

ПОЛІТИЧНІ ПРОБЛЕМИ МІЖНАРОДНИХ ВІДНОСИН

THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS IN POLAND – A SURPRISING POLITICAL TURNING POINT

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Abstract. *Presented thesis analyzes the presidential election in Poland which took place in 2015 and led to change of the head of the state. In article author examined the circumstances of the election campaign, political programs presented by candidates, main factors which caused that opposition candidate has won the elections and presented some future scenarios for political life in Poland.*

Keyword: *elections, Poland, Komorowski, Duda.*

Even a few months ago there was no indication that the presidential elections in Poland would lead to a political crisis and a loss of the post by president Komorowski. The incumbent head of the state enjoyed great social trust oscillating in the region of 70%. Also most of the polls made at the beginning of the campaign predicted an explicit victory of Komorowski already in the first round. Apparently these premises dulled the president's campaign team and his political environment believed that a victory was a foregone conclusion.

Such an attitude then had an impact on the campaign carried out by Komorowski's team. In the general opinion of experts it was conducted badly, without a clear message and a strategy in presenting the achievements of the last five years of his presidency. Komorowski himself also looked like a politician who was convinced of his victory, especially in the situation when the remaining biggest political parties did not slate their leaders for the elections. Surely, such a situation liberated conviction in Komorowski and his power base of a lack of real danger of a loss of power.

Abdication of the leaders. The conviction of definite Komorowski's victory accompanied also the leaders of the most important political parties in Poland. Thus, the leaders of the biggest of them did not decide to take part in the election competition and slated less known politicians for the fight for presidency. For them an expected loss in the elections would not be an image failure, and participation in the campaign itself was to strengthen their recognisability and guarantee gaining experience and political capital for the future.

That is why, the co-ruling Polish Peasant Party did not slate its leader Janusz Piechociński, and their candidate became the świętokrzyskie voivodship marshal Adam Jarubas. A similar decision was taken by Democratic Left Alliance. In this case it was its chairman Leszek Miller that did not decide to participate in the elections. The candidate of this party was Magdalena Ogórek – a person without political experience, who had been a commentator for religious matters in one of the Polish information televisions.

The results of these candidates oscillated in the region of several percent support, which meant a severe failure for both parties. It was also a subject of great criticism aimed at chairman

Miller and Piechociński for taking such decisions. In the case of the latter one, a part of the members of the party demanded even his resignation. However, the motion lodged in this case was rejected by the Polish Peasant Party executive.

However, it does not mean that Piechociński can feel secure as a leader of the Polish Peasant Party. The opposition fraction gathered around the former Deputy Prime Minister and the leader of this political formation Waldemar Pawlak is waiting for a proper moment to take over power from Deputy Prime Minister Piechociński.

The right decision. However, the decision not to slate in the elections the leader and the chairman of the party appeared to be a great success in case of the largest opposition party, that is Law and Justice. For a long time this party had been doing analyses and preparing a strategy of conducting the campaign. The key issue in these activities was the decision concerning the participation of the leader of the party Jarosław Kaczyński in the elections. After the tragic death of his brother, president Lech Kaczyński in 2010, this politician took part in the fight for presidency. He lost it, however, with a slight difference of votes, with the candidate of Civic Platform Bronisław Komorowski.

That is why, a part of the observers of the political scene thought that Kaczyński wanting a revenge for the previous failure would decide to participate in the elections again. However, presidential polls did not give him much chance. An essential role was played here by the question of the so-called negative electorate, who regardless of taken action would not vote for the leader of this formation. That is why Law and Justice decided to take a very important step. In the presidential elections they slated a very young and not very much recognizable candidate, a deputy to the European Parliament Andrzej Duda. This very risky solution turned out to be a really correct decision.

Effective campaign. After a few months of an excellent campaign Andrzej Duda gained support in polls, winning finally the fight for presidency with Bronisław Komorowski. The candidate of Law and Justice began the campaign having low support, which started to go up in the following weeks of the electoral competition. It was the result of very intensive action undertaken by the candidate and his team, which was ably led by a deputy of Law and Justice Beata Szydło.

Duda was presented as a young, dynamic, very energetic politician, after all having already enough political experience to hold the most important office in the state. This action and building a positive image of the candidate made it possible to gain the votes from the so-called negative electorate of Law and Justice, who would not vote for the leader of that party Jarosław Kaczyński.

A lot of promises. Independently of the above image-creating action a vital element of Andrzej Duda's victory in the elections were his promises made for the voters. This politician sharply attacked Civic Platform and president Komorowski for their reign and emphasized that the situation in the state in many spheres requires radical changes. Criticizing the people ruling at present he also strongly stressed the programme of changes which would be introduced in case he won.

During the campaign Duda presented a special document, the so-called programme agreement, which contained his programme as well as aims and tasks of presidency. It consisted of four programme parts with election promises of the candidate. They referred to the following spheres of social life: 'Family', 'Work', 'Safety' and 'Dialogue'.

The issues concerning the situation and the level of wealth of Polish families are one of the most important elements of every campaign. No wonder Duda made several of them the flagship slogans of the campaign. The first of the propositions is to give financial support of 500 PLN

(about 130 dollars) a month for children. The second one is to increase the sum free of tax. The third key slogan of the campaign was to withdraw the retirement reform introduced already by Donald Tusk's government. In 2012 the retirement age in Poland was increased for men and women to 67 years. During the campaign Duda promised that a withdrawal of this law would be one of his first initiatives in case he occupied the position of president.

The above propositions were sharply criticized by the present government as unrealistic to be implemented. The representatives of ruling Civic Platform underlined that in case they were fulfilled, Poland would be an insolvent country and could share the fate of Greece. Yet, followers of Duda stressed the fact that the election promises could be realised only if the tax system was sealed and changes in the economic policy were introduced.

«No» for the common currency. Economy was the next key issue of the campaign. One of its aspects was the question of Poland's joining the euro zone. Such a step was many times announced by Donald Tusk during his reign, however, the decision of resignation from the national currency was postponed because of the economic situation in Poland and in the euro zone. At the beginning of his presidency in 2010 also president Komorowski presented suggestions of changes in the constitution which were to make it possible to introduce euro in Poland.

This issue in a natural way became also one of the subjects of the campaign. In this case the candidate Duda took an unequivocal stand and was against introducing euro in Poland. In his electoral programme he sharply stated that the priority of his presidency would be defence of the Polish currency, which according to him constitutes a guarantee for economic development of the country¹.

Interestingly, in recent times the Polish society has changed considerably as for the question of introducing euro and a vast majority of Poles is against this decision. The poll carried out in November 2014 by the Centre for Public Opinion Research shows that 68 percent of Poles are against joining the euro zone. The idea of introducing the common currency is supported by 24 percent of the respondents. In the course of a year the level of the followers went down by 5 percentage points and is the lowest in the history of conducted research. The respondents pointed out that their concerns connected with introducing euro refer to increase of prices, an unfavourable exchange rate of the national currency into euro and loss of independence and decision-making about the shape of monetary policy².

A streak of successes or missed opportunities? The debate on introducing euro, however, did not have a key impact on the voters' decision to support Duda or Komorowski. For this issue the key arguments concerned the current economic policy of the rulers and the financial situation of Poles.

President Komorowski and politicians of Civic Platform emphasized that the situation in Poland was very good and the recent years of the reign of this formation was a streak of successes. Duda and his power base sharply attacked the years of reign of Civic Platform and Polish Peasant Party. They stressed the fact that the authorities did not fully use the opportunities for the development of Poland which were given by European funds and that they also led to the collapse of many sectors of Polish industry. They also indicated a lack of perspectives in Poland and low earnings, which were the reason for mass emigration of Poles in search of work to the countries of Western Europe.

In his programme Duda announced creation of more workplaces thanks to increase of the level of investments in Poland. In order to do so he announced preparation of a special invest-

¹ *Umowa programowa*. <http://www.andrzejduda.pl/umowa-programowa> (access: 07. 08. 2015).

² *Narastanie obaw związanych z wprowadzeniem euro*, The Centre for Public Opinion Research, A report of research, Warsaw, November 2014, no. 151, 2014. <http://www.cbos.pl/PL/publikacje/raporty.php> (access: 07. 08. 2015).

ment plan and unblocking the potential of Polish companies. In his opinion, it is limited by such factors as bureaucracy, abuse and inequality of chances. The programme document of the candidate of Law and Justice also said that along with European funds for the mentioned special investment programme one billion 400 milliard PLN could be implemented³.

A surprising settlement. The dynamic campaign and numerous promises made for the voters began to give effect. In the following weeks of the campaign the support for the candidate of Law and Justice started to grow, which was reflected in most of the polls presented at that time. The campaign team of president Komorowski, however, did not react properly to the poll tendencies and a radical change in the strategy of running the campaign did not take place. The political environment of the president supposed that independently of the presented polls, the real support for the president of the state was wider and he would win.

That is why the results of the voting carried out on 10th May 2015 were after all a big surprise. The winner of the elections in the first round was Andrzej Duda, who received 34,76 percent of votes, while 33,77 percent of the citizens taking part in the elections voted for the incumbent president. It meant that in the second round these politicians would put up a direct fight with each other for presidency.

A complete surprise. Analysing the results of the elections one should emphasize the splendid third place taken by the independent candidate Paweł Kukiz. He received 20,80 percent of votes, which was a real surprise, because he had not been a politician and was known to a wider public opinion as a rock musician and once a leader of one of popular music bands in Poland.

For some time Kukiz had been criticising the state of democracy in Poland, he declared himself as an independent candidate, at the same time speaking phrases of fighting with the present political system. In his opinion the elite ruling in Poland does not listen to the voice of the citizens, because the electoral system and the principles of financing parties from the budget guarantee representatives of the establishment participation in ruling the country. That is why during the campaign Kukiz called for resignation from financing parties from the state budget and a change of the election system. This candidate proposed introducing the system of single-member constituency in elections to the Sejm.

Strong support received by Kukiz meant that taking the citizens voting for this candidate to himself would bring Duda or Komorowski a victory in the second round of the elections. A bigger chance to take over this electorate had the candidate of Law and Justice, who also frequently criticised the authorities in his statements. President Komorowski's team realised that without gaining votes from Kukiz's electorate it would be difficult to be re-elected. That is why he made a daring attempt to take over the main campaign slogans of his candidate. Already on the next day after the first round of the elections president Komorowski announced organising a poll of an entire population, in which Poles would answer three questions important for the citizens. The first of them concerned the resignation from financing parties from the state budget, the second one settling ambiguities in tax disputes in favour of the citizens, and the third one the question of introducing single-member constituencies⁴. In this last matter president Komorowski even sent to the parliament a draft of alterations in the constitution, which would make it possible to introduce a new electoral system in Poland⁵.

³ *Umowa programowa*, op. cit.

⁴ *Zamierzam zarządzić ogólnopolskie referendum*. <http://www.prezydent.pl/archiwum-bronislawa-komorowskiego/aktualnosci/wydarzenia/art,3254,zamierzam-zarzadzic-ogolnopolskie-referendum.html>, (access: 07. 08. 2015).

⁵ *Projekt nowelizacji konstytucji ws JOW-ów*. <http://www.prezydent.pl/archiwum-bronislawa-komorowskiego/legislacja/ustawy/zgloszone/art,31,projekt-nowelizacji-konstytucji-ws-jow-ow.html>, (access: 07. 08. 2015).

A new president. However, the above attempts undertaken by Komorowski's team did not bring any results. Most of Kukiz's followers in the second round voted for Duda and this is why he finally succeeded. In the voting the candidate of Law and Justice received 51,55 percent of votes. The current president Komorowski got 48,45 votes⁶, losing the fight for re-election, and Andrzej Duda became a new president.

The experts agree that one of the reasons for Komorowski's failure was badly conducted campaign. However, the president refutes these allegations. While interviewed by one of Polish weeklies he states that his political rivals created around him an organised action of black PR. He adds that this action was effective and carried out with real brutality. He also stresses the fact that it led to destroying the image of president and his dignity⁷.

Komorowski also pointed out that his role as a president had been to emphasize actual successes in Poland. The ex-president was also surprised that during the campaign Poles had accepted Duda's narration about a disastrous situation in the country and a necessity of its rebuilding. «It remains a riddle for me how so many Poles could be persuaded that after 26 years of freedom, in spite of economic prosperity, Poland would have to be rebuilt from ashes like after the war. It seemed so stupid, so nasty, that it was not worth a polemic» – said the ex-president in the interview⁸.

Confirmation of the promises. According to the constitution, a new president of Poland occupies the office after taking an oath before the National Assembly, that is the joined chambers of the Sejm and the Senate. This ceremony took place on 6th August and the new president delivered an address to the nation then. In his speech he confirmed that he would fulfil the electoral promises made in the campaign. His most important commitments were preparing the law on increasing the free of tax amount and decreasing the retirement age. He also added that Poland needed definite repair in many spheres and he would take action in order to change this situation⁹.

Foreign policy correction. During his presidential address Duda referred also to the question of foreign policy and security. In Poland there used to be frequent competence disputes between president Lech Kaczyński and Donald Tusk's government on conducting foreign policy. We have a similar situation of cohabitation nowadays, that is why a declaration of the new president in that matter was awaited with great interest.

President Duda emphasized the fact that having regained sovereignty Poland achieved two big successes in the international sphere, which was joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and the European Union. He pointed out that his foreign policy would not be revolutionary, but he announced essential corrections of its shape.

Duda stated that in the near future he would seek strengthening of allied guarantees of the NATO for Poland and the countries of Central–Eastern Europe. According to the president the mentioned declarations should be obtained by Poland within the initiative «Newport Plus», at

⁶ *Obwieszczenie Państwowej Komisji Wyborczej z dnia 25 maja 2015 r. o wynikach ponownego głosowania i wyniku wyborów Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej.* http://prezydent2015.pkw.gov.pl/aktualnosci/0/93_Obwieszczenie_Panstwowej_Komisji_Wyborczej_z_dnia_25_maja_2015_r_o_wynikach_ponownego_glosowania_i_wyniku_wyborow_Prezydenta_Rzeczypospolitej_Polskiej (access: 07. 08. 2015).

⁷ J. Paradowska, J. Baczyński. *Bronisław Komorowski o przegranej i nadziejach związanych z jesiennymi wyborami.* <http://www.polityka.pl/tygodnikpolityka/kraj/1624423,1,bronislaw-komorowski-o-przegranej-i-nadziejach-zwiazanych-z-jesiennymi-wyborami.read>; *Pierwszy wywiad Komorowskiego. 'Dlaczego przegrałem?.'*, <http://www.rp.pl/artypol/1212569.html> (access: 07. 08. 2015).

⁸ *Ibidem.*

⁹ *Address by the President of the Republic of Poland Mr Andrzej Duda before the National Assembly,* <http://www.president.pl/en/news/art,7,address-by-the-president-of-the-republic-of-poland-mr-andrzej-duda-before-the-national-assembly.html>; *Duda sworn in as president.* <http://www.president.pl/en/news/art,1,andrzej-duda-sworn-in-as-president.html> (access: 07. 08. 2015).

the summit of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation in Warsaw in 2016. The president stressed that independently of the allied guaranties, the key issue for Poland's security is building a strong and modern army. He said that high financial outlets would still be allotted for its development.

The Ukrainian issue. It should be noticed that while talking in his address about international issues and the security policy, the new president of Poland did not refer to the situation in Ukraine and the war in the Donbas. He stated very generally that he would strive for good relations with the neighbours and that Poland should conduct a dialogue with its partners in the region. Interestingly, Duda announced an attempt of rebuilding and activation in the following years of the Visegrad Group. It will be a really difficult task. The Ukrainian conflict clearly showed how different and even contradictory interests the countries of the Visegrad Group had. It also confirmed that after joining the NATO and the EU it would be difficult for the countries making up this structure to work out a common standpoint in the international arena.

However, the foreign policy towards Ukraine during Duda's presidency should not change radically. Poland will still stand up for Ukraine on the international agenda and will support the Euro-Atlantic course of Kiev. Yet, vital changes can take place in reference to broader regional policy. President Duda refers in his plans to the ideas implemented by Lech Kaczyński, the president who died tragically, and thus one can expect closer co-operation and an attempt of creating an allay with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the Black Sea basin.

Summary. This year's presidential elections have completely changed the political situation in Poland. After eight years the era of reign and political domination of Civic Platform is ending. Today it is difficult to say explicitly what Andrzej Duda's presidency will be like. As a candidate he made many promises, which gave hope to the voters and enabled him to win the elections. In the first statements after taking over the office, the new president confirmed the will of their fulfilment and attacked the critics of his propositions who claimed that decreasing the retirement age and increasing the free of tax sum were the promises impossible to fulfil.

It should be underlined that the parliamentary elections, which took place at the end of October was a key event for fulfilling the electoral promises. A president in Poland is elected directly by the citizens, but he does not have real executive authority and he will have to co-operate in this sphere with the government formed after the elections. Law and Justice won the election, so there will be close co-operation of the government and the president as for the implementation of the electoral programme but it is difficult to predict now whether political promises will be fulfilled in the future.

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ПРЕЗИДЕНТСЬКІ ВИБОРИ В ПОЛЬЩІ ЯК НЕСПОДІВАНІЙ ПОЛІТИЧНИЙ ПОВОРОТ

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Анотація. У цій статті проаналізовано президентські вибори в Польщі, які відбулися в 2015 році, що призвело до зміни глави держави. У статті автор розглянув обставини виборчої кампанії, політичні програми, представлені кандидатами, а також основні фактори, які сприяли перемозі опозиційного кандидата на виборах. Також запропоновано сценарії розвитку подій у політичному житті в Польщі.

Ключові слова: вибори, Польща, Коморовський, Дуда.

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ПРЕЗИДЕНТСКИЕ ВЫБОРЫ В ПОЛЬШЕ – НЕОЖИДААННЫЙ ПОЛИТИЧЕСКИЙ ПОВОРОТ

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Аннотация. *В этой статье проанализированы президентские выборы в Польше, которые состоялись в 2015 году, что привело к смене главы государства. В статье автор рассмотрел обстоятельства избирательной кампании, политические программы, представленные кандидатами, а также основные факторы, которые способствовали победе оппозиционного кандидата на выборах. Также предложено сценарии развития событий в политической жизни в Польше.*

Ключевые слова: *выборы, Польша, Коморовский, Дуда.*