Communicating Populism Online. Radical Right in 2015 Polish Parliamentary Elections

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ABSTRACT

The recent surge of academic interest in populism emphasizes communicative aspects of the phenomenon and the role of new media for the diffusion of populist messages and subsequent mobilization of potential supporters. 2015 parliamentary elections in Poland provide particularly convenient entry point to study populist political communication. The stunning success of two radical right agents: Paweł Kukiz in parliamentary (8.81%) and presidential elections in 2015 (over 20% in the first round), and good electoral result of Janusz Korwin-Mikke’s party KORWiN in parliamentary elections 2015 (4.76%) can be partially ascribed to the skillful communication via social media. Lacking the financial resources and organizational infrastructure enjoyed by mainstream political opponents they still managed to garner huge support from the young voters due to their high activity on the Facebook (Korwin-Mikke) and Twitter (Kukiz).

The objective of the paper is to analyze comparatively the populist political communication of these politicians and determine the scope and type of populist message they promoted. First, we aim to examine quantitatively the populist content of messages they spread through social media. Secondly, quantitative analysis of the social media will be supplemented with the qualitative discourse analysis of Facebook posts in order to trace the discursive details of the populist constructions: idea of the people, anti-elitist themes, the critique of representative democracy and the construction of the other.

Additionally, as both politicians competed in the field densely populated by other right wing candidates, we shall scrutinize the mechanisms of right-wing identity construction and delegitimization strategies of political opponents.

The elections of 2014 and 2015 increased academic interest in the sources of populist success and the role of new media in the diffusion of populist messages and subsequent mobilization of potential supporters for several reasons. First of all, two right-wing populist political actors, Janusz Korwin-Mikke and Paweł Kukiz achieved stunning electoral successes.

Korwin-Mikke in various political guises has been present on the Polish political scene for 25 years. In that period he has launched several political parties, with the last one taking part in the 2015 elections - Koalicja Odnowy Rzeczpospolitej Wolności i Nadzieja – KORWiN (Coalition of Republic's Renewal Freedom and Hope; hereafter, KORWiN). Over these 25 years on the political stage Korwin-Mikke has promoted a neoconservative vision with emphasis on a free market,

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1 The work is sponsored by the National Science Centre, Poland, grant ID: 2015/18/M/HS5/00080.
minimal state and radical critique of bureaucratic apparatus, particularly tax apparatus combined with anti-EU arguments.²

Although for a very long time he had been rather a marginal political actor, never crossing the threshold of 2.5 percent of votes r, in the European Parliamentary elections of 2014 his party was ranked fourth with 7.15 percent and 11 seats in the European Parliament. A year later he received 4.76 percent of votes in national parliamentary elections.

Kukiz, meanwhile, with his political movement Kukiz’15, entered the Polish political scene in 2015, finishing third in the presidential elections (with 20.8 percent) and winning 8.81 percent in the parliamentary elections of 2015.

Kukiz was previously better known as a rock star and political activist. The main focus of his activism was the replacement of Poland’s current list-based electoral system with a UK-style single-member constituency system. He argued that thus was a key instrument in destroying what he called “the partiocratic system.”

Although in 2005 and 2007 parliamentary elections Kukiz supported Plaforma Obywatelska (Civic Platform; hereafter, PO), in the following years he veered towards much more conservative and nationalists milieus.

Not only the Polish political scene, but also the profiles of those who support populist actors has changed significantly. Namely, both aforementioned political actors managed to garner huge support from young voters. Furthermore, both politicians performed very well despite the fact that they could not draw on the resources and organizational infrastructure enjoyed by their political opponents. Although they disparaged the mainstream media as a part of establishment, they actually received some coverage and provided very good examples of the power of skilful communication online and via social media: Facebook and Twitter at the same time.

Another important feature in common is their radical right wing populist character. The majority of the analyzes of populism refer to the Cas Mudde’s definition, namely that it is "an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, ‘the pure people’ versus ‘the corrupt elite’, and which argues that politics should be an expression of the volonté générale (general will) of the people.”³ Other scholars emphasize a strongly normative or even moralistic character of the us-them division, exclusion of specific groups from the

homogenous community and sense of crisis. Both Kukiz’s and Korwin-Mikke’s discourse fit this definition well. Both positioned themselves as anti-system politicians aiming to restore normality in a situation portrayed as a crisis or catastrophe. Both grounded their discourse in the strong division between elites and the ordinary people, burdening the former with the responsibility for building “socialism,” “system,” “oligarchy” or “partiocracy.” Furthermore, they deliberately exploited the occasion posed by the refugee crisis by employing strong, exclusionary discourse based on hatred and fear.

The main question here is how to explain the electoral results of both political actors: what are the causes of the breakthrough of Korwin-Mikke and the immediate success of Kukiz?

As theoretical background we employ two concepts: political opportunity structure and discursive opportunities. While the former states that “the capacity to mobilize depends on opportunities and constraints offered by the political-institutional setting,” the latter explicates how structurally given political opportunities become publicly visible by capturing the role of the public sphere in politics and identifying the media as the medium whereby political actors disseminate their ideas. Another aspect is resonance and legitimacy of the populist message in the specific public sphere. The degree to which the reactions of dominant political actors support the political claims formulated by the populists determines their chance to spread their message and win votes.

We agree that these two sets of necessary conditions or facilitating factors are relevant to understand the electoral success of Korwin-Mikke and Kukiz. Moreover, we claim that it is the interaction between the abovementioned factors and programmatic winning formula which was responsible for the extraordinary results of the elections. In order to examine this phenomenon, our study will refer to five elements. First, we look at demand-side factors that have created a political, social and cultural ‘reservoir’ to be exploited by far-right political parties, such as a voter volatility and socio-economic conditions, as well as a perception of the immigration threat. Second, we study Korwin-Mikke’s and Kukiz’s success in public opinion, indicated by the intention to vote for these

political actors and their actual election results with a main focus on socio-demographic profiles of
the voters. Third, we analyse the visibility of both political actors in the traditional media and their
activity in the social media. Fourth, in order to grasp the resonance and legitimacy of the populist
messages we also take into consideration such supply-side factors as the structure of the electoral
system and the responses of Prawo i Sprawiedliwość [Law and Justice] (hereafter, PiS) as an
established political actor and, after 2007, the biggest opposition party with wide access to the
media and huge support of the electorate. Fifth, we scrutinize the populist aspects of the electoral
formula disseminated via social media by J. Korwin-Mikke and P. Kukiz.

**Political opportunity structures**

Much of the previous research on the rise of right-wing parties has focused on the structural
conditions that have facilitated their emergence.\(^8\) One of these factors is low level of consistency of
voter behavior resulting in a high level of volatility and a low level of a party loyalty that has been
observed among Polish voters.

For example, in 2015 only half of the PO's electorate from 2011 (51.9 percent) voted for that
political party, while 13.3 percent decided to vote for Nowoczesna, 10.9 percent for PO's main
opponent, PiS, and 6.5 percent for Kukiz'15.\(^9\) Furthermore, 25.2 percent of the people who in the
2011 parliamentary elections voted for a newcomer: the radically anti-clerical and culturally left-
wing Palikot’s Movement, voted for the rightist Kukiz’15 four years later.\(^10\)

The electoral volatility of the electorate, both at the aggregated level measured with the so-called
Pedersen index, and the individual level recreated on the basis of Polish voters’ preferences
unveiled by the PGSW (Polish National Electoral Study) was very high until 2007, from 62.2 in
1993 to 34.5 in 2007. Although it dropped in 2011 elections to the level of 23.1, it was still very
high in comparison to Western countries. Moreover, the relative openness of the political system for
the newcomer parties has been bolstered by an ideological instability among Polish voters and a
high number of people systematically abstaining from electoral participation (from 49 to 59 percent
between 2001-2015).\(^11\)

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\(^11\) Ibid.
Another factor belonging to the social structural explanation is an increased sense of threat by immigrants.\textsuperscript{12} Despite the relatively low immigration figure suggested by the European Commission, Poles seemed to be afraid of the idea: 78 percent believed that it would lead to a decrease in security and would be a huge burden on the budget.\textsuperscript{13} In 2015 a half of the Polish people (51 percent) were against taking in any refugees. What is noteworthy is a fact that the youngest potential voters (18-24 and 25-34 years old) were the most reluctant to take in refugees (76 and 56 percent, respectively), while older people were more eager to accept the fact that refugees would come to Poland. Moreover, a critical attitude towards the possible admission of refugees was articulated in the online media – the media environment where young people are the most active\textsuperscript{14}.

Moreover, studies conducted in 2015 showed clearly that right-wing populist actors such as Kukiz and Korwin-Mikke resonated particularly well with the youngest voters. In 2015, during the presidential elections, as many as 41 percent of Kukiz's voters were the youngest ones, while the eldest declared hardly any support for the candidate. As Table 1 shows, most of the elder voters declared in an exit poll their support for either Andrzej Duda (PiS), or Bronisław Komorowski (PO).

[Table 1 here]

\textbf{HERE}

Findings of studies on demographic profiles of P. Kukiz's and J. Korwin – Mikke's supporters conducted during the election campaign period (see Table 2) draw similar picture. One quarter of all potential voters of these political actors represented the youngest group of voters (18 – 25 years old). Almost half of the Korwin-Mikke's supporters were around 26-35 years old. In both cases there were more men than women and more people living in the cities than in villages. Both candidates gathered a huge support among well-educated people (university degree or at least high school graduates).

[Table 2 here]

\textbf{Discursive opportunities}

The first and most basic aspect of discursive opportunity distinguished by Koopmans and Muis is

\textsuperscript{14} Dorota Hall, Agnieszka Mikulinska-Jolles, Upadzenia, Strach czy Niewiedza? Młodzi Polacy o Niechęci do Przyjmowania Uchodźców (Warszawa: Stowarzyszenie Intervencji Prawnej, 2016).
visibility. This depends on the “number of communicative channels by which a message is included and the prominence of such inclusion.”\textsuperscript{15} Previous studies focused on traditional media coverage of political actors, where the amount of attention and character of media coverage (either supportive or critical) were perceived as the main opportunities and constraints at the same time. Therefore, much attention has been paid to the gatekeeping process and criteria used by journalists to decide which topic, event or political actor would be covered (so called news values).\textsuperscript{16}

To obtain data on discursive opportunities variables we used content analysis of television and social media. Television is still the most important source of information about politics in general, and election in particular in Poland. Namely, 79 percent of Polish potential voters gain their knowledge about political parties and candidates from broadcasts, while 66 percent get it from political advertising broadcasts on television or radio stations. Almost half of the Polish population (49 percent) receives information on elections from the radio. Only one third of Polish citizens (32 percent) receive information about political events such as election from online media.\textsuperscript{17}

However, online media seem to be an important source of political information for the youngest voters: 97.5 percent of those between 16 and 24 years old and 93 percent of those between 25 – 34 years old use internet on a regular basis.\textsuperscript{18}

We collected data on television coverage of political parties and candidates before three elections: the European Parliamentary elections in 2014 and presidential elections as well as parliamentary elections in 2015. In each case the content analyses of main newscasts (main evening edition) broadcast by public (TVP1, TVP2, TVP Info) and commercial TV stations (TVN, Polsat, TV Trwam, TV Republika, and Superstacja) were conducted. The sample comes from newscasts broadcast over the two weeks prior to election day in the case of parliamentary elections (May 10-23, 2014 and October 17-23, 2015), and one week prior to election day in case of the first round of presidential elections (May 2-8, 2015). Additionally, a content analysis of opinion programmes (commentary, political talk-shows, or interviews) of several TV stations (TVP1, TVP2, TVP Info, TVN24, Polsat News, and TV Trwam) was conducted (the same periods of time as in case of newscasts). The studies were ordered by Krajowa Rada Radiofonii i Telewizji (National Radio and

\textsuperscript{15} Koopmans and Muis, "The Rise of Right-Wing Populist Pim Fortuyn,” 648.
Television Council; hereafter KRRiT)

Not surprisingly, two mainstream political parties - PiS and PO, as well their presidential candidates (Duda and Komorowski) - were the most covered political actors during the election campaigns of 2014 and 2015. Yet, in contradiction to complaints expressed by Kukiz and Korwin-Mikke, their coverage on television was moderate, but relatively significant. In 2014, the amount of airtime devoted to Korwin-Mikke and his political party KNP in newscasts and opinion programs was significantly smaller (30 and 115 minutes, respectively) than PO and PiS (in the case of opinion programs the number was actually five times smaller). However, in the main evening newscasts more airtime was devoted to KNP than to PSL – the smaller party in the governing coalition with PO at that time. In fact, only two other political parties (except of two leading competitors: PO and PiS) received more airtime in the newscasts than KNP (see Table 3).

[Table 3 here]

During the last week before the presidential election Korwin-Mikke and Kukiz received similar attention in terms of the airtime devoted in newscasts per candidate on TV channels (around 17 minutes). In comparison to Duda (PiS) and Komorowski (PO), the number was about half. Still, in comparison to all others (except of M. Ogórek - the candidate of the left-wing political party Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej [Democratic Left Alliance]), the number was actually twofold higher (see Table 4). It is worth mentioning that in the opinion programs, the two main candidates, Komorowski and Duda, were presented for around two hours, while most of the others candidates less than hour, but again neither Korwin-Mikke nor Kukiz were treated less favorably than others.

[Table 4 here]

Given that the traditional media focused mostly on the two competing political parties (or presidential candidates), their own limited funds on paid political advertising and support among younger voters, both Korwin-Mikke and Kukiz built their communication strategy on social media. Facebook was the main channel of communication used by KNP and its leader Korwin-Mikke before the European parliamentary elections. Interestingly, posts provided by Korwin-Mikke received more attention and caused more activities by Facebook users than posts provided by Komorowski (president) or Ewa Kopacz (prime minister).

[Table 5 around here]

Korwin-Mikke employed the same strategy in 2015 during his presidential and parliamentary
election campaigns. Over the period of two weeks prior to the election he again received the highest number of responses (either “likes,” comments or shares) from other Facebook users (see Table 6). In the two weeks prior to election day (1st round) Korwin-Mikke not only was more active than the other main candidates, but his posts again received the highest mean number of responses. The only exception here was the mean number of comments to Komorowski’s posts. However, it was a newcomer in these elections – Kukiz - whose Facebook profile had the highest increase in number of the observers in that period.

[Table 6 around here]

Another dimension of the discursive opportunity is the resonance with the agenda of the established political actors and the high level of legitimacy of anti-establishment discourse in the public sphere. In contrast to many Western countries, where a so-called cordon sanitaire has been developed by the media or (and) political actors as a reaction to the rise of the extreme right wing populism, this has not happened in Poland. Due to a non-democratic historical legacy, the Polish political party system was divided into two camps, with the post-communists left on one side and former anti-communist opposition on the other (right). Such a situation resulted in several significant consequences.

First, Polish political communication has been extremely polarized since the early 1990s. Secondly, the extreme right political parties have been perceived as a solid element of right wing coalitions against the former communists and later on against competitors from centre-right.19

Thirdly, centre-right PiS gradually evolved into much more radical direction, changing its rhetoric, ideology, political allies and broadening the voter base. Already since 2005 PiS’s discourse combined a strong anti-establishment message with the strategic employment of the elements of nationalism and fundamental Catholicism to outmaneuver its coalition partner League of Polish Families (LPR).20 Fourthly, it entailed a change of attitude towards national-Catholic Radio Maryja, which previously had been treated with significant reserve and criticized for pro-Russian sympathies and anti-Semitism. But in 2005 Jarosław Kaczyński claimed that he was mistaken forewarning against Radio Maryja. As he added “It is not possible to win elections without Radio Maryja.”21 Fifthly, the radicalization was part of the carefully designed strategy of securing the right

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21 Jarosław Kaczyński, Lech Kaczyński, Michał Karnowski and Piotr Zaremba, O Dwóch Takich. Alfabet Braci
flank of the political spectrum. It was consistently followed after 2007 when PiS failed the elections and became the biggest opposition party. In one of the interviews Kaczyński said that there should be no space, but the wall on the right side of PiS. The radicalization was even more pronounced after the Smolensk catastrophe on April 10, 2010. The event per se and the allegedly improper reaction of the then governing PO was used to build strong emotional links with the electorate, by attacking political elites, disseminating conspiracy theories and resorting to populist forms of mobilization, such as mass marches organized by PiS every tenth day of each month to commemorate the victims of the catastrophe.

The refugee crisis that broke out during electoral campaign in 2015 provided another window of opportunity for a radicalization of the PiS agenda. Strong criticism of the PO government in accepting 7,000 immigrants over two years as a part of the relocation scheme agreed at the September 2015 European Council meeting employed all the argumentative tools from the populist repertoire such as: victim perpetrator reversal, us-them dichotomy, equating refugees with terrorists, a topos of numbers, catastrophic scenarios, etc. Such a discourse might have helped legitimize a negative approach towards refugees dominant in the Polish public sphere.

The strategy of PiS to control the right flank of the Polish scene provided an opportunity for more radical populist groupings, but could be a significant constraint at the same time. On the one hand, it normalized populist themes, making them a legitimate part of the public political discourse. On the other hand, its ideological and rhetorical positioning left a very little room for right wing populists. At the level of direct political interactions between PiS and more radical right wing parties the former employed a strategy of discreditation or self-presentation as the exclusive owner of the populist issues. The former strategy was particularly pertinent to PiS in its relationship with Korwin-Mikke’s party, portrayed by Kaczyński as “an element of pathology, which serves to reproduce the system in a shape which devoids Poles a lot of chances.” The Latter strategy can be discerned in the reaction of PiS towards Kukiz portrayed as less anti-establishment politician in


comparison to Andrzej Duda, PiS’s candidate in presidential elections\textsuperscript{26}.

The programmatic formula

The political, social and discursive context facilitated the dissemination of the populist agenda of the two politicians under scrutiny. After the initial pilot study we decided to concentrate on the three features commonly recognized as the constitutive elements of the populism: the people, the elites and the other of the homogenous people\textsuperscript{27}. If one remember about the strongly anti-political and anti-refugee approach of the young generation – the majority of KORWIN’s and Kukiz’15 voter, the construction of the elites and the other are particularly important aspects of discourse.

Although there are some differences between academics, the most recent research perceives populism as a political communication strategy conveyed through discourse. Hence, the most appropriate approach would be qualitative discourse analysis allowing for studying the details of communication strategies of populist actors and deciphering the populist messages coded in specific categories, allusions, insinuations or argumentation schemes. In order to analyse how aforementioned four elements were decontested and filled with specific content in discourse of two right wing populism parties a sample of political communication was constructed. We analyzed posts published on Facebook profile by J. Korwin-Mikke and P. Kukiz during two weeks preceding parliamentary elections on 25\textsuperscript{th} of October 2015. We assume that this period is the most intense and important moment of political communication due to its strong impact on voters preferences. This assumption fits particularly well to the Polish case – a country with high electoral volatility, unstable party system and significant number of “undecided” voters, particularly among younger generation\textsuperscript{28}. It is the time when political agents employ variety of strategies to get to the electorate and convince voters to go to the polls and vote for them. Thus it provides a convenient entry point into the complexity of discursive strategies employed by populist parties. In order to analyze the specific content of main categories constituting populist discourse we rely on the slightly modified framework adapted from R. Wodak’s discourse-historical approach. The discourse of J. Korwin-Mikke and P. Kukiz is analyzed by answering the following questions:

1. How are the people, elites, the other are constructed by being named?


\textsuperscript{27} See i. e. Jan Jagers, Stefaan Walgrave, „Populism as political communication style: An empirical study of political parties' discourse in Belgium”, European Journal of Political Research, 46, no. 3 (2007): 322.

2. What positive or negative traits, qualities and features are attributed to the actors?
3. What kind of argumentation schemes are employed to justify/legitimize nomination and predication strategies?
4. Are the respective utterances articulated overtly, intensified or mitigated?

The people

Although people-centrism is considered as a core element of populist discourse, references to the populist community appear rarely in the discourse of P. Kukiz. “We” references pertain more frequently to the Kukiz ’15 rather than the electorate. In the rare instances when the community is invoked, it is nominated as “Poland”, “citizens”, metonymically as “Poland” or simply as “the people”. The community is constructed as a group of hard-working people, from the small cities or rural areas, exploited by the state and elites (“And we are brilliant people who can toil from morning to night, and that our potential is squandered”). People are also attributed with the spontaneous The most prevalent image of the community represents it as a passive group rather than active agent (passivation strategy) 29. The people are referred to mainly in the context of the activities of political and media elites and represented as the object of these activities. People are “being lied to” and “given promises” by the politicians and media, “insulted” and patronized by the experts, “expelled” from Poland or “reduced to the role of the serf”. The fact of massive immigration is depicted in the hyperbolized terms as “an extermination of Polishness”.

The people invoked in the discourse of J. Korwin-Mikke were nominated as “Polish”, “citizens” and frequently aggregated as a group of individuals and their rights. Different from P. Kukiz’s discourse is the emphasis put on the specific professional group, namely representatives of the small business. They are metonymically nominated as “Polish entrepreneurship”, “small trade” or “Polish enterprises”. The significance of this group for the party is epitomized by the direct voice given to the businessman from the catering industry who provides detailed arguments why this economic branch should support J. Korwin-Mikke. Another group which appears once in the sample are the young people. They are referred in the information on the poster posted on Facebook, that 28,5 % of voters between 18-25 supported J. Korwin-Mikke in the European Parliamentary elections of 2014. The people’s identity is, similarly to P. Kukiz discourse, constructed in relation to threatening

elites. Gramatically, people are portrayed as the objects of the negative activities of the state, politicians, media, police, judges, assessors and tax offices. Individuals who want to “work and live peacefully” are “being lied”, “robbed” and “persecuted”. Specific features of the community can also be inferred from the normative vision of the future promoted by the politician. As J. Korwin-Mikke declares: “I dream of a return to the normal Poland, Poland where man has children and the state does not interfere in their upbringing, a country in which he has his money, which are not robbed by a state, a country where a woman can go to the store and buy whatever she wants to, regardless what allows her some office or the European Union. […] I would like to have a state in which the parents are responsible for their children and where parents can actually raise their children, not being under the constant pressure that the spank of the children will put them to jail”. It is a deeply traditional vision of conservative family values based on the figure of strict father, heteronormative structure of gender relations with the domination of masculinity and with the idea of a woman reduced to traditional roles of the house-keeper, mother, wife and a consumer. The discourse of freedom from the state frames the willingness to restore past, hierarchical order of the people.

The elites

Both P. Kukiz and J. Korwin-Mikke based their Facebook posts on the strong dichotomies differentiating people and the elites. Particularly pertinent to both cases is M. Reisigl’s remark claiming that one of the rhetorical principles of right wing populists in Austria is insistent repetition. Indeed, references to elites in our sample are abundant and, as was clearly visible above, the populist discourse is structured by the negative image of active elites counterposed to the passive people. The elites are represented in a pejorative way in all instances of language use, albeit grounds for the criticism are multifarious. Moreover, simplified vision of the social stratification (elites vs. society) is enhanced by the emotionally charged, derogatory language operating on highest registers. In P. Kukiz discourse the elites are nominated as “gangs”, “cliques”, “party system cynics”, “party oligarchy”, “partocracy” or “bands”, “party minions”. These categories constitute larger antiparty frame directed predominantly against political elites. The moralizing language allows for picturing them as corrupted, focused on own personal interests, manipulating the public opinion and not caring about the country.

Although the then incumbent government was heavily criticized, governing Civic Platform (PO) party was depicted as “thievish” and pursuing German, rather than Polish national interests, the critical and insulting language was directed against all political parties. Above all, all the parties are criticized for their lack of accountability and representativeness. Additionally, parties do not provide platform for civic participation. The metaphor of party as a top-down organized military troop is used to enhance this statement. This comparison bolsters the impression of the party system as a structure decoupled from the community, with its own rules and aims, not allowing for any discussions or individual opinions. Main oppositional party – Law and Justice (PiS) was portrayed as a member of the same political establishment interested only in exploiting state resources. Together with the Civic Platform and other parliamentary parties they created “system” (a category used in normative not depictive sense) and were not interested in any changes. Another target was newly founded liberal party Nowoczesna. Its leader, R. Petru: “The man who throughout his entire life has advised banks, big corporations and guarded their interests. When he says that he is defending Polish interests, he is not a reliable man for me”. R. Petru is not only assessed directly as unreliable, but there is also presupposition that his professional identity has not changed, he is not a Polish politician caring about Poland’s interests, but an advisor of the international institutions paid for securing their interests. Media are yet another incriminated segment of the elite, criticized for the lack of objectivity, political bias and connections to the specific parties. Complaints about media ignoring his own movement are coupled with the posts providing evidence of links between parties and politicians (for example, one of the posts informed about the wife of the editor in chief of “Rzeczpospolita”, big Polish daily, who started as a parliamentary candidate on behalf of Nowoczesna).

Whereas the critique of the elites provided by P. Kukiz was grounded in the patriotic language of conservatism, J. Korwin-Mikke’s promoted neconservative vision with its emphasis on free market, minimal state and radical critique of bureaucratic apparatus, particularly tax apparatus. Hence, the elites were nominated as “gang of socialists”, “gang of bureaucrats”, “gang of four” (the number refers to parliamentary parties), “gang of lefties”, “gang of thieves, or, in other words, apparatus of the Third Republic”, “the network between big companies, banks and government”, “EuroMoscovite elites”. Main activity they are criticized for is the destruction of Polish trade, destruction of free market or, more generally, destruction of Poland. All the political parties were also accused of lying to the citizens and not delivering their promises: „Poles turned away from the Civic Platform, because the government and Tusk lied, they increased taxes. Law and Justice also lied, and precisely because they did not realized promises, they had to relinquish power”. The evaluation of the elites is bolstered by the argumentum ad populum. The people’s opinion about the
elites and motivations of electoral decision are presented in a way supporting J. Korwin-Mikke’s vision of the world.

The antiestablishment critiques are strongly related to the current political party politics and the requirements of positioning in the structure of ideological space. S. van Kessel and R. Castelein claim that populist parties do not voice criticism just to protest against the entire established political system, but behave like normal political players competing with other parties, for example express strong criticism of ideologically proximate actors, as their main electoral competitors. KORWIN’s case supports this opinion, among the actors attacked most frequently were liberal parties: Civic Platform and Nowoczesna R. Petru. Identity of both parties was systematically debunked; they were called “fake liberals” or “fake freemarketeers”. R. Petru as a leader of newly founded liberal party was attacked particularly frequently as not being a real freemarketeer. He was represented through his former professional connections (contacts with big business, banks interested more in dealing with governments thank free market operations) and his personal traits (“cold, calculated man”). Interestingly, the accusations against him were based on the fallacious argumentation ad ignorantiam (argument or thesis is to be regarded as true if it has not been refuted): “If it is true – and Mr Petru never denied that – that he converted his mortgage credit into zloty and at the same time he advised people having credit in Swiss franks to keep it, in the United States he would be put behind bars”. Further, his allegedly unethical links with banks were represented through insinuating question in the party official spot: “He was given 2 million zlotys of the bank loan for a campaign. It’s interesting why?”. Law and Justice was criticized much less frequently, usually through making equivalence with Civic Platform (“they are the same”, “they would do the same”) or accusing the party of signing the Lisbon Treaty what allegedly deprived Poland its sovereignty. Media are another national level actor strongly criticized in our sample. Beside being portrayed as a “regime television” (on public television) or mouthpiece of government, most of the references emphasize their biased and prejudiced approach towards KORWIN. Several examples posted on Facebook are provided to justify claims about media boycott of the party (“regime TV combats us as it can”). Thus, the critique of the media become part of the victimization strategy conveyed through argumentum ad misericordiam (appeals for compassion and empathy).

Further, there are some references to the EU or Germany as an important EU actor. Image of totalitarian, omnipotent structure, interfering in all aspects of political and social life is articulated

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or presupposed in such nominations as “EU occupation”, “EU regime”, “Brussels-Moscow elites”. Metonymical names and expressions like “Brussels”, “reds governing from Brussels”, socialist superstate are typical elements of strong, Eurosceptic language. The discourse is based on the divisions between Europe and the EU allowing for portraying Europe as a continent under the occupation of the EU. Hasty generalizations of some specific regulative practices of the EU or the alleged plans to regulate are used to ridicule the entire project. At the more general level, hasty generalization argument is applied to the issue of the sovereignty. On the basis of the fact that in some domains the EU law has precedence over the national legal systems it is inferred that the EU took over the entire sovereignty of the member states. As J. Korwin-Mikke states “We demand the return of sovereignty. After the signing of the Treaty of Lisbon states are no longer sovereign. The European Union is the sovereign, we have to do what the EU wants, EU law has the primacy over Polish law and we do not have any choice in this respect”. Additionally, the EU is defined as a platform of interests promotion for the strongest states rather than space of cooperation between states (topos of definition). Further, KORWIN employs cultural anti-Europeanism themes, rejecting europeanisation, and portraying Europe as decaying, decadent with its culture destroyed by left-wing elites, limited economic freedoms, multiculturalism, immigration and islamization of Europe33. Euroscepticism is also employed to delegitimize right-wing political competitors from Law and Justice, party which had always attempted to play the European card to secure the more traditional and nationalist segment of constituency34. Accusing J. Kaczynski, the leader of the party of signing the Lisbon Treaty which allegedly transferred the entire sovereignty to the EU was aimed to diminish its influence in the more Eurosceptic segments of the Polish right wing electorate.

The radical critique of the elites and their activities was part and parcel of the strategy of positive self-presentation. Demoralized, egoistic and corrupted elites portrayed by P. Kukiz were part of the discursive strategy of legitimation through moral evaluation. As T. van Leeuwen states in some cases moral value is simply asserted by evaluative words, in other cases moral evaluation is linked to specific discourses of moral value35. This fits very well to P. Kukiz case who on the one hand portrayed himself and members of his movements as righteous and decent and on the other he employed the discourse of patriotism, saturated with some insurrectionist slogans deeply embedded in Polish political culture. “No matter how many MPs we will introduce to the Parliament, one can be sure - that in the future we will be written about us as righteous people and true patriots”.

33 Cecile Leconte, Understanding Euroscepticism (Houndmills and New York, Palgrave: 2010).
35 Theo Van Leeuwen, Discourse and practice, 110.
Moreover, the image of politics and the status of its own movement was envisioned through the metaphor of war constructed through the militaristic language. The topos of savior so prominent in the discourse of the populist politicians from other European countries was part of the Polish political discourse as well. P. Kukiz portrayed himself as a warrior fighting “the rotten system” and struggling for better Poland for citizens. As far as J. Korwin-Mikke is concerned, his legitimation strategy is closest to the rationalization as a type of legitimacy distinguished by T. van Leeuwen. References to “normality” and “natural order of things” linked to his party and based on the free market and homo economicus are abundant in his discourse and counterposed to the ways of thinking and political decision of the Polish and EU elites.

The other

Scholars studying right wing populism usually trace numerous groups excluded from the demos or populist heartland: ethnic minorities, immigrants, women or sexual minority groups. In case of Kukiz ’15 and KORWIN, one group featured prominently as a role model of the Polish other. We are thinking about the refugees who were referred to particularly frequently by KORWIN. Although in the case of Kukiz there was only one post referring to this issue, the discursive strategies were quite similar. First, refugees were represented as an omnipresent threat, rather than demanding policy issue, which requires well-functioning institutions and expertise. The absolute rejection of the possible admission of the refugees by Poland was justified through the securitization of the issue. The refugee crisis was metaphorized as war or “invasion” of “hordes” of young men attacking Europe. This argument was strengthened by the topos of threat, which relies on the conditional: “If there are specific dangers or threats, one should do something against them” (Wodak 2015, 53). Immigrants were conceived not only as a group posing the existential threat to Poland or even entire Europe, but also a threat to Polish freedom and culture. Additionally, the topos of history was used by Izabela Lewandowska-Malec, a parliamentary candidate on behalf Kukiz, to compare past situations when Europe was attacked by the Muslim world with the current situation.

Secondly, twofold recategorization strategies were employed to justify the exclusion of refugees. On the one hand, refugees were nominated as illegal imigrants. Authorization strategy referring to

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37 Theo Van Leeuwen, Discourse and practice, 113.
impersonal rule of the law was used to justify such move[^8]. J. Korwin-Mikke claimed for example that according to international law, groups of people fleeing the war in Syria could be called “refugees” as long as they stayed in Turkey where they escaped. The moment they left Turkey their status changed to “illegal imigrants”. On the other hand, they were categorized as “Islamists”, a strategy used to construct the topos of threat and danger. Prominent example of this strategy is provided in a slogan of KORWIN party “No illegal immigrants, not a single zloty for the their livelihood, no to islamization”. Adjacent textual positions of two categories “illegal immigrants” and “Islamisation” is based on the assumption of equivalence between these two categories[^9].

Thirdly, the refugees are represented as motivated by unwillingness to work and eagerness to exploit European systems of welfare benefits, not by the fear of war. The topos of burden and uselessness for the European economy (P. Kukiz) is employed next to neoliberal frame explaining why allegedly illegal immigrants are arriving and how to stop them (J. Korwin-Mikke). According to KORWIN’s party the major explanation of their arrival is the socialist, redistributionist character of the European states (especially Germany). Thus the simple prescription for the refugee crisis would be abolition of the welfare state. As KORWIN party explicitly stated “no money should be given to immigrants”. The opinions about refugees were expressed without any mitigation strategies. One of the posts under scrutiny contains links to his two speeches on immigrants, from 1993 and 2015 supplemented with the comment that he already “warned” against immigrants in 1993. Moreover, juxtaposition of the two speeches supported the often repeated theme of many posts that J. Korwin-Mikke is consistent in his opinions and does not change them opportunistically. The second speech took place in Strasbour on September 9 during the session of the European Parliament. J. Korwin-Mikke reacted on the “State of the Union” address of the Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker by saying "This is an absurd policy that causes flooding Europe with human garbage”.

Contrary to the cases depicted by R. Wodak, discursive provocation of J. Korwin-Mikke did not end up without any ambivalences or reformulations, neither the quasi-apologies occurred[^10]. The disciplinary measures imposed on him by the Parliament’s President were used as a part of the victimization strategy and presented as an evidence of persecution and lack of freedom of speech in the European Union. Fourthly, there was overlap between exclusionary anti-refugee discourse and Eurosceptic discourse emphasizing loss of Polish sovereignty and directed against Germany, as the

[^8]: Ibid., 108.
strongest state in the European Union. Angela Merkel’s idea to introduce quota system to distribute non-EU asylum seekers around EU member states was represented as an attempt to impose from above unwanted policy solution and as a manifestation of hegemonic tendencies of the EU and Germany in particular. Again, J. Korwin-Mikke resorted to provocative, unmitigated and insulting language to discredit such policy. In order to evoke the image of aggressive German policy and justify own anti-refugee stance the notion of “German concentration camps” was coined as a label for possible future “refugee camps” in Poland. Such fallacious historical analogies were legitimized by the alleged fact that refugees would be forced to live there, whereas if they had a choice, they would prefer live in Germany offering bigger benefits.

Blaming the opponent through the use of figures from the most dramatic historical periods served to reverse the role of victim and perpetrator. In such perspective Poland appeared not as a country contributing to the difficulties posed by the migrant crisis, but a victim of the arbitrary policy of German elites dominating in the EU structures. Another linguistic tool was the reversal of the argument (*retorsio argumenti*). The following excerpt from the discussion with the parliamentary candidate of Kukiz’15 provides particularly prominent example: “Do you really think that the adopting of seven thousand people without the knowledge of our language and closing them in the refugee centers has something to do with humanitarian aid?” (I. Lewandowska-Malec). The rhetorical question suggests that not the complete closure of borders should be classified as inhumane, but rather the policy instruments designed by the EU and implemented in Poland. Moreover the verb “close” referring to the immigrants as objects puts the immigration policy in the negative context as a forced, top-down project.

Radically negative image of the other serves as a point of reference for the positive self-presentation. Such strategy was particularly visible in KORWIN’s case representing itself as the only party with the clear and coherent policy position towards immigrants: “there is only one party, which has a clear position on the issue of illegal immigrants”. Moreover such position is represented as an act of bravery, what implies some kind of political conspiracy of silence and justifies strong language used to portray the issue: “We courageously say no to illegal immigrants as the only one party. Only Korwin will provide security to us and our families”.

18
Conclusions

In this paper, we set out to examine the unexpected career of two right-wing populist political actors: Janusz Korwin – Mikke and Paweł Kukiz and their political organizations. It seemed that a high level of anti-immigrant threat perception combined with a dissatisfaction with an incumbent government and a subjective negative perception of the socioeconomic situation of the Polish people offered fertile ground for populist parties. The political opportunity structure perspective adds to our understanding of the potential for a radical-right parties. Research show that political actors may benefit from a system with a high level of volatility, a low level of party loyalty, ideological inconsistency and large number of non-voters. When combined with the aforementioned sense of insecurity and disappointment with the mainstream parties, such a political system provides space for populist, anti-establishment political initiatives (the case of Kukiz and Kukiz'15).

We also showed that media attention for Kukiz and Korwin-Mikke was moderate: they were covered less intensively than mainstream political parties, PO and PiS, but they were not neglected by the traditional electronic media either. At the same time, they provided very good examples of a significance of skillful communication via online and social media: Facebook (Korwin-Mikke) and Twitter (Kukiz). Hence, they succeeded in reaching the youngest voters who shared with them a political agenda (or at least dissatisfaction with the establishment in general and the government in particular).

Although the media enable the transmission of a populist message, they cannot provide any communicative impact without the additional property of the discursive opportunity structure. Another important factor for the success of the populist agenda is its ability to resonate with public opinion and the generalized perception of its legitimacy. As we claim, the gradual radicalization of PiS’s agenda normalized and legitimized anti-elitist and anti-refugee claims in the public eye. As such, together with the high volatility of the electorate, the biggest oppositional party contributed heavily to the anti-establishment climate of the electoral campaign before the 2015 parliamentary elections, providing a fertile ground for the success of the anti-establishment and anti-immigrant agenda of the two populist actors under scrutiny.
Tables and Figures

Table 1. Preferences of age groups of Polish voters in presidential and parliamentary elections: results of exit polls (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Paweł Kukiz</th>
<th>Kukiz'15</th>
<th>Janusz Korwin-Mikke</th>
<th>KORWiN</th>
<th>Andrzej Duda</th>
<th>PiS</th>
<th>Bronisław Komorowski</th>
<th>PO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-29</td>
<td>41.1</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>29.9</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>30.6</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>23.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49-49</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>35.4</td>
<td>38.7</td>
<td>34.6</td>
<td>25.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>44.6</td>
<td>47.1</td>
<td>35.1</td>
<td>23.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60+</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>44.9</td>
<td>48.7</td>
<td>44.3</td>
<td>28.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Demographic profile of supporters of J.K. Mikke and P. Kukiz (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Janusz Korwin - Mikke</th>
<th>Paweł Kukiz</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-25</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-35</td>
<td>47.2</td>
<td>29.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-50</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>28.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-65</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>16.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65+</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender (% male)</th>
<th>77.4</th>
<th>53.5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education (% of university degree)</td>
<td>52.8</td>
<td>46.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place of living (% of city)</td>
<td>56.6</td>
<td>59.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Airtime dedicated to political parties before European Parliamentary elections (May 10-23, 2014)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political party</th>
<th>Newcasts (min.)</th>
<th>Publicistic programme (min.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Platforma Obywatelska (PO)</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>648,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (PiS)</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>545</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej (SLD)</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>346</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europa+Twój Ruch</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solidarna Polska (SP)</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polska Razem (PR)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe (PSL)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kongres Nowej Prawicy (KNP)</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruch Narodowy (RN)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source:

accessed December 4, 2016.

Table 4. Airtime dedicated to candidates before presidential elections in 2015 - 1st round (May 2-8, 2015)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Newcasts</th>
<th>Publicistic programme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Duda</td>
<td>00:30:52</td>
<td>02:23:05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Komorowski</td>
<td>00:33:20</td>
<td>01:51:55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adam Jarubas</td>
<td>00:06:31</td>
<td>00:37:58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grzegorz Wilk</td>
<td>00:04:16</td>
<td>00:56:12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janusz Korwin – Mikke</td>
<td>00:17:27</td>
<td>00:54:38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janusz Palikot</td>
<td>00:08:23</td>
<td>00:45:02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magdalena Ogórek</td>
<td>00:11:00</td>
<td>01:06:09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marian Kowalski</td>
<td>00:05:16</td>
<td>00:49:29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paweł Kukiz</td>
<td>00:17:04</td>
<td>00:43:36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paweł Tanajno</td>
<td>00:03:19</td>
<td>00:45:34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grzegorz Braun</td>
<td>00:04:16</td>
<td>00:43:34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. Activity on Facebook before the EP elections in 2014 (May 9-23, 2014)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean number of POSTS</th>
<th>Mean number of LIKES</th>
<th>Mean number of COMMENTS</th>
<th>Mean number of SHARES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Janusz Korwin-Mikke</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2053</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bronisław Komorowski</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>534</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ewa Kopacz</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6. Activity on Facebook before the presidential elections in 2015 (April 24 – May 8, 2015)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean number of POSTS</th>
<th>Mean number of LIKES</th>
<th>Mean number of COMMENTS</th>
<th>Mean number of SHARES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Janusz Korwin-Mikke</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>3769</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>642</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paweł Kukiz</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1604</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrzej Duda</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1438</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bronisław Komorowski</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>429</td>
<td>253</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

w-telewizji.html, accessed December 4, 2016..
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