



**‘Social Poland’ Defeats ‘Liberal Poland’?:
The September-October 2005 Polish
Parliamentary and Presidential Elections**

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Abstract

Although the 2005 Polish parliamentary and presidential elections were held on separate days the two campaigns ‘contaminated’ each other and the presidential largely overshadowed the parliamentary. For most of the campaign the dominant issue was probity in public life and parties competed on their ability to tackle corruption effectively. The conservative Law and Justice party and its presidential candidate Lech Kaczyński emerged as unexpected winners by framing the contest as choice between ‘social-solidaristic’ and ‘liberal’ visions of Poland. The underlying ideological divisions between, and social bases of support for, Polish parties do appear to be in some flux and a re-alignment of the dimensions of party competition is one possible outcome. However, one should be cautious in assuming that this apparent ‘social versus liberal’ dichotomy will provide a long-term basis for political alignments in Poland and the old ‘post-communist’ historical-cultural divide still appears to be a significant point of orientation for a substantial number of voters.

‘Social Poland’ Defeats ‘Liberal Poland’?: The September-October 2005 Polish Parliamentary and Presidential Elections

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2005 was a year of elections in Poland with parliamentary and presidential polls held within weeks of each other in September and October. Election campaigning completely overshadowed all other political developments during the spring and summer of that year. The result of these elections was a major turnover of the Polish political elite and possibly the beginning of a distinctive, new phase in post-1989 politics. This paper examines the 2005 Polish parliamentary and presidential election campaigns. It begins with a survey of the main developments in the Polish party system during the 2001-2005 parliament and then examines the parliamentary-presidential campaign as it unfolded during the spring and summer. A brief analysis of the parliamentary election results is followed by an account of the final, post-parliamentary election phase of the presidential campaign. Finally, consideration is given as to whether it is possible to draw any long-term conclusions from these elections, particularly whether new dimensions of party competition are replacing the ‘post-communist’ historical-cultural divide that was dominant throughout the post-1989 period.

The paper argues that although the 2005 Polish parliamentary and presidential elections were held on separate days the two campaigns ‘contaminated’ each other and the presidential largely overshadowed the parliamentary. For most of the campaign the dominant issue was probity in public life and parties competed on their ability to tackle corruption effectively. The traditionalist-conservative Law and Justice (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość: PiS) party and its presidential candidate Lech Kaczyński¹ emerged as unexpected winners by framing the contest as choice between ‘social-solidaristic’ and

¹ The Law and Justice party was formed in April 2001 by Jarosław Kaczyński to capitalise on the popularity of his twin brother Lech, the (politically independent) justice minister in the previous Solidarity Electoral Action (Akcja Wyborcza Solidarność: AWS)-led government. Jarosław Kaczyński played a key role in securing Lech Wałęsa’s victory in the 1990 presidential election, but then broke with the legendary Solidarity leader and his Centre Agreement (Porozumienie Centrum: PC) party played a relatively minor role in Polish politics during the 1990s.

'liberal' visions of Poland. The underlying ideological divisions between, and social bases of support for, Polish parties do appear to be in some flux and a re-alignment of the dimensions of party competition is one possible outcome. However, one should be cautious in assuming that this apparent 'social versus liberal' dichotomy will provide a long-term basis for political alignments in Poland and the old 'post-communist' historical-cultural divide still appears to be a significant point of orientation for a substantial number of voters.

Polish party system development in the 2001-2005 parliament

Since the previous September 2001 parliamentary election the greatest turbulence and party instability has occurred on the centre-left of the political spectrum. This was surprising given that commentators have cited the Polish communist successor party, the Democratic Left Alliance (Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej: SLD),² as almost a model of how to transform a former regime party into a modern, electorally successful social democratic formation.³ The Democratic Left Alliance won the 2001 election in coalition with the smaller Labour Union (Unia Pracy: UP),⁴ falling just short of an overall majority in the Sejm, the more powerful lower chamber of the Polish parliament.⁵ It went on to form a government led by former communist official Leszek Miller in coalition with the

² The Democratic Left Alliance was originally formed at the beginning of the 1990s as an electoral coalition comprising various parties and groupings clustered around Social Democracy of the Polish Republic (Socjaldemokracja Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej: SdRP), the direct organisational successor to the Polish communist party. It won the September 1993 parliamentary election and was the main government party between 1993-97 but, in spite of increasing its share of the vote, lost the September 1997 election to Solidarity Electoral Action. In June 1999 it was transformed into a single, unitary party.

³ See, for example: Anna Grzymała-Busse, *Redeeming the Communist Past: The Regeneration of Communist Successor Parties in East Central Europe After 1989* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

⁴ The Labour Union was a small social democratic party set up in 1992 as a left-wing alternative to the Democratic Left Alliance and originally included both former communists and leading members of Solidarity amongst its founders. The party was represented in the 1993-97 parliament but failed to cross the 5% threshold in 1997.

⁵ See: Aleks Szczerbiak, 'Poland's Unexpected Political Earthquake: The September 2001 Parliamentary Election,' *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*. Vol 18 No 3 (2002), pp41-76; and Frances Millard, 'Elections in Poland 2001: electoral manipulation and party upheaval,' *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*. Vol 36 No 1 (2003), pp69-86.

successor to its erstwhile communist satellite, the Polish Peasant Party (Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe: PSL).⁶

The Democratic Left Alliance returned to office with high expectations that it would represent a significant improvement on the previous, deeply unpopular centre-right Solidarity Electoral Action government led by the hapless Jerzy Buzek. However, the new government enjoyed virtually no post-election honeymoon and its approval ratings declined rapidly. This was due to an accumulation of problems. In the first instance, it stemmed from concerns about the continued sluggishness of the Polish economy. Although the economy recovered towards the end of 2003, this failed to filter down to ordinary Poles and produce a tangible 'feel good' factor because unemployment remained stubbornly high throughout the life of the parliament, fostering a continuing sense of personal insecurity.⁷ Continued in-fighting within the government and between premier Miller and the Democratic Left Alliance-backed President Aleksander Kwaśniewski exacerbated these problems with the economy and proved especially damaging given that the party was elected on a promise to restore competent and disciplined government after the chaos and in-fighting of the Buzek administration. Indeed, the Miller government's incompetent handling of certain key policy areas, such as health service reform, suggested that it was as, if not more, ineffective than its discredited predecessor.⁸ Moreover, in March 2003, the Peasant Party was forced out of the coalition following its failure to back the government in a crucial parliamentary vote, leaving Miller to head up a minority administration dependent on independents and small parliamentary fractions for its Sejm majority.

However, the Democratic Left Alliance still retained an opinion poll lead because the fragmented and ineffective opposition, particularly the two main centre-right parties - the

⁶ The Peasant Party was formed in 1990 as the organisational successor to the former communist satellite United Peasant Party (Zjednoczone Stronnictwo Ludowe: ZSL). It was the junior government coalition partner between 1993-97 after it emerged as the second largest party in the 1993 election and its leader Walemar Pawlak was premier from October 1993-February 1995, but saw its vote share slump in 1997.

⁷ See, for example: 'Czarno widzą', *Rzeczpospolita*, 19 August 2004.

⁸ See: Janina Paradowska, 'Aparat na części,' *Polityka*, 14 December 2002; Piotr Zaremba, 'Zwycięski bakcyl chaosu,' *Rzeczpospolita*, 14 January 2003; and Janina Paradowska, 'Miller we młynie,' *Polityka*, 18 January 2003.

liberal-conservative Civic Platform (Platforma Obywatelska: PO)⁹ and more traditionalist-conservative Law and Justice party - failed to project themselves as a credible alternative.¹⁰ In spite of its minority status, the government was fairly secure in office because the Polish Constitution made it difficult to remove an incumbent premier by requiring a so-called ‘constructive vote of no-confidence’ in favour of a named successor. It was also able to win key parliamentary votes because the Democratic Left Alliance had a disciplined and cohesive parliamentary caucus and could generally rely on the support of enough independent deputies fearful that bringing down the government would herald an early election in which they would almost certainly lose their seats.

The situation began to change following the outbreak of the so-called ‘Rywin affair’ that came to light at the end of 2002. This centred on allegations that individuals linked to the Democratic Left Alliance, including media mogul and film producer Lew Rywin, demanded payment from the newspaper publisher Agora in return for favourable changes to the government’s media regulation law. The televised public hearings of the special parliamentary commission set up in January 2003 to investigate the allegations revealed close links between Rywin and senior media figures associated with the Democratic Left Alliance and drew in numerous government officials, including Miller himself.¹¹ The Rywin affair was followed by a succession of further, high profile sleaze allegations linking government ministers and party officials with corruption and cronyism.¹² Another parliamentary commission was set up in 2004 to investigate allegations made by a former Treasury minister that Miller had used the security services to arrest the president of PKN Orlen, Poland’s largest energy company, to block a deal to supply it with Russian oil. The

⁹ Civic Platform was formed in January 2001 to capitalise on former finance and foreign minister Andrzej Olechowski’s relative success as an independent liberal-conservative candidate in the 2000 presidential election. A triumvirate that included Olechowski, Solidarity Electoral Action Sejm speaker Maciej Płażyński and Donald Tusk, a leading member of the liberal Freedom Union (Unia Wolności: UW) party (see note 25), originally led the party.

¹⁰ See: Janina Paradowska, ‘Przeciwko samym sobie,’ *Polityka*, 5 October 2002.

¹¹ A TNS-OBOP poll published in April 2004 found that when asked who (apart from Rywin himself) was most damaged by the affair, 27% answered the government, 26% the Democratic Left Alliance and 21% premier Miller. See: Wiesław Władyka, ‘Zyskał Rokita,’ *Polityka*, 3 April 2004.

¹² For example, a September 2003 poll found that most respondents considered that Democratic Left Alliance politicians were: concerned primarily with their personal or party interests (79%), susceptible to corruption (75%), failed to observe the law (66%), were dishonest (63%), and easily embroiled easily in “dubious networks” (62%). See: Eliza Olczyk, ‘Socjaldemokracja tytułarna,’ *Rzeczpospolita*, 2 October 2003.

negative impact of these various scandals was exacerbated by the fact that at the end of 2003 the government was forced to introduce a series of tough and unpopular austerity measures drawn up by deputy premier responsible for economic affairs, Jerzy Hausner, to prevent the budget deficit from spiralling out of control. All of this had an extremely damaging effect on the Democratic Left Alliance's already battered public standing and, from the end of 2003, the party lost its opinion poll lead to Civic Platform.¹³ The latter benefited enormously from the presence of its parliamentary caucus leader, Jan Rokita, as one of the most effective and high profile members of the Rywin commission.¹⁴

At the same time, attempts to organise a single, broad right-wing electoral coalition on the lines of Solidarity Electoral Action were abandoned in favour of consolidation around the three main existing parliamentary parties: Civic Platform, the Law and Justice party and the clerical-nationalist League of Polish Families (Liga Polskich Rodziń: LPR).¹⁵ Although the liberal Donald Tusk became Civic Platform's sole leader in June 2003 (the party having been previously led by a triumvirate), and eventually their presidential candidate, it was Rokita who emerged as its most high profile figure and important political strategist, spearheading efforts to re-profile the party as more socially conservative and with a stronger national-patriotic discourse.¹⁶ The latter was exemplified by a change of tone in the party's approach to European issues, particularly its opposition to the new voting provisions contained in the EU constitutional treaty, which would have replaced the ones in the 2001 Nice treaty that were felt to be more favourable to Poland,

¹³ An April 2004 CBOS poll found that, when asked what had most damaged the Miller government, 66% of respondents cited corruption and criminal scandals, 49% continuing high levels of unemployment, 28% the party's failure to implement its election promises, 22% its arrogant style of government, 22% the failure of ordinary citizens to feel the benefits of economic success, 20% the 'Rywin affair' specifically, 19% internal party conflicts and divisions, and 14% public expenditure cuts and the Hausner plan. See: 'Korupcja, afery, bezrobocie,' *Rzeczpospolita*, 10-12 April 2004.

¹⁴ See: Janina Paradowska, 'Takich dwóch jak ich trzech,' *Polityka*, 6 December 2003. As noted above, the Law and Justice party was originally established to capitalise on Lech Kaczyński's popularity as justice minister in the previous government.

¹⁵ The League of Polish Families was formed in the run up to the September 2001 parliamentary election as a coalition of various right-wing and clerical-nationalist parties. However, it was registered and contested the election as just one party (in order to be eligible for the lower 5% threshold for parliamentary representation, 8% for electoral coalitions) and was re-organised subsequently as a single, unitary party.

¹⁶ See: Filip Gawryś and Piotr Śmiłowicz, 'Platforma Konserwatywna,' *Rzeczpospolita*, 18 December 2003; Witold Gadomski, 'Platforma do zwycięstwa,' 27 August 2004 at <http://serwis.gazeta.pl/wyborcza/2029020,34474,2254696.html> (Viewed on 2 September 2004); and Janina Paradowska, 'PR dawniej PO,' *Polityka*, 29 January 2005.

encapsulated in Rokita's slogan 'Nice or Death'. This broadening of the party's appeal beyond its core liberal electorate, appeared to bear fruit when, as noted above, Civic Platform emerged as the most popular party in opinion polls at the beginning of 2004 and won the largest share of the vote in the June 2004 European Parliament election.¹⁷ Meanwhile, the Law and Justice party consolidated its position when its honorary chairman Lech Kaczyński (twin brother of the party's founder and leader, Jarosław Kaczyński) won a stunning victory in the October 2002 election for the post of mayor of Warsaw, making him the centre-right's most obvious challenger for the presidency.¹⁸ The League of Polish Families also survived the withdrawal of support from its original sponsor, the influential fundamentalist Catholic broadcaster Radio Maryja, with its popularity unscathed, while the young and extremely ambitious Roman Giertych began to emerge as the party's main spokesman, particularly following his prominent role in the parliamentary commission investigating the 'Orlen affair'.¹⁹

Among the agrarian parties, the defection of nearly half of the parliamentary caucus of the Self-Defence party (Samoobrona) had little discernible impact on its level of support, suggesting that it was the party's controversial leader Andrzej Lepper who 'defined' it for most of its voters.²⁰ Indeed, at the beginning of 2004 polls showed a surge of support for Self-Defence as it capitalised on the decline of the Democratic Left Alliance, making it (briefly) the most popular party ahead of Civic Platform. However, the party's fortunes ebbed and flowed and in the 2004 European Parliament election Self-Defence only obtained the same level of support that it enjoyed in the 2001 parliamentary election, suggesting that while it may have had large reservoirs of potential voters, its electorate

¹⁷ See: Aleks Szczerbiak, 'The European Parliament Election in Poland, June 13 2004,' *European Parties Elections and Referendums Network 2004 European Parliament Election Briefing No 1, June 2004*, June 2004 at <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/sei/documents/epnep2004poland.pdf> (Viewed on 10 January 2006).

¹⁸ See: Janina Paradowska, 'Dwaj bracia i Ludek,' *Polityka*, 14 August 2004.

¹⁹ See: Małgorzata Subotić and Piotr Smiłowicz, 'Liga – naprzód marsz,' *Rzeczpospolita*, 20 October 2004.

²⁰ Self-Defence was set up in the early 1990s as both a political party and farmers' union by Lepper, one of the most controversial figures in Polish politics who first came to prominence as leader of radical farmers' protests against debt foreclosures. Lepper returned to front line politics during farmers' blockades at the beginning of 1999 and surprised observers when Self-Defence emerged as the third largest party in the September 2001 election.

was also 'soft' and extremely volatile.²¹ On the other hand, the Peasant Party – which, along with the Democratic Left Alliance, had appeared to be a point of stability in the post-1989 Polish party system - saw its poll ratings slump. It lost support initially as a result of its association with the deeply unpopular Miller government, in which it found itself increasingly marginalized. When it was eventually forced out of the coalition acrimoniously, the party found it difficult to develop a distinctive profile in opposition and was relentlessly squeezed for its core electorate by Lepper and Self-Defence, even placing a question mark over its future survival as a parliamentary party.²²

By the start of 2004, the Democratic Left Alliance was in deep crisis as Miller's tough, uncompromising style - which was an asset when he was leader of the opposition in the previous parliament - came to be viewed as imperious and high-handed, especially following his arrogant performance in front the Rywin commission. When the Miller government became the most unpopular post-1989 administration with approval ratings of only 5-10%, fear of electoral meltdown led to the growth of opposition within the party. Miller's decision to resign as party leader in March, while staying on as premier, failed to stem the tide and matters came a head when the party's poll ratings began hovering dangerously close to the 5% and 8% thresholds required for parties and electoral coalitions to secure parliamentary representation. This precipitated the first major split on the Polish centre-left since 1989 when, in March 2004, 33 Democratic Left Alliance and Labour Union deputies led by the Sejm speaker Marek Borowski broke away to form a new party, Polish Social Democracy (Socjaldemokracja Polska: SdPI), convinced that unless the left broke decisively with the tainted Miller government it would suffer electoral catastrophe.²³ This deprived the government of its *de facto* parliamentary majority and, as a consequence, Miller agreed to stand down as premier on May 2, the day after Polish accession to the EU.

²¹ See: Szczerbiak, 'The European Parliament Election in Poland, June 13 2004.' For a good analysis of the nature of Self-Defence's support see: Radosław Markowski, 'Jak gasną populizmy,' 19 November 2004 at <http://serwisy.gazeta.pl/wyborcza/2029020,34591,2401990.html> (Viewed on 23 November 2004).

²² See, for example: Krystyna Naszkowska, 'Jak z chłopa zrobić chadeka,' *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 15 March 2004.

²³ See, for example: 'Nic nie słyszeli w Sojuszu,' *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 27-28 March 2004.

Following Miller's resignation, Kwaśniewski entrusted his one-time economic adviser Marek Belka with the task of forming a new government. Although Belka was essentially a non-party technocrat he had also served twice as finance minister in Democratic Left Alliance-led governments. Belka secured parliamentary approval for his government on his second attempt in June when Polish Social Democracy changed its original stance and decided to support his administration. He attempted to present a fresh image and assert his independence from the Democratic Left Alliance. However, although he never plumbed Miller's depths of unpopularity, Belka failed to develop any significant momentum and, given that his government retained virtually all of the key ministers from the previous administration, was too closely associated with its predecessor, even without Miller at the helm.

Belka presented his new cabinet as a one-year interim government of experts, and promised to bring the parliamentary election date forward from autumn to spring/summer 2005. The Democratic Left Alliance had also pledged itself to support an early election, but as polls showed the party hovering dangerously close to the 5% threshold, it began to change its political calculations.²⁴ This was re-inforced by the fact that in December 2004 the party had elected as its new leader Sejm speaker Józef Oleksy who, although a long-standing critic of the Miller premiership and at one viewed as an ally by reformist elements within the party, won by enlisting the backing of the old guard. Moreover, only three days after his election as leader, the so-called 'lustration (vetting) court' found that Oleksy had lied about his links with the communist security services, forcing him to resign as Sejm speaker. All of this led the Democratic Left Alliance to renege on its earlier promise to support an early election.

At one point it did appear possible that the parliamentary election might still be brought forward when in March 2005 Belka, strongly supported by Kwaśniewski, announced his intention to resign in order to persuade enough Democratic Left Alliance deputies to vote for an early dissolution. In fact, Belka used the May 2005 dissolution debate to break formally with the Democratic Left Alliance and join a new pro-EU, pro-reform political

²⁴ See: Janina Paradowska, 'Trzy w jednym,' *Polityka*, 14 May 2005.

movement called the Democratic Party-democrats.pl (Partia Demokratyczna-demokraci.pl). This party was formed earlier that year on the basis of the liberal Freedom Union party²⁵ joined by economy minister Hausner, who broke from the Democratic Left Alliance in February, in an attempt to broaden its appeal to a new centre-left electorate. Polling evidence suggested that such a new party could draw away a significant number of ‘centrist’ voters from Civic Platform, following the latter’s adoption of increasingly conservative and national-patriotic rhetoric.²⁶ However, in the event the Democratic Left Alliance voted solidly to block the dissolution motion and although Belka resigned anyway Kwaśniewski persuaded him to continue as caretaker premier for a further five months; as accepting his resignation would probably have led the election to be held during the summer holiday period. Kwaśniewski announced that the parliamentary election would take place on September 25. At the same time, Democratic Left Alliance Sejm speaker Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz set the date for the first round of the presidential election on October 9, with a second round run off to be held two weeks later on October 23 between the two leading candidates if no one secured more than 50% of the vote.

The parliamentary/presidential spring-summer campaign

Presidential campaign overshadows parliamentary

Although the elections were held on separate days, the two campaigns ran very much in tandem and inevitably ‘contaminated’ each other. In spite of the fact that the president’s constitutional powers were actually quite limited and Poland is closer to a German-style Chancellor system than a French semi-presidential one,²⁷ for most of the time it was the

²⁵ The Freedom Union was formed in April 1995 through a merger of two ‘post-Solidarity’ liberal-centrist parties, the Democratic Union (Unia Demokratyczna: UD) and the Liberal Democratic Congress (Kongres Liberalno-Demokratyczny: KLD) that, between them, supplied three of Poland’s first four post-1989 premiers: Tadeusz Mazowiecki, Jan Krzysztof Bielecki and Hanna Suchocka. The party was Solidarity Electoral Action’s junior government coalition partner in 1997-2000 but failed to secure re-election to parliament in 2001.

²⁶ See, for example: Radosław Markowski, ‘Centrum: jest czy go nie ma?’ *Polityka*, 26 February 2005.

²⁷ Although the President nominates the premier on the first and third attempts to form a government, the candidacy must be approved by parliament and, in reality, is nominated by the largest party - or whichever can command a majority - in the Sejm. The President can dissolve parliament if the Sejm fails to approve a new government after three attempts or the annual budget within four months of its first reading. The

presidential campaign that overshadowed the parliamentary one in terms of media coverage. This also meant that the parliamentary campaign was the most personalised and leader-dominated since 1989 and benefited parties associated with visible and popular candidates, particularly those where the party leader was standing for the presidency or where the presidential candidate and party were, in effect, indistinguishable, such as: Lech Kaczyński and Law and Justice, Donald Tusk and Civic Platform, and Andrzej Lepper and Self-Defence. On the other hand, it was very damaging for parties with lacklustre presidential candidates such as Maciej Giertych for the League of Polish Families,²⁸ or where the candidate was only loosely associated with the party supporting them, such as the Henryka Bochniarz for the Democrats.²⁹

The main shifts in party support during the spring and summer were closely linked to major developments in the presidential campaign. Law and Justice benefited from Kaczyński's high profile presidential campaign launch, in the style of a US political convention, in the week immediately prior to Easter that effectively began the long election campaign. Not only did Kaczyński gain momentum as the first to formally declare his candidacy, but the fact that political activity was completely suspended following the death of Pope John Paul II just over a week later gave other parties and candidates little time to respond.³⁰ Kaczyński also secured a high public profile from his presence, by dint of his mayoral office, at the huge and extensively reported open-air masses held in Warsaw in the week leading up to late pontiff's funeral. As a result of this, Law and Justice drew level with Civic Platform in the polls and Kaczyński began to eclipse the earlier presidential front runner Professor Zbigniew Religa, an independent centre-right member of the Senate who was Poland's most trusted politician. In fact, like

President can also veto legislation, which requires a three-fifths majority in the Sejm to be overturned, or refer bills to the Constitutional Tribunal. In addition, the President has the right to initiate legislation and nominate a number of key state officials.

²⁸ Maciej Giertych was chosen specifically because he had the same name as, but would not overshadow, his more charismatic son Roman who was too young to stand for presidency in 2005! See: Wojciech Załuska, 'Trzy fronty PiS,' 18 July 2005 at <http://serwisy.gazeta.pl/kraj/2029020,34317,2825609.html> (Viewed on 19 July 2005),

²⁹ See: Małgorzata Subotić, 'Jak sobie strzelić samobójczego gola,' *Rzeczpospolita*, 8 September 2005.

³⁰ See: Jarosław Kurski, 'Trzy recepty PiS na zwycięstwo,' 21 April 2005 at <http://serwisy.gazeta.pl/wyborcza/2029020,34474,2668078.html> (Viewed on 22 April 2005).

other, apparently popular, non-party candidates in previous presidential polls, Professor Religa faded rapidly when confronted with a bruising election campaign.³¹

Then, having been virtually written off by some commentators, the Democratic Left Alliance received a huge boost at the end of June when Cimoszewicz, the party's respected speaker of the Sejm, reversed his earlier decision and decided to re-join the presidential contest. Cimoszewicz's superbly choreographed re-entry was managed to give the impression that he was a figure above the party fray who had changed his mind due to a groundswell of popular support and he immediately overtook Kaczyński as the new front-runner.³² Although Cimoszewicz was formally a non-party candidate, his election committee included a number of prominent Democratic Left Alliance members and association with his campaign contributed to a sense that the party was engaged in a process of atonement for past mistakes. A June 2005 TNS-OBOP poll, for example, found that 27% of respondents saw Cimoszewicz as primarily a Democratic Left Alliance candidate, 20% a candidate of the broad left and only 17% as an independent non-party candidate (33% did not know).³³ This renewal process already appeared to have begun in May when the party elected 31-year old agriculture minister Wojciech Olejniczak as its new leader. Olejniczak stamped his authority on the party quickly by removing the most unpopular members of its old guard from the Sejm candidate lists, most notably former premier Miller.³⁴ Cimoszewicz's re-entry and emergence as front-runner also led to a slump in support for Borowski, the Social Democrats' presidential candidate and main electoral asset, helping the Democratic Left Alliance pull ahead of its rival on the centre-left with whom they had been running neck-and-neck up until then.³⁵

Tusk's August surge

³¹ See: 'Znany kardiochirurg z nieznanym potencjałem,' *Rzeczpospolita*, 2 February 2005.

³² For a good analysis see: Ireneusz Krzemiński, 'Opportunizm nagrodzony,' *Rzeczpospolita*, 1 July 2005. Cf. Tadeusz Szawiel, 'Cimoszewicz w pierwszej turze?' *Rzeczpospolita*, 20 July 2005.

³³ See: Janina Paradowska, 'Marszałek rusza w pole,' *Polityka*, 9 July 2005.

³⁴ See: Janusz Rolicki, 'Jak SLD uciekł z szafotu,' *Rzeczpospolita*, 22 July 2005.

³⁵ See: Wojciech Załuska, 'Powbyorcza przyszłość lewicy. Skąd dobry wynik SLD,' 27 September 2005 at <http://wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/wybory2005/2029020,67805,2936976.html> (Viewed on 27 September 2005).

The beginning of August saw Civic Platform once again pulling ahead of Law and Justice in the parliamentary campaign following a surge in support for Tusk. This was largely due to Tusk's effective campaigning during the relatively quiet summer period particularly the fact that he was the only presidential candidate to travel to Belarus (in his capacity as Sejm deputy speaker) to express solidarity with the former leadership of the Polish community in that country that had been deposed and expelled from their offices by the authorities in that country.³⁶ Tusk received a further boost in September when Religa pulled out of the race and became head of his campaign committee. At the same time, Tusk also benefited from a big slump in support for Cimoszewicz, who lost ground as the novelty of his campaign launch wore off and then became involved in a damaging controversy following his admission, when appearing before the Orlen commission in July, that he had failed to declare shares that he owned in the company. Cimoszewicz claimed that this was simply an oversight but then one of his former assistants, Anna Jarucka, said that she had been instructed by him to remove the reference to Orlen shares and then re-submit his declaration. Cimoszewicz denied this vigorously and no criminal charges were levelled against him, as it emerged that the document that Jarucka produced before the commission, apparently instructing her to amend the declaration, may well have been a forgery. Nonetheless, the fall-out from the 'Jarucka affair' deprived Cimoszewicz of momentum at a critical stage in the campaign and fatally undermined his efforts to present himself as a politician of high ethical standards.³⁷ An August 2005 TNS-OBOP poll, for example, found that 45% of respondents believed that Cimoszewicz had lied in his assets declaration, compared with only 21% who saw the 'Jarucka affair' as a plot concocted by his political opponents.³⁸ His campaign never really recovered and, although he continued to enjoy around 15-20% support in the polls, he eventually withdrew from the presidential race ten days prior to the parliamentary election.³⁹

³⁶ For good analyses, see: Piotr Smiłowicz, 'Wykorzystał wakacyjną przerwę,' *Rzeczpospolita*, 9 August 2005; and Paweł Wroński, 'Siła spokoju kampanii Tuska,' 7 September 2005 at <http://wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/wybory2005/2029020,67805,2903925.html> (Viewed on 7 September 2005).

³⁷ See: Janina Paradowska, 'Sprawa Jaruckiej,' *Polityka*, 3 September 2005.

³⁸ A further 8% said that Cimoszewicz made a mistake when completing his declaration, 6% that it stemmed from Jarucka's desire for revenge, 4% that it was a security service plot and 27% did not know. See: Mariusz Janicki, 'Tusk ucieka peletonowi,' *Polityka*, 3 September 2005.

³⁹ For interesting, and contrasting, analyses see: Adam Leszczyński, 'Jak zabili Cimoszewicza,' 27 September 2005 at <http://wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/wybory2005/2029020,69307,2937668.html> (Viewed on 27

'Social-solidaristic versus liberal' Poland division emerges

Interestingly, Cimoszewicz's withdrawal did not, as polls originally suggested, benefit Tusk primarily but rather changed the dynamics of the campaign and re-focused it onto socio-economic issues where there was a clear divide between the liberal Civic Platform and more economically interventionist Law and Justice party. Indeed, Law and Justice ran a superb campaign during the last few days of the parliamentary election and re-framed the election as a choice between the Civic Platform's vision of a 'liberal' Poland, which they argued would benefit the better off and 'winners' primarily, and their more egalitarian concept a 'social' or 'solidaristic' Poland. In other words, Law and Justice argued that it was the state's responsibility to build more solidarity between those who had succeeded in the new capitalist Poland and those who felt that they had lost out; in order to capitalise on the fact that most Poles were broadly sympathetic to state intervention in the economy and economic redistribution.⁴⁰ This was exemplified by the party's extremely effective TV advertisement, purporting to demonstrate the effects of Civic Platform's flagship policy to introduce a unitary 15% 'flat tax', that showed the contents of a child's bedroom, a fridge and a pharmacy disappearing.⁴¹ For his part, Lech Kaczyński also drew effectively on the strong support that he received from the Solidarity trade union in order to highlight these two apparently different visions.⁴²

September 2005); and Dominika Wielowiejska, 'Zawinił sam Cimoszewicz,' 27 September 2005 at <http://serwisy.gazeta.pl/kraj/2029020,34314,2939047.html> (Viewed on 28 September 2005).

⁴⁰ See, for example: Paweł Wroński, 'Czy PO wytrzyma ataki innych partii,' 21 September 2005 at <http://wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/wybory2005/2029020,67805,2926158.html> (Viewed on 21 September 2005); and Jarosław Kurski, 'Dlaczego wygrało PiS?' 25 September 2005 at <http://wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/wybory2005/2029020,69307,2935166.html> (Viewed on 26 September 2005).

For a good analysis of how the 'solidaristic v liberal' dichotomy fitted into Law and Justice's broader political discourse, see: Mariusz Janicki, 'Świat ze słów,' *Polityka*, 12 November 2005.

⁴¹ Although, interestingly, an October 2005 GfK Polonia poll found that, within the context of general public opposition to further economic liberalisation, 41% of Poles actually supported Civic Platform's flat tax policy (15% strongly) compared with only 32% who opposed it (12% strongly). See: Marcin Czeakański, 'Chcemy silnego państwa,' *Rzeczpospolita*, 11 October 2005.

⁴² Solidarity leader Janusz Sniadek admitted subsequently that the union's enthusiastic support for Lech Kaczyński was really a proxy to signal its more general support for the Law and Justice party. Solidarity held back from supporting the party more explicitly simply in order to avoid antagonising union members who had bad memories of its most recent foray into party politics through its sponsorship of Solidarity Electoral Action. See: Krzysztof Katka, 'Jak rozmawiac, to tylko z Lechem,' 26 January 2006 at <http://serwisy.gazeta.pl/kraj/2029020,34317,3131110.html> (Viewed on 26 January 2006).

Corruption a major campaign issue

Not surprisingly, given the string of high profile corruption scandals that occurred in Poland over the last two years and their importance in the collapse of support for the Democratic Left Alliance and Miller government, until the last two weeks of the parliamentary election campaign, the dominant issue was probity in public life. An August 2005 CBOS survey found 38% of respondents said that the most important factor determining how they would vote in the forthcoming election would be whether or not they felt that a party free from corruption, compared with only 13% of voters who had cited this as the most important factor in 2001. This figure increased to 52% for Law and Justice and 46% for Civic Platform voters, but was also cited by 37% of League of Polish Families and 32% of Self-Defence voters, compared to only 3% of Democratic Left Alliance voters.⁴³ Parties, therefore, competed with each other on their ability to tackle corruption and offer ‘clean government’.

The Law and Justice party was founded primarily as an anti-corruption and law-and-order party, which gave it particular credibility on this issue. This was encapsulated in the party’s slogan of building a ‘Fourth Republic’, a conservative project based on a radical critique of post-1989 Poland as corrupt and requiring far-reaching moral and political renewal⁴⁴ and exemplified by its plans to set up a powerful, new anti-corruption office and special truth and justice commission with a broad remit to investigate possible scandals. Similarly, as noted above, one of the main reasons why Civic Platform was able to appeal beyond its core liberal electorate and increase its public support significantly

⁴³ See: CBOS. *Motywacje wyborcze w wyborach parlamentarnych*. (CBOS: Warsaw, September 2005, August 2005 data). In contrast, the number of voters who cited a party’s expertise and competence as a key determining factor fell from 31% in 2001 to 21% in 2005.

⁴⁴ See: Aleksander Hall, ‘IV Rzeczypospolitej raczej nie będzie,’ *Rzeczpospolita*, 27 October 2005; and Janusz Reykowski, ‘3 razy 60 proc.’ *Polityka*, 29 October 2005. Although it came to be associated primarily with Law and Justice, politicians and intellectual milieu associated with Civic Platform also developed this critique and party-aligned sociologist and future deputy Paweł Śpiewak apparently, first coined the slogan. See: Paweł Śpiewak, ‘Koniec złudzeń’, *Rzeczpospolita*, 23 January 2003. For a good summary of the debate on this concept, see: Rafał Matja, ‘Druga..., trzecia..., czwarta..., czyli o państwie Polaków’, 4 August 2004 at <http://www.e-fakt.pl/artykuly/artykul.aspx/Artykul/30956> (Viewed on 19 December 2005).

was Rokita's high-profile role on the Rywin commission in which he was portrayed as an equally uncompromising scourge of corruption. Indeed, at one point, Civic Platform's rhetoric on this issue appeared to almost converge with that of Law and Justice,⁴⁵ although the fact that the election inevitably focused on the liberal Tusk as the party's presidential candidate rather than the conservative Rokita as premier-designate, meant that it adopted a somewhat less radical tone during the campaign.⁴⁶

A core element of the appeal of the radical-populist parties, Self-Defence and League of Polish Families, was always the fact that they articulated popular disenchantment with the whole post-1989 political order that they portrayed as corrupt and out of touch with the concerns of ordinary Poles. Although the two parties differed in terms of their emphasis on moral-cultural and socio-economic issues, they both continued to make this extremely bleak view of the Third Republic the core of their electoral appeal.⁴⁷ Meanwhile, as noted above, Polish Social Democracy attempted to present itself as a 'new left' untainted by scandal,⁴⁸ while a core theme of the Democratic Left Alliance's campaign was that the party was renewing itself and breaking with the unacceptable practices associated with the Miller government. Similarly, Cimoszewicz's initial attraction was that he was a 'clean hands' politician of the centre-left,⁴⁹ and a major reason why his campaign faltered was because the 'Jarucka affair' destroyed this image.

Moral cultural issues and the communist past less significant

Interestingly, moral-cultural issues such as Church-state relations and abortion, that had played such an emotive and significant role in Polish elections during the 1990s - and which, together with attitudes towards the communist past, provided the basis for the

⁴⁵ See, for example: Rafał Kałukin, 'Ruchoma Platforma,' 15 June 2005 at <http://serwisy.gazeta.pl/wyborcza/2029020,34474,2768523.html> (Viewed on 16 June 2005).

⁴⁶ See, for example: Paweł Wroński, 'Jak Platforma walczy o rząd,' 21 June 2005 at <http://serwisy.gazeta.pl/wyborcza/2029020,34474,2777726.html> (Viewed on 21 June 2006).

⁴⁷ See, for example: Piotr Smiłowicz, 'Giertych atakuje Kaczyńskich,' *Rzeczpospolita*, 2-3 May 2005; and Andrzej Stankiewicz, 'Prawda według Leppera,' *Rzeczpospolita*, 21 July 2005.

⁴⁸ See, for example: Jolanta Banach, 'Budujemy Polskę bez układów,' 24 July 2005 at <http://serwisy.gazeta.pl/kraj/2029020,34314,2837052.html> (Viewed on 25 July 2005).

⁴⁹ See: 'Socjologowie o Cimoszewiczu,' 26 June 2005 at <http://serwisy.gazeta.pl/kraj/2029020,34308,2787327.html> (Viewed on 27 June 2005).

main axis of party competition and voter alignments in post-1989 Poland - were almost entirely absent from this campaign. The only exception here was the issue of lesbian and gay rights which became salient following Kaczyński's decision, in his capacity as Warsaw mayor, to prevent an 'Equality Parade' being held in the capital in June.⁵⁰ For sure, the clerical-nationalist broadcaster Radio Maryja, which was very influential with Poland's sizeable 'religious right' electorate,⁵¹ mobilised its listeners to stop the Civic Platform by voting for the Law and Justice party and the League of Polish Families; and then, even more unambiguously, campaigned in favour of Kaczyński and against Tusk in the presidential campaign.⁵² However, although many individual clergymen may have had an instinctive sympathy towards the conservative-traditionalist and clerical parties, and Lech Kaczyński and the Law and Justice party attempted to capitalise on this with a special letter calling for their support,⁵³ the Catholic Church hierarchy did not play an active role in the election. For example, Polish bishops made a point of meeting with both Kaczyński and Tusk in the final stages of the presidential campaign.⁵⁴

Similarly, attitudes towards the communist past did not surface as a major campaign issue, although at one stage it seemed that they might. The issue of lustration (vetting individuals for their links with the communist-era security services) had certainly been a very high on the political agenda earlier in the year.⁵⁵ Indeed, when the presidential election appeared to be developing into a bi-polar contest between Cimoszewicz and Kaczyński, the 'historic' post-Solidarity versus ex-communist divide looked like it could once again emerge as a very significant one. Initially, Law and Justice strategists certainly appeared to think that the contest would polarise in this way, and planned to

⁵⁰ See: Izabela Kraj and Karolina Baca, 'Parada z przeszkodami,' *Rzeczpospolita*, 13 June 2005. For how the Law and Justice party and League of Polish Families used this issue in their campaign broadcasts, see: Aleksandra Majda, 'Walka z gejami i korupcją,' *Rzeczpospolita*, 10 June 2005.

⁵¹ Krzemiński estimates, on the basis of 2001 data, that Radio Maryja listeners comprised up to 15% of the electorate, and frequent listeners 9%. See: Ireneusz Krzemiński, 'Wbyór fundamentalny,' *Rzeczpospolita*, 18 October 2005.

⁵² For a good analysis of how Radio Maryja supported the Law and Justice and Kaczyński campaigns see: Jacek Hołub, 'Jak bracia Kaczyńscy podziękują Radiu Maryja,' 24 October 2005 at <http://serwisy.gazeta.pl/kraj/2029020,34314,2983870.html> (Viewed on 25 October 2005).

⁵³ See: Katarzyna Wisniewska, 'Lech Kaczyński wysłał proboszczom list,' 1 October 2005 at <http://wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/wybory2005/2029020,67805,2946118.html> (Viewed on 3 October 2005).

⁵⁴ See: Marcin Kowalski and Katarzyna Wisniewska, 'Kandydaci idą do Kościoła,' 16 October 2005 at <http://wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/wybory2005/2029020,68705,2970269.html> (Viewed on 17 October 2005).

⁵⁵ See: Eliza Olczyk, 'Lustracyjny hit kampanii wyborczej,' *Rzeczpospolita*, 25 January 2005.

exploit the twenty-fifth anniversary celebrations of the coastal strikes that led to the formation of Solidarity, that fell in the middle of the campaign in August, in order to highlight it.⁵⁶ Moreover, Law and Justice always attempted to link its moral and political renewal agenda to its proposals for more radical lustration and de-communisation, arguing that many ex-communist politicians and sections of the business community linked to the former regime formed a corrupt nexus with communist-era security service functionaries and organised crime.⁵⁷ However, following Tusk's surge of support and Cimoszewicz's slump and eventual withdrawal, the 'historic' divide receded into the background, given that both main parties and presidential candidates came from the Solidarity tradition.

The parliamentary election results

As Table 1 shows, Law and Justice's successful framing of the election as a choice between 'social/solidaristic' and 'liberal' visions of Poland was clearly a success and the party emerged as the narrow, but clear, election winner with 26.99% of the vote and 155 seats (out of 460), ahead of Civic Platform with 24.14% and 133 seats. Although bitterly disappointed by its narrow defeat, particularly given that in early September opinion polls indicated that the party was heading for an overwhelming victory, in many ways the result was also a relatively good one for Civic Platform. The party was able to increase its share of the vote substantially and, in historic terms, this was the best result by a liberal party in any post-1989 Polish election, reflecting its ability to construct a broader conservative and national-patriotic appeal that went well beyond its 'core' support.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ See: Wojciech Załuska, 'Trzy fronty PiS,' 18 July 2005 at <http://serwis.gazeta.pl/kraj/2029020,34317,2825609.html> (Viewed on 19 July 2005).

⁵⁷ Janicki dubbed this element of Law and Justice's discourse "post-communist anti-communism". See: Mariusz Janicki, 'Taka sprytna partia,' *Polityka*, 25 June 2005.

⁵⁸ See: Reykowski, 'Trzy razy 60 proc.'

Table 1: September 2005 Polish parliamentary election to the Sejm

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

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

*In coalition with the Labour Union.

**As the Freedom Union.

The radical-populist parties, Self-Defence (11.41% and 56 seats) and the League of Polish Families (7.97% and 34 seats), retained broadly the level of support they achieved in 2001. In fact, both parties ran poor campaigns and encountered substantial internal difficulties⁵⁹ and these were disappointing results that fell well below their earlier expectations, suggesting that they had little conception of how to expand their electoral appeal. Nonetheless, in spite of this, both parties were still able to hold on to retain relatively high levels of core support. Moreover, Self-Defence maintained its position as the third force in the Sejm finishing (very narrowly) ahead of the Democratic Left Alliance, while the League's caucus appeared to be somewhat more cohesive than in the previous parliament and largely comprised well-educated and articulate former members of the All-Poland Youth (Młodzież Wszechpolska: MW) organisation who were fiercely loyal to Roman Giertych.⁶⁰

Although the party lost three quarters of its 2001 vote share, 11.31% of the vote and 55 seats was actually a relatively good result for the Democratic Left Alliance. New leader Olejniczak clearly did enough to hold on to the party's hard core ex-communist electorate

⁵⁹ See, for example: Dominik Uhlig, 'Ciężki kryzys w Samoobronie,' 19 August 2005 at <http://wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/wybory2005/2029020,67805,2874706.html> (Viewed on 19 August 2005); and Jolanta Kowalewska, 'Bunt szczecińskich działaczy LPR,' 5 September 2005 at <http://serwisy.gazeta.pl/kraj/2029020,34308,2898240.html> (Viewed on 5 September 2005).

⁶⁰ See, for example: Wojciech Szacki, 'Liga bardziej Wszechpolska,' 4 October 2005 at <http://wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/wybory2005/2029020,67805,2949691.html> (Viewed on 4 October 2005).

while simultaneously project a message of renewal. (The party's slogan was "By changing ourselves, we are changing Poland.")⁶¹ The party also enjoyed explicit backing from Kwaśniewski who, although formally a non-party figure, remained by far the most popular and influential political leader on the Polish centre-left.⁶² On the other hand, in retrospect supporting the Belka government proved to be a huge strategic error for Polish Social Democracy. Associating Borowski's party with an unpopular administration that, in many voters' eyes, was dominated by the Democratic Left Alliance from whom they were trying to distance themselves, sent a very unclear signal and made it extremely difficult for the party to present itself credibly as a renewed left. Polish Social Democracy could still have recovered from this and achieved a respectable election result. However, while the party's decision to focus its campaign almost entirely on promoting Borowski as its presidential candidate was effective when he was the only serious contender on the centre-left, support for both the party and its leader slumped when Cimoszewicz re-entered the race in June. Cimoszewicz's subsequent, second withdrawal in September came too late for the party to recover any ground. The 'renewed' Democratic Left Alliance emerged as the dominant centre-left party and Social Democracy failed to secure parliamentary representation winning only 3.89% of the vote.

Although it was the party's worst result in any post-1989 election, the Peasant Party's 6.96% of the vote share and 25 seats was also better than expected given that most polls suggested that it would not even cross the 5% threshold. This result was probably due to the fact that it had a strong grassroots organisational network able to mobilise the party's residual core rural-agricultural electorate. In the context of a turnout of only 40.57%, as Table 2 shows a record low for any post-1989 parliamentary election, this was enough to ensure its parliamentary survival.

⁶¹ See: Wojciech Załuska, 'Olejniczak wzmacnia Sojusz,' *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 7 July 2005; and 'Od Torwaru do Stodoly,' *Rzeczpospolita*, 23 August 2005.

⁶² See: 'Prezydent zagrzewał Sojusz do walki,' *Rzeczpospolita*, 22 September 2005.

Table 2: Turnout in post-1989 Polish elections (%)

	1990	1991	1993	1995	1997	2000	2001	2005
Presidential	60.6(1) 53.4(2)			64.7(1) 68.2(2)		61.1		49.7(1) 51.0(2)
Parliamentary		43.2	52.1		47.9		46.2	40.6

Source: *Rzeczpospolita*, 14 June 2004 and Polish State Electoral Commission (<http://www.pkw.gov.pl/>)

The Democrats polled a very disappointing 2.45%, even failing to achieve the 3% required to secure state party funding. Their appeal to disillusioned, ‘centrist’ liberal Civic Platform voters came across as too dry and technocratic in a campaign dominated by the emotive issue of moral and political renewal.⁶³ The party’s attempt to transcend the ‘historic divide’ by recruiting Belka and Hausner from the Democratic Left Alliance simply ended up associating it with a discredited and unpopular government and confusing core supporters; the change of name alone may have lost the party a considerable number of votes.⁶⁴ A September 2005 TNS-OBOP poll, for example, found that in spite of the fact that the Democrats included the largest number of Solidarity’s best known historic leaders, only 3% of voters said that the party best represented the ideals of the original movement, even fewer than the 5% who cited the Democratic Left Alliance!⁶⁵ As noted above, the Democrats’ presidential candidate failed to make any impact, while more popular figures associated with the party, such as the MEP and former foreign minister Bronisław Geremek, barely featured in their campaign.⁶⁶

The (post-parliamentary) presidential election campaign

Prior to the election, it was generally expected that the new premier would be the leader of whichever of the two centre-right parties won the most seats in the Sejm.

⁶³ See, for example: ‘Demokracy.pl: Polska do przodu, nie wstecz,’ 21 August 2005 at <http://wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/wybory2005/2029020,67805,2878287.html> (Viewed on 27 August 2005).

⁶⁴ Indeed, Belka’s decision to join the Democrats ended up being disastrous all-round: disorientating the party’s ‘core’ ex-Solidarity voters while draining support for his premiership by tarnishing his image as a non-party technocrat. See: Janina Paradowska, ‘Dziwny premier,’ *Polityka*, 2 July 2005.

⁶⁵ See: Janina Paradowska, ‘Już tylko POPiS’, *Polityka*, 10 September 2005.

⁶⁶ See: Reykowski, ‘Trzy razy 60 proc.’

Consequently, following Law and Justice's election victory, Civic Platform attempted to force Jarosław Kaczyński to accept the premiership, hoping that concerns about the two highest elected state offices being occupied by twin brothers would damage Lech's presidential hopes.⁶⁷ An October 2005 TNS-OBOP poll, for example, found that 49% of respondents were uneasy about this prospect and only 8% welcomed it (37% were indifferent).⁶⁸ This forced Jarosław to resign his prime ministerial ambitions and nominate the less high profile and more consensual Law and Justice deputy Kazimierz Marckinkiewicz for the premiership instead. In spite of Law and Justice moving quickly to defuse this potential electoral handicap, the fact that the presidential election continued for a further four weeks bogged down - and, as it turned out, eventually helped to scupper - talks on forming a new coalition government.

Nonetheless, this manoeuvre allowed Lech Kaczyński to build on the momentum created by Law and Justice's parliamentary election success arguing that only a victory for him would allow the party to fully implement its 'Fourth Republic' project. Kaczyński also reprised the argument that his candidacy represented 'social solidarity' while the liberal economic reforms supported by Tusk only benefited those who had emerged as 'winners' from the capitalist transformation.⁶⁹ The fact that he was the candidate of the main governing party also made his wide-ranging pledges in areas such as economic policy, where the president had very limited competencies, appear much more credible. For his part, Tusk argued that his victory was necessary in order to prevent a concentration of power.⁷⁰ He also developed a more aggressive tone to his campaign rhetoric and members of his Warsaw campaign team began attacking Kaczyński's record as the

⁶⁷ See: Małgorzata Subotić, 'Jak przekuć porażkę w sukces,' *Rzeczpospolita*, 27 September 2005.

⁶⁸ See: Mariusz Janicki, 'Kto lepszy,' *Polityka*, 8 October 2005. In a subsequent, post-election interview, Jarosław Kaczyński admitted that that party's own polling indicated that his brother would secure no more than 34% support if he had accepted the premiership. See: 'Kaczyński: czekam na telefon od Tuska,' 29 October 2005 at <http://wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/wybory2005/2029020,67805,2991235.html> (Viewed on 1 November 2005).

⁶⁹ See, for example: Piotr Adamowicz and Grażyna Rakowicz, 'Weekend Kaczyńskiego,' *Rzeczpospolita*, 3 October 2005.

⁷⁰ See: Witold Gadomski, 'Krajobraz po pierwszej bitwie,' 10 October 2005 at <http://serwisy.gazeta.pl/kraj/2029020,34314,2961370.html> (Viewed on 11 October 2005).

mayor.⁷¹ The most controversial example of this was a press conference organised by Civic Platform deputy Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz where she accused Kaczyński's administration of cutting funding for the capital's hospices; a claim that he strongly contested.⁷²

In the event, as Table 3 shows, Tusk finished ahead of Kaczyński in the first round by 36.33% to 33.10%, although this was much closer than polls had predicted. The narrowing gap between the two candidates gave Kaczyński's campaign a sense of momentum and feeling that Tusk's lead could be overturned easily. Lepper finished third scoring an impressive 15.11% share of the vote, showing that he had an even stronger personal appeal than his party among a sizeable segment of the Polish electorate. Given the lack of alternatives on the centre-left following Cimoszewicz's withdrawal, Borowski scored a respectable 10.33%; again demonstrating the size of the residual left-wing electorate. In spite of the fact that the Peasant Party had defied predictions and secured parliamentary representation, its presidential Jarosław Kalinowski achieved a disastrous result securing only 1.8% of vote, as did the Democrats' candidate Bochniarz with 1.26%. As Table 2 shows, although an increase on the parliamentary election two weeks earlier, 49.74% was the still lowest ever turnout in a post-1989 presidential election.

Table 3: October 2005 Polish Presidential election

	1st round	%	2nd round	%
Lech Kaczyński (Law and Justice)	4,947,927	33.10	8,257,468	54.04
Donald Tusk (Civic Platform)	5,429,666	36.33	7,022,319	45.96
Andrzej Lepper (Self-Defence)	2,259,094	15.11		
Marek Borowski (Social Democracy)	1,544,642	10.33		
Jarosław Kalinowski (Peasant Party)	269,316	1.80		
Janusz Korwin-Mikke	214,116	1.43		
Henryka Bochniarz (Democrats)	188,598	1.26		

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

⁷¹ See, for example: 'Strategia rozwoju Warszawy czy chwyt wyborczy PiS,' *Rzeczpospolita*, 5 October 2005.

⁷² See. 'POPiSowa wymiana ciosów między koalicjantami,' 5 October 2005 at <http://serwisy.gazeta.pl/kraj/2029020,34308,2953374.html>. (Viewed on 5 October 2005)

During the first week of the second round campaign Kaczyński faced a severe crisis when it emerged that one of his key strategists, Jacek Kurski, had wrongly suggested in a newspaper interview that Tusk's grandfather had volunteered to join the Wehrmacht during the Second World War. Kurski went on insinuate that this might help to account for Tusk's allegedly pro-German foreign policy sympathies.⁷³ It emerged subsequently that this allegation was untrue and, although Law and Justice responded quickly by firing Kurski and expelling him from the party (re-instating him after the election), the Kaczyński campaign lost momentum and polls appeared to show Tusk's lead widening.⁷⁴

However, during the final week of the campaign Kaczyński quickly regained the initiative by, once again, framing the election as a choice between 'social/solidaristic' and 'liberal' visions of Poland and re-iterating that he would work constructively with the new government to build a Fourth Republic.⁷⁵ While Kaczyński had a clear message on which he focused relentlessly, Tusk abandoned his more aggressive first round tactics and ran a weak and anaemic second round campaign.⁷⁶ In particular, he never developed an effective and convincing response to Kaczyński's central charge that his programme represented a 'liberal experiment' from which only the rich would benefit.⁷⁷ For example, an October 2005 PBS poll found that 42% of voters felt that Tusk only represented the interests of rich Poles and that ordinary citizens would not benefit from his presidency. This included 72% of those first round Kaczyński voters but also 11% of Tusk supporters.⁷⁸ Tusk's rather negative message that he would act as a moderating influence to prevent the Law and Justice party from pursuing too radical an agenda implied that he would use his presidential powers primarily to obstruct a government led by a party that

⁷³ See: 'Kurski: Nie jestem taki zły, jak mnie malują,' 14 October 2005 at <http://wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/wybory2005/2029020,67805,2967560.html> (Viewed on 17 October 2005).

⁷⁴ See: Piotr Smiłowicz, 'Na razie 1:0 dla Tuska,' *Rzeczpospolita*, 14 October 2005.

⁷⁵ For a good analysis of how Kaczyński captured the initiative during the last few days of the campaign see: Janina Paradowska, 'Pod znakiem bliźniat,' *Polityka*, 29 October 2005.

⁷⁶ For example, a September 2005 GfK Polonia poll found that while voters thought that Tusk had more 'presidential qualities', they also felt that they had a much clearer idea of what Kaczyński actually stood for. See: Andrzej Stankiewicz, 'Prezydent naszych marzeń,' *Rzeczpospolita*, 5 October 2005.

⁷⁷ See: Jarosław Kurski, 'Wszystkie błędy Tuska – analiza,' 2 October 2005 at <http://wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/wybory2005/2029020,67805,2947296.html> (Viewed on 3 October 2005); and Małgorzata Subotić, 'Skuteczne i nieskuteczne rad sposoby,' *Rzeczpospolita*, 6 October 2005.

⁷⁸ See: Piotr Pacewicz, 'Jak ulegaliśmy negatywnej kampanii,' 21 October 2005 at <http://wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/wybory2005/2029020,67805,2943647.html> (Viewed on 21 October 2005).

had just won an election victory; and Jarosław Kaczyński's decision to cede the premiership allayed concerns about the concentration of power. While Kaczyński received enthusiastic backing from the Solidarity trade union and Radio Maryja,⁷⁹ Tusk was much less active at mobilising his potentially supportive milieu.⁸⁰ Ironically, the fact that both Kwaśniewski and former President and Solidarity legend Lech Wałęsa endorsed Tusk,⁸¹ simply re-inforced the notion that his candidacy represented a continuation of the post-1989 order when the electorate's appetite was clearly for radical and decisive change.

Moreover, it emerged subsequently that Tusk's grandfather had actually fought in the Wehrmacht, albeit only briefly and against his will before quickly deserting to fight with Polish forces alongside the Western Allies. Although the 'Wehrmacht affair' may have damaged Kaczyński in the short term, it may have ultimately ended up weakening the Civic Platform leader more by (however unfairly) creating doubts in the minds of the electorate about his family links with Germany. An October 2005 PBS poll, for example, found that 23% of Poles felt that a Tusk presidency would be too weak in defending Polish interests against Germany; increasing to 39% among first round Kaczyński voters.⁸² Finally, Kaczyński's pledge not to re-nominate Leszek Balcerowicz, architect of Poland's post-1989 economic transformation and Poland's number one liberal bogeyman, for a further six-year term as President of the National Bank of Poland, was clearly aimed

⁷⁹ See, for example: Jacek Hołub, 'O. Rydzyk w Radiu Maryja o Tusku,' 23 October 2005 at <http://wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/wybory2005/2029020,67805,2981970.html> (Viewed on 25 October 2005). Krzemiński argues that Law and Justice's 'solidaristic versus liberal' dichotomy also had a national-cultural sub-text in which a "solidaristic, social Poland" was meant to contrast a "Poland for the (Catholic) Poles" with a "ruthless (cosmopolitan) capitalism." See: Ireneusz Krzemiński, 'Kampania wyborcza, rząd i Polska,' *Rzeczpospolita*, 7 November 2005.

⁸⁰ See: Renata Grochal and Agata Kodzińska, 'Zwycięstwo wydawało nam się prawie pewne,' 25 October 2005 at <http://wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/wybory2005/2029020,67805,2983872.html> (Viewed on 27 October 2005).

⁸¹ See: 'Kwaśniewski "miętko za Tuskiem",' 20 October 2005 at <http://wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/wybory2005/2029020,67805,2978211.html>; and Jerzy Sadecki and Aleksandra Majda, 'Wsparcie na finiszu,' *Rzeczpospolita*, 21 October 2005.

⁸² See: Pacewicz, 'Jak ulegalismy negatywnej kampanii.' Jacek Protasiewicz, Tusk's campaign manager, estimated that the 8% of first round Tusk voters who switched to Kaczyński in the second round did so largely as a result of this issue. See: Renata Grochal and Agata Kodzińska, 'Zwycięstwo wydawało nam się prawie pewne,' 25 October 2005 at <http://wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/wybory2005/2029020,67805,2983872.html> (Viewed on 27 October 2005).

at mobilising the Self-Defence vote.⁸³ In the event, Kaczyński obtained Lepper's endorsement⁸⁴ and more than 83% of the Self-Defence leader's first round voters supported him in the second round.⁸⁵ By contrast, Tusk received only lukewarm support from Borowski and none from the Democratic Left Alliance.⁸⁶ As Table 3 shows, Kaczyński emerged as the decisive second round winner by 54.04% to 45.96% on a 50.99% turnout, a slight increase on the first round.

The long-term trajectory of Polish politics

Is it possible to draw any conclusions about the long-term trajectory of Polish politics from these elections, particularly about whether or not new divisions are emerging within the party system?

An examination of the social and ideological bases of party support in post-1989 Poland indicates that most Polish voters could define their political views as 'left', 'right' and 'centre', had a fairly clear sense of what these terms represented to them and that this ideological self-placement was strongly linked to party preferences.⁸⁷ As a consequence, in spite of high levels of electoral and party instability (discussed below) clear and

⁸³ See: Dominik Uhlig, 'Kaczyński: Balcerowicz musi odejść', 19 October 2005 at <http://wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/wybory2005/2029020,67805,2973316.html> (Viewed on 19 October 2005).

⁸⁴ See: 'Razem przeciw liberalom', *Rzeczpospolita*, 19 October 2005. Lepper argued that this was to defeat the 'greater evil' of a liberal Tusk presidency. However, at the same time as Lepper made his declaration of support, Law and Justice was helping him to secure the influential post of Sejm deputy speaker, from which he been sacked in disgrace in November 2001 after making a serious of false allegations of corruption against other parliamentarians. See: 'Lepper chce być marszałkiem', *Rzeczpospolita*, 13 October 2005.

⁸⁵ See: 'Kogo poparł elektorat przegranych', *Rzeczpospolita*, 24 October 2005.

⁸⁶ See: Marek Borowski, 'Borowski: jednak Tusk,' 20 October 2005 at <http://serwisy.gazeta.pl/kraj/2029020,34314,2977724.html> (Viewed on 21 October 2005); and 'SLD nie popiera żadnego kandydata', 18 October 2005 at <http://wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/wybory2005/2029020,67805,2973957.html> (Viewed on 19 October 2005).

⁸⁷ See Krzysztof Pankowski. 'Lewicowość-prawicowość: deklaracje polityczne Polaków 1990-1997' in Lena Kolarska-Bobińska and Radosław Markowski (eds.), *Prognozy i wybory. Polska Demokracja '95* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Sejmowe, 1997), pp69-108; Tadeusz Szawiel. 'Zroźnicowanie lewicowo-prawicowe i jego korelaty,' in Radosław Markowski (ed.), *Wybory Parlamentarne 1997: System partyjny, postawy polityczne, zachowanie wyborcze* (Warsaw: ISP: PAN, 1999), pp111-148; Tadeusz Szawiel. 'Podział lewica-prawica w polityce oraz w szerszym kontekście kulturowym.' in Mirosława Grabowska and Tadeusz Szawiel (eds.), *Budowanie demokracji: Podziały społeczne, partie polityczne i społeczeństwo obywatelskie w postkomunistycznej Polsce* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2001), pp216-266; Tadeusz Szawiel. 'Podział na lewicę i prawicę w Polsce po 1989 roku – jego sens i trwałość.' in Radosław Markowski (ed.), *System Partyjny i Zachowanie Wyborcze: Dekada Polskich Doświadczeń.* (Warsaw: ISP PAN, 2002). pp. 178-216.

relatively stable dimensions of left-right competition have structured the Polish party system and voting in Polish elections. However, this left-right divide was not, as in most established Western democracies, linked to socio-economic class and attitudes towards related issues such as the distribution of wealth, role of the state in the economy, and levels of taxation and public expenditure. These have represented very much a secondary issue axis in the Polish party system. Rather, the dominant axis of competition was a historical-cultural one, framed by a combination of attitudes towards the communist past and moral-cultural values, particularly the role of the Catholic Church in public life, and closely linked to levels of religiosity measured by regularity of church attendance. As Grabowska has argued in her influential monograph, the May-June 1989 ‘semi-free’ elections, in which the Solidarity-led democratic opposition scored a decisive victory over candidates supported by the communist regime, represented a ‘founding election’ that carved out the two sides of what she terms the ‘post-communist’ political divide that has dominated post-1989 Polish electoral and party politics.⁸⁸ On one side of this divide, the ‘left’ was identified primarily with: a more positive attitude towards the communist past, liberal social values, secularism and opposition to a significant public role for the Church. On the other side, the ‘right’ was associated with: anti-communism and support for the Solidarity movement, conservative social values, high levels of religiosity and a significant role for the Church in public life.⁸⁹ As Szawiel has pointed out, this divide was also deeply rooted at elite level where there was very little crossover between parties emerging from the communist successor and post-Solidarity traditions. All attempts to set up parties and political groupings that transcended this ‘post-communist’ divide - such as the Democrats and, in the early 1990s, the Labour Union - failed and no government coalition included parties from the two different traditions.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ See: Mirosława Grabowska. *Podział postkomunistyczny: Społeczne podstawy polityki w Polsce po 1989 roku.* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, 2004).

⁸⁹ See: Krzysztof Jasiewicz, ‘Portfel czy różaniec? Wzory zachowań wyborczych Polaków w latach 1995-2001’ in Radosław Markowski (ed.), *System Partyjny i Zachowanie Wyborcze: Dekada Polskich Doświadczeń.* (Warsaw: ISP PAN, 2002), pp. 75-100; and Mirosława Grabowska, ‘Religijność i kościół a polityka w III Rzeczypospolitej’ in Radosław Markowski (ed.), *System Partyjny i Zachowanie Wyborcze: Dekada Polskich Doświadczeń.* (Warsaw: ISP PAN, 2002), pp. 100-146.

⁹⁰ See: Tadeusz Szawiel, ‘Cimoszewicz w pierwszej turze?’ *Rzeczpospolita*, 20 July 2005.

In fact, comparative analyses written at the beginning of the 1990s predicted that, given the likely success of economic transformation, the main political divisions in Poland would be socio-economic.⁹¹ Subsequently, some Polish commentators argued that the historical-cultural division would give way, progressively, to competition over socio-economic issues based on class voting. In particular, it was felt that the increasing salience of controversies surrounding Polish EU membership in public debate could act as a catalyst for bringing new socio-economic divisions between ‘winners’ and ‘losers’ of the economic transition - or other issue dimensions such as nationalism-cosmopolitanism - to the fore.⁹² When the September 2001 parliamentary election shattered what appeared to be a gradually emerging order in the Polish party system, this raised further questions as to whether the old ‘post-communist’ divide was giving way to a new set of socio-demographic and issue alignments;⁹³ although Polish Election Survey data on the social and ideological bases of competition suggested that, while the ‘old’ divisions might have declined in salience, they were still the dominant ones.⁹⁴

The 2005 parliamentary and presidential elections provided further (tentative) evidence that the ‘post-communist’ divide was weakening and that Poland may be moving into an era of new political divisions. Firstly, as noted above, the fact that attitudes towards the communist past and moral-cultural issues - which had been a prominent feature of Polish campaigns throughout much of the 1990s - were much less evident in 2005. In particular, the ‘post-Solidarity versus ex-communist’ conflict appeared increasingly anachronistic and irrelevant, especially after the withdrawal of Cimoszewicz from the presidential race. This was exemplified by fact that support for the communist successor Democratic Left Alliance, representing one side of the ‘post-communist’ divide, slumped to its lowest level in any post-1989 election and both main parties in the parliamentary election and

⁹¹ See: Herbert Kitschelt, ‘The Formation of Party Systems in East Central Europe,’ *Politics and Society*, Vol. 20 No. 1 (1992), pp7-50; and Geoffrey Evans and Stephen Whitefield, ‘Identifying the Bases of Competition in Eastern Europe’, *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 23 No. 4 (1993), pp521-548.

⁹² See, for example: Lena Kolarska-Bobińska, ‘Co innego będzie dzielić Polaków’. *Rzeczpospolita*. 26 November 1998; and Klaus Bachman, ‘Historyczny kompromis inaczej.’ *Rzeczpospolita*. 9 June 2000.

⁹³ See: Aleks Szczerbiak, ‘Old and New Divisions in Polish Politics: Polish Parties’ Electoral Strategies and Bases of Support’, *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 55 No. 5 (2003), pp. 729-746.

⁹⁴ See: Radosław Markowski, ‘Dynamika współzawodnictwa w Polskim systemie partyjnym 1997-2001’ in Radosław Markowski (ed.), *System Partyjny i Zachowanie Wyborcze: Dekada Polskich Doświadczeń*. (Warsaw: ISP PAN, 2002), pp 147-175; and Jasiewicz, ‘Portfel czy różaniec?’

main presidential candidates emerged from the same, post-Solidarity tradition and shared a broadly conservative orientation in terms of moral-cultural issues. An April-May 2005 CBOS poll also suggested that although historical-cultural issues still continued to have a strong bearing on how Polish voters defined concepts of ‘left’ and ‘right’, they appeared to be declining in salience in terms of defining parties’ bases of support.⁹⁵ Secondly, there was a greater emphasis on so-called ‘valence’ issues where there is broad agreement among large sections of the population and parties compete on the basis of attempting to demonstrate competence and an ability to achieve shared objectives and goals (such issues typically include economic development and the maintenance of order). This trend had already emerged during the 2001 parliamentary election,⁹⁶ but appeared to be even more noticeable in 2005, particularly, as noted above, in relation to questions of corruption and probity in public life. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, attitudes towards socio-economic issues also appeared to emerge as a dominant theme, particularly during the final stages of the campaign, exemplified by the apparent conflict between ‘social-solidaristic’ and ‘liberal’ visions of Poland represented by Law and Justice/Kaczyński and Civic Platform/Tusk. Some commentators argued that – although, in one sense, this dichotomy was clearly exploited by the Law and Justice party for electoral purposes - it was not an artificial one and would continue to be a significant feature of Polish party politics following its “electoral awakening” in 2005.⁹⁷

However, while it may be convenient to see the 2005 elections as heralding a new bipolar divide in Polish politics between ‘social/solidaristic’ and ‘liberal’ axes, there are also reasons to suggest that this dichotomy may not necessarily provide a long-term basis for political alignments in Poland and that the old ‘post-communist’ divide remains a significant one.

⁹⁵ See: CBOS. *Potencjalne elektoraty o istotnych kwestiach społeczno-politycznych*. (Warsaw: CBOS, August 2005, April-May 2005 data).

⁹⁶ See: Szczerbiak, ‘Old and New Divisions in Polish Politics.’

⁹⁷ See: Janusz Majcherek, ‘Realne podziały, realne problemy,’ *Rzeczpospolita*, 25 November 2005. Cf. Mirosław Czech, ‘Dlaczego Polacy nie głosują,’ 18 October 2005 at <http://serwis.gazeta.pl/kraj/2029020,34314,2973789.html> (Viewed on 19 October 2005).

Firstly, it is questionable to what extent one can draw *any* long-term conclusions from what scholars may look back on as an unusual and atypical set of elections. Perhaps most importantly, the record low levels of turnout in both elections, but particularly the parliamentary one, should make analysts extremely cautious, even when voting behaviour data is fully analysed. This meant that, for example, although the combined vote share for the Law and Justice party and Civic Platform in 2005 was 10% higher than for the Democratic Left Alliance-Labour Union in 2001 they actually only obtained 700,000 more votes; in spite of the fact that it is difficult to conceive of a more favourable set of circumstances than there were during this election for the Polish centre-right to expand its electorate. Moreover, as noted above, the fact that the parliamentary and presidential campaigns ran concurrently made them particularly especially liable to ‘contamination’ by each other, particularly given that parliamentary campaigning was highly personalised and leader-oriented in a way that may not be repeated in future elections that are likely to be held separately.⁹⁸

Secondly, the ex-communist/secular centre-left in general, and the Democratic Left Alliance in particular, was at an especially, and perhaps atypically, low ebb in these elections. As noted above, from the beginning of 2003 the Democratic Left Alliance suffered a series of unprecedented scandals relating to accusations of misconduct against party officials and the concomitant spectacular fall from grace of nearly of all of its best-known leaders. All of this meant that the public trust that the party had built up steadily through the 1990s collapsed during the 2001-2005 parliament. However, there is also evidence to suggest that, rather than switching to the right-wing or radical-populist parties, many centre-left voters simply did not bother to vote at all and that the record low turnout in these elections affected these parties disproportionately. For example, the PBS-OBOP parliamentary election exit poll showed that 30% of 2001 Democratic Left Alliance voters did not vote in 2005, the highest level of abstention among all the 2001 party electorates.⁹⁹ There is also evidence that the largest fall in turnout occurred in those regions where the centre-left had polled most strongly in 2001 while it held up much more

⁹⁸ Assuming both parliament and president serve full terms, this will next occur in 2020.

⁹⁹ See: Maciej Kochanowski, ‘Co sie stało z wyborcami SLD z 2001 roku? Rozsyпка elektoratu SLD,’ 18 October 2005 at <http://serwisy.gazeta.pl/kraj/2029020,65650,2972437.html> (Viewed on 21 March 2006).

solidly in the post-Solidarity right's traditional strongholds.¹⁰⁰ All of this suggests that the 2005 election results may have under-stated the true levels of support for the ex-communist/secular centre-left among Polish voters.

Thirdly, in spite of all the problems that it encountered in the previous parliament, the ex-communist/secular left in general, and the Democratic Left Alliance in particular, survived these elections. Together, the Democratic Left Alliance and Polish Social Democracy (which one can, in one sense, categorise as an attempt to fashion a 'renewed' Democratic Left Alliance) won the support of more than 15% of the total electorate and 37% of 2001 Democratic Left Alliance voters.¹⁰¹ Moreover, not only is the Democratic Left Alliance the sole focus of centre-left opposition in the new parliament, it also retains considerable assets in terms of: a substantial number of members and activists, relatively well-known leaders, a developed grassroots organisation, thousands of councillors - many of them in key local government positions - and a 'brand name' that is tainted but still clearly identifiable to most voters. Indeed, it is worth bearing in mind that all previous attempts to develop alternative social democratic formations on the Polish centre-left, such as the Labour Union and Polish Social Democracy, ended in failure because the Democratic Left Alliance was simply too well organisationally and electorally entrenched among a substantial segment of Polish voters. Similarly, the attempt by Self-Defence in these elections to make a pitch for disillusioned Democratic Left Alliance voters by positioning itself as a left-wing party¹⁰² also failed. As the PBS-OBOP parliamentary election exit poll shows, only 6% of 2001 Democratic Left Alliance voters switched to Self-Defence; compared to 13% who voted for the Law and Justice party and Civic Platform respectively, and 21% who remained loyal to the Democratic Left Alliance.¹⁰³ In other words, it is too early to write off the ex-communist/secular left as a political force and the Democratic Left Alliance in particular has every prospect of being the focus for,

¹⁰⁰ See: Czech, 'Dlaczego Polacy nie głosują.'

¹⁰¹ See: Mirosława Grabowska, 'Polska dzieli się na nowo,' 17 February 2006 at <http://serwisy.gazeta.pl/kraj/2029020,34314,3170413.html> (Viewed on 19 February 2006).

¹⁰² See, for example: Dominik Uhlig, 'Samoobrona ściąga ludzi z SLD,' 12 July 2005 at <http://serwisy.gazeta.pl/kraj/2029020,34308,2815333.html> (Viewed on 12 July 2005).

¹⁰³ See: Kochanowski, 'Co się stało z wyborcami SLD z 2001 roku?'

if not the precise organisational form of, the renewed centre-left' that is likely to emerge in the new parliament and could recover strongly in future elections.

Fourthly, although parties did not always necessarily choose to articulate the 'post-communist' divide¹⁰⁴ it may still have been a deeply ingrained and highly salient point of orientation for many voters. Survey data compiled during the campaign provided conflicting evidence on this. On the one hand, a September 2005 TNS-OBOP survey found that only 37% of respondents agreed (11% strongly) that the 'ex-communist versus post-Solidarity' divide had an impact on their electoral choice, while 56% disagreed (31% strongly).¹⁰⁵ On the other hand, another September 2005 TNS-OBOP survey found that, when given a choice, most respondents (30%) said that the historical divide was still the most important one in Polish politics (a further 4% cited divisions over moral issues). 17% opted for the issue of European integration while only 16% cited divisions between supporters of 'liberal' and 'social' economic options.¹⁰⁶ Indeed, the fact that the Law and Justice party chose to polarise the election by invoking the slogan of a 'solidaristic', rather than just a 'social', Poland implied that this concept was not simply meant to encompass the party's more collectivist and welfarist approach to socio-economic policy but also a broader claim by to represent the Solidarity political tradition.¹⁰⁷

Fifthly, the first quantitative data to emerge from the 2005 Polish Election Survey also offers conflicting evidence as to whether the 'social-solidaristic versus liberal' dichotomy was simply a clever campaign slogan or based on real divisions within society.¹⁰⁸ On the one hand, this division was reflected in the fact that Civic Platform voters were clearly the most 'liberal' in terms of their attitudes towards socio-economic issues (such as

¹⁰⁴ See: Teresa Bogucka, 'Pęknięta Polska,' 28 January 2005 at <http://serwisy.gazeta.pl/wyborcza/2029020,34474.2518948.html> (Viewed on 31 January 2005).

¹⁰⁵ See: Paradowska, 'Już tylko POPiS'.

¹⁰⁶ See: Janina Paradowska, 'Ostatnia prosta,' *Polityka*, 24 September 2005. The fact that a September 2005 CBOS survey carried out just two weeks before the parliamentary election found that 71% of respondents said that they faced a difficult choice in deciding whom to vote for, compared to 52% and 58% at the same point in the 1997 and 2001 campaigns, also suggests that the 'post-communist' divide was still a very important point of orientation for many voters. See: CBOS. *Trudny wybór Polaków*. (Warsaw: CBOS, September 2005, September 2005 data).

¹⁰⁷ See, for example: Adamowicz and Rakowicz, 'Weekend Kaczyńskiego.'

¹⁰⁸ See: Grabowska, 'Polska dzieli sie na nowo.'

privatisation, taxes, agricultural subsidies and welfare benefits) while the views of Law and Justice voters were more ‘socially oriented’. On the other hand, the most significant differences between the party electorates emerged on the basis of divisions between supporters of the ex-communist/secular left (Democratic Left Alliance and Polish Social Democracy) and the post-Solidarity/moral-cultural right (Law and Justice, Civic Platform and the League of Polish Families). Democratic Left Alliance and Polish Social Democracy voters defined themselves as left-wing, opposed de-communisation and giving the Church a prominent role in public life, and supported liberalisation of the abortion law. There were some differences of emphasis in terms of the Civic Platform and Law and Justice party’s bases of support: the former were slightly more ‘centrist’ in terms of their ideological self-placement and attitudes towards moral-cultural issues, and had a somewhat smaller religious component; the latter were slightly more ‘rightist’ and religious. However their common historical roots and similar, socially conservative views on moral-cultural issues broadly united them. In other words, there was no clear ‘social-solidaristic versus liberal’ dichotomy between the two electorates and it was difficult to see the parties as representing polar opposites in terms of their ideological bases of support.

A final reason why one should be wary of making firm, long-term predictions on the basis of these elections is the fact that the Polish political scene remains extremely fluid and unstable. The post-1989 Polish party system has been characterised by extraordinarily high levels of electoral volatility and party instability. The level of net electoral volatility calculated according to the Pederson index was 38.78% in 1993, falling to 19.9% in 1997 and then increasing to a massive 49.3% in 2001,¹⁰⁹ when both governing parties (Solidarity Electoral Action and the Freedom Union, that between them won 47.2% of the vote in 1997) actually failed to cross the thresholds for parliamentary representation. At first glance, the September 2005 parliamentary election appeared to provide tentative counter-evidence that the Polish party system was stabilising, with the same six parties and political groupings that secured election in 2001 all being re-elected

¹⁰⁹ See: Radosław Markowski and Mariusz Cześniak, ‘Polski system partyjny: dekada zmian,’ in Radosław Markowski (ed.), *System Partyjny i Zachowanie Wyborcze: Dekada Polskich Doświadczeń* (Warsaw: ISP PAN, 2002), pp17-47 (26-27).

in the 2005, the first time that this has happened in Poland since 1989. On the other hand, although the level of electoral volatility fell from its 2001 peak to ‘only’ 35% in 2005, it remained extremely high by European standards, exemplified by the massive slump in support for the Democratic Left Alliance.

Conclusion

Although the 2005 Polish parliamentary and presidential elections were held on separate days, the two campaigns ‘contaminated’ each other and for the most of the time the presidential overshadowed the parliamentary. Not surprisingly, given the role that high profile scandals played in the collapse of support for the Democratic Left Alliance, for most of the campaign the dominant issue was probity in public life and parties competed on their ability to tackle corruption effectively, although socio-economic issues also became significant in the final few weeks. Moral-cultural issues and attitudes towards the communist past, which had been such an important feature of Polish election campaigns during the 1990s, were much less prominent this time. In the event, the result of the election was a major turnover in Poland’s governing elite. The Law and Justice party and its presidential candidate Lech Kaczyński came from behind to emerge as the unexpected winners by framing the contest in its final stages as a choice between their ‘social-solidaristic’ and their opponents’ ‘liberal’ visions of Poland. Civic Platform and Tusk achieved the best results by a liberal party and presidential candidate in any post-1989 Polish election, albeit in large part because of the party’s successful efforts to re-profile itself as more socially conservative and with a stronger national-patriotic discourse. However, the party was extremely disappointed with the outcome as most opinion polls taken in the final weeks suggested that it would win both contests. The bitter and polarised election campaign played a crucial role in poisoning relations between the two main centre-right parties, particularly the fact that the presidential campaign continued for a further four weeks after the parliamentary vote. This prevented the formation of the coalition government that virtually all commentators (including this one!) had taken for granted and a Law and Justice-led minority government led by Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz emerged instead.

While the radical-populist Self-Defence and the League of Polish Families failed to make any significant advances on 2001, they held on to their share of the vote and Lepper achieved an impressive first round presidential vote, allowing him to emerge as an important power broker in the second round run-off. The Peasant Party achieved its worst result in any post-1989 parliamentary election, as did the party's presidential candidate, but it defied predictions that it would not cross the 5% threshold for parliamentary representation. Indeed, the fact that the new government was a minority one potentially gave these three minor parties' significant leverage in the new parliament. The Democratic Left Alliance suffered a massive slump in support compared with 2001, and found itself without a presidential candidate following Cimoszewicz's withdrawal. However, under its youthful new leader Olejniczak the party did enough to hold on to its hard-core ex-communist electorate while simultaneously projecting a message of renewal, and performed much better than expected. Polish Social Democracy presidential candidate Borowski achieved a respectable first round result but his party failed to secure parliamentary representation and it is the Democratic Left Alliance that will be the focus for centre-left opposition in the new Sejm. At the same time, Belka and Hausner's defection from the Democratic Left Alliance failed to help the Democrats transcend the 'historic' divide and draw way significant numbers of 'centrist' liberal voters from either Civic Platform or the left-wing parties.

In terms of the long-term trajectory of Polish politics, some commentators have argued that the way that socio-economic issues emerged as a dominant theme in these elections suggested that Poland was moving into an era of new political divisions. The two largest groupings in the new parliament are centre-right, socially conservative parties emerging from the Solidarity tradition and their candidates were also the front-runners in the presidential campaign. The underlying ideological divisions between, and social bases of support for, Polish parties do appear to be in some flux and a re-alignment of the dimensions of party competition is clearly one possible outcome. However, there are also reasons why one should be cautious in assuming that this apparent 'social-solidaristic versus liberal' dichotomy will provide a long-term basis for political alignments in

Poland, not least the record low turnout which may have affected the centre-left disproportionately. The old 'post-communist' historical-cultural divide still appears to be a significant point of orientation for a substantial number of voters. Moreover, while there was a huge decline in support for the communist successor Democratic Left Alliance, in spite of extremely unfavourable political conditions it performed better than expected and, given its organisational and electoral resilience, could provide the focus for a 'renewed' and perhaps resurgent centre-left in the new parliament.

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