stability and Continuity: The October 2011 Polish Parliamentary Election
130. Lee Savage April 2012
A product of their bargaining environment: Explaining government duration in Central and Eastern Europe
131. Paul Webb August 2012
Who is willing to participate, and how? Dissatisfied democrats, stealth democrats and populists in the UK
132. Dan Keith and Francis McGowan February 2014
Radical left parties and immigration issues
133. Aleks Szczerbiak March 2014
Explaining patterns of lustration and communist security service file access in post-1989 Poland

134. Andreas Kornelakis April 2014
The Evolution of National Social Dialogue in Europe under the Single Market, 1992-2006
135. Aleksandra Moroska-Bonkiewicz and Bartek Pytlas June 2014
European Issues as a Domestic Proxy: The Case of the German Federal Election 2013
EUROPEAN PARTIES ELECTIONS AND REFERENDUMS NETWORK Working Paper No. 27
136. Cristina Ares Castro-Conde June 2014
From Measuring Party Positions on European Integration to Comparing Party Proposals on EU Affairs: the Case of the 2011 Spanish General Election
EUROPEAN PARTIES ELECTIONS AND REFERENDUMS NETWORK Working Paper No. 27
137. Toygar Baykan August 2014
Halkçılık and Popülizm: “Official-Rational” versus “Popular” in the context of “Turkish Exceptionalism
138. Aleks Szczerbiak January 2015
A model for democratic transition and European integration? Why Poland matters
139. Aleks Szczerbiak February 2016
Why did Poland adopt a radical lustration law in 2006?
140. Aleks Szczerbiak June 2016
An anti-establishment backlash that shook up the party system? The October 2015 Polish parliamentary election

All Working Papers are downloadable free of charge from the web -

<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/sei/publications/seiworkingpapers>.

Otherwise, each Working Paper is £5.00 (unless noted otherwise) plus £1.00 postage and packing per copy in Europe and £2.00 per copy elsewhere. Payment by credit card or cheque (payable to 'University of Sussex').