

**LIBERALISM VS. SOLIDARITY OR FREEDOM
VS. SOCIALISM? CONFLICTING AND MISLEADING
FRAMINGS OF MEDIATED MESSAGES IN THE 2005
POLISH PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN:
A POLITICAL COMMUNICATION PERSPECTIVE**

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INTRODUCTION

For most of September and October 2005, the Polish news media were busy covering the parliamentary and the presidential elections in that country. Beginning two weeks apart from one another, with the presidential run-off election following two weeks later, these overlapping campaigns became the most important media and political events of the year. Their conjunction was an occurrence expected to happen once in 20 years because of Poland's five-year presidential term and a four-year parliamentary term. For the first time since 1989, the result was that the President, the upper house of the parliament (*Senat*) and the lower house (*Sejm*) of the parliament are now controlled by the same party, Law and Justice (*PiS*). For the first time since Solidarity swept both elections, the Polish electorate has also made a definite turn to the right, voting for a political party that supports radical change, the symbolic setting up of a Fourth Republic which will be a morally superior country in contrast to the Third Republic, the independent Polish state established after the Solidarity revolution when Poland was the first country in the former Soviet Block to end communism. This essay analyzes the 2005 presidential campaign from the point of view of agenda setting theory of how political communication is framed in campaign messages, media use and media coverage.

POLITICAL CONTEXT FOR THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

The presidential election took place at a time when the Poles were tired of the numerous corruption scandals involving politicians associated with the post-communist government led by the Social Democratic party (*SLD*). Also, they had seen how the scandals had rubbed off on Aleksander Kwaśniewski, the internationally active and recognized post-communist president whose popularity ratings at home remained very high throughout most of his two terms in office. During the last two years, his ratings fell from his usual percentages in the 80s to those in the 50s and 60s, as a result of what the media covered and the electorate perceived as his close, and sometimes unclear, ties with the business world. During the 2001-2005 *SLD*-led government, Poland joined the EU; and Kwaśniewski gained to his credit Poland's

Table 1. Parliamentary Election Results (September 25, 2005).

Party	Leader	Support in percentage	No. of Seats in the Sejm
Law and Justice (PiS)	Jarosław Kaczyński	26.8	152
Civic Platform (PO)	Donald Tusk	24.2	133
Self-defense (Samobrona)	Andrzej Lepper	11.7	57
Social Democrats (SLD)	Wojciech Olejniczak	11.4	56
League of Polish Families (LPR)	Maciej Giertych	7.9	33
Peasants' Party (PSL)	Waldemar Pawlak	6.9	27
Social Democracy of Poland (SdPi)	Marek Borowski	3.9	–
Democratic Party (PD)	Władysław Frasyniuk	2.5	–
Election Committee German Minority	–	0.3	2

joining NATO and its new constitution. However, the people were clearly ready for change. The parliamentary election held on September 25, 2005, saw Law and Justice (PiS) receive the most votes, with the Civic Platform (*PO*) coming in as a close second despite polls predicting the opposite. During the campaign, the two parties had promised to form a coalition, a plan which apparently had been in the working for over two years. Under a new, young, and photogenic leader who was 8 when martial law was introduced in Poland, the *SLD* managed to get in the Parliament with 10% of the vote, despite some polls and the social democrats' worries. The other parties are Self-defense (*Samoobrona*), the populist and unruly farmers' party, and the League of Polish Families (*LPR*), the nationalist, anti-EU, gay bashing, Catholic party supported by the ultraconservative radio station Radio Maryja. The *PSL* (*Pol-*

skie Stronnictwo Ludowe), the post-communist peasants' party, between 1993-1997 the second biggest Polish political force, also managed to slip in with barely over 5%. In accordance with the polls, the Law and Justice and the Civic Platform turned out to be the two strongest parties in the parliament with enough seats to form a coalition. These two parties immediately started discussions about forming a government, initially with journalists' cameras rolling. However, because the presidential campaign went into full swing with the first round of voting two weeks away, their discussions progressed very slowly. Clearly, both parties were waiting for the outcome of the presidential vote. The leader of the winning Law and Justice, Jarosław Kaczyński, who earlier had been expected to become Prime Minister, nominated Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz for that position. He himself took a low media profile for the rest of the presidential campaign, in order to help his look-alike brother, Lech Kaczyński, win the presidency.

THE CANDIDATES

There were 16 eligible presidential candidates: Henryka Bochniarz, Marek Borowski, Leszek Bubel, Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz, Maciej Giertych, Liwiusz Iłasz, Lech Kaczyński, Jarosław Kalinowski, Janusz Korwin-Mikke, Andrzej Lepper, Daniel Podrzycki, Jan Pyszko, Zbigniew Religa, Adam Słomka, Donald Tusk, Stanisław

Table 2. Candidate support in presidential election

Candidate	Party	% first round (9/9/2005)	% run-off (9/23/2005)
Lech Kaczyński	Law and Justice (PiS)	33.1	
Donald Tusk	Civic Platform (PO)	36.3	
Andrzej Lepper	Self-defense (Samoobrona)	15.1	–
Marek Borowski	Socialdemocrats of Poland (SDRP)	10.3	–
Jarosław Kalinowski	Peasants' Party (PSL)	1.8	–
Janusz Korwin-Mikke	Janusz Korwin-Mikke Platform	1.4	–
Henryka Bochniarz	Democratic Party (PD)	1.3	–
Liwiusz Iłasz	–	0.2	–
Stanisław Tymiński	All Polish Citizens Coalition	0.2	–
Leszek Bubel	Polish National Party	0.1	–
Jan Pyszko	–	0.1	–
Adam Słomka	–	0.1	–

Tymiński. Three of these candidates withdrew: Religa (September 2), Cimoszewicz (September 14), and Giertych (October 4). One, Daniel Podrzycki died in a car accident (September 24). Out of the remaining 11 candidates, only four were seen as serious, as measured by electorate support above 5%. They were: Borowski, Kaczyński, Lepper, and Tusk. After Cimoszewicz’s decision to drop out in protest against campaign mudslinging and an inability to set the campaign agenda, the election clearly narrowed to a choice between Kaczyński and Tusk. As the polls predicted, Tusk beat Kaczyński in the first round (36.3% to 33.1%), with Lepper and Borowski coming a distant third and fourth (15.1% and 10.3% respectively). The other candidates’ support was negligible (below 2% each).

THE POLISH POLITICAL COMMUNICATION SYSTEM

In order to be considered eligible to run for president, a candidate must have Polish citizenship, be over 35, and have collected over 100,000 signatures of citizen support. The election is held among all eligible candidates, with the top two candidates moving to a run-off election held two weeks after the first round (provided no candidate receives more than 50% of the vote, in which case there is no run-off). All eligible candidates receive the same amount of airtime on public television and public radio. For two weeks preceding the first round, TVP1 and TVP2, as well as Polish Radio, broadcast the so-called “electoral blocks” of uncensored candidate programming. A typical daily broadcast on the first channel of public television scheduled between 3:55 and 5:00 p.m. will carry an hour of candidate-produced and delivered programming, with each candidate receiving about 5 minutes of airtime. All candidates appear on all electoral blocks in a rotating order. Private advertising is allowed, and it takes the form of a 30- or 60-second ad, not unlike the typical American political ad (Płodowski, 2005b).

Table 3. Major Polish print and electronic media

Newspapers		Weeklies		TV stations	
<i>Gazeta Wyborcza</i>	Center-left	<i>Polityka</i>	Center-left	TVP1	Public
<i>Rzeczpospolita</i>	Centre-right	<i>Wprost</i>	Center-right	TVP2	Public
<i>Trybuna</i>	Far left	<i>Newsweek</i>	Center	TVN	Private
<i>Nasz Dziennik</i>	Far right	<i>Przekrój</i>	Yuppie, center left	Polsat	Private
		<i>Ozon</i>	Youth, center-right		

CAMPAIGN MESSAGES

ISSUES

Even though the 2005 presidential campaign was often described by experts, commentators, and journalists as the most issue-based campaign ever, issues were often reduced to soundbites, slogans, and their false dichotomies. Both candidates' political platforms were to a large extent reduced in media messages to what presidential candidate Kaczyński called "the choice between liberal Poland and Solidarity Poland." In response, Tusk reframed the options between the two candidates as a choice between "*Polska liberalna*" or liberal Poland, and "*Polska socjalna*" or social Poland. (While Tusk's Polish phrasing referred to society, it mainly carried the connotation of citizens living off government-supported income such as welfare, pension, or disability benefits, and enjoying "free" healthcare and education. On a different occasion, Tusk opposed Kaczyński's distinction between liberal and Solidarity Poland another way, saying freedom and solidarity are not mutually exclusive notions. In turn on more than one occasion, Kaczynski specified that he was opposed to Tusk's liberalism, not freedom per se. Most of the time, the campaign revolved around such notions or catchphrases or candidate-imposed false dichotomies of liberalism vs. some sort of Polish version of social compassion (Kaczyński) and freedom vs. socialism (Tusk). As a result, Tusk was framed one way or another as a liberal, a label he did not oppose, sometimes even confirmed, while referring to his philosophical and economic ideas in some of his extended press interviews.

For the most part, the public discourse oscillated around these four catchphrases: liberal Poland, Solidarity Poland, freedom, and socialism, which created a situation in which issues were limited to simple dichotomies that did not reflect the candidates' real stands on real issues or real political intentions.¹ At the same time, such use of issues basically turned them into image categories.

IMAGES

The dominant candidate images were those of the "liberal," a term whose association was in fact "only-for-the-rich," Donald Tusk and the "cowboy," (the actual term not used explicitly very often) implying the socially caring and compassionate,

¹ e.g. while Kaczyński was accusing Tusk in a public debate of propagating a healthcare system designed to benefit for the rich, the PiS-designated candidate for Prime Minister, Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz, was unofficially agreeing in his talks to PO's Jan Rokita to hand over healthcare to PO.

yet strong and decisive, Lech Kaczyński. Kaczynski's image dated from his days as Minister of Justice and also the Mayor of Warsaw, where he opposed what many saw as moral decline, that is, the increase in bordellos advertised as escort services, and the gay pride parade, which he declared illegal and tried to prevent. While most Warsawians disagreed with these policies, most Poles supported them.

NEGATIVITY

While Kaczyński and Tusk remained friendly, if sometimes slightly malicious terms with each other—they often referred to each other and each others' parties throughout the campaign as “my dear/respectable friend(s)” – their campaigns did have their share of mudslinging, character bashing, and blatant misrepresentation of their opponent's records. As is the case in most professional political campaigns (Płodowski, 2004, p.

Figure 1. I agree Tusk is

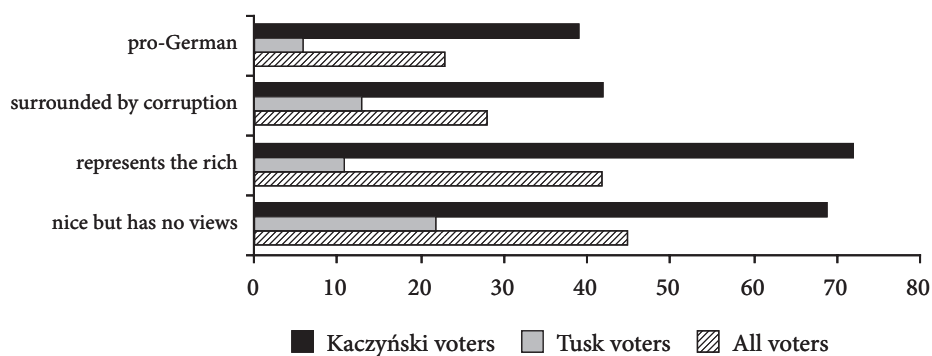
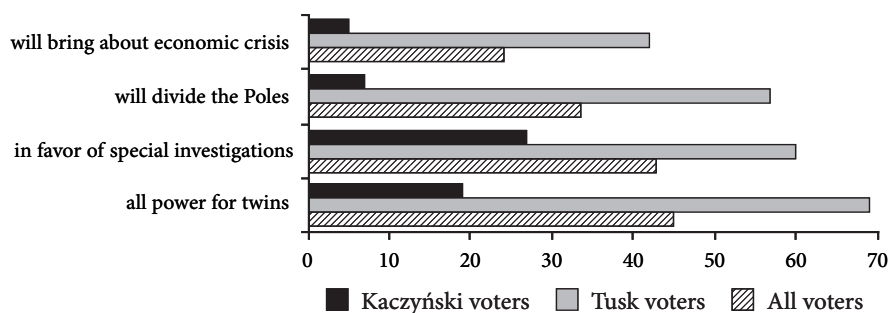


Figure 2. I agree Kaczyński



Source: Pacewicz, Piotr. (2005, October 21). *Tusk zły, Kaczyński zły, czyli jak Polacy ulegli negatywnej kampanii*. “Gazeta Wyborcza”, p. 4.

298–299), negativity is usually delivered by somebody other than the candidate. Kaczyński's Karl Rove, or, as he called himself, "bullterrier", was Jacek Kurski, who was responsible for TV campaigning. Interestingly enough, the look-alike Kaczyński brothers are not the only significant brothers of this campaign. Jacek Kurski's brother, Jarosław Kurski, a journalist at *Gazeta Wyborcza*, wrote articles giving public advice to Tusk on how to defend himself against his brother's accusations.

Evidence suggests that the campaign negativity strategy worked. In the minds of a significant number of voters, the negative labels stuck to their opponents, including the images of each candidate's supporters. Tusk was seen as "smooth, nice, photogenic, but with no ideas" (45%), "only representing the interests of the rich; the common man will lose during his presidency" (42%), "surrounded by corrupt people who form corrupt networks (or a corrupt network) around him" (28%), "someone who will give in to German influence and will not realize the Polish interests" (23%). On the other hand, Kaczyński was considered to be a candidate who "aims at taking all power with his brother" (45%), "will damage democracy by screenings, and special parliamentary committees" (43%), "will divide Poles, as he is disagreeable, vengeful, and sees enemies everywhere" (34%), "does not know much about economy and his policies will bring Poland to a crisis" (24%).

TELEVISION COVERAGE

The campaign was covered extensively by both public and private channels. Although no systematic studies of campaign coverage are yet available, the media are said to have been more supportive of Tusk than Kaczyński. After winning the election, Kaczyński expressed that sentiment in several press interviews, including those for *Przekrój* and *Polityka* weeklies. In an informal interview, Danuta Waniek, the chairwoman of the *Krajowa Rada Radiofonii i Telewizji*, the Polish regulatory body overlooking electronic media, supported that assertion, albeit based on her "personal impressions." "More research is needed," she said. Overall, appearances of objectivity were maintained by both private and public stations. The only TV station that openly rooted for one of the two candidates was *TV Trwam*, a highly conservative, Catholic station associated with the *Radio Maryja* camp (as is the *Nasz Dziennik* daily) that called for "the sinking of the (Tusk's *Civic*) *Platform*."

NEWSPAPER COVERAGE

The press covered the campaign on the front page throughout most of the campaign. The two main newspapers, the center-left *Gazeta Wyborcza* and center-right *Rzeczpospolita*, provided a variety of viewpoints on the candidates. Judging by some

headline phrasing, *Gazeta Wyborcza* was more protective of Tusk than was *Rzeczpospolita*. For example, when *Rzeczpospolita* ran a story of Tusk's grandfather's WWII military involvement, in which it turned out that, contrary to what the candidate had said, his grandfather had indeed been in the Wehrmacht, but briefly and only to defect and join the Polish Army, its headline was "Józef Tusk in two armies," whereas *Gazeta Wyborcza* titled the story "From the Wehrmacht to Anders' Army?" In the latter headline, the "Anders' Army" carried very strong, patriotic connotations for the Poles. *Gazeta Wyborcza* was often seen as first rooting for Cimoszewicz and then supporting Tusk over Kaczyński, whom it had criticized for most of the Nineties as part of the "*oszołom*" camp, a new colloquial term for irresponsible, paranoid, aggressive politicians in search of ways to revolutionize the country politically, culturally, and morally. However, for the most part, *Gazeta Wyborcza* covered the two candidates with little, if any, bias. After the campaign was over, Piotr Pacewicz, one of *Gazeta's* editors-in-chief, admitted that Tusk's vision was closer to his than Kaczyński's was.

OUTDOOR ADVERTISING

During the campaign, both camps, as well as those of Borowski, Lepper, and Giertych, flooded the streets of Poland with huge outdoor posters of the two candidates. Tusk was featured in outdoor advertising the most prominently during the summer. Kaczyński accelerated his use of that medium towards the end of the campaign, when his supporters mounted posters depicting Kaczyński looking presidential behind a conservative-looking desk with a pen in hand and bookcases in the background. In contrast to posters of Kaczyński's bust in conservatively brown surroundings, Tusk's posters usually depicted him in a more modern, youthful way, as a face on white background, with the writing: "President Tusk" and one of two slogans: first, "Man with Principles," and, second, during the run-off, "We'll be proud of Poland." The wording on his opponent's poster throughout was: "Lech Kaczyński. The President of the Fourth Republic."

TELEVISION ADS

Television ads offered a unique glimpse into both candidates' communication and marketing strategies, their visions of the country, and their visions of themselves.

In the first round, Tusk was depicted in a series of ads as a father and a Solidarity member and activist, marching in demonstrations and working physically. His daughter talked movingly about how she remembered her father trying to make ends meet

by working hard during martial law, cleaning chimneys and tall buildings. Tusk was also shown as sympathizing with the underdog by mentions of his mother who, as a nurse, was paid very little money in contrast to some managers of failed companies, who were given severance pay of thousands of zloty. In other ads, Tusk propagated the 15% flat tax supported small business owners. He managed to sound almost populist and, at the same time, to propagate economic freedom. It was in early September, a month before the first round of voting, that Tusk's campaign reached its peak.

However, the ad judged by the media to be the single most memorable and effective ad of the campaign was the so-called "fridge ad" designed by Kaczyński's camp. It showed members of a typical Polish family and their house/apartment. On-screen numbers showed their incomes falling under the Civic Platform-proposed 15% flat tax, followed by scenes of most food disappearing from their fridge, drugs from their bathroom cabinets, and toys from their children's room. The final scene had a big, fluffy toy cat fall flat on its face.

At first, the ad attracted little public or media attention. Civic Platform's and Tusk's ratings remained high and there seemed to be little, if any, effect. In fact, some advisors in Kaczyński's camp, including Jacek Kurski, worried about possible backlash. Soon, however, the ad became news, which gave the ad's content more credibility and prominence. Quite clearly, the ad set the media and public agenda for late September and most of October. From then on, one of the campaign's most common questions was: are Civic Platform's and Tusk's policies going to empty people's fridges, medicine cabinets, and children's rooms, and leave less money in people's pockets? That ad epitomizes the core of the 2005 Polish campaign. It promoted the image of both the Civic Platform and Tusk as being economically liberal and not beneficial to the little guy or average person.

In the run-off election campaign, Kaczyński's main ad message was different. Kaczyński's camp ran an ad showing two familiar buildings, the Sejm and the Presidential Palace, asking: "do you want these two institutions to cooperate or be in constant conflict?" At that time, the parliamentary election had been won by the Law and Justice or PiS party, which now designated Marcinkiewicz as Prime Minister. Coalition talks with the PO had been staggering and Tusk's election would have divided the two main seats of power between the two camps, which the ad implied would lead to more conflict. This implication was in keeping with Polish polls during the 2000s, which continually show that the Polish people are averse to political conflict and feel tired of seeing what they consider "bickering politicians on TV."

Both camps ordered more public opinion polls than had been the case in any previous campaign. The "conflicting seats of power" ad's message seemed to be research-based and to have struck a cord with the public. In short, it responded to people's deepest worries of the country being conflicted, at least for the next four

years. Kaczyński's other endorsement ads at that time featured prominent Polish representatives of the cultural world, such as actors Ewa Błaszczyk and Jerzy Radziwiłowicz, which appealed to a different group of citizens, those worried about the fate of Polish cultural production and national/cultural identity, particularly in face of galloping globalization and EU-enlargement. More importantly, these ads refuted the image of Kaczyński as not being supported by any of the elites. Kaczyński's ads ran often and were prominent, much more than Tusk's, particularly during the last weeks of the campaign. For example, his were the only ones running during the TVN premiere of the long-awaited movie about John Paul II, *Karol, the Man Who Became Pope*, on the Wednesday and Thursday before the final election.

THE TV DEBATES

The 2005 election featured more TV debates than any in Polish history. The first TV presidential debate after 1989 had taken place in 1995 and is remembered as one of the factors that helped Kwaśniewski beat Wałęsa. In the 2000 election, Olechowski challenged Kwaśniewski to a debate in a series of newspaper ads, but due to the incumbent's reluctance, no debate was held. In 2005 two formal debates were held between Tusk and Kaczyński, one before the first round and the second before the run-off election, both on TVP and TVN. In between, the two candidates met in informal debates on several other radio and television programs, including Monika Olejnik's "RadioZet" show and Tomasz Lis' "Polsat" TV show. Overall, they appeared together in various formats, both formal and informal, taking questions from both hosts and each other.

Ultimately, both candidates were seen in media analyses as coming out of the main debates strong, with no clear winner. After one debate, Tusk was criticized by some for his frowning and other unnatural facial expressions. Of the two candidates, he was viewed as the one who was more uncomfortable when in the heat of an attack. Tusk was also seen as the one who changed radically during the campaign: while he was more positive and at ease during the first round, he appeared to grow more tense and aggressive in the run-off debates, which proved to some he was "a marketing product" rather than himself.

ENDORSEMENTS

Tusk was endorsed by both previous presidents, Kwaśniewski and Wałęsa. Wałęsa's son also ran for the Sejm from a *Civic Platform* ballot and managed to obtain a seat. Wałęsa's support came early in the campaign and was clearly welcomed by Tusk while

Kwaśniewski's came only after the first round when no left-wing candidate remained available. Also, Kwaśniewski's endorsement was something of a problem for Tusk. While Kwaśniewski remains a popular politician with ratings oscillating around 50–60%, both the *Civic Platform* and *Law and Justice* ran messages supporting radical change.

Kaczyński received the official endorsement of the Solidarity trade union and its previous leader, Marian Krzaklewski, who had ranked third in the 2000 presidential election only to subsequently disappear from national politics, with neither remaining major forces in Polish politics.

More importantly and controversially, Kaczyński was endorsed after the first round by Andrzej Lepper, leader of populist *Samobrona* and the third most popular candidate in 2005, having won the support of 15% of Polish voters. Also, Kaczyński was the favorite of the ultraconservative *Radio Maryja*, which presented Tusk as a threat and vowed to “sink the (Civic) Platform.” In contrast, Tusk was supported by Jerzy Urban, the spokesperson in the communist government of the 1980s and a current publisher and millionaire, and by Leszek Miller, a post-communist/social-democratic Prime Minister between 2001 and 2004, noted both for presiding over Poland's successful EU entry and for numerous corruption scandals among his fellow ministers and party members leading to his resignation in 2004.

Both Kaczyński and Tusk tried to use each other's controversial endorsements to their own advantage. Tusk spent a great deal of time during the last TVN-broadcast debate trying to link Kaczyński to Lepper for the benefit of TVN's urbane, educated viewers. Kaczyński responded by bringing up Urban's and Miller's endorsements. While Tusk's association with the post-communists was rather loose (he was preferred by them as a lesser evil, a counterbalance to Kaczyński, whom they saw as a threat to civil liberties and a religiously and ideologically neutral state), Kaczyński's link with his endorsers was perceived to be tighter. He was said by Tusk's representatives and commentators to have made a secret deal with populist Lepper and to owe favors to him and conservative Christian circles rallied by Radio Maryja and the League of Polish Families. Despite Kaczyński's denials, post-campaign events have proved Tusk right—his PiS party had formed an informal coalition with *Samobrona* and the *League of Polish Families*, which had helped PiS reject Civic Platform's candidate for Speaker of the House and had helped it choose its own Speaker, as well as to choose Lepper as one of its four Vice-Speakers. This way, PiS ended up holding the three most important positions in the country: President (Lech Kaczyński), Speaker of the House (Marek Jurek), and Prime Minister (Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz). They also now hold 51 seats in the 100-seat Senate. Moreover, the much-discussed and often-promised coalition between PiS and the Civic Platform has not happened; and, during the first four days after the election, the złoty sank by 2% and investors

started to withdraw from the Polish stock market. One of the ironic headlines in the center-right *Rzeczpospolita's* economic section was: "Investors abandon the Fourth Republic."

PUBLIC OPINION POLLS AND CAMPAIGN DYNAMICS

As early as spring 2005, Tusk had ranked fifth or sixth in public opinion polls while the popular TV anchor and journalist Tomasz Lis, the First Lady Jolanta Kwaśniewska, and the successful heart surgeon and an unaccomplished politician, Zbigniew Religa, had all ranked higher (even though some of them said they did not intend to run). At that time and well into early summer, the campaign was seen as ultimately a choice between Kaczyński and Cimoszewicz. Cimoszewicz was a post-communist former Minister of Foreign Affairs, a former Prime Minister, and, in 1980, a Fulbright scholar at Columbia University. After Lis and Kwaśniewska decided not run, Tusk rose to prominence and he went up in the polls. His July and August campaigning, with several visits to Belarus to support the Polish ethnic minority, discriminated against by the Łukaszenka government, clearly helped him too. Cimoszewicz's September 14 withdrawal (Olczyk, 2005, October 16) left the Polish left with no serious candidate, which seemed to help Tusk more than Kaczyński. In mid-September, Tusk was predicted to not just beat Kaczyński, but win the presidency in the first round with 51% (*Rzeczpospolita*, 2005, October 17–18).

Asked about which of the two candidates they would vote for in the run-off election, most voters during the summer campaign period chose Tusk over Kaczyński. However, a poll conducted on July 16 showed Kaczyński ahead with 54% vs. 46% for Tusk. At that point, the two candidates' support started to reverse. Two weeks later, both politicians had the same support. Nonetheless, on August 6 Tusk moved ahead by 7 percentage points (53% vs. 47%), on August 20 by 8 points (54 to 46), and on September 3 by 18 points (59 to 41). The peak of Tusk's support came on September 10, when polls gave him 63% with only 37% Poles intending to vote for Kaczyński, if the two politicians end up in the run-off. Soon afterward, the gap again started narrowing. On October 1, when college classes start, it was merely 52% to 48% for Tusk, his share briefly rose to 56 to 44% ten days later, but then the range narrowed back to what it had been, 52 to 48%, on September 19, two days before the "electoral silence."²

² During the period starting midnight on the Friday preceding the election Sunday and ending at 8p.m. that day, when polling stations are closed, no campaigning is allowed, which includes the media covering or endorsing candidates or publishing public opinion polls. Voters' support can change during that time, a fact the last 2005 pre-election public opinion

After the last public opinion poll taken, however, important campaign events took place to change the odds. On Thursday, the two candidates clashed in a debate on TVN and during the day after that, which was the last day of campaigning, they debated on Channel One of public television, the most widely watched station in Poland. On Saturday and Sunday, both candidates stopped campaigning and voters were without media influence. Nevertheless, voters did influence each other through informal interactions within families and among friends and acquaintances.

BREAKING NEWS CAMPAIGN EVENTS

There were three major breaking news events during the 2005 campaign. A close analysis of their timing and framing shows that all of them favored Kaczyński and one also helped Tusk.

The first event was the scandal surrounding Cimoszewicz's incomplete and/or deceptive tax returns. That event dominated the headlines for most of August and, ultimately, prevented the candidate from setting his own agenda. Quite importantly, it also was a strong blow to what was perceived as the candidate's main strength—his honesty. The situation of Cimoszewicz was similar to that of Kerry in August 2004 when he was accused of falsifying his war record (see Płudowski, 2005). As a result, Cimoszewicz withdrew and did not participate in the election, not even in the first round. That event had enormous consequences for the race. For one thing, the campaign was left with no strong left-wing candidate, which moved the focus of the election to the right. Now the choice was between two right-wing, post-Solidarity candidates, one of whom was more socially conservative and less economically liberal than the other. The main effect of that narrowed choice was that the campaign was reframed from the choice between “PRL Poland” catchword and “AK Poland” catchword³ to a choice between liberal Poland and Solidarity Poland. As it

polls, usually held on the Thursday and published on the Friday do not reflect; hence, the difference between the polls and the final result. Exit polls reflected the candidate's support accurately.

³ PRL stands for the People's Republic of Poland, the communist state of 1945-1989, by implication represented here by Cimoszewicz, a former party member. AK stands for *Armia Krajowa*, the Polish WWII underground resistance army, prosecuted by the communists after WWII, seemingly represented in this election by Kaczyński, who had nothing to do with it personally other than being a Solidarity activist in opposition to communist Poland before 1989. The labels for the two camps were chosen somewhat arbitrarily by Kaczyński's camp for their perceived social resonance. By doing that, Kaczyński was trying to focus the debate on the past and frame the election in terms favorable to him.

turned out, the strategy of Kaczyński's camp was very successful throughout the campaign at framing events in catchy, if in somewhat, sometimes highly, irrelevant and/or misleading, terms. Cimoszewicz's withdrawal could have benefited Tusk as well, though; but his camp missed this opportunity. Tusk was the one of the remaining two main candidates who was more attractive to social-democratic voters in terms of supporting civil liberties, diversity, and the state's religious and ideological neutrality. In turn, Kaczyński's voters shared most of Cimoszewicz's supporters' economically protectionist and antiliberal expectations. By defining the election mainly in economic, rather than freedom, terms, Kaczyński met the expectations of a larger part of the Polish electorate. In sum, he turned out to be culturally closer to what is the core of Polish society than the individualistic Tusk did. By striking a deal with the economically populist, anti-free market Lepper, Kaczyński sealed the fate of the election.

The other breaking news event that probably helped turn the election around was the infamous Wehrmacht story. The day after the first round, on October 10 Kaczyński's main media strategist, Jacek Kurski, said in an interview that "in Pomerania region, serious sources are circulating rumors that Tusk's grandfather had voluntarily joined the Wehrmacht during the war." While, admittedly, one is not responsible for anything one's grandfather did, the information acted as a nasty, crawling supposition that poisoned people's minds. Formally, Kurski could not be held responsible—he resorted to a safe rhetorical trick, he was merely repeating information coming from other "serious", if undisclosed, "sources." Kaczyński's initial reaction was to downplay the event, or even to justify it, by saying on a morning radio show that Kurski may say controversial things, but he never lies. The media focused on Kurski's claim, though, and Kaczyński's camp feared backlash. Ten minutes before the first evening TV newscast, TVN received a phone call saying Kurski was no longer working on the PiS campaign and he might even get removed from the party, which he was. It is not certain to what extent Kurski's interview was approved by Kaczyński's camp, but their reaction saved the day for Kaczyński. At the same time, the rumor was out in the open and contributed to Tusk's image as being pro-German and "not a real Pole."⁴ It coincided with Tusk's pride in his background as a *Kaszub*, an ethnic minority in Northern Poland distinct from both Poles and Germans. The rumor also reinforced the image of Tusk as culturally different from

⁴ Tusk initially denied his grandfather ever being in the Wehrmacht, let alone joining it voluntarily. Soon it turned out that he was indeed in the Wehrmacht shortly, most likely as a result of being drafted by force, at that time a frequent occurrence in the Kaszuby region, where Donald Tusk's family is from. Shortly afterwards, Józef Tusk defected and joined general Anders' Polish army.

the average Pole, a sense highlighted by three factors: a foreign-sounding first name, a unique ethnic background in a country that since WWII (and in contrast to most of its history) has been an ethnically and religiously homogenous country, and a dubious relationship to the Catholic religion (Tusk had married his wife and mother of their two adult children in church only several months prior to the election, 27 years after the secular ceremony, as revealed by one of the tabloids).

Finally, on Thursday, October 20, four days before the vote and the day before the electoral silence, Warsaw was paralyzed by a bomb scare. Thirteen numbered bombs carrying a letter and signed "Gay Power/Silny Pedał" (Powerful Faggot) were placed all over the country's capital. As it turned out, the bombs were phony. However, the scare became breaking news in the national media. The country's gay organizations did not confirm links to that event. The message was not explicitly directed at either of the candidates and the implied organization is not known and has not been identified. *Gazeta Wyborcza* (2005, October 25, p. 2) claims that the event benefited Kaczyński for two reasons. Firstly, it confirmed his message of gay people being a threat to society. Secondly, it increased people's fear of terrorism and it allowed Kaczyński to play the "strong cowboy," his "natural" role, given his party's and his own favorite theme of law and order going back to his days as the Minister of Justice in Buzek's government (1997–2001) when Kaczyński's popularity in the polls and his rise to power began.

ELECTION RESULTS AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Kaczyński won the run-off election with 8,257,468 votes (54.04%) and Tusk received 7,022,319 votes (45.96%). Election results came as a surprise to many even though the last polls showed a clear trend towards Kaczyński narrowing the gap with Tusk. Also, being ahead in the polls and the media's and elite's favorite, Tusk tended to be overrepresented in the polls. In contrast, Kaczyński, and Lepper, who asked his voters (who made up 15% of the vote on October 9, 2005) to support Kaczyński, tend to be underrepresented as the underdogs. Radically conservative voters sometimes refuse to answer questions asked in polls or give untrue answers.

In comparison with the first round of the election, Tusk lost 360,000 voters to Kaczyński and managed to attract only 122,400 of Kaczyński's voters. Most importantly, he attracted fewer new voters⁵ (828,600 in contrast to Kaczyński's 1,015,700), and failed to attract most of the rural electorate: Lepper's (238,600 vs. 1,522,800) and Kalinowski's voters (49,600 vs. 159,100). Attracting most of the social democratic electorate of Borowski's (722,000 vs. 276,300), and economically liberal voters of

⁵ i.e., those who did not participate in the first round on October 9, 2005.

Korwin-Mikke (99,100 vs. 92,100), and the socially liberal supporters of the only female candidate Bochniarz (127,400 vs. 50,200) did not make enough difference.

Demographically speaking, Tusk turned out to be the candidate of the best educated (he received 62% of the vote of those with a college degree), young (55% of the 18-24 age group), and non-rural Poles (60% among citizens living in cities of 500,000 inhabitants or more and 56% in cities of between 200,000 and 500,000). Kaczyński won very strongly among the voters with only primary school education (68%), country-dwellers (67%), and the elderly (60% of citizens aged 60 or more, 56% of those aged 40-59). Gender was not much of a deciding factor: Kaczyński received a slight plurality of both the male (55%) and the female (51%) vote, but clearly Tusk was more attractive to women. Overall, education, age, and place of living were all strongly correlated with the vote—the less educated, the older, and less urbane, the more likely the person was to vote for Kaczyński. The more formal schooling, the younger, and more urbane, the more likely to support Tusk.

Two days after the vote, a TVN reporter talked to the inhabitants of two towns that voted **the** most differently. In Wisła, a mountain resort in southern Poland, noted for tourism, a large number of small businesses, and churches of thirteen denominations, Tusk received over 83.4% of the vote. In Gołuchów, a small village in eastern Poland, noted for its religiousness and religious homogeneity, Kaczyński received over 96% of the vote. In the TV interviews, the voters of Wisła said they were hoping for low taxes, simplified business rules, and, given the town's diversity, liked tolerance and disliked bigotry. The interviewed inhabitants of Gołuchów said the community was highly Catholic and Tusk was "not much of a Catholic"—he married his wife in church several months prior to the election, over 20 years after the civil ceremony. Besides, he wanted to "privatize hospitals."⁶

Geography was a good predictor of the vote. Following the pattern of the red and blue states of the 2000 and 2004 America, Poland was divided by the media into Poland T and Poland K. Poland T is the north-western part while Poland K is the south-eastern rest. Areawise, the two parts are nearly equal with the exception of the big cities which almost unanimously voted for Tusk who beat Kaczyński even in his hometown, Warsaw (60% to 40%).⁷

⁶ In reality, Tusk was in favor of offering citizens a choice of state and private medical care, not privatizing all medical care.

⁷ This is a reference to an older division of the so-called Poland A and Poland B, the first one being made up of the more heavily industrialized Western parts, and the latter consisting of the more rural eastern states. The division goes back to the times of the three partitions of the 18th century when Poland was divided for 123 years among Prussia, Austria and Russia. The divisions of Poland A/Poland B roughly overlap with the Prussian & Austrian/Russian provinces.

My personal experience confirms those divisions and differences. A poll conducted among students of Warsaw's Collegium Civitas, one of the best private universities in Poland showed that Tusk won over 80% of the vote. In contrast, students in one of the large lectures taught at Akademia Świętokrzyska, a state school in Poland K's smalltown Piotrków Trybunalski more often (60%) voted for Kaczyński. Additionally, when asked to give reasons, Tusk supporters did so freely while Kaczyński's supporters said it was their "private business."

In short, Kaczyński to a much larger extent than Tusk, is the candidate of the rural, antimodern, nationalistic, less cosmopolitan, less socially open and less economically successful and independent Poland. If I were to choose a single factor that determined the outcome of this election, I would point to Kaczyński's framing the debate in terms of the choice between liberal Poland and solidarity Poland. For one thing, it brings connotations of Solidarity, widely considered the brightest period of Poland's last 300 years. Two, liberalism as a label does not have much in common with the academic meaning of the term and is perceived by a large part of Polish society as a threat. Kamiński, one of Kaczyński's main campaign strategists might be right when he says that there is not enough demand for that kind of vision among Polish citizens now. Even though freedom and solidarity are not mutually exclusive ideals and Tusk is no more well-off than Kaczyński (in fact, in terms of social class, his family background was working class while Kaczyński's was upper middle class of Warsaw's old, intellectual Żolibóz), at this point in Poland's history, more people seem to expect protectionism, safety, and tradition than freedom, development, and openness. At the same time, the media- and candidate-imposed framing of the options offered to voters do not represent the complex reality of the candidates' programs or views. Tusk is neither as liberal as Kaczyński would have him, nor is Kaczyński as anti-free market as Tusk claims. Unfortunately, the widely known conditions of contemporary mediated campaigning do not seem to allow for much detailed discussions of issues and policy. Also, given a different set of candidates, the open and modern Poland might have prevailed.

CIVIC DISENGAGEMENT

Accompanying and in a way overriding the framing debate was the deepening civic disengagement in Poland. Even the most passive involvement in politics, that is following the election results as they are announced on TV at 8p.m. of the election day, does not interest most citizens. The two TV programs presenting and discussing parliamentary election results had fewer viewers than a female basketball program broadcast simultaneously on a different channel. Even the results of the first round

of the presidential election were not the most watched program on TV, losing to a soap opera. The final electoral night programs announcing the likely President attracted more viewers than any other TV show for about five minutes only to lose to entertainment programming.

More importantly and disappointingly, election turnout is low and falling. Only 51% of the electorate voted in the 2005 run-off election. Worse yet, the 2005 parliamentary election attracted only 40% of eligible voters. Non-voters offer numerous reasons for their absence (Stankiewicz, 2005, October 8-9); the most important ones are “having nobody to vote for” (14%) and “not being interested in politics” (13%). Others explain they have no time (11%), think their vote makes no difference (10%), happen to have been sick on Election Day (9%), are tired of politics (9%), happened to be away (8%), and had more important things to do (8%). At the same time, most Poles do not think suffrage should be taken away from regular non-voters (83%), or voting should be made compulsory (77%). Non-voting has become socially acceptable, also among college students. There are several proposals aimed at increasing election turnout, including holding two-day elections, extending the hours later into the night (10 p.m. instead of 8 p.m.) to adjust them to Poles’ changing living habits, and mailing leaflets with specific information about the time, place, and rules of the voting to all eligible voters.

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