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# Catholic and Nationalist Populism in the Current Poland

**Abstract:** This paper is dedicated to Catholic and nationalist populism that has become a part of political party called *Prawo i Sprawiedliwość* (Law and Justice), the faction which currently rules in Poland. This attitude of populism is characteristic also for its leader Jarosław Kaczyński who builds his political strategy on populist slogans concerning nationalist and Catholic elements. The level of populism has permanently been growing since the origin of PiS. The great power that supports these tendencies is the Catholic hierarchy. A folk version of religion is a main face of Polish Catholicism. It is one of the sources of populism in Polish society. The Catholic Church in Poland has lost its intellectual image. Author underlines that populist slogans try to mobilize right-wing electorate but consequences for Polish political system, the place of Poland in Europe and international relations as well as for the future of the European Union can be dangerous.

**Keywords:** Catholic and nationalist populism, Poland, Law and Justice, Jarosław Kaczyński

## 1. Introduction

Populism is a quite common phenomenon in the contemporary political history [1]. It has strongly disclosed in the post-communist area in the recent years, also in the Central-European countries considered as a model countries of democratization processes [2]. This could be observed also in post-communist Poland, where it takes various forms

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– from an agrarian populism to a neoliberal one. In this paper, I will concentrate on one form of populism, i.e. Catholic and nationalist populism which is getting stronger and stronger in the Polish political life in the last two years. Its political significance has been increasing since 2015, i.e. since the last parliamentary and presidential elections were held and won by *Prawo i Sprawiedliwość* (Law and Justice, hereinafter referred to as the PiS, i.e. Polish abbreviation of the name). Obviously, not only PiS refers to the populism in the Polish political discourse. Polish populism has a pretty long history. British historian Peter Brock, a specialist in history of Central and Eastern Europe, points Bolesław Wysóuch (1855-1937) as a pioneer of the Polish populism – naturally, Brock means its traditional or agrarian form [3]. In the contemporary Poland, as proved for example by researches Paweł Przytycki [4], the populist discourse is a feature of common for majority of Polish political parties – from the left wing (i.e. from the post-communist left: *Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej* – Democratic Left Alliance, peasant and nationalists *Samoobrona* – Self-Defence as well as left liberals *Ruch Palikota* – Palikot's Movement [5]), through the centrist parties (agrarian *Polskie*

*Stronnictwo Ludowe* – Polish People’s Party), up to the centre-right (liberal and conservative Platforma Obywatelska – *Civic Platform*, Polish abbreviation PO) as well as the right parties (mentioned conservative and Catholic PiS or *Liga Polskich Rodzin* – League of Polish Families, Polish abbreviation LPR). As obvious from the above, the populism is characteristic also for mainstream parties and liberals.

This short essay does not open enough space for any detailed linguistic analysis of the term “populism”. Thus, it could be assumed that criteria of the populism content both premises: (1) anti-elitism. i.e. populism is against an elite defined negatively as being usually corrupted and alienated that treats the state institutions and state-owned companies as sinecures creating opportunities for enriching and maintaining the economic position; populists refer to the mythical *people* and this position is in opposition to the elite (the PiS which is currently in power in Poland refers to the *sovereign*); (2) simplicity of the methods which, in opinion of politicians using a populist argumentation, could restore a situation in the state; they obviously assume to side-track demoralized and compromised elite from the power and resources. Of course, this kind of approach to the issue is an oversimplification but it contains features which could be definitely assigned to populism [6]. It also shows how often one can meet a refereeing to the populist argumentations and solutions in the political discourse. As mentioned above, also liberals and centre-left parties have not resisted populism in Poland. Thus, we can recall here an idea “4 times yes” promoted by PO in 2004 concerning the referendum in the case of the reducing number of the MPs, liquidating of Polish *Senate*, aboliting parliamentary immunity as well as reforming the national electoral law (in order to establish a majoritarian voting system)<sup>i</sup>.

Aim of this essay is not even outline history of the Polish populist discourse so it is to focus on the current Catholic and nationalist form of the Polish populism that is characteristic for the ruling party – PiS (in fact, it comprises about three formally separate parties that create one parliamentary faction, i.e. PiS, *Solidarna Polska* – Solidary Poland built by the former secessionists from PiS, and *Polska Razem* – Poland Together which groups former politicians of PO and PiS) as well as parliamentary formally opposition faction – movement *Kukiz’15* (name of the movement originates from the surname of its founder and leader – Paweł Kukiz). Such feature is quite often in the current Polish political practice, especially regarding populist movements). However, the only faction that is currently in power in Poland falls to the centre of this essay-, because its politicians, particularly Jarosław Kaczyński, are real political decision-makers and they are shaping domestic politics in Poland. They are also foreign-policy outliner shaping the nowadays position of Poland in the contemporary international relations and thus defining its role worldwide, especially within the European Union. Existence of the populist parties, populist politicians as well as social attitudes present within the whole national politics is rather a general tendency present in the Polish society. Even though Western liberal democracies are not free from the populism. Generally said from political science point of view that the situation is more questionable when populists legally manage to gain a real power in the state by democratically held electoral process. Then the national politics becomes unpredictable and political system is threatened by destabilization Therefore, this essay is to concentrate on populism of – it can sound as an oxymoron but only seemingly [7] – elites currently ruling Poland. This populism is strongly enhanced in that part of the Polish society which reveals populist tendencies, i.e. within the PiS electorate [8], and the causes of the populism are in the centre of this essay underlining with as well as its eventual consequences, especially for the process within the EU in the future.

Commonly recognised, populism refers to extreme organizations, usually propagating nationalist slogans. As signalized above, it may be an oversimplification because populist attitudes worldwide are common for different groups, either rightist or leftist, as proved also in the Polish case. Therefore, my considerations here concern Catholic and nationalist populism in Poland experiencing the current rule of the PiS since 2015 national elections, referring hereby to general definition of populist movements and saying that the PiS is populist party and a part of populist world tendencies, its political program, speeches of its top politicians as well as political decisions and actions already held definitely refer to the Catholic and nationalist populism, as proved below. However, it should be remarked that Polish Catholicism is challenged by a specific kind of Catholicism which could be called a “folk Catholicism”, comprising, in fact, an anti-intellectual Catholicism, as analysed in a separate part of the paper.

## 2. PiS: from a moderate right-wing to the Catholic and nationalist populism

The PiS is a political party which entered the Polish politics more than a decade ago. It was founded in 2001 after disintegration of the rightist alliance called *Akcja Wyborcza Solidarność* (Electoral Solidarity Action) and the main group of PiS was formed by the former political representatives of a party called *Porozumienie Centrum* (Centre of Agreement) lead by Jarosław Kaczyński. His brother, Lech Kaczyński, later became President of the Republic of Poland, was also one of its faces important for the PiS background. Anti-corruption and criminality comprised the main postulates of the PiS. In the first years of its activity nothing proved that the Party's rhetoric and its program will, in the future, have clearly nationalist and Catholic character [9]. This role was characteristic for rightist LPR party mobilizing a traditionalist electorate and enjoying support of important mass media, i.e. of *Radio Maryja* interconnected to important personality, Tadeusz Rydzyk who is its founder and director. From the very beginning of its history, the LPR bonded nationalist slogans with Folk Catholicism. It was anti-European faction from its beginning and it rejected the ongoing European integration in opposition to the Polish Catholic hierarchy as well as of Pope John Paul II who was a promoter of Polish accession to the European Union [10] [11].

The PiS is defined in Polish political science literature as a right, conservative and Christian democratic party. Conservatism of the PiS is mainly of national character. Catalogue of values affirmed by the PiS contents values as tradition, family values (traditional family), religion represented by mainly the Catholic Church, strong state, etc. In the economic sphere, the PiS rejected neo-liberalism and promoted solidarism declaring an acceptance for a free market but also allowing a state intervention to the economy. Generally speaking, the PiS was characterized as a right multi-stream party[12].

Obviously, the above mentioned does not mean that populism was not present in the PiS from the very beginning. According to research by Paweł Przytycki, during electoral campaigns in 2001, 2005 and 2007 the average number of populist sentences present in the PiS political program amounted to 15%, while the non-populist ones almost to 85%. It was mainly political populism referring to national and Catholic slogans<sup>ii</sup>. Political program of the PiS underlined for example a preservation of Polish sovereignty but simultaneously it supported Polish accession to the European Union. In this time, the populist discourse concentrated mostly on the internal enemies as for example the post-communists (2001campaigning) and liberals

(2005 and 2007 campaigns) [4, p. 192]. In my opinion, PiS then was proving features also of penal populism. Based on analysing the aforementioned electoral campaigns, the program and politicians of the Party generally emphasized necessary to stiffer penalties for the most serious crimes as in the PiS's vision effective prevention would be more that reduces criminality in Poland. In the literature referring to this simply method is determined as penal populism [13]. But it is not a subject of the paper, although undoubtedly comprising an interesting aspect of the populism analysed.

It is required here to underline that for the post-communist standards of concept of nation was used in a moderate form in official narration of the PiS. Danuta Karnowska, the researcher specializing in the contemporary Polish political thought, emphasises links between program of PiS and a communitarian tradition, however rather on intuitional than rational level [14]. Karnowska also puts attention to the character of their vision of a nation outlined in the PiS's political program as it is their vision of nation through which they gradually evolved to the present position nationalist populists. Firstly, it is a romantic vision in which the nation, however understood not in ethnical categories but rather in cultural and political, is to become a basic principle of state. Responsibility of its leaders lies in an activity for the "Nation". Secondly, this romantic vision makes the nation to be an "exclusive" community. However, the exclusivism does not mean a reduction of the nation to the ethnical category because the PiS in its program says about two possibilities of being a Pole, i.e. from either "origin" or "choice". It was associated with affirmation of "traditional values of the nation" which the Catholic Church is a depository of. In opposition to individualism and idea of civic society, the nation in the PiS's political conception is seen as an organic community and thus a common good of the nation takes priority over individual goods. Only with respect to the common good understood as a good of nation, an individual is able to determine one's own good. So, there is a requirement of an active participation in the national community [14, pp. 81-82].

The attitude of PiS to the European Union issues could be seen ambivalent since the origin of the Party. From the one hand, the PiS declared a will of the Polish accession to the EU, but from the other hand, its politicians and program underlined an importance of the state sovereignty as well as called for a "tough" EU accession negotiation. It is obvious that in the narration of the Party's representatives, the European Union was gaining more because of Polish accession than Poland after becoming a member state. However, in the official statements of the PiS representatives its members of the Party were required to vote for the European integration. Nonetheless, they underlined that then Polish government (government led by Leszek Miller – SLD party) had negotiated unfavourable conditions of the Polish accession to the European Union, especially in the area of finances, agriculture and structural politics. The PiS rejected – and still rejects – a federalist conception of the European Union, promoting an idea of "Europe of national states" as the most optimal form of European integration [9, p. 159-160].

Despite some populist elements in the narration of the PiS in its first period of existence on the Polish political scene, the Party could be not classified as a populist party. Of course, the representatives of the PiS officially and publicly manifested their maintaining to the national and Catholic traditions but it was not enough to rank the PiS to populist parties. So, when the change in the Party value-orientation appeared? In my opinion we can indicate two key events which caused radicalization of the PiS and its transformation into a populist organization. Firstly, it was in year 2007 when marginalization of populist allies of the PiS happened and re-

sulted to governmental coalition with the PiS during 2005-2007, i.e. the Self-Defence Party representing left agrarian and nationalist populism as well as nationalist and Catholic LPR party. The second event happened in 2010 with the air crash in Smolensk which brought -out an attitude called as “religion” or even “Smolensk sect” by a part of the Polish media which is characteristic for some right-wing groups, was the result of this occurrence [See: *Gazeta Wyborcza* 2015-04-10, available at: [http://wyborcza.pl/1,75968,17730529,Katastrofa\\_smolenska\\_Sekta\\_zakrzykuje\\_prawde\\_Ale.html](http://wyborcza.pl/1,75968,17730529,Katastrofa_smolenska_Sekta_zakrzykuje_prawde_Ale.html)].

Although the percentage of populist statements in the 2007 PiS electoral program as well as the number of populist statements of politicians of this Party during the parliamentary debates in the same year was lower than in the previous years [4, p. 193], it should be taken into centre that the “hostile takeover” of voters after extinguishing the Self-Defence and LPR strengthened populist tendencies in the PiS. In 2007 electoral campaign, the PiS presented itself in a position of a ruling power, that is a reason why populism would be completely incomprehensible. Moreover, it was a period before financial crisis outbroke, the Polish economy was in good condition absorbing funds from the European Union and Polish government and President (Lech Kaczyński from the PiS) proclaimed the Lisbon Treaty as their success. But the first two years of the PiS in opposition indicated a substantial increase of the Party’s populist expressions during parliamentary debates. In years 2002-2009, as examined by Paweł Przytycki, the number of populist expressions was the highest exactly in the two last years, i.e. in 2008 and 2009 containing many references to religion, tradition as well as national virtues [4, p. 194].

Since this period a permanent radicalization of the PiS could be noticed. In my opinion, the air crash during which brought death to Lech Kaczyński who was the President of the Republic of Poland and the first PiS chairman (and the twin brother of Jarosław Kaczyński), contributed to this process stronger than the first cause in 2007. Due to this unquestionable national tragedy politicians and journalists from the right side as well as some representatives of Polish Catholic clergy started to create a Catholic and nationalist narration that strengthened polarization of the Polish society. Epithets which divided Poles in two groups and indicated on bad intentions of political opponents became a part of newspeak of Polish rightist spectrum. Here it is possible to identify a division into “real Poles” with reference to followers of “right” and “false” Poles with reference to the rest as well as invectives, e.g. untranslatable “*szlachta*” (this neologism means lying elite), “lemmings” with reference to voters of PO and left wing, “communists”, “thieves” etc. Earlier some of right-wing politicians and journalists said about the “German option” which was representative one especially for Donald Tusk but also for the whole social and regional groups like Silesians and Kashubians<sup>iii</sup>.

### 3. Phenomenon of Jarosław Kaczyński and followers of the PiS

Leaders of political parties having a direct influence to national politics for example by being a government party thus may through their political statement given publicly influence also the nation-wide attitudes and views, from positive but also from negative aspects. In this context, based on the research of the main roots of polarisation in the Polish society, it may be provided that polarization of the Polish society as well as inserting to the language of political debates some pejorative terms determining political opponents could be definitely identified as a contribution of Jarosław Kaczyński. He is seemed to be the main, maybe even the one

and only, architect of politics created by the PiS and inside the PiS. His personality effects the way of conducting political discourse in Poland. Agnieszka Turska – Kawa, the Polish political psychologist and scientist, made a psychological description of personality of Jarosław Kaczyński. In her opinion the leader of PiS is characterized by following features of personality: (1) dogmatism; (2) excessive suspiciousness; (3) authoritarianism; (4) high level of Machiavellianism; (5) low openness for experience implying a use of extreme categories as well as (6) uncompromising attitude [15]. These features imply an attitude which is determined by term *populism of politicians* in the literature of political science.

Post-political world, as some scholars see it, is associated with a limitation of the role of ideology, social classes as well as traditional political structures. Media, also social media, create a new political reality opening place for charismatic leaders who referring to their voters and followers bypasses traditional parties as well as ideological engagement [16]. Jarosław Kaczyński is a politician declaring anti-communism, affirmation of Christian values and Catholic Church, however, he treats these attitudes, values and institutions instrumentally. The power is his main aim. It is a source of his Machiavellianism which is in my opinion a key element of his political personality. As mentioned above, Agnieszka Turska – Kawa notices that Machiavellians accept moral norms, respect some values but if the norms and values create an obstacle on their way to reach their aims – in this case we talk about gaining the power – they do not hesitate to break the rules and norms and reject the values. Based on Turska – Kawa, Jarosław Kaczyński could be characterised as an example of Machiavellian because of his low level of empathy, emotional coldness or resistance to social influence. His Machiavellianism is revealed also by instrumental treatment of norms and values. Declaring anti-communism, he included former members of the Communist party as well as officials of the Communist-regime state to his political faction. Reference to the Christian values is not barrier for him to stigmatize political opponents and use pejorative terms while offending them [15, p. 164].

Jarosław Kaczyński used to change his image for the electoral campaign. He embodies the role of conciliatory person, regarding his enemies and opponents. In spite of the fact that he was many times one of the politicians with the lowest level of social trust expressed in opinion polls, among his rigid electorate found him to be a “providential man”. His attitude of chameleon brings him also new followers however usually temporary ones. Aggressive style of politics rather discourages the unstable part of the PiS electorate and its leader. But in the case of rigid and stable the PiS electorate, features which seem to be negative for us are interpreted as his power and smartness. So, for instance dogmatism is a constancy of opinion and Machiavellianism is a political competency. Dichotomy between *objective* Jarosław Kaczyński and his positive image among his followers speaks us something about his electorates. Agnieszka Turska – Kawa in her psychological analysis shows us over the dozen key needs and features of the PiS electorate, among others: need of acceptance, need of respect and community deriving from a low self-esteem, need to order and control over their circle, need of sense of security, need to order the world on the base of simple system of judgements, low susceptibility to changes, fidelity of tradition, need to respect norms and values etc. In the opinion of the above mentioned political psychologist, the features and needs of the PiS electorate and personal features of Jarosław Kaczyński are complementary. Followers of the Party and its leader are conservative and resistant to changes from their nature. It is easy for them to build a dividing line between “we”, i.e. who continue traditional national values, who remain with patriotism and religion, and “you” who are searching for the new solutions in the public space.

The PiS electorate sees positively an uncompromising attitude of the Party leader. It raises belief that Jarosław Kaczyński would never agree with relativisation of traditional values. They are also united due to their suspiciousness, lack of trust to other persons, imputing them negative intentions as well as an excessive attention given to the issues of security [15, pp. 172-174]. It is an origin of suspicious attitude to the European Union (in narration of the PiS, the European Union represents interests of Germany and France and wants to deprive Poland of its sovereignty or establish new norms which are in opposition to the traditional values of the Polish society) as well as to immigrants and refugees (in narration of the PiS, they want to conquer Christian Poland and Europe and establish *Sharia*, they are source of diseases, they do not respect Polish and European values and they rape women).

His form of communication is simple without any intellectual fineness, sometime even primitive. An average man, typical *Kowalski* is a target group of his statements. However, rooted in intelligentsia family surrounding, Jarosław Kaczyński is an anti-intellectualist. He has no trust to intellectual groups identifying them as “liberals” from the beginning of his political activity during the communist period [17]. In his anti-intellectual attitudes, we can find sources of his later populist inclinations. They give him a characteristic. We can say with reference to *populism of politician* but because of authoritarian personality of him and authoritarian management of the Party, populism became a part of the PiS – *populism of organization*.

#### 4. Catholic Church and populism of the PiS

In the Polish political reality, it is hard to overvalue the importance of the Catholic Church. The Church is an important element of the public order that has exceeded over the sacral sphere and actively participated in political life from beginning of the Polish statehood. Role which the Church played in the past, especially during the partition period as well as in the time of Nazi occupation or communism – Catholic Church was treated as a mainstay of Polishness – has strengthened stereotypic image of a Pole as a Catholic. That role also currently legitimizes the Catholic Church position in the Polish political system as its active subject, being an interest group, privileged participant of public debate as well as centre creating and forming attitudes and behaviours of citizens. A significant part of Polish clergy, also higher hierarchy being aware of social legitimization as a centre of political activity tries to implement some principles of non-secular state. We have been witnesses of sacralisation of the Polish public sphere since the end of the 80<sup>th</sup>. Religious symbols are present in the public institutions on each level of administration (local, regional, state), at schools, bureaus, hospitals and workplaces. Secular state is defensive against claims of the Church concerning symbolic sphere as well as economic, organizational and legal ones. Participation of clergy in politics is manifested by an active support for political factions declaring loyalty to the Catholic doctrine and national traditions. However, political activity is not a common phenomenon among the Polish priests. Many of them outdistance from the current politics and giving their clear declaration of support to a concrete political party. Involvement in the campaigns of concrete politicians or factions was rather characteristic for a conservative part of episcopate and lower parish clergy which is in its majority traditionalist, in opposition to ethos of Catholic intelligentsia and Catholic progressivism. Redemptorist *Radio Maryja* became a symbol of the Polish nationalist Catholicism. Director of the Radio, father Tadeusz Rydzyk is an active carries – maker in the Polish politics on the right-wing side. The radio essentially effects political behaviour of



its auditory not forming the civic attitude but rather loyalty to the concrete political faction that is treated as a guarantor of catholicity and Polishness of the state. In opposition to this style of pseudo-religious activity, if priests representing so-called *open Church* speak about political topics, they are rather avoiding any direct declarations of political support limiting to civilizing the public order in the spirit of evangelical ideals of peace and reconciliation according to the Catholic philosophical and theological tradition [18].

The PiS and Jarosław Kaczyński have been treated by significant part of the Polish clergy as protectors of Polishness and Catholicism since 2010. This political faction got a main role in neo-Messianic historiosophy revealing *ad hoc* after the air crash in which the President died. It is not an academic historiosophy, but rather *historiosophia pauperum* because pronounced pictures of fight between good and evil, Catholicism and laicism could be found here as well as Polishness and liberal cosmopolitanism and other enemies of Poland and Poles. Enthronisation of Jesus Christ of the King of Poland in Krakow on the 19<sup>th</sup> November 2016 became the crowning a return to neo-Messianic historical narration. The most prominent officials of the state, participated also by President of the Republic of Poland Andrzej Duda, among the others. Despite the fact that the Polish hierarchs underlined that it was only Jubilee Act of Affirmation of Christ as the King and Lord avoiding declaration that Poland was the Kingdom of Christ [Cf. <http://episkopat.pl/19-xi-jubileuszowy-akt-przyjecia-jezusa-za-krola-i-pana/>], in common opinion this event was identified as enthronisation of Christ of the King of Poland. This act, one of many, shows the shape of Polish Catholicism in its majority or rather in its current mainstream. It is the folk Church, anti-intellectual and dressed in nationalist rhetoric. Nationalism covered by Messianic illusion is a constitutive element of this Church. Its believers can be an electorate of the faction referring to the populist (nationalist and religious) slogans. Now, they comprise mainly PiS electorate. The Party can find additional support in the Church organizations and mass media, especially in *Radio Maryja* that can guarantee a mobilization of the electorate on the level of tens of percentage [19].

## 5. Populism and Euroscepticism of the PiS

As mentioned above, Eurosceptical tendencies have been representative for the PiS since beginning of the faction. They are also presented in declarations which could be classified define as anti-German ones. It is an attitude quite characteristic for Polish nationalist and Catholic right wing. Euroscepticism and anti-Germanness are present in political program and speeches of *Zjednoczenie Chrześcijańsko-Narodowe* – Christian and National Union (some politicians of this faction were co-founders of the PiS in 2001) and LPR. Initial Euroscepticism of the PiS is determined as a *soft* approaching to the *soft* Euroenthusiasm on the line an “extreme Euroenthusiasm and extreme anti-Europeanism” [11, p. 288]. In the Polish literature of political science, we can find an opinion that relation of the part politicians of the PiS, especially those who derived from the Centre Agreement (PC) founded by Jarosław Kaczyński, to the European integration can be determined as Eurorealism [20]. However, also opposite opinions could be found. For example, Marcin Lasoń states that also in the first stage of the PiS existence, its Euroscepticism was a populist one. It was in fact a nationalistic and Catholic populism. He says that the populism of the PiS was a tool of attracting the Catholic electorate connected to, the *Radio Maryja* [21]. In 2005 the PiS published a less known program document titled *Katolicka Polska w chrześcijańskiej Europie* (*Catholic Poland in Christian Eu-*

rope). It is hard to disagree with Lasoń that issue of the document was an expression of populist tendencies inside the PiS. Not only the contents of the document but also its form and its language are characteristic for a folk Catholicism, for Catholicism that is dressed in national and pseudo-intellectual rhetoric. In this document, we can read that the European Union has bad intentions, its aim is to negate Christian values of Europe and destruction of the moral order. There is written:

Rejection of the invocation to God in the Constitutional Treaty is a sign of this civilizational orientation. Policy of the EU partly disregards a social order and even partly directly fights against this order. We can find here the rejection of normative character of Christian morality. [...] Policy of the European Union is prejudiced to faith, national bond and family (so, to all values which reveal dignity of human nature) but in the extreme cases this policy supports degenerations, moral pathologies or even crimes treated as an expression of human freedom and signature of "open society" [Polska katolicka w chrześcijańskiej Europie, Warszawa 2005, p. 42].

Catching voters of the LPR and Self-Defence resulted a radicalization of the PiS and strengthened the Eurosceptical attitudes or even more in some cases generated anti-union standpoints [4, p. 211]. the PiS redefined also an enemy. Besides internal enemies, i.e. liberal societies, left wing, Donald Tusk and PO, European institutions – European Commission, European Parliament, and last but not least also so-called *Venice Commission*, briefly speaking all institutions which express doubts about the state of democracy and the rule of law in Poland under the PiS – became external enemies. It surely gives opportunities to save a *populist face* for the people who currently rule in Poland. Populists must be anti-elitists. When decision-makers from the PiS became a state-ruling elite, they started to fight against international elites in the name of national sovereignty and dignity of the nation. Polish national interest and Polish reason of state comprise their key argument in the conflict with external enemy. All unconstitutional decisions and activities done under the PiS rule are explained by democratic legitimization that the PiS received during the last election in Poland. The will of *Nation* as a sovereign is above the law, Constitution as well as obligations arising from the international treaties. Generally, it is symptomatic for different kinds of populism. The will of people is treated as an ultimate reason of all decisions and acts. Therefore, any confrontation between the Polish authorities and European institutions is unavoidable. This confrontation creates new opportunities for this faction. It enables mobilization of the followers in the struggle for sovereignty of Poland.

Immigrants and refugees sent to Poland by the European Union in the frame of the program of relocation became also an external enemy. In the PiS narration, they threaten Polish identity, national and internal security (terrorism and common crimes, e.g. rapes) as well as epidemiological security (refugees as vectors of infectious diseases). It is another sphere which reveals the populism of the PiS and its leader. Officials of the Party scare Polish people by imaginary threats. It gives them the next "argument" in the conformation with the European Union as a promoter of politics of multiculturalism as well as power of relativisation of Christian and national values.

## Conclusions

Paweł Przytycki correctly provides that “*The faction of J. Kaczyński has conducted a discourse which is to convince a Polish society that the PiS is only one party truly national, Catholic and simultaneously supporting a sovereignty of Polish nation for a few years*” [4, p. 209]. The populist slogans have become a constant part of political practice of people who are ruling in Poland since victory of the PiS in both elections, presidential and parliamentary, in 2015. These slogans became a principle of internal (deterioration of liberal democracy) and external (weakening of European unity) politics. What will be its political and social consequences? In case the anti-European populism still wins in the EU member states (presidential elections in France, parliamentary elections in the Netherlands, Germany and Italy), a black scenario outlined by political scientist Jan Zielonka can be prophetic [22]. If the European Union does not survive the time of trial, Polish politicians ruling today in Poland led by Jarosław Kaczyński will have their contribution also in dismantling the European unity. Betting on strategic alliance with the United Kingdom, damaging cooperation within *Weimer Triangle*, broking constitutional rules in internal politics, establishing norms closer to the model characteristic for authoritarian regimes in the post-Soviet countries than for Western-liberal ones in fact crowds Poland out from the European political and axiological space. Promoting nationalism and throwing out values of the European Union, i.e. solidarity, they really contribute to split of this European political structure. One of the prominent PiS politicians, Piotr Naimski reveals the real intentions of his faction noticing in the Party journal saying that “*Passive participation in the process of rescue of the European integration project at any price leads inevitably step by step to a loss of sovereignty and as its consequence threatens an independence of the member states, also of Poland* [Zeszyty Polityczne, no. 1, p. 14]. In my opinion, in some simplification we can state that the European Union was and still is for the PiS only an instrumental value. In the PiS vision, the European Union is useful if it gives support for Poland. But Poland is not obliged to follow the rules of solidarity, democracy, freedom and justice. Reference to national and religious traditions can be a smokescreen for real acts which in fact mean a *deEuropeanization* of political system in Poland as well as a disintegration of the European community, a value-based community.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> If PO changed then the voting system according to its initiative of referendum, currently PiS would have had not only majority in the Polish Parliament (*Sejm*) but also PiS would have had a constitutional majority what surely could strengthen its authoritarian tendencies. The idea of PO, in its essence populist, shows from perspective of time that simply methods which intentionally are to remove corrupted elite from power and improve the decision-making system, in fact they can have catastrophic consequences for liberal democracy, especially young and jeopardized on authoritarian temptations.

<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, Paweł Przytycki did not refer to the important program document of PiS entitled *Polska katolicka w chrześcijańskiej Europie – Catholic Poland in Christian Europe* (2005). If he included it in his research, probably the number of populist sentences was much higher.

<sup>3</sup> Donald Tusk identifies himself as Kashubian. His grandparents were citizens of the Free City of Gdansk before the World War II. The service of Tusk’s grandfather as a citizen of the Third Reich (after annexation of Gdansk) in Wehrmacht was used by propaganda of PiS during the presidential campaign in 2005. In this way PiS wanted to negate his patriotism and impute him pro-German attitude and subordination to Germany. This unfair argumentation probably helped Lech Kaczyński to win the election.

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