

Małgorzata WINIARSKA-BRODOWSKA

Jagiellonian University in Kraków

ORCID: 0000-0002-6518-6841

Dorota PIONTEK

Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań

ORCID: 0000-0002-6315-7609

Joanna DZWOŃCZYK

Cracow University of Economics

ORCID: 0000-0002-8907-8255

Monika JABŁOŃSKA

Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań

ORCID: 0000-0002-3196-8394

The Law and Justice Leader and Prime Minister's Affinity Towards the Alternative Media on Facebook in Poland¹

Abstract: A clear differentiation between media sources and electorates within the legacy media ecosystem may help to explain the limited importance of the alternative media (focused on fake news and hoaxes) as relevant information sources. In a political and analytical discourse, the alternative media can be seen as an “alternative” to the dominant liberal media and discourse. Within this context, Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki and Deputy Prime Minister Jarosław Kaczyński were active in “liking” other profiles on their FB pages. Morawiecki liked some media, mostly TV and radio channels from his constituency region. His focus was more on the national identity and national interests in an economic sense. However, he also liked a press magazine that is a borderline case between ideologically heavily biased and disinformation scene in Poland.

Key words: Poland, populism, Facebook, Kaczyński, Morawiecki, button “like”, alternative media

¹ This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 822590 (DEMOS). Any dissemination of results here presented reflects only the consortium's (or, if applicable, author's) view. The Agency is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains. The charts were prepared by Ľubica Adamcová.

Introduction

Over the last few years, Poland has been associated with democratic backsliding. Dawson and Hanley (2016) characterise it as a ‘semi-authoritarian regime’. The Economist Intelligence Unit’s Democracy Index evaluates it as a flawed democracy, with a downward trend since 2015 from 6.62 points to 4.47 points in 2019 – scored from 0 (authoritarian regimes) to 10 (full democracies) based on 60 indicators (*Democracy Index*, 2020). The situation in Poland has been discussed in the context of the infringement of the rule of law. Also, the media-related policies are closely watched. The scholars and analysts explore threats to media independence, public service media capture and debate on the relationship between illiberal trends in Polish politics and the media landscape (Shotter, 2020; Surowiec, Kania-Lundholm, Winiarska-Brodowska, 2020; Kerpel, 2017). There are also many media freedom alerts in the Council of Europe regarding Poland (*Council of Europe*, 2020). Media freedom in Poland has been facing its greatest challenges since 2015 (Media Freedom Rapid Response, 2021). The Polish media struggle with political influences and pressures. It has not been a new phenomenon. However, the recent political alignment has reached an unprecedented scale (Bajomi-Lázár et al., 2020).

A recent body of scholarship has begun to engage with the exploration of links between politics and social media in Central and Eastern Europe. A debate on a post-transitional approach to analysing media and politics in CEE has been opened as this region is a fertile ground for such an undertaking (Surowiec, Štetka, 2018). The Polish online political communication has been widely researched (Jacuński, Baranowski, 2015; Koc-Michalska, Lilleker, Surowiec, Baranowski, 2014). Many scholars refer to Facebook (FB) as the most important social network and the most popular online space for political communication in Poland. Following this lead, this contribution aims to provide insights into the “ego” networks which exist on FB of Polish leaders – the Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki and the Deputy Prime Minister Jarosław Kaczyński, the chairman of the Law and Justice (*Prawo i Sprawiedliwość*, abbreviated as PiS) party. The latter is considered to be the most influential politician in Poland. It is important to mention that the leaders of the political parties in Poland, with some exceptions (the Greens, the PSL and the SLD), have rather strong and exclusive executive powers (Tomczak, 2015).

Embedded in a broader context (discussed in a separate theoretical-methodological part), as we hypothesise, the publicly endorsed social

media connections may indicate the direction of the activities undertaken by the authorities in the *media* sphere in general. In any case, as a recent body of scholarship has begun to engage with various new forms of “computational propaganda”, Gorwa (2017, p. 4) emphasises that Poland is a fascinating case study for this topic because:

“despite the numerous cases of alleged political trolling and online manipulation by foreign actors that have been covered in the Polish media, as well as a highly adversarial domestic political climate and accusations that certain Polish political parties are using paid commentators and fake accounts on a variety of social networks, there have been no comprehensive efforts to assess these developments in the country.”

In the analysis, we asked whether there are any relations with alternative news (a concept to be discussed further) sites among the “liked” FB pages (RQ1). The second research question refers to the issue of compatibility between the links to the media sources “liked” and the values they present with the political party’s programme line, i.e., values adhered to by the PiS politicians² (RQ2) as the construction of the networks may navigate their followers towards a suitable media sources and content.

Before proceeding further, some context may be useful to provide knowledge for a better understanding of these inevitably partial findings. Thus, the country’s social media and political communication framework are examined first, followed by a discussion on the definition and the roles of alternative/fake news media in the country. Finally, the unique role of Jarosław Kaczyński, the PiS leader, both for the party discussed and within the Polish political life in general, is explored. It is necessary to explain the justification for including this leader – who was not the Prime Minister in 2020 – into our sample (in addition to the acting Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki).

Social Media and Political Communication

The Polish media environment is characterised by “highly competitive and often partisan broadcasters, large web portals, and a divided press”;

² “Program Prawa i Sprawiedliwości” [“Law and Justice Manifesto”], 2019, <http://pis.org.pl/aktualnosci/program-prawa-i-sprawiedliwosci>. Such values as dignity, protection of life, family, freedom, national community, equality, justice, human solidarity and the Polish State as a basic value are described in the programme. The programme also draws attention to the fact that the “teaching of the Catholic Church, Polish tradition and Polish patriotism have strongly joined together in building the political identity of the nation” (p. 14).

there is also an “overwhelming consensus that the media environment is highly polarised”. Moreover, polarisation in the Polish media has deepened significantly in the last few years (Kaisy, Elliott, 2020; Makarenko et al., 2020, 2019; Piechota 2018). For example, an ideological bias was documented in the newspapers “Gazeta Polska Codziennie” (conservative), “Nasz Dziennik” (conservative-Catholic) and “Gazeta Wyborcza” (centre-left); in contrast, “Rzeczpospolita”, remained rather neutral in its political coverage (Olechowska, 2017). The most important sources of news – apart from television, which is the main source of information, especially for the older generations – are some popular online portals like Onet and WP (Wirtualna Polska), along with rapidly ascending social media use (66% usage for news) (Makarenko et al., 2020).

Onet was the most often cited news source in the summer of 2020, followed by TVN24, “Rzeczpospolita”, and RMF FM (Ulan, 2020)³. FB is Poland’s most-used social media platform (both for general use – 83% and for news – 65%) (Makarenko et al., 2020). According to the Global Web Index and the Digital 2020 – Poland report, 89% of internet users aged 16 to 64 reported using this platform (*Digital 2020 – Poland*, 2020). However, as mentioned, TV channels were the most important source of information. Polsat was the primary source for one third and TVP (including TVP Info) for around a quarter of respondents. FB was mentioned by over a quarter of the Polish respondents. For most PiS voters, television was the primary source of news (especially media such as Republika TV and Radio Maryja). The analysis of the broadcast of Republika TV showed a high degree of bias (Wirtualnemedial, 2020a). Interestingly, TVP was only the sixth most important source of news for the parties’ voters other than PiS. In short, the differentiation between different media sources and electorates is manifested (Wenzel, 2018).

The efforts of the ruling coalition to take control over the institutional media mean that the importance of social media as an alternative to the state-controlled media is growing. At the same time, the increasing popularity of social media as a communication channel between various social groups means that political parties are trying to reach very different groups of users with their messages.

It is noteworthy that the PiS party, until recently associated with everything but the Internet, has become dominant in online communication. In

³ IMM, <https://antyweb.pl/najbardziej-opiniotworcze-media-w-polsce/>, Instytut Monitorowania Mediów, <https://www.imm.com.pl/raporty>, 22.12.2020.

2010, PiS tried to promote its own internal (accessible only on permission) social networking site, MyPiS.pl. Three years later, attempts were made with its own YouTube – PiS.TV. Neither communication initiative succeeded (Głowacki, 2015). However, PiS has begun to be more professional in online communication since 2014. An example of the supremacy of the online political discourse by PiS was the 2015 presidential campaign. Clearly, the PiS online team is probably the most professional one. It includes employees of parliamentary offices and regional party structures, volunteers, and trolls recruited for PiS (Głowacki, 2015). These online supporters are neither quite bots nor trolls as traditionally conceived in the online political communication literature – they blur the lines between political marketing and propaganda in many ways (Gorwa, 2017). There were reports about “suspicious accounts with no profile photos that engage with other users on political issues”, and about the activities of Paweł Szefernaker, the Secretary of State in the Chancellery of the Polish Prime Minister, who has been referred to as PiS’ “internet genius” and is widely believed to be the mastermind behind its successful online efforts (Krzymoski, 2017). Not only does his work have an impact in this context, but there are many people behind PiS’s success in online communication⁴.

The Alternative Media

Among the first alternative media can be mentioned an internet radio called KonteStacja, which was launched in 2009. Nocuń (2016) argues that its main difference from the mainstream media is the use of provocative language. Another alternative Polish media include LGBTQ media (Replika and Queer.pl) (Turek, 2013). There were at least 60 alternative political or news information portals (serving propaganda information and fake news, e.g., Sioe.pl, Wolna Polska and wsensie.pl, or right-wing Magna Polonia), of which 23 sources seemed to be connected to the Russian portals (e.g., Voice of Europe) (Mierzyńska, 2018). Alternative media refers not only to the alternative, a different choice of media but also to those contesting the existing state of affairs. In Poland, the alternative media propose an alternative, mainly conservative vision for Poland, as for a longer time, the liberal vision has been associated with the mainstream media (Leszczyński, 2017). They build identity, fight for meanings and

⁴ E.g., for the duration of the parliamentary campaign, PiS appointed regional heads of the Internet campaign in each of the forty constituencies.

create a picture of the reality other than the mainstream because, in their opinion, there is no room for a different worldview in the mainstream.

Alternative and partisan news outlets have grown in significance since 2018. In the Digital News Report Mariusz ‘Max’ Kolonko is mentioned as an example: Kolonko, who is a Polish journalist living in the US, has built an opinion-based online video channel that has similar levels of reach to more mainstream outlets such as *Niezależna.pl* (a conservative portal), *Natemat.pl* (a service offering a wide range of topics)⁵ or *wPolityce.pl* (a right-wing internet portal with close ties to the ruling party PiS) (Piechota, 2018 ; Eurotopics a, nd). The study mentioned the latter on FB user interactions with most shared junk news sources (Marchal, Kollanyi, Neudert, Howard, 2019). At the same time, it is considered one of the most opinion-forming internet portals – in the ranking right behind the biggest internet portals: *Onet.pl*, *WP.pl*, and *Interia.pl* (Instytut Monitorowania Mediów, 2020).

As the problem of misinformation and disinformation (often present in the alternative media) in Poland is growing, increasingly more organisations are fighting this phenomenon. In this respect, online communication is monitored and analysed by several (both state and private) institutions in Poland (Wrzosek, 2019, p. 43).

The specificity of the Polish online communication environment remains understudied. However, one can notice that the growing group of citizens does not treat the classic mainstream media (following journalistic standards) as the main source of information. This observation is valid, especially for the young and old and inexperienced people who use social media uncritically. By doing so, they become recipients of the content of the alternative media or anonymous platforms on which it is easy to find propaganda and all kinds of conspiracy theories (Cf. Baluk, Demczuk, 2020).

The Personalisation of Politics – The Case of Jarosław Kaczyński

Jarosław Kaczyński has been selected for our case study, although he was neither the Prime Minister nor in the government for much of 2020

⁵ As indicated on the website <https://natemat.pl/info/projekt>, the “service will not be right-wing, neither left-wing, nor liberal, nor conservative”. In 2016, Google awarded the publisher a grant under its Digital News Innovation (DNI) fund, in which it supports innovative and quality journalism. This is how the *Trudat.pl* service was created, which is to verify news and popular opinions. In 2019, the company was recognized by Google DNI for the second time, receiving a grant for the development of another project (*WirtualneMedia.pl*, 22.03.2019).

(until joining Morawiecki's government in October 2020). As mentioned, he has been widely seen as a key person in Polish politics, especially within the PiS party (Zamana, 2016; Smolar, 2018). In politics, like Orbán in Hungary or Janša in Slovenia, Kaczyński uses the same methods, that is, propaganda, pointing out enemies and dividing society. Like them, he relies on the slogans of “defending the Christian civilisation” against a foreign attack. He gets engaged, one after another, with invented LGBT enemies, through the media, judges or NGOs. Also, his quite surprising decision was to run for the Parliament on the list of a party other than the one he was chairing⁶. It is worth pointing out, however, that at that time, he was already a supporter of informal actions and making decisions in the privacy of his office, outside formal channels (Nalewajko, 2013; Torańska, 1994).

After PiS won the elections in 2015, Jarosław Kaczyński decided to become a “rank and file deputy”. Not only did he resign from the prime minister's position, but he also did not assume the position of the head of the parliamentary fraction or any other executive structures within the Parliament. Nonetheless, he is the key background political figure. J. Kaczyński has complete informal powers to make political decisions impacting individuals and public institutions outside the party. Still, PiS maintained high popular support throughout the entire term (Krekó et al., 2018). In 2019, during the PiS programme convention, the PiS president presented the programme described as “Kaczyński's Five”, which was distinguished by the fact that it was implemented almost immediately (unlike both “Morawiecki's Fives”). It was another show of uniqueness and agency of the president of PiS, this time addressed directly to the society. Kaczyński can also very effectively use social moods (especially fears) and create them, known as “platonian xenophobia”⁷. J. Kaczyński has the power that no other politician had after 1989 (Cf. J. *Pragmatyczny*, n.d.). Before turning to Kaczyński and FB, let us first explore the “liking” of his nominee for the P.M. on FB.

⁶ J. Kaczyński headed the “Center Agreement” (“Porozumienie Centrum”) established on his initiative (from its inception in May 1990 to December 1997). In the September 1997 elections, he ran and became an MP from the list of the “Movement for Reconstruction of Poland” (“Ruch Odbudowy Polski”).

⁷ This concept is used by the authors Krekó et al. (2018), to denote a situation characteristic of ethnically homogeneous societies, in which, in the absence of immigrants, there are strong anti-immigrant feelings.

The Use of FB “Like” Button – The Official Profile of the Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki

In 2015, after PiS’s victory in the parliamentary elections, M. Morawiecki took the office of the deputy prime minister and minister of development. However, he did not join the party until 2016. In the past, he was associated with politics only as an activist at the local level at the end of the 1990s. In December 2017, he was appointed the Prime Minister. He was re-designated as P.M. in November 2019.

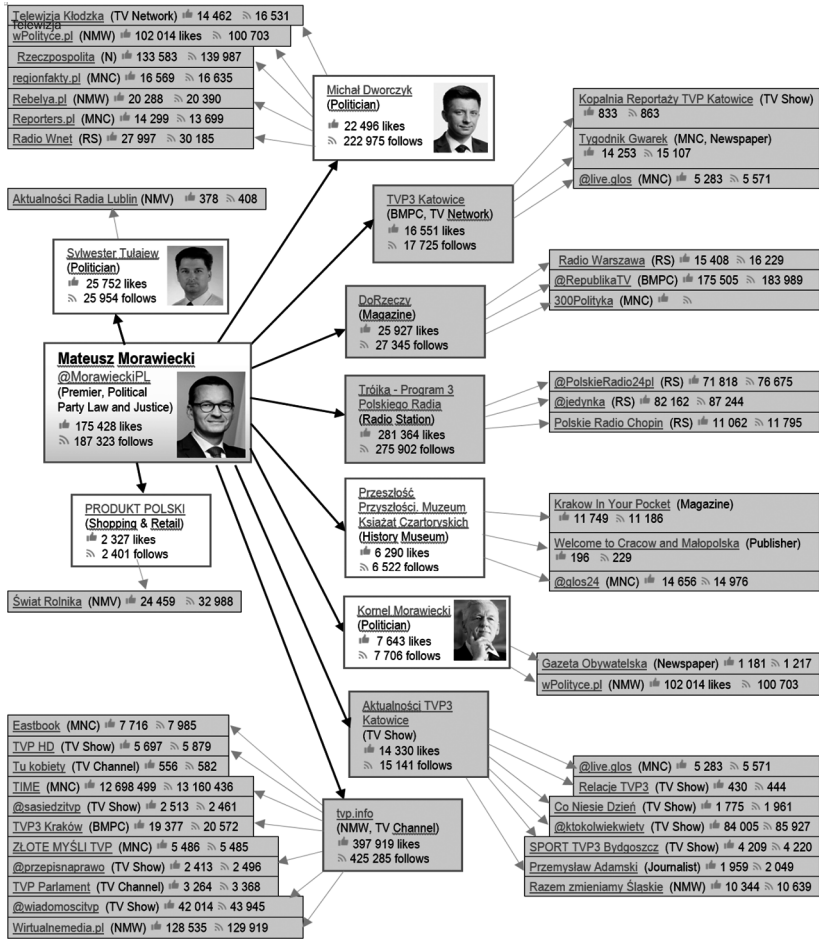
Morawiecki is considered to be an expert in the banking sector. In the context of this analysis, it is worth noting that the profile of P.M. M. Morawiecki is not run by the politician himself, nor by the PR agency or employees of the government ministries, but by a friend of the Prime Minister, who is a marketing specialist at the bank (Kończak, 2020). It can be seen as a questionable approach to public relations. The lack of professionalism in the political communication and non-transparency in the image-building activities, even at the highest levels of government, can be explained by the fact that Polish politicians are still afraid to employ professional agencies because they are more expensive and must be included in the financial statements, which are open to public scrutiny (Kończak, 2020). One can wonder how does then look his “liking” communication on FB (chart 1)?

Mateusz Morawiecki’s FB page was created in August 2019. It is an officially verified page⁸. There is also information that this page has run ads about social issues, elections, and politics. Morawiecki is categorised there as a politician. In the ‘About’ section, one can find a description: “A patriot, economist and historian. Poland, solidarity and family are the most sacred values for me”. The site directs users to other places on the Internet⁹. The analysis of the use of the FB “Like” button exhibits that the media connections are important for the Polish P.M. As can be seen in Chart 1, the first level of connections of M. Morawiecki’s FB page consists of five references to media sources (tvp.info, TVP3 Katowice, Aktualności TVP3 Katowice, PR3 and DoRzeczy), three references to politicians (Michał Dworczyk, Kornel Morawiecki and Sylwester

⁸ The FB page transparency information states: “Mateusz Morawiecki is responsible for this Page. This is a person or organisation that has completed our verification process and claimed responsibility for this Page”.

⁹ <https://www.premier.gov.pl/ludzie/mateusz-morawiecki.html>, [@MorawieckiM](https://www.instagram.com/morawieckiM), and <https://www.instagram.com/morawieckiM/>.

Chart 1. The Mateusz Morawiecki's Official Facebook "Liked" Pages



MNC-Media/News Company, NMW-News & Media Website, RS-Radio Station, N-Newspaper, BMPC-Broadcasting & Media Production Company, J-Journalist

Tułajew) and two references to the sites promoting the Polish products and culture (*Produkt Polski* and *Czartoryski Museum*).

The connections to media sources show that the regional branches of the (selected) national TV and other national media are favoured by him. The Polish Television news channel is linked to the Wiadomości TVP (a news channel), TVP3 (regional news channels), TVP Parliament, TVP HD, TVP Economic Reports (Relacje TVP), ‘Przepis na prawo’ (a pro-

gramme about legal affairs on TVP Info), ‘Tu kobiety’ (a programme about women and for women on TVP Info), Reportage Mine of TVP Katowice, Sport TVP3 Bydgoszcz, ‘Neighbours’ (Sąsiedzi TVP, a TV series) and also apparently non-brand ‘Words of Wisdom’ (‘Złote Myśli’ TVP which presents “told, overheard thoughts of editors, journalists, and other people working at TVP, written for posterity and as a warning”). ‘Trójka’ – Polish Radio Programme 3 directs to Polish Radio 24, Polish Radio Programme 1, and Polish Radio Chopin. Most of the channels mentioned above fulfil news and current affairs functions.

Among the regional TVP 3 channels, attention is given to the South of Poland: there are links to media and journalists from Katowice and Śląskie (the Silesia region) – Morawiecki’s constituency, e.g., TVP3 Katowice and further connections among others to “Tygodnik Gwarek” (a local weekly issued since 1957); at the second level of analysis also the Silesian region is visible (‘*Razem zmieniamy Śląskie*’ – ‘*We are changing Silesia together*’ – a project under the Regional Operational Programme of the Silesian Province 2014–2020) as well as Kraków and Małopolskie (Lower Poland region) with connections to: ‘Krakow In Your Pocket Magazine’ (an English-language guide to Kraków and the surrounding Małopolska region which is updated every two months); ‘Welcome to Cracow and Malopolska’ (a monthly magazine about Cracow and the region, published in Polish, English and German); and Głos 24 – Małopolski Portal Informacyjny (Voice 24 – an information portal of the Lower Poland in the Polish language). There is also a link to the Głos (Voice – the newspaper of the Poles in the Czech Republic)¹⁰ and the Eastbook – a portal on Eastern affairs.

On the first level of connections, there is a link to ‘DoRzeczy’ – a weekly news and political magazine. It represents conservative opinions bordering on nationalist positions and frequently supports the PiS party line (<https://www.eurotopics.net/en/148616/do-rzeczy>). It is also noted that it is not only a hard Euro-sceptic but also a right-wing populist magazine with anti-Semitic overtones (Kowalczyk, 2019). The magazine page directs FB users to other right-wing media: Republika TV – a TV

¹⁰ Editorial office of this newspaper was destroyed in November 2020 by unknown perpetrators. The newspaper, which has been operating for ten years, was able to equip offices with new furniture and equipment thanks to the financial support of the created by Polish government Foundation called “Pomoc Polakom na Wschodzie” (“Aid to Poles in the East”) – some of them have now been damaged or destroyed (Kozielski, 2020).

channel offering news, documentaries, reportages, and cultural journalism; 300 Polityka (an information portal about politics); and Radio Warszawa (a Catholic radio station in Warsaw).

On the second level of analysis, via TVP Info, there are also connections to “Time” (a US weekly news magazine) and Wirtualne Media (a news portal dedicated to television, radio, press, Internet, advertising, technology, public relations and marketing research). Interestingly, at this level of connections, the FB page belonging to the father of P.M. (Kornel Morawiecki, 1941–2019¹¹) directs to two media. The first one was ‘Gazeta Obywatelska’ – ‘Civic Newspaper’ (a bi-weekly magazine whose editor-in-chief was Kornel Morawiecki), and the second one – wPolityce.pl (news website recognised by Marchal et al. (2019) as a junk news source). The wPolityce.pl website was also present among the media links of several PiS politicians. According to Marchal et al. (2019), this sort of junk news is not produced by foreign agents but rather comes from the domestic media, often of an ideological and party nature (Cf. Fraser, 2019). The most popular junk news deals with topics that populists tend to feed on, such as immigration and Euroscepticism.

Promoting Poland is also important on Morawiecki’s FB page. One can find a link to a website of the information and education campaign #KupujŚwiadomie (Buy Consciously) #Produktpolski (Polish product) which connects FB users to Świat Rolnika (Farmer’s World – a portal whose mission is to provide reliable information on important matters concerning Polish agriculture, rural areas and food). The second link directs to the National Museum, in particular to the official fanpage of the project ‘Przeszłość Przyszłości’. “The past of the Future” – renovation of the Prince Czartoryski for the National Museum in Cracow to provide a unique collection” project funded by the EU. The Museum page directs the FB users to media connected with The Cracow and Małopolska region. Although, as can be seen on the P.M.’s FB page, promoting Poland and national values in line with the PiS political programme (including the national media) is the main aim, there are also on Morawiecki’s FB page the links to the European funds and regional operational programmes.

¹¹ Polish politician, physicist and academic teacher. Activist of the democratic opposition in the times of the People’s Republic of Poland, founder and chairman of Fighting Solidarity, MP and Senior Marshal of the Sejm of the 8th term. A few months before his death, in March 2019 he was decorated by the Prime Minister of Hungary Viktor Orbán with the Commander’s Cross of the Order of Merit (Komunikat, 2019).

The Use of FB “Like” Button – The Profile of Jarosław Kaczyński

As mentioned, Kaczyński is an advocate of conducting politics traditionally, based on a hierarchy and strong leadership. The lack of personal involvement of the PiS leader in social media utilisation may result from his reluctance expressed in the past towards the Internet and its users.¹² Kaczyński used to perceive social media as a source of hate (Gmyz, 2015). Indeed, Kaczyński himself is not active on social media but uses them in his political activities through his team of advisers who manage his social media accounts. PiS/Kaczyński team tries to be active and innovative on FB (Chart 2) and other platforms (Dąbrowska, 2020). For example, Kaczyński, although then 71-year-old and known for his dislike of social media, made his debut on the Tik-Tok platform in a short video with an appeal in September 2020: “There is a lot of bad happening here and we must prevent it. Every good person should support this law. I support it with all my heart [...]” (Wirtualnemedia.pl, 2020b). In general, his online contributions can impact or at least cause a public uproar. For example, the statement by Kaczyński, referring to the judgment of the Constitutional Tribunal on abortion and the protests that followed, which was published on October 27, 2020 on FB and YouTube on PiS channels, was ranked first “in the organic search network in Poland” – after only 13 hours of its publishing. This FB post had over 3.3 million views (“this was a record in Poland in the category of political video viewership”). Moreover, the video generated over 100,000 reactions, 56,000 comments and 17,000 shares (Osowski, 2020). Both the content and form of the message were rather controversial and interpreted differently.¹³

¹² In 2008, Jarosław Kaczyński, in the context of the possibility of organizing internet elections, said that: “I am not enthusiastic about a young person sitting in front of a computer, watching movies, pornography, drinking beer from a bottle and voting when he wants to. The supporters of internet voting want to take away its seriousness. Why? You know who has the advantage on the Internet and who uses it. The easiest way to manipulate this group is to suggest who to vote for” (TVN24, 2008).

¹³ One commentator remarked that: “this is one of the most disturbing audiovisual materials in the entire political history of the Third Polish Republic. It shows that either Kaczyński has completely lost touch with reality, he completely does not understand what is happening in Poland and he no longer controls anything – or that the leader of the ruling party is striving for total confrontation with the growing social rebellion” (Kucharski, 2020). As well as: “On *Niezalezna.pl* there is an article about the full mobilization of the Patriotic Guard of ‘Gazeta Polska’ Clubs. ‘People guard

the contact details are correct: <http://www.PiS.org.pl/> and jaroslaw.kaczyński@sejm.pl.

There are many websites with the Jarosław Kaczyński name (some of them being a fan page of the vice-prime minister: Jarosław Kaczyński – *fani* @JaroslawKaczyńskiPiS) but there is no official one. Some of Kaczyński's accounts were analysed regarding social media marketing and politicians' image building, but most of them are temporary, usually related to election campaigns (Cf. political party leaders on Facebook in: Adamik-Szyziak, 2014).

The entries on the analysed FB page are published with irregular frequency (e.g., just one entry between February 2019 and November 2020 and eight entries in November 2020). The analysed FB page, apart from connections to the FB page of the PiS Party and politicians such as Andrzej Duda (President of Poland)¹⁴ and Antoni Macierewicz (the PiS Deputy Leader), features links to other unofficial websites such as 'Polska.Poland' – a web page of a PR and informative nature which publishes materials promoting Poland and information related to or indirectly referring to Poland. This website is connected with a news and media website called 'Patrioci' (Patriots, both sites share news of similar content).

Again, like in the analysis of Morawiecki's FB page, media connections play a significant role here (with five links to media, two links to politicians, one link to the party and two other links). On the Kaczyński's FB page, the first level connections to media mention: Radio Maryja, Rzeczpospolita, wPolityce.pl, Poinformowani.pl, and Telewizja Republika.

Radio Maryja is a Catholic radio station. It supports the conservative political national parties, mainly PiS. Vice-versa, PiS openly declares support for the Catholic Church. Radio Maryja FB page links to six other media, among others Vatican News (an information service with more than four million "likes" provided by the media of the Holy Seat's Communication Department), "Nasz Dziennik" (a daily newspaper that "tries to teach Catholic values and covers all the areas from politics to sport. It is closely aligned with the PiS. It is owned by the Polish priest Father Tadeusz Rydzyk, who has built up his own media empire that includes radio and TV stations (TV TRWAM), including Radio Maryja. Rydzyk is said to wield considerable political influence" (cf. Eurotopics b, nd).

¹⁴ Duda's account is verified.

“Rzeczpospolita” is a liberal-conservative daily newspaper (cf. Eurotopics c, nd). It is self-defined as one of the leaders of the press in Poland. It is a multiple winner in the ranking of the most cited media in Poland. In 2014, it was recognised as the most important opinion-making medium of the decade. It is also the overall sales leader in business/economy periodicals. “Rzeczpospolita” FB page links to six other media: apart from its own products, it links to “Uważam Rze” (a national conservative weekly magazine, cf. Eurotopics d, nd) and two publishing houses. It is worth noting that, as mentioned in the section on the media reform in Poland, PKN Orlen is considering the acquisition of Gremi Media, the publisher of “Rzeczpospolita”.

The “Poinformowani.pl” website provides impartial information from Poland, the world, sports, culture, science and technology. This portal is supported by crowdfunding¹⁵.

The “wPolityce.pl” and “Republika TV” were described in previous sections, including the analysis of the use of the FB “Like” button on the official profile of P.M. Morawiecki. The “wPolityce.pl” links to six other media, mainly owned by FratRIA. FratRIA is a media production company operating on the Internet, press and publishing areas, publisher of the weekly magazine “Sieci” and websites such as: “wPolityce.pl”, “wNas.pl” and “wGospodarce.pl”.

“Republika TV” links to 21 different media. However, the majority of them are right-wing, conservative media. Some of them belong to the FratRIA media group, some belong to the Independent Polish Publishing House: “Gazeta Polska Codziennie” – a nationwide daily, “Gazeta Polska” – a weekly about social, political and historical issues and Gazeta Polska VOD; journalists working for these media also contribute to the “Niezależna.pl” – a conservative internet portal, link to which is included in the 21 mentioned media.

The other media to which connections were visible: “Prawy.pl” – a website promoting national and Catholic values, Polish family, Christian tradition and culture; “Rzeczy Wspólne” – a conservative socio-political quarterly; “Nowa Strategia” – a military and historical portal. There is also a link to a website of Stefan Czerniecki, a journalist who publishes among others in ‘Do Rzeczy’, ‘Rzeczpospolita’, ‘Nowe Państwo’ and

¹⁵ Poinformowani: <https://patronite.pl/LepszeMedia>. Another example of crowdfunding for media is an initiative of ‘self-proclaimed reporters’ – <https://patronite.pl/reporterzysamozwancy> – which was a link (“liked” medium) of one of the channels of Polish Radio in this study.

‘Gazeta Polska Codziennie’; and a link to ‘Tygodnik Idziemy’, a weekly of the diocesan publishing house; and to ‘Stowarzyszenie Dziennikarzy Polskich’ (Polish Journalists Association, SDP) as well. The president of the SDP, Krzysztof Skowroński, was heavily criticised for holding meetings and press conferences of the PiS party and for exceeding the limits of acceptable involvement of journalists in politics (Mańkowski, 2012). Among the preferred connections of the PiS politicians described below, there is also a link to Skowroński (see media “likes” of Krzysztof Szczerski).

Two out of 21 connections lead to the media operating in the East of Poland – these are mainly media related to Vilnius: ‘Kurier Wileński’, a Polish daily in Lithuania as well as ‘Radio znad Wilii’ (the Chancellery of the Prime Minister finances this project as part of the Public Task on helping the Polish diaspora and Poles abroad – “The Aid for the Poles in the East” Foundation).

One exception in this group of 21 media links of Republika TV is the link to TVN24, a news television that is very often accused by the PiS politicians and conservative journalists of bias and manipulation (TVP.info, 2017; TVN24 kończy 10 lat, 2011). It is important to notice that, as mentioned in the section on the media reform in Poland, some plans regarding TVN24 have already been made.

The national media, described in the previous section on Morawiecki’s FB page analysis, were represented here scarcely – only on the second level of connections originating from the FB pages of A. Duda (Radio Kraków) and Republika TV (tvp.info).

Conclusions

In the political and partially analytical discourse, the alternative media can be seen as “alternative” to (be that correct or not observation) dominant liberal media and discourse. It is often emphasised that the right-wing in Poland is fighting for balance in the media, because the mainstream media did not allow journalists with traditional, conservative views to speak up. It is probably why so many media analysed in this study have words such as <Polish/National>, <Common/Community/Republican>, or <East> in their names; and the less known media use the word <Voice> to give a voice to those who have not had one before.

Indeed, the media sources on FB accounts analysed play mainly an ideological identity supporting role in the communication of the analysed political party and its leader. In the Morawiecki case the national identity is underlined, in the Kaczyński case these are right-wing, conservative and Catholic features that stand out. There is a high grade of compatibility between the links to media sources “liked” and the values they present with the values cherished by PiS as presented in the political party’s programme. It can be stated that both the individual politicians of PiS, as part of the FB “I like it” policy, made strategic decisions on “liking” some media. It can be proved by consistency in the selection of the liked profiles. The trend of media selection is noticeable, not so much in terms of the reach to recipients, but in terms of the ideological and political profile of a given medium.

Nevertheless, only in one case we might speak of junk news, misleading or incorrect information and publications of an ideological nature, or about the borderline case.

Bibliography

- Adamik-Szysiak M. (2014), *Social media marketing – kreowanie wizerunku polityka w przestrzeni wirtualnej na przykładzie liderów polskiej sceny politycznej* [Social media marketing – creating a politician’s image in a virtual environment on the example of the leaders of the Polish political scene], “Rocznik Nauk Społecznych”, vol. 6(42), no. 1, pp. 111–136.
- Bajomi-Lázár P., Balčytienė A., Dobрева A., Klimkiewicz B. (2019), *History of the media in Central and Eastern Europe*, The handbook of European communication history, pp. 277–298.
- Baluk W., Demczuk A. (2020), *Monitoring propagandy i dezinformacji. Rosyjska propaganda wobec Polski i Ukrainy* [Monitoring of propaganda and disinformation. Russian propaganda towards Poland and Ukraine], Instytut Nauk o Polityce i Administracji UMCS, no. 1, <https://phavi.umcs.pl/at/attachment-s/2020/0728/105857-biuletyn-politologiav2-ostateczna-.pdf>.
- Baranowski P. (2015), *Online political campaigning during the 2014 regional elections in Poland*, “Media and Communication”, 3(4), pp. 35–44.
- Council of Europe – media freedom alerts/Poland (2020), https://www.coe.int/en/web/media-freedom/all-alerts?p_p_id=sojdashboard_WAR_coesoportlet&p_p_lifecycle=0&p_p_col_id=column-4&p_p_col_count=1&sojdashboard_WAR_coesoportlet_selectedStringFilters=year.2020&sojdashboard_WAR_coesoportlet_selectedCategories=11709560.

- Wrzosek M. (ed.) (2019), *Zjawisko dezinformacji w dobie rewolucji cyfrowej. Państwo. Społeczeństwo. Polityka. Biznes*, NASK Państwowy Instytut Badawczy, Warszawa, <https://cyberpolicy.nask.pl/raport-zjawisko-dezinformacji-w-dobie-rewolucji-cyfrowej-panstwo-spoleczenstwo-polityka-biznes>.
- Dawson J., Hanley S. (2016), *What's Wrong with East-Central Europe?: The Fading Mirage of the "Liberal Consensus"*, "Journal of Democracy", 27(1), pp. 20–34.
- Dąbrowska A. (2020), „Młoda gwardia” [„Young Guard”], "Polityka", no. 42 (3283, October 13, 2020), p. 23.
- Democracy Index* (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2020), <https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2020/01/22/global-democracy-has-another-bad-year>.
- Digital 2020 – Poland* (2020), <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2020-poland>.
- Eurotopics (a, nd)
- Eurotopics (b nd), <https://www.eurotopics.net/en/148726/nasz-dziennik>.
- Eurotopics (c nd), <https://www.eurotopics.net/en/148775/rzeczpospolita>.
- Eurotopics (d, nd), <https://www.eurotopics.net/en/148615/sieci>.
- Fraser M. (2019), *Problem z 'junk news' przed eurowyborami? Największy w Polsce* [*Problem with 'junk news' before the European elections? The largest in Poland*], Mediaphilia.pl, <https://mediaphilia.pl/2019/05/problem-z-fake-news-przed-eurowyborami-najwiekszy-w-polsce/>, 12.12.2020.
- Głowacki M. (28.09.2015), *Prawo i Sprawiedliwość króluje w polskim internecie. Pomaga w tym zdyscyplinowana armia trolli* [*Law and Justice reigns supreme in the Polish Internet. A disciplined army of trolls helps in this*], "Polska Times", <https://polskatimes.pl/prawo-i-sprawiedliwosc-kroluje-w-polskim-internecie-pomaga-w-tym-zdyscyplinowana-armia-trolli/ar/8866523>.
- Gorwa R. (2017), *Computational propaganda in Poland: False amplifiers and the digital public sphere*, Computational Propaganda Research Project, pp. 1–32. <https://www.eurotopics.net/en/148616/do-rzeczy>.
- Instytut Monitorowania Mediów (2020), *Najbardziej opiniotwórcze media w Polsce – wrzesień 2020* [*The most opinion-forming media in Poland – September 2020*], <https://www.imm.com.pl/najbardziej-opiniotworcze-media-w-polsce-wrzesien-2020>.
- Instytut Monitorowania Mediów, <https://www.imm.com.pl/raporty>.
- Jacuński M., Baranowski P. (2015), *The development of online political communication in Poland in European Parliamentary elections 2014: Technological innovation versus old habits*, "Central European Journal of Communication", 8(2), pp. 219–234.
- Kaisy A., Elliott Ch. (2020), *Building Trust in Journalism Poland*, https://dev.ethicaljournalismnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Building-Trust-in-Journalism-Poland-policy-report_new.pdf.

- Kerpel A. (2017), *Pole and Hungarian Cousins Be? A Comparison of State Media Capture, Ideological Narratives and Political Truth Monopolization in Hungary and Poland*, "SLOVO Journal", 29(1), pp. 68–93, <https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/1538690/1/5.pdf>.
- Koc-Michalska K., Lilleker D. G., Surowiec P., Baranowski P. (2014), *Poland's 2011 online election campaign: New tools, new professionalism, new ways to win votes*, "Journal of Information Technology & Politics", 11(2), pp. 186–205.
- Kończak I. (2020), *Zaprzyżnżnione osoby prowadzą konta polityków na FB. „To oburzające”* [*Friends keep politicians' accounts on FB. "Outrageous"*], Press.
- Komunikat (2019), *Odnaczenie marszałka seniora Sejmu Kornela Morawieckiego Krzyżem Średnim Orderu Zasługi Węgier* [*Kornel Morawiecki, Marshal of the Sejm, decorated with the Middle Cross of the Order of Merit of Hungary*], <https://pap-mediroom.pl/polityka-i-spolczenstwo/odnaczenie-marszalka-seniora-sejmu-kornela-morawieckiego-krzyzem-srednim>, 22.12.2020.
- Kowalczyk M. (2019), *Od rzeczy*, Press, https://www.press.pl/tresc/57963,redaktor-naczelnny-pawel-lisiecki_-sylwetka-szefa-_do-rzeczy_.
- Kozielski M. (2020), *Włamanie do redakcji polskiej gazety w Czechach* [*Break-in into the editorial office of a Polish newspaper in the Czech Republic*], Press.
- Krekó P., Molnar C., Juhász A., Kucharczyk J., Pazderski F. (2018), *Więcej niż populizm: Zjawisko trybalizmu na Węgrzech i w Polsce* [*More than populism: The point of tribalism in Hungary and Poland*], Instytut Political Capital.
- Krzymowski M. (2016), *Ucho partii* [*The ear of the party*], "Newsweek Polska".
- Kucharski S. (2020), *Echa oświadczenia Jarosława Kaczyńskiego. „Komunikacja z poprzedniego tysiąclecia”* [*Echoes of Jarosław Kaczyński's statement. 'Communication from the previous millennium*], Wirtualnemedi.pl, <https://www.wirtualnemedi.pl/arttykul/oswiadczenie-jaroslaw-kaczynski-komunikacja-z-poprzedniego-tysiaclecia>, 12.12.2020.
- Leszczyński A. (2017), *Ziobro o „mainstreamowych mediach”. Rozszyfrowujemy jedną z ulubionych fantazji prawicy* [*Ziobro on „mainstream media”. We decipher one of the favorite fantasies of the right*], Oko Press.
- Lievrouw L. (2011), *Alternative and activist new media*, Polity.
- Pragmatyczny radykał. Jarosław Kaczyński walczy o miejsce w historii* (n.d.), TVN24.pl, <https://tvn24.pl/magazyn-tvn24/pragmatyczny-radykal-jaroslaw-kaczynski-walczy-o-miejsce-w-historii>, 221,3805, 14.12.2020.
- Makarenko V. et al. (2020), *Digital News Report – Poland 2020*, <https://www.digital-newsreport.org/survey/2020/poland-2020/>.
- Mańkowski M. (2012), *Krzysztof Skowroński krytykowany przez dziennikarzy. Ale problemem nie jest tylko prezes, ale całe SDP* [*Krzysztof Skowroński is criticized by journalists. But the problem is not only the president, but the entire SDP*], Natemat.pl, <https://natemat.pl/33949,krzysztof-skowronski-krytykow>

- any-przez-dziennikarzy-ale-problemem-nie-jest-tylko-prezes-ale-cale-sdp, 16.12.2020.
- Marchal N., Kollanyi B., Neudert L. M., Howard P. N. (2019), *Junk news during the EU parliamentary elections: Lessons from a seven-language study of Twitter and Facebook*, University of Oxford.
- Media Freedom Rapid Response (2021), *Demokracja w odwrocie: ograniczanie wolności mediów w Polsce. Raport z misji [Democracy in Retreat: Restricting Media Freedom in Poland. Mission report]*, International Press Institute.
- Mierzyńska A. (2018), *Rosyjską propagandę szerzą polskie portale. Znaleźliśmy 23 takie witryny! [Russian propaganda is made available on Polish portals. We knew 23 such cases!]*, OKO Press.
- Nalewajko E. (2013), *Między populistycznym a liberalnym. Style polityczne w Polsce po roku 1989*, Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN, Dział Wydawnictw, Warsaw.
- Nocuń R. (2016), *Język prowokacji w mediach alternatywnych na przykładzie radia internetowego KonteStacja*, „Forum Lingwistyczne”, no. 3, pp. 63–74, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego.
- Olechowska P. (2017), *Stopień stronniczości polskich dzienników ogólnoinformacyjnych (wybrane zagadnienia) [The degree of bias of Polish general news dailies (selected issues)]*, „Political Preferences”, (16), pp. 107–130.
- Osowski P. (2020), *Świetny ruch Kaczyńskiego. Wybił opozycji argumenty z ręki [Kaczyński's great move. He knocked the opposition's arguments out of hand]*, TVP.info, <https://www.tvp.info/50535691/jaroslav-kaczynski-nagral-wideows-aborcji-tylko-na-facebooku-ponad-3-mln-wyswietlen>, 12.12.2020.
- Piechota G. (2018), *Digital News Report – Poland 2018*, <https://www.digitalnewsreport.org/survey/2018/poland-2018>.
- Shotter J. (2020), *Fears grow for independence of local media in Poland*, “Financial Times”, <https://www.ft.com/content/f836d45f-63e4-4c74-bdc0-90c46b3b032c>.
- Smolar A. (2018), *Portrait of Jarosław Kaczyński – Former Polish Prime Minister of Poland, Chairman of the political party Law and Justice*, <https://www.institutmontaigne.org/en/blog/portrait-jaroslaw-kaczynski-former-polish-prime-minister-poland-chairman-political-party-law-and>.
- Surowiec P., Kania-Lundholm M., Winiarska-Brodowska M. (2020), *Towards illiberal conditioning? New politics of media regulations in Poland (2015–2018)*, “East European Politics”, 36(1), pp. 27–43.
- Surowiec P., Stetka V. (eds.) (2018), *Social media and politics in central and Eastern Europe*, London.
- Tomczak Ł. (2015), *Leaders of Polish political parties and their scope of power in party structures*, “Political Preferences”, (11), pp. 7–17.
- Torańska T., *Interview with: J. Kaczyński, „Nowa Polska czy jeszcze stara?” [New Poland or Still Old One?]*, http://niniwa22.cba.pl/my_toranska_kaczynski_1994.htm.

- Turek K. (2013), *Media alternatywne w służbie mniejszości: Funkcje mediów mniejszości seksualnych w Polsce*.
- TVN24 kończy 10 lat. Stacja wystartowała 9 sierpnia 2001 r., Wpolarityce.pl, August 8, 2011, <https://wpolarityce.pl/polityka/116758-tvn24-konczy-10-lat-stacja-wystartowala-9-sierpnia-2001-r>, 16.12.2020.
- TVP.info (2017), *Seria materiałów TVN24 o Trybunale. Lista manipulacji*, <https://www.tvp.info/33991767/seria-materiałow-tvn24-o-trybunale-lista-manipulacji>
- Wenzel M. (2018), *News consumption and political party preferences in Poland*, "Political Preferences", (18), pp. 57–74.
- WirtualneMedia.pl (22.03.2019), 'Polityka', *naTemat i WP z dotacjami w szóstej rundzie Digital News Innovation Fund*, <https://www.wirtualnemedi.pl/artykul/polityka-natemat-i-wp-z-dotacjami-w-szostej-rundzie-digital-news-innovation-fund-dlaczego>, 12.12.2020.
- Wirtualnemedi (2020a), *KRRiT chwali 'Wiadomości' i Polsat News. TV Trwam i TV Republika uznane za stronnicze* [National Broadcasting Council praises 'Wiadomości' and Polsat News. TV Trwam and TV Republika are considered biased] <https://www.wirtualnemedi.pl/artykul/krrit-chwali-wiadomosci-i-polsat-news-tv-trwam-i-tv-republika-uznane-za-stronnicze#>.
- Wirtualnemedi.pl (2020b), *Jarosław Kaczyński pojawił się na TikToku, promuje ustawę antyfutrzarską (video)* [Jarosław Kaczyński appeared on TikTok, promotes the anti-fur law (video)], <https://www.wirtualnemedi.pl/artykul/jaroslaw-kaczynski-pojawil-sie-na-tiktoku-promuje-ustawe-antyfutrzarska-video>.
- Zamana J. (2016), *Styl przywództwa Jarosława Kaczyńskiego* [The Style of Leadership of Jarosław Kaczyński], „Studia Krytyczne”, 2, pp. 201–213.

Stosunek lidera Prawa i Sprawiedliwości oraz premiera wobec mediów alternatywnych na Facebooku

Streszczenie

Wyraźne rozróżnienie między źródłami medialnymi a elektoratami w ramach ekosystemu mediów tradycyjnych może pomóc wyjaśnić ograniczone znaczenie mediów alternatywnych (skoncentrowanych na fałszywych wiadomościach i mistyfikacjach) jako istotnych źródeł informacji. W dyskursie politycznym i analitycznym alternatywne media mogą być postrzegane jako „alternatywa” dla dominujących liberalnych mediów i dyskursu. W tym kontekście premier Mateusz Morawiecki i wicepremier Jarosław Kaczyński aktywnie „polubili” inne profile na swoich stronach FB. Morawiecki polubił niektóre media, głównie kanały telewizyjne i radiowe ze swojego okręgu wyborczego. Skupił się przy tym bardziej na tożsamości narodowej i intere-

sach narodowych w sensie ekonomicznym. Spodobał mu się jednak również magazyn prasowy, który jest przypadkiem granicznym między ideologicznie mocno stronnicy a dezinformacyjną sceną w Polsce.

Słowa kluczowe: Polska, populizm, Facebook, Kaczyński, Morawiecki, przycisk „Lubię to”, media alternatywne