
Agnieszka Kwiatkowska
Centre for the Study of Democracy
University of Social Sciences and Humanities
Warsaw, Poland

The paper presented at the ECPR Joint Sessions,
University of Nottingham, 25-30.04.2017
DRAFT VERSION: PLEASE DO NOT QUOTE

Contact:
Agnieszka Kwiatkowska
Center for the Study of Democracy
University of Social Sciences and Humanities,
ul. Chodakowska 19/31
03-815 Warszawa, Polska
agn.kwiatkowska@swps.edu.pl
Over the last decade we have witnessed a clear increase in extreme political rhetoric in the parliamentary debate in Poland. One aspect of the progressing radicalization of the language is overuse of words having a high negative emotional intensity to describe the events in ordinary, everyday politics, which leads to the degradation of their significance. With the increase in the frequency of their use in politics, words like "shame," "disgrace" or "treason" ceased to describe only shocking, memorable historical events and widened their meaning to cover the regular political activity of the opponents in the parliament. As research shows, brutalization of the language of the debate has negative consequences at the levels of the political elite and the electorate, leading to reduced efficiency of the parliament, the exacerbation of conflicts between parties and among their supporters and the political alienation of citizens.

In this paper I analyse changes of the political discourse using the transcripts of parliamentary speeches from the lower chamber of the Polish parliament from the period from 1991 to 2016 related to the idea of shame, betrayal, disgrace and scandal, combining them with the corresponding socio-demographic and political data of the Polish MPs. Searching for latent topics using Structural Topic Modelling allows me to specify the contexts in which the extreme language were the most probable to appear and how it changed over time, who uses it most often, and how it influences the government-opposition dynamics of competition. My findings show that the use of uncivil language is increasing in time, appears mainly in the context of national identity issues, and is moderated – besides political affiliation – by gender, education, parliamentary experience and electoral results of the MPs.

Keywords: Poland, parliamentary debates, political elites, quantitative content analysis, text mining
The language of Polish politics is perceived negatively, both by linguists and by society. Although it is an elitist language, there are a lot of negative traits colloquially attributed to it: manipulation, opacity, vulgarity, aggressiveness (Bralczyk 2003:7). Its characteristic manners are the displacement of substantive arguments with moralistic rhetoric, lack of compromise, focus on self-presentation, ritualism, and lack of respect for opponents – partners in discourse (Piotrowski 1997). Introducing strong emotions and expressive behaviours into everyday politics, often merely as a tool of political competition, makes a fair public debate difficult to conduct. Over the past decade, these negative features have become even more acute.

Observing the Polish political debate – being held in parliament and in the media - there is a marked increase in the brutal political rhetoric, manifested in the frequent use of extremely emotionally negatively-charged terms. As a consequence of their increased usage, words such as "disgrace", "dishonour" or "betrayal" have ceased to describe only shocking, long-lasting historical events, and have undergone a devaluation, which changed them into definitions of common activities the speaker disapproves. Such abuse of extreme words has made their authors and recipients immune to their power as words themselves ceased to fulfil their punishing function.

The rise of extreme rhetoric in politics is not a phenomenon unique for Poland. By examining US Congress speeches, Uslaner (1993) notes that the crisis, which undermined traditional norms setting the limits of acceptable behaviours in the parliamentary debate, such as courtesy and tactfulness, began as early as the 1970s and 1980s, reflecting increased party polarization following the United States involvement in the Vietnam War and the Watergate affair. The radicalisation of language of politics have also been observed in other countries (Semetko, Schoenbach 2003; Ilie 2004; Spary 2010; Bates, Kerr, Byrne, Stanley 2014; Murphy 2014).

Progressive incivility of language can be described as an increase in the frequency of using words with high negative emotional intensity and connotations that dominate over denotations (Bralczyk 2016). The use of words that are extremely negative, emotionally saturated, to describe the events of everyday politics leads to the degradation of their meaning. Participants and recipients of political debate become accustomed to the worst epithets, if they are repeated regularly, which inspires further brutalization of language. For example, the Polish word "hańba", which can be translated as "disgrace, dishonour, shame", with meaning according to the Dictionary of the Polish Language (PWN) of "unworthy conduct which generates general condemnation and contempt" used to be regarded as unacceptable in the standard political discussion. However, after the political transformation of 1989,
such political rhetoric appears not only in accusations of acts of the highest treason, but even as an expression of dissatisfaction with the administrative decision of the opponent at the local level.

Empirical research on the social acceptance of political behaviour that goes beyond cultural norms is carried out primarily in times of intensification of political competition - that is, during electoral campaigns. The conclusions drawn from the research regarding the effectiveness of such behaviours are ambiguous. Fridkin and Kenney (2004), reviewing literature on the effectiveness of negative campaigns, show that, according to the results of most studies, extremely negative elements attract the recipient's attention, increasing his or her interest in the speaker and subject of discussion and emotional engagement with politics, and such increase in attractiveness of their applicants happens at the expense of their competitors. However, they note a number of studies showing no effect of negative campaigns. Meta-analyses conducted by Lau, Sigelman, Heldman and Babbitt (1999) and Lau, Sigelman and Rovner (2007) covering research on the impact of negative campaigns on candidate ratings, indicate that negative campaigns are no more effective than positive ones. Later works by Krupnikov (2011, 2012), however, suggest that the impact of negative campaigns occurs both at the level of candidate choice and at the level of political demobilization, but only when certain conditions regarding the chronology of the decision-making process and the specific forms of the campaign are met.

There is less research, though with recently increasing interest, covering the use of extreme vocabulary in daily parliamentary discourse. Works in this category mainly concern the US Congress (Uslaner 2000; Dodd, Schraufnagel 2012; Wolf, Strachan, Shea 2012) and the UK Parliament (Harris 2001; Jamieson 2001; Illie 2014; Murphy 2014). There are also a few books that deal with this issue in relation to the Polish Sejm (Kamińska-Szmaj 2001; Laskowska 2004; Batko-Tokarz 2008; Piniarski 2011; Polkowska 2015).

The use of uncivil vocabulary is tempting for politicians. The expressiveness of speech and its radical content allows the speaker to break through the inflow of information conveyed in the media and quickly gain recognition. In addition, descriptions of political opponents in terms of absolute good and evil, and not on account of their competence, avoids the need for substantive confrontation with their arguments. The aim of the moral stigmatization of the opponent is his discrediting as a person unable to conduct politics regardless of earlier achievements.

The language of politics, combining the function of the means of communication and the tool of competition at the state level, is particularly susceptible to extremism. The development of the internet communication and the widening of access to parliamentary debate proceedings makes extreme, violent speeches quickly spread in society. The simple, expressive and radical language seems to be, in the popular opinion, more closely resembling the true description of reality. In addition, aggressive attacks and humiliation of the opponent fuel anti-elitist attitudes. What's more, the media, in pursuit of increased
audience, are more eager to focus on the emotional (especially negative) aspects of the parliamentary
debate, rather than on substantive elements that are tedious to the majority of viewers, readers, or
listeners.

Incivility of the language of politics is not just a matter of aesthetics. The quality of the
parliamentary debate, including the level of language extremism, has implications at the level of political
elites and voters. Extreme rhetoric on both these levels leads to: increased polarization, difficulties in
reaching a compromise, perception of political opponents as enemies actively seeking to harm us, and
not just people with different political views (Wolf, Strachan, Shea 2012, Jamieson 2001, Maisel 2012).
The existing rules of conduct in the parliamentary debate are intended to alleviate competition and allow
construction of public policies despite divergent ideological positions. However, the language based on
the slander and denigration of the opponent strengthens this polarization. Verbal aggression in politics
creates the impression of a ubiquitous conflict in which neutral positions cannot be tackled. Excessive
emotionality of the parliamentary debate is also unfavourable in terms of the efficiency of state policies
- it replaces substantive discussion with a shallow quarrel. Research conducted on the work of the US
Congress has shown that the number of invectives in the parliamentary debate is positively correlated
with the ineffectiveness of work: the longer time required to reach consensus and the lower number of
decisions (Jamieson 2001).

The language of the parliamentary debate influences the style of public communication. It is
normative, as people take over the linguistic habits of political elites with whom they interact through
the media (Bralczyk 2003: 8). Moreover, Kalmoe’s (2014) study has shown that the infusion of political
rhetoric with aggression increase support for acts of political violence among voters with dispositions
of aggressive behaviour. In addition, extremist rhetoric in politics, if used extensively over a long period
of time, has the effect of discouraging towards politics, cynical interpretation of the political world, a
decrease in political efficacy and affiliation, which in the long run translates into lower political
participation (Fridkin, Kenney 2004).

If politicians of all political flavours are accused of treason and betrayal, this leads to the social
delegitimiziation of the whole elite. Based on experimental research on the US Senate elections, Fridkin
and Kenney (2004) found that the negative messages from competing candidates are effective as a
political tool when they focus on substantive issues and refer to proposed policies rather than the
candidate himself. However, when negative messages are formulated in too extreme a form and focus
on non-essential aspects, they contribute to the deterioration of the evaluation of both candidates
participating in the campaign - the attacker and the attacked.

Utilizing extreme rhetoric in new democracies is facilitated by the lack of public experience of
a large part of the political elite. A poorly developed political culture makes usage of uncivil vocabulary
less often interpreted as a violation of social norms concerning the behaviour of a MP. The low level of political knowledge of elites and voters, resulting from a short period of gaining democratic experience, contributes to favouring symbolic issues, also referred to as easy issues, covering primarily national identity and moral attitudes, over hard issues, demanding political sophistication, covering details of public policies (Carmines, Stimson 1986). The symbolic and identity issues are, in turn, susceptible to conflict and political rhetoric based on negative emotions and stigmatization of the opponent.

The extent to which uncivil rhetoric in parliament negatively affects the political cooperation in parliament and political engagement among voters, determine the importance of the research problem. In further analyses, I will try to verify the main hypothesis of the article, which is that since the democratic transition of 1989, we can observe the increase of the frequency of the use of uncivil vocabulary in the parliamentary debate, as well as answer a number of detailed research questions:

How often the MPs speak about disgrace, dishonour, and shame in parliament? In which contexts accusations of disgrace, scandal, or treason are the most common? Which parties most often use uncivil vocabulary? Do opposition parties employ radical language more often than government parties? Do uncivil rhetoric appears more often as a part of parliamentary speeches or as non-statutory intercalations or calls from the parliamentary audience?

I will also explore which socio-demographic traits of the MPs can be used as predictors of uncivil rhetoric usage. Finally, I will take a look whether there is a change of contexts in which the uncivil rhetoric is used in the parliamentary debate, a change in themes in which allegations of disgrace and betrayal appear. On methodological level, the objective of the paper is to present a latent thematic modelling approach as an alternative way of categorization of qualitative data.

**Methodology and data sources**

The transcripts of the parliamentary debates are rich but rarely used in Polish political science source of data on ideological positions of the political parties. Particularly missing are in-depth quantitative analyses (for literature review of Polish works on parliamentary discourse see Polkowska 2015: 13-17). Meanwhile, the stenographic data provided on a regular basis by the Sejm (lower chamber of the Polish parliament) are multidimensional textual resources, allowing diachronic analyses of the dynamics of party competition, intra- and inter-party conflicts, and the style and quality of the parliamentary debate.
The language of parliamentary debates is a specific form of language of politics, defined as a functional variation of the general language used in texts produced by politicians and others persons in the sphere of politics, intentionally directed to the general public and dominated by persuasion (Walczak 1994: 20). The main audience are the MPs present at the debate, although the speakers deliver their speeches with the knowledge that, due to the presence of the media in the chamber, their words will potentially reach a wide, national audience. This absent but potential audience, according to some researchers, is the main partner in the debate for the speakers, not the allies and opponents in the parliament, and that primary orientation towards influencing public opinion causes the participants to not communicate with each other (Tyszka 1996).

The second distinguishing feature of this type of language is the structured nature of the parliamentary discourse, consisting of the sequential statements of individual MPs, which precludes the possibility of an immediate replica (as we shall see later in the paper, this is compensated by the increasing number of non-statutory intercalations), and which take place in the order set by the Marshal of the Sejm or his deputy, are limited in time, and are subject to conventionalisation and parliamentary etiquette. Speeches of members of parliament largely belong to a special category of texts "written-to-be-spoken", which locate them between written and spoken forms of language.

Another specific feature of the parliamentary language is its functional duality. On the one hand, its primary task is to contribute to the legislation of normative acts on public policies, so that a considerable part of the discourse are legal texts, their fragments or references to them. On the other hand, the statements of MPs are expressive, aimed at rhetorically defeating the opponent - either directly during the debate or through mass media, in the eyes of the public opinion.

The features of the language of parliamentary debate described above make it very suitable for content analysis. Thanks to a more structured speeches compared to the natural language of conversation, and due to a formal structure of debate that enables the speaker to convey the whole message within given time, the transcripts of parliamentary debates consist of in-depth statements on a wide range of issues. The transcripts contain the statements of many representatives of parliamentary groups, not just their leaders, and the speeches are personalized in terms of style and arguments, as opposed to official programs and party positions. This allows to conduct a thorough observation of the changes in the language of political discourse.

Automated analysis of parliamentary speeches allows to group important issues in the parliamentary discourse and to trace their changes over time. In the paper, besides introductory descriptive statistics, I use a generative topic modelling method, which infers latent topics (which the parliamentary speeches are considered to be mixtures of) based on word co-occurrence in utterances.
Unsupervised methods of textual data analysis can be seen as an automated implementation of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967). They do not impose a top-down interpretation made by the researcher through a pre-developed theoretical model, and the results are obtained with the generative model. In this method, it is assumed that each document (speech) is a mixture of topics, and each word in the document has a certain probability of occurrence on a particular topic. Therefore topics are represented as probability distributions on words. The aim of the latent topic modelling is to reconstruct the topics taken in the analysed set of texts based on the coexistence of particular words in speeches.

The analysis presented in this paper, showing the transformations of the thematic contexts of radical vocabulary in the parliamentary debates, was built inductively from data constituting a complete population. The method does not require text coding and manual construction of conceptual categories, because the categories are automatically built solely on the basis of two elements: the frequency of coexistence with each other in the individual documents and the meta data related to the speech and the speaker. Instead of assigning a word to a category, probabilities of belonging to particular categories are assigned to the words. The model is constructed in an iterative way, and construction is completed when subsequent comparisons with data no longer yield significant changes in the probability related to words.

Thus, the division into categories does not require "judgments of meaning" (Janis 1949: 81), which are often problematic due to the ambiguity of the wording, dependencies between categories and the diversity of the reception of messages in different context. Therefore, topic modelling solves a major content-related problem, namely the strong influence of established categories and their composition on results. By lacking originally defined categories, topic modelling fulfils the condition of restraining from preconceptualization in data collection and model construction. Theory is emerging directly from data and mediation of the researcher is negligible.

Computer-aided deep text mining techniques allow for much faster, large sample-based and less error-prone and influenced by researcher analysis. The computational efficiency of the algorithm makes possible the analysis of the entire set of texts rather than the selected speeches, which in turn eliminates the problems of sample selection. Analysis using a structural topic modelling is also characterized by high reliability, reflected in results stability, replicability and accuracy (Krippendorff 2004: 2150216). Building a model with predetermined parameters, including pseudo randomly generated initialization of the model, returns the same results. At the same time, the results of the thematic models with different parameters generated on the same data set show a high degree of consistency among the categories. For these reasons, the topic modelling may be used as a faster and more reliable alternative to categorization of textual data, or can be used to verify categories obtained manually.

The method I use is a variant of Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA), extended to account for spatial polarity in the issues covered, in addition to the salience of the issues themselves. The primary
The unit of analysis is one speech, within which the bag-of-words approach is applied. Latent Dirichlet Allocation (Blei et al. 2003) is an unsupervised method that has been widely shown to produce meaningful results in multidimensional topic analysis for automated inference of dimensions (e.g., Zirn & Stuckenschmidt 2014). This variant, called Structural Topic Model (STM) and an associated package for the R language (Roberts et al. 2014), is an extension of LDA for computer-assisted reading of large text corpora allowing for incorporation of metadata into the topic model. STM extends LDA in three ways (Roberts et al. 2014). First, unlike in LDA which assumes the same prior topic distribution over all documents, STM assigns to each document its own prior topic distribution, basing on information provided by the metadata. Second, the topics are allowed to be correlated. Third, STM allows for intra-topic variability in the word distribution. Taken together, these properties make it suitable for analysis of metadata-augmented parliamentary debate.

The choice of metadata, which can be defined as any information describing all or part of documents in the corpus, was based on the information available from the lower house of the Polish parliament website (www.sejm.gov.pl) and included: date, speaker, parliamentary club membership (which typically reflects party membership, but this need not be the case, particularly for smaller parties or clubs being created mid-term which may not be related to any political entity), and a topic of the debate – typically containing the name of the bill being considered. Where available, information on intra-term club affiliation change was extracted from roll-call data. Inclusion of temporal (parliamentary term) and political (political party) variables as metadata in the model enables their influence on distributions of topics discovered.

All analyses in this paper were done using R (R Core Team 2014) version 3.3.2 in R Studio (RStudio Team 2015) version 0.99.903. The research material is a complete set of parliamentary speeches in the I-VII and one-fourth terms of the VIII Sejm (by the end of the 28th meeting, that is until October 21, 2016 inclusive), covering a total of around 125 million words in 29,252 speeches. The corpus of speeches was scraped from the Sejm of the Republic of Poland website (http://www.sejm.gov.pl), linked to the metadata available on the site, and the data collected was cleaned and cross validated to exclude errors. The raw texts of the speeches were processed with morphological analysis in order to transform each word into the basic grammatical form. After lemmatization, standard preprocessing on the texts was performed, removing punctuation, stopwords (conjunctions, prepositions, etc.) and words that are closely related to the specificity of the parliamentary procedures and thus do not carry information (e.g., marshal, MP, sir).

For the purposes set before the paper, a selection of speeches related to the idea of shame, betrayal, infamy, and scandal was selected from the full corpus (see Table 1). Due to the fact that building generative models is better for large collections of texts, I expanded the subcorpus to contain words expressing strongly negative emotional attitudes, similar in meaning to the above: disgrace,
ridicule, disrespect, shame, mischief, dishonour, scandal, scoundrel, wickedness, treachery, treason, infamy, altercation, chutzpah, betrayal, and other grammatical forms sharing the same core. From the full corpus of Sejm speeches, speeches containing at least one of the words from the regular expression (in Polish): „hań|hanieb|niesław|ośmiesz|wstyd|podl(y|e|ośc|y)|dyshonor|skandal|łotr|niegodziw|zaprza|targowic|infami|awantur|hucp|zdrad|zdrajc” covering all possible grammatical forms derived from the searchable cores or their specific extensions narrowing the search area to the desired thematic scope were chosen. Finally, 11519 speeches with 16865 key words were selected, as shown in Table 1.

The selected set of words, of course, does not contain all expression that could be defined as “uncivil language”. I decided to focus on a specific subgenre of uncivil language common in Polish politics, characterized by a set of distinct features: words that sound archaic and are rarely used in common Polish, are pompous and have extreme negative emotional content, and bear absolute moral judgement of events, persons or behaviours. In the paper, I use terms “uncivil language”, “radical/extreme rhetoric” and similar interchangeably.

Table 1. Keyword occurrences in parliamentary transcripts 1991-2016.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Searched word core</th>
<th>English meaning</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Number of speeches</th>
<th>Number of occurrences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>hańb</td>
<td>hanieb</td>
<td>disgrace</td>
<td>hańba, haniebny, hańbić, pohańbiony</td>
<td>1659</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>niesław</td>
<td>ridicule</td>
<td>niesława, niesławny, zniesławić, zniesławiony</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>389</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ośmiesz</td>
<td>disrespect</td>
<td>ośmieszyć, ośmieszenie, ośmieszyl, ośmieszony</td>
<td>811</td>
<td>950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wstyd</td>
<td>shame</td>
<td>wstyd, wstydzić, zawstydza, bezwstydny</td>
<td>3612</td>
<td>4715</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>podl(y</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>ośc</td>
<td>y)</td>
<td>mischief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dyshonor</td>
<td>dishonour</td>
<td>dyshonor, dyshonorem, dyshonoru</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>skandal</td>
<td>scandal</td>
<td>skandal, skandalu, skandaliczny, skandalista</td>
<td>3845</td>
<td>4881</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>łotr</td>
<td>Scoundrel</td>
<td>łotr, łotrem, łotrostwo, łotrzyk</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>niegodziw</td>
<td>wickedness</td>
<td>niegodziwy, niegodziwiec, niegodziwa, niegodziwość</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zaprza</td>
<td>treachery</td>
<td>zaprzasthanstwo, zaprzasthanstwami, zaprzaniec</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Descriptive analyses

The collected data indicate that speeches that use extremely negative vocabulary are unevenly distributed over time (Figure 1). After its initial intensity in 1992 there was a decline and a period of relative calm down to 2001 inclusive (especially during the first half of this period, during the 1993-1997 parliament with the SLD-PSL ruling coalition). In the years 2002-2004 and the first half of 2005 (the SLD-UP governments, until March 3, 2003 in the coalition with the PSL) there was a dramatic increase in the number of speeches using pompous and uncivil vocabulary, with 2004 being the maximum. In the next two terms there was a decline in negative rhetoric - particularly during the first Donald Tusk government of 2007-2011 (PO-PSL coalition). The downward trend has been reversed since 2012, with accusations of treason, disgrace, and betrayal remaining at a very high level.
Fig. 1. The use of radical vocabulary in the parliamentary speeches in the years 1991-2016. Source: own calculations. The colour of the parliamentary terms was marked alternately.

The words included in the study most frequently occur during the general, non-specific parliamentary debates: the parts of the sittings called Statements, Questions in current affairs, Interpellations and inquiries, as well as during the Presentation by the Prime Minister of the agenda of the Council of Ministers requesting a vote of confidence. If we take into account only those debates where individual laws were discussed, the most often radical terminology was used in the debates: “The Report on the State of Public Affairs and State Institutions presented at the end of the PO-PSL Coalition (2007-2015)” presented by the successive Council of Ministers, “The first reading of the parliamentary draft resolutions on shortening the term of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland”, and the “Report of the Constitutional Committee of the National Assembly on the draft Constitution of the Republic of Poland - second reading”.

Among the speeches, the most references to betrayal, disgrace, and semantic similarities in a single speech were used by Zdzisław Jankowski, an independent MP, who used 15 words from the analysed set in his November 26, 2003 speech. Here is an excerpt from this statement:

“This is treason, ladies and gentlemen. Let us be aware of the fact that after 1989 in Poland power was taken by sellers and traitors who set themselves the goal of destroying the Polish state and enslaving the Polish nation. This is the disgrace and betrayal of the Polish raison d'etre ... This betrayal cannot be explained, the betrayal must be
condemned. (...)

Extreme vocabulary is a rhetorical tool used primarily by opposition parties. Figure 2 shows that the opposition parties are responsible for the peak intensity of the negative rhetoric that occurred during the V and VII terms.

![Graph showing usage of radical vocabulary in parliamentary speeches](image)

**Fig. 2. Usage of radical vocabulary in parliamentary speeches in the years 1991-2016 in division into government and opposition parties.**

*Source: own calculations. Data after removal of interruption voices from the set.*

Overall, extreme vocabulary was used mostly by smaller parliamentary clubs (see Figure 3). During the first increase in the use of extreme vocabulary (in 1992), taking place in polarized and fragmentarized Sejm of 1991-1993, it was a large group of small parties, mostly right-wing, which was mainly responsible for the radicalization of the language, first and foremost: the Confederation of Independent Poland (KPN), the Democratic Union (UD), the Christian-National Union (ZChN), Solidarity, and the Centre Agreement (PC). Also during the next intensity peak around year 2004 (with the leftist government of 2001-2004), the group most often resorting to accusations of treason and betrayal was the Catholic-National Movement micro-party. However, the high frequency was also
visible among the three groups that, in the next parliamentary term, formed a coalition government: LPR, PiS and SRP. Between these peak periods, the largest number of speeches using words from the analysed set was generated by the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD), the main opposition party in the 1997-2001 parliamentary term.

However, the situation changed in late spring of 2006, when the Law and Justice (PiS) minority government was joined by SRP and the LPR. Since this year, PiS as the main ruling party has become the group most often using extreme rhetoric – it was particularly prominent during the period of 2008-2011 - and has retained this position until 2015. In 2016, during the second government formed by PiS, we observe the radicalization of both smaller parliamentary clubs (primarily Modern) and the unprecedented radicalisation of the centrist Civic Platform language.

![Fig. 3. Usage of radical vocabulary in parliamentary speeches in the years 1991-2016 in division into parliamentary parties. Source: own calculations. Data after removal of interruption voices from the set.](image)

The year 2016 together with parliamentary crisis brought other interesting phenomenon: a sharp increase in usage of uncivil language among the parliamentary audience, e.g. in non-statutory
interruptions of the speeches from the floor. The number of speeches from the analysed subset during which the interruptions including uncivil language occurred accounted for just over 11% of all analysed speeches. However, in 2016 alone, the percentage of uncivil interruptions into speeches increased to 32% of speeches. As illustrated in Fig. 4, interrupting the speeches, however, affected twice as many members of the opposition parties than the ruling parties. The opposition is therefore more eager to use negative rhetoric in their official speeches, but also more prone to have their speeches interrupted with uncivil comments (as most comments is not assigned to a specific person, we can only assume, that the interruptions are authored mostly by MPs from ruling parties).

Comments are distinguished in parliamentary transcripts and are intended to record voices from the floor (of identified speakers or not) as well as the not expressed verbally events and atmosphere in the Chamber. Examples of various forms of comments:
“(Voice from the floor: O Jesus!)”
“(Votes from the floor: Disgrace!) (Applause)”
“(Ryszard Zbrzyzny, MP: Where are commissions, investigative commissions?)”
Thematic modelling

In order to find model with satisfying fit to analysed data, a series of STM models were developed for the selected set of occurrences to extract hidden themes. After comparing models with different number of topics specified, a model with a set number of \( K = 18 \) topics was selected, characterized by the highest interpretability of the results and the high degree of semantic coherence and exclusivity (Roberts, Stewart, Tingley 2016).

Topics obtained through latent topic modelling of parliamentary transcripts can be divided into three groups. First, some topics can be labelled technical. They consist of words that, while not meeting the definition of “stop words”, are commonly used in parliamentary proceedings (examples: applause, statement). While these topics can rank highly in the total tally of the debate, they are irrelevant to the subject matter investigated. The STM model selected has returned three technical topics, referring in turn to: parliamentary procedures, legislation and voting. The second group of topics can be described as ephemeral. Their characteristic feature is the frequent occurrence of proper names, especially the names and surnames of MPs, or references to current events with no lasting importance.

After the exclusion of these two groups of topics from further analyses, we are left with essential topics, being the relevant contexts most strongly linked to the idea of disgrace, treason, and scandal. For each topic, presented in Table 2, its name is the only feature imposed post factum by the author. The rest of the features, including a list of top words which the model generates with highest probability of affiliation with specific topic (PROB) and a list of top words with highest frequency-exclusivity (FREX) score, i.e. the high-probability words for a given topic that are not high-probability words for other topics (Bischof, Airoldi 2012), were automatically assigned by the algorithm. The total frequency of topics throughout the debate (FREQ) as well as relative frequency, i.e. frequency calculated only among the selected essential themes (RELFREQ) is provided.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>PROB</th>
<th>FREX</th>
<th>FREQ</th>
<th>RELFREQ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Table 2. Essential topics from the STM model.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Keywords</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Independence</td>
<td>Polish, nation, Pole, national, years, Poland, own, commonwealth, war, history</td>
<td>Soviet, doomed, independence, veteran, army, cross, extermination, war</td>
<td>8.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td>Public, political, television, council, electoral, polish, media, national, election</td>
<td>TV subscription, television, radio, broadcasting, media, broadcaster, election, voter, electoral</td>
<td>6.59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intelligence and law enforcement agencies</td>
<td>Case, person, commission, police, prosecution, security, operation, state, prosecutor</td>
<td>Prosecutor, policeman, investigation, police, lustration, officer, trial, testimony</td>
<td>5.06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Privatisation</td>
<td>Polish, bank, state, privatization, company, treasure, business, property, enterprise, economy</td>
<td>Sugar factory, privatize, shipyard, privatization, bank, mine, stock exchange, coal</td>
<td>4.41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Child, family, health, person, life, law, patient, social, doctor, care</td>
<td>In vitro, patient, medicine, treatment, abortion, violence, hospital, doctor, child</td>
<td>4.88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judiciary</td>
<td>Law, constitutional, court, constitution, tribunal, article, state, criminal, case, legal</td>
<td>Judge, constitutional, tribunal, ruling, constitution, punishment, court, criminal, code, ruling</td>
<td>4.97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>School, local government, municipality, teacher, education, province, city, culture, environment, polish</td>
<td>University, teacher, school, county, mayor, monument, student, district, party, forest</td>
<td>3.82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure</td>
<td>Road, program, stay, building, resource, highway, million, ministry, investment, infrastructure</td>
<td>Highway, National Railway, speed camera, section, kilometre, vignette, railway, driver, train, road</td>
<td>3.54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign affairs</td>
<td>Polish, European, union, politics, country, affairs, foreign, state,</td>
<td>Treaty, NATO, integration, presidency, diplomacy, Russia, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European, membership, partnership</td>
<td>6.35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The STM model returned ten essential topics, all with high interpretability. The most common context for accusations of shame, treason, or scandal have been speeches during debates regarding independence, martyrdom, national identity, historical events and their anniversaries, especially related to the Second World War. The use of extreme vocabulary in this context may be, however, more in place, as it refers to great historical events and figures that have permanently integrated themselves into the cultural consciousness in Poland. Hence, consideration of events such as the partitioning of Poland in the XVIII century, the "backstabbing" attack of the Soviet Union on Poland in 1939, or even cooperation with the communist authorities after the war in terms of disgrace or treason may be more justified than discussions regarding events of everyday politics debated in terms of absolute moral judgements than we can find in other topics.

Subsequent frequency-wise topic in which the mentions of disgrace and treason occur is the management of the national media. Detailed issues debated here include long-term goals of public television, the politicization of public broadcasting and the nomination process for key positions in the sector, the use of television for political competition during electoral campaigns and the obscure mode of granting broadcasting concessions. These problems appeared mainly in relation to television brands affiliated with catholic church.

Foreign policy have been构成ing a context of extreme rhetoric mainly in debates preceded by speeches of the Foreign Minister - primarily the annual information of the Minister of Foreign Affairs on the main directions of Poland's foreign policy in a given year, or – in the past – information on the state of negotiations with the European Union. Two historical aspects in which accusations of treason or betrayal occur most often can be distinguished. The first were references to past actions in Poland's foreign policy undertaken by the communist authorities, which negatively impacted Poland's international position and internal situation. The second aspect relates to the process of Poland's accession to the European Union and required changes in public policies. The accusations fallen here
both at a very general level and concerned the potential loss of sovereignty of the country and regarding specific, technical issues such as the remuneration of Polish MEPs.

Successful topic, budget issues, was the context for extreme vocabulary especially during debates on drafts of annual budget law and its implementation. MPs expressed their indignation over the budget structure and the allocation of funds in the budget unfair or unfavourable, in their view, for the country, and the mismanagement of government in the administration of these funds. The issues of the state pension policy were the single most outstanding issue in this topic.

The next highest percentage of speeches referring to the idea of shame and betrayal occurred within the context of intelligence and law enforcement agencies. Speeches falling into this category were associated with various cases and scandals in which intelligence agencies, public prosecutors and investigators have taken part, including: Moscow loan controversy, Olin’s affair, Starachowice affair, kidnapping of Krzysztof Olewnik.

The subject of the judiciary as a context of occurrence of uncivil vocabulary in speeches includes a number of issues related to the legal regulations concerning the courts and the separation of powers principle. These include the creation of a hierarchical court system, legal status of judges, but also the legal actions toward those judges who have violated the basic standards of professional practice in the period 1944-1989. During the eighth parliamentary term the debate on the Constitutional Court became the judiciary context in which radical vocabulary was particularly frequently expressed, including the appointment of some of the Court's judges in a manner incompatible with the Constitution, as well as the draft law on the status of judges of the Constitutional Court.

Other, less frequent topics refer to: privatization, public health, education and infrastructure.

Temporal dynamic of context of extreme rhetoric

The frequency of the emergence of extreme rhetoric in parliamentary debates in different thematic contexts varied over time (see figure 5 for the six most frequent topics). The first three terms were dominated by two themes: control over public media and national identity and independence. The topic of regulation of public media, primarily television, has been brought up with an increasing frequency in parliamentary debates until the culmination during the fourth term in which it peaked in the form of the so-called “Rywin affair” (see Karklins 2015:55). In subsequent parliamentary terms the
subject of the media appeared less frequently, and in the last term it became the rarest of the analysed topics.

![Fig. 5. Frequency of topics as contexts of radical vocabulary.](image)

Source: own calculations.

Note: The heights of the bars in the graph for each term were relativized to the number of speeches from the study set (presented in Fig. 1). As in previous charts, the calculations cover only ¼ of the eighth term of the parliament.

On the other hand, topics of independence and foreign policy achieved their maxima in the fourth and seventh terms (although the former was the most frequent context of uncivil rhetoric during the whole 2005-2015 period). In the fourth term, the process of Poland's accession to the European Union and the consequent modification of national law, particularly the necessity to delegate some of the powers of the national authorities to the EU authorities, has fuelled the accusations of treachery and corruption. Many right wing parliamentary groups interpreted accession as a loss of sovereignty and legislative subordination to the European Union, often compared to the former Soviet bloc structure.
In the seventh parliamentary term, the increase in the frequency of topics of independence, martyrdom and national identity was primarily a result of the growing conflict between the Law and Justice and the Civic Platform, which redefined the Polish political scene and intensified in debates during which various interpretation of the past clashed. On the other hand, foreign policy has provoked violent emotions in the seventh parliamentary term, inter alia as a result of the refugee crisis in the European Union and a top-down decision requiring member states to adopt fixed amounts of refugees, which were contested especially by the right-wing parties in Poland.

Other topics appeared less often as contexts of disgrace. They were present in every term, but some of them appear more frequently than others. The topic of the public scandals involving intelligence and law enforcement agencies caused negative rhetoric primarily in the period 2001-2005. The budgetary and judicial themes often attracted extreme vocabulary during the 4th and 7th parliamentary terms.

Based on analyses, we cannot identify stable in time topic-wide issue ownership, i.e. association of a given topic with a specific party. However, during single terms, some parties were appearing more often than others in some context of uncivil language. Figure 6 presents the mean probability of six most frequent contexts for main Polish political parties. The most distinguished is the position of PiS during third term in the topic of media – it was mainly caused by the speeches regarding the content of public television and in favour of the Church-affiliated broadcasters. In turn, the standing out emphasis of LPR on independence was an effect of the party’s fierce opposition towards the EU. Other, less remarkable phenomena include high emphasis of the main ruling party during the third term (AWS) on independence, as well as general above-the-average emphasis of the farmers party (PSL) on foreign affairs.
The socio-demographic and political predictors of uncivil language usage

The last part of the paper aims to predict the number of uses of uncivil language (which is output variable) using several predictors including socio-demographic (gender, education) and political (parliamentary experience – the number of previous terms as MP, votes received in last parliamentary elections, political affiliation, membership in government or opposition party) variables. The unit of analysis is interaction of MP and parliamentary term.

From the family of generalized linear models, a Poisson regression was used, which models the log of the expected count of the output variable as a function of predictor variables. For each predictor, the value of coefficient with standard error and statistical significance were estimated. As the interpretation of values of estimated coefficients in Poisson regression is not straightforward (see note under the table 3), the increase factor was also computed representing the predicted change in output variable caused by the one unit change in the predictor variable.

Table 3. Poisson regression coefficients.

<p>| Coefficients:          | Estimate | Std. Error | z value | Pr(|z|) | Increase factor |
|------------------------|----------|------------|---------|--------|-----------------|
| Intercept              | 2.22     | 0.15       | 14.98   | 0.00***|                 |
| Term                   | -0.10    | 0.01       | -11.03  | 0.00***| 0.79            |
| Gender: male           | 0.178    | 0.03       | 6.96    | 0.00***| 1.50            |
| Education              | -0.22    | 0.03       | -7.69   | 0.00***| 0.60            |
| Votes                  | 0.07     | 0.00       | 17.96   | 0.00***| 1.17            |
| Parliamentary experience| 0.07    | 0.01       | 7.76    | 0.00***| 1.17            |
| In government party    | -0.63    | 0.02       | -25.89  | 0.00***| 0.23            |
| Party: Lewica          | -0.17    | 0.13       | -1.34   | 0.18   | 0.67            |
| Party: LiD             | -1.04    | 0.18       | -5.81   | 0.00***| 0.09            |
| Party: LPR             | 1.16     | 0.11       | 10.50   | 0.00***| 14.54           |
| Party: N               | 0.44     | 0.13       | 3.36    | 0.00***| 2.72            |
| Party: PiS             | 0.55     | 0.10       | 5.30    | 0.00***| 3.52            |
| Party: PO              | 0.09     | 0.11       | 0.85    | 0.40   | 1.23            |
| Party: PSL             | 0.08     | 0.11       | 0.72    | 0.47   | 1.21            |
| Party: RP              | 0.56     | 0.12       | 4.88    | 0.00***| 3.65            |
| Party: SRP             | 0.94     | 0.11       | 8.23    | 0.00***| 8.61            |
| Party: SDPL            | -0.33    | 0.14       | -2.26   | 0.02*  | 0.47            |
| Party: SLD             | 0.20     | 0.11       | 1.81    | 0.07   | 1.59            |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>TR</th>
<th>-0.13</th>
<th>0.14</th>
<th>-0.93</th>
<th>0.35</th>
<th>0.74</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Party:UP</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>10.09</td>
<td>0.00***</td>
<td>22.09</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party:independent</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>0.01*</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party:other</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>0.00***</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Statistical significance: ‘****’ < 0.001, ‘***’ < 0.01, ‘**’ < 0.05.

McFadden pR2 = 0.44.

Note: Each regression coefficient represents the predicted difference in the log of expected counts for a one unit change in the predictor variable, given the other predictor variables are held constant.

As presented in the Table 3, the key role in determining the frequency of usage of uncivil language is played by political variables. Of particular importance is here party affiliation of the MP, and this especially concerns three parties, whose members are most eager to use uncivil language: UP, LPR and SRP, all three happen to be the minor partners in ruling coalitions in the past. It could be that increased usage of accusations of treason and disgrace is the way in which small government parties are trying to gain media popularity and to distinguish themselves from a larger coalition partner.

Other political variables turned out to be statistically significant as well. The influence of the previous parliamentary experience (measured by the number of parliamentary terms served as MP) was equally significant predictor as a number of votes gained in the preceding parliamentary election (grouped into 10 equal groups) – each caused the increase in usage of uncivil language by a factor of 1.17. Significant, but of small effect size was also the difference between opposition and ruling parties, with ruling parties less likely to use uncivil language. However, the small effect can be explained by inclusion in the model of the variable representing the MP’s party – in a regression model without political affiliation of the MP, the variable government-opposition becomes single most important predictor factor.

Among the socio-demographic variables included in the model, gender turned out to be of highest influence on the count of uncivil expressions. Men in parliament were 1.5 times more likely to use it than women. One-unit increase in education level (here measured on three levels: primary, secondary, university) hinders the tendency to use uncivil language nearly in half.
Summary

Extreme rhetoric related to the concepts of shame, scandal, and treason is used more frequently in the 2000s than in the 1990s, particularly during the fourth term of the parliament (2001-2005) and from 2012 to the present. Its level can be seen as an indicator of intensity of political conflict, which reached its maximum as a side effect of the process of Poland's accession to the European Union, and currently for several years has been a permanent element of parliamentary reality, reflecting the ongoing conflict between the Civic Platform and the Law and Justice.

Uncivil language is used primarily by opposition parties. This was particularly visible during the period of 2003-2005 (in the form of radical opposition to the governments of the Alliance of Democratic Left, especially in the second half of the parliamentary term) and 2012-2014 (primarily in the speeches of Law and Justice MPs directed against the Donald Tusk government). Nearly 90% of the uncivil vocabulary from the analysed collection were used in official speeches, but in 2016 we observe a radical increase in the percentage of extreme terms as voices from the floor. This growth is mainly due to the public shouting from the audience obstructing speeches of politicians of opposition parties. It is also evident that the usage of uncivil language is expanding. While initially the speeches employing accusations of treason or disgrace were authored primarily by radical right wing parties, the usage of radical vocabulary by MPs from centrist parties increased since 2015.

Extreme rhetoric was most often found in debates on issues related to independence, state media control, and foreign policy, but dominant themes and party positions changed over time. During the first three terms MPs expressed accusations of treason and disgrace mostly during debates concerning independence and national identity and control over the state media. However, in the fourth term, the issue of foreign policy related to preparation for the accession to the European Union prevailed. In the last term, the parliamentary crisis over the Constitutional Court resulted in elevated position of the judiciary topic. Although some parties, mostly minor partners in government coalitions, use uncivil vocabulary in specific context more often than other parties, we cannot identify stable in time topic-wide issue ownership.

The differences between MPs use of uncivil language are mostly a consequence of their political affiliation. This influence is especially strong in case of smaller parties. However, other political and socio-demographic variables are also exerting a significant effect over the quantity of uncivil language used, which is higher among: males, uneducated, in opposition, having obtained large number of votes in previous parliamentary election and having extensive previous parliamentary experience.
Appendix: Polish political parties shortcuts referred in the paper:

PiS – Law and Justice; PO – Civic Platform; PSL – Polish People’s Party; SLD – Alliance of Democratic Left; N – Modern; K’15 – Kukiz ’15 Movement; LPR – League of Polish Families; LiD – Lefts and Democrats coalition; AWS – Electoral solidarity Action; UW – Freedom Union; UD – Democratic Union; Lewica – Left; RP – Palikot’s Movement; SDPL – Social Democracy of Poland; UP – Labour United; SRP – Self-Defence of the Republic of Poland; KPN - Confederation of Independent Poland, ZChN –Christian-National Union, S – Solidarity, PC – Centre Agreement.

References


