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ANTI-MIGRATION POPULIST DISCOURSE IN THE POLISH PARLIAMENT

What Future for Europe?

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Populism as a Communication Strategy

Populism can be defined as a:

- “style of political communication that utilizes particular communicative practices and routines that simultaneously connect and divide, and construct and reconstruct identities in the pursuit of power”

(Block and Negrine 2017: 190);

- “double constitutive relation of vertical and horizontal oppositions”

(Brubaker 2019: 14).

- (1) Reference to the **people** considered as a monolithic entity,
- (2) **Elite critique** – on the domestic, European and/or international level,
- (3) **Exclusion of certain groups**, which are said not to fit in the previously described society.

Poland and the Migration Crisis

Poland detached from the migration crisis. However, migration has been heavily politicised after the European Commission's implementation of relocation system.

“The radicalization of Africans in contemporary Poland needs to be seen in the wider context of the **unprecedented politicization of immigration** in the last few years and the new dynamics of othering linked to the development of Polish nationalism. This issue is further exacerbated by the presence of the Polish ultra-right in the country's parliament since 2015, and the alliance between conservative elements of the Polish Catholic Church and the ruling coalition”

(Pędziwiatr and Balogum, 2018: 87).

PiS, the EU and Migration

Law and Justice (*Prawo i Sprawiedliwość* – PiS):

- Founded in 2001,
- Usually described as a far-right nationalist and populist party,
- Won elections in 2005,
- Coalition government over the period 2005-2007,
- In opposition from 2007 to 2015,
- 2015 marked the return of PiS on the national political scene.

From 2015, tumultuous relation with the EU:

- Disapproval of several of its policies, not only in relation to migration and asylum policies but also touching upon the environment, the rule of law and the judicial independence,
- Triggering of Article 7 in December 2017.

Data Collection and Methodology

Parliamentary debates in the Polish *Sejm*

“[Parliamentary debates] tailor national legislation, represent different interests and exercise a strong impact on public opinion formation”

(Maatsch 2011: 36).

Qualitative methods: Foucauldian-type of discourse analysis

2014-2016 period of time:

- 7th and 8th electoral terms,
- From 2011 to 2015, PO: 207 // PiS: 157 (460 seats in the *Sejm*),
- After the 2015, PO: 135 // PiS: 235,
- Analysis of 9 debates related to migration.

Discursive Representation of Migration

“There has been massive pressure on the Southern borders of Europe and, as it turns out, all those people who come here, many thousands of people, they all say they are Syrians. No one is able to verify this, of course, no one knows if they are **genuine refugees**, whether they are emigrants or whether they are terrorists from Islamic State.”

(Marzena Dorota Wróbel 16.09.2015)

“These [immigrants] are people who have their own, **different from our**, Polish, religion, civilization, different from the **Christian one**.”

(Tomasz Górski 16.09.2015)

“If the state – and here were also such opinions – refer to pictures of poor children, who can drown somewhere, why don't you show such pictures as the one of a **10-year-old Islamist who cuts someone's throat**? This is also a child. Do you want to bring such children here, to us?”

(Zbigniew Girzyński 16.09.2015)

Discursive Representation of the EU

“And who created here a magnet, a great magnet, a powerful social magnet to attract economic migrants? Germany.”

(Jarosław Kaczyński 16.09.2015)

“This huge wave of immigrants that we are dealing with today was caused by the irresponsible statement of Chancellor Angela Merkel, who said no less that the German government will accept all Syrians because they should be given humanitarian aid.”

(Marzena Dorota Wróbel 16.09.2015)

“I am terrified of what I heard today, what was the government's information on refugees, because basically from what the Prime Minister and the ministers of the Polish government said, it appears that our government has already agreed to all the quotas that the West wants to impose, all quotas of illegal immigrants.”

(Marzena Dorota Wróbel 16.09.2015)

Anti-European Elite Critique

“Comprehensive solutions should be developed, because you cannot focus only on one element. In this way, problems that were not caused by Europe cannot be solved, because Europe has become a *victim* of ill-considered international politics. Today, unfortunately, the Union is *weak* against this problem - the refugee problem. After all, thousands of refugees are already in Europe. **The European Union and Brussels seem unprepared.**”

(Andżelika Możdżanowska 01.12.2016)

“From a **suicidal European Union policy** of accepting immigrants from Africa and the Middle East and the intention to relocate them in many countries, including Poland, there must be a retreat and it seems that it is slowly happening, not only from the societies of individual countries – some have already tried it – but also from prominent politicians.”

(Krzysztof Szulowski 01.12.2016)

Role of Poland in the EU

“What is the main objective of the Union when it comes to the immigration crisis? Is the goal to stop the wave of immigrants and refugees, or is some other goal pursued in the Union, for example, making the European nations a multicultural mass, in which it will no longer be possible to return on a larger scale to the **Christian roots of the continent.**”

(Konrad Głębocki 28.01.2016)

“Does the Polish government conduct any research in this direction [on migration and the Islamic State]? Because we have to look into the future, how will the whole of Europe behave and **what will be the impact of Islam on European civilization.**”

(Michał Wojtkiewicz 28.01.2016)

“We are telling these people [European elites] a firm, hard "no". **Let us defend Europe against the flood of Islam, let us defend against Islamization.** This is what millions of Poles expect from us at the moment.”

(Przemysław Wipler 16.09.2015)

Conclusion

- Opposition to both migration and the EU interconnected:
 - (1) Reference to the people: people defined by the negative of who they are not, and by the Catholic denomination,
 - (2) Elite critique: elites defined as imposing decisions (**vertical opposition**) and as different and outsider of the Polish reality (**horizontal opposition**),
 - (3) Exclusion of certain groups: migrants defined as a others in their values (**horizontal**).
- ➔ Populism as a way to link both vertical and horizontal oppositions and to logically connect both.

- PiS MPs stress the role of Poland in the defence of Europe, for the future of European civilisation.

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