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## 2015 parliamentary election in Poland: Does the migrant/refugee issue matter?\*

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**Abstract:** In the 2015 parliamentary general election held in Poland, the opposition party Law and Justice (PiS) became the leading party and obtained an absolute majority in parliament. It is sometimes said that the so-called European migrant/refugee crisis has brought about this result. However, though the landslide victory of PiS was a consequence of the crisis, PiS would have won the election even without this crisis. The main factors behind the victory of PiS are the disappointment of the young with the Civil Platform (PO) government, skillful electoral strategy of PiS, and the peculiarity of the electoral system. This paper makes this point clear by comparing the results of this election with the results of the presidential election held five months before the general election, when the migrant/refugee crisis had not been so acute.

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### Introduction

In October 2015, a parliamentary general election was held in Poland. It was thought that the governing liberal-conservative party Platforma Obywatelska (PO: Civic Platform) would lose the position of the leading party in parliament, and that the largest opposition, national-conservative and populist party, Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (PiS: Law and Justice) would be the leading party. But it was also estimated that PO might stay in power after the election, as neither PO nor PiS could win an overall majority and anti-PiS parties might form a coalition government with PO.<sup>1</sup>

When the results were announced, it became clear that the PiS had acquired an absolute majority for the first time since the first elections held in 1991 in Poland. On the other hand, the PO suffered a crushing defeat and lost about one-third of its former parliamentary seats. Why was PiS able to achieve such a landslide victory? It is sometimes said that the European migrant/refugee crisis is a major issue and that this caused the victory of PiS, opposing the acceptance of the refugee quota assigned by the European Union.<sup>2</sup> However, though the migrant/refugee crisis contributed to the landslide victory of the

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1 “Załamanie notowań lidera. Rośnie Nowoczesna i jest najpopularniejszą partią drugiego wyboru, zagrażając PO,” *Rzeczpospolita*, 05.10.2015.

2 “Poland’s conservative Law and Justice party wins election, should able to govern alone: exit polls,” *Deutsche Welle (English version)*, 25.10.2015.

PiS, the result itself is not a consequence of the crisis, but of other domestic factors, such as the dissatisfaction of the young with the PO government, difference in electoral campaign between PiS and PO, and the peculiarity of the electoral system. This paper aims to clarify this point by analyzing the change in the trend occurring in 2015 in Poland.

The paper is organized as follows. Section 1 surveys the performance of eight years' PO government and indicates that though the economic situation itself was in good shape, the situation of the young deteriorated during this period. Section 2 analyzes the results of the presidential elections held in May 2015, just before the migrant/refugee crisis intensified, and clarifies the fact that the incumbent president Bronisław Komorowski, belonging to PO, lost the election by losing the support of the young. Section 3 surveys the change in the attitude of society towards migrants/refugees between the presidential and the parliamentary election, and shows that the voters were not necessarily opposed to the acceptance of migrants/refugees before the election. Section 4 analyzes the results of the general elections, and shows that the results themselves were caused by the factors indicated above, but that the migrant/refugee crisis contributed to the landslide victory of PiS, as those who opposed accepting migrants/refugees tended to vote more than the supporters of accepting migrants/refugees. The discussion is summarized in the conclusion.

## 1. Eight years of PO government

PO took power in the election held in 2007, and stayed in power for eight years since then by making a coalition government with the conservative agrarian party Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe (PSL: Polish Peasant Party).

PO is basically a liberal-conservative party pursuing a liberal market economy and European integration, and proposed the introduction of the so-called flat tax system, a cut in the corporate tax rate, and the relaxation of the regulations relating to the labor law (Kowalczyk 2005, 125). On the other hand, PO is not a dogmatic neo-liberal party. For example, the PO government increased government spending during the global financial crisis so as to avoid worsening of the crisis. Rae calls this flexible attitude of the PO "pragmatic liberalism" (Rae 2013).<sup>3</sup> The main supporters of PO are those who are highly educated, live in mid-size and large cities, live in the western part of the country, and are young compared to the supporters of PiS.

The performance of this eight years' PO government can be evaluated both positively and negatively. As for the positive side, the PO government avoided a serious economic crisis. Poland became the only EU member state not to experience a recession in 2009, and has maintained stable economic development since then (see Table 1). In addition, though the level is still lower than other Central East European countries, the GDP per capita of Poland has been steadily growing and exceeded 10,000 euros in 2013 (see Table 2).

According to Rae, this success of the PO government's economic policies was achieved due to the following five factors: no significant collapse of its banking and financial system, low dependence on the inflow of private credit and capital, not so heavy reliance on exports and lack of dependence on one export

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3 It is often said that the defeat in the election held in 2005 prompted the change in the PO, as a straight neoliberal economic policy could not attract enough support from the voters (Myant et al. 2013, 397).

**Table 1. Annual GDP growth rate of Central East European countries (%)**

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
<b>Czech Republic</b>	2.7	-4.8	2.3	2.0	-0.9	-0.5	2.0
<b>Estonia</b>	-5.4	-14.7	2.5	7.6	5.2	1.6	2.9
<b>Latvia</b>	-3.2	-14.2	-2.9	5.0	4.8	4.2	2.4
<b>Lithuania</b>	2.6	-14.8	1.6	6.1	3.8	3.3	2.9
<b>Hungary</b>	0.9	-6.6	0.8	1.8	-1.5	1.5	3.6
<b>Poland</b>	3.9	2.6	3.7	4.8	1.8	1.7	3.4
<b>Slovenia</b>	3.3	-7.8	1.2	0.6	-2.7	-1.1	3.0
<b>Slovakia</b>	5.4	-5.3	4.8	2.7	1.6	1.4	2.4

Source: Eurostat (available at <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat>, accessed 1 October 2017)

**Table 2. GDP per capita (Euro, current market price)**

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
<b>Czech Republic</b>	14,800	13,600	14,300	14,800	14,600	14,200
<b>Estonia</b>	12,100	10,400	10,400	12,100	13,000	13,900
<b>Latvia</b>	10,500	8,600	8,600	9,800	10,900	10,600
<b>Lithuania</b>	10,100	8,400	8,900	10,200	11,000	11,700
<b>Hungary</b>	10,500	9,100	9,600	9,900	9,800	9,900
<b>Poland</b>	9,500	8,100	9,200	9,600	99,00	10,100
<b>Slovakia</b>	11,900	11,600	12,100	12,800	13,200	13,300
<b>Slovenia</b>	18,400	17,300	17,300	17,600	17,200	17,100

Source: Eurostat

industry, independence of the złoty, the Polish national currency, from the euro, and increase in public spending by raising public investment (Rae 2013, 417). In particular, it is said that the continuation of government spending, especially in the construction sector and pensions, helped to maintain consumption-led growth through 2009 and 2010 (Myant et al. 2013, 398).

While considering the economic situation of the country, the PO government also reconstructed government finances, reducing both annual government deficit and government debt so that Poland could observe the fiscal criteria decided by the Fiscal Compact of the European Union (see Table 3 and 4).<sup>4</sup> First, the rate of VAT was increased from 22% to 23% from 2011.<sup>5</sup> Next, after PO succeeded in staying in power by the election held in 2011, the government carried out spending-cut policies such as a freeze on public-sector pay, pension reduction, and cuts in employment creation measures (Myant et al. 2013, 398). In addition, the PO government introduced pension system reforms in 2011 and 2013.<sup>6</sup> By these two pension reforms, the government could move a significant sum of money into the state budget helping to

4 According to the information of the European Council on Foreign Relations website, by this Fiscal Compact (formally “Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance in the Economic and Monetary Union”), “The member states have committed once again to a budgetary position in ‘balance or in surplus’. They further commit to passing a national law or an amendment of the national constitution that limits the structural budget deficit to 0.5% of GDP, from which a deviation is only allowed in ‘exceptional circumstances’ or deep recession.” ([http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary\\_reinventing\\_europe\\_explaining\\_the\\_fiscal\\_compact](http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_reinventing_europe_explaining_the_fiscal_compact), accessed 1 October 2017)

5 The increase of VAT is a limited-time legislation, valid until 31 December 2016 (*Dziennik Ustaw* 2011, nr. 177 poz. 1054, art. 146a). The reduced tax rate for food and books is also increased.

6 From the news of the website of Ministry of Labor and Social Policy in Poland “Prezydent podpisał ustawę reformującą system emerytalny,” 27 December 2013 ([http://www.mpips.gov.pl/aktualnosci-wszystkie/ubezpieczenia-spoeczne/art\\_6540,prezydent-podpisał-ustawę-reformującą-system-emerytalny.html](http://www.mpips.gov.pl/aktualnosci-wszystkie/ubezpieczenia-spoeczne/art_6540,prezydent-podpisał-ustawę-reformującą-system-emerytalny.html), accessed 1 October 2017).

**Table 3. Annual government deficit ratio of Central East European countries (% of GDP)**

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
<b>Czech Republic</b>	-2.1	-2.7	-4.0	-1.3	-1.9	-5.5	-4.4
<b>Estonia</b>	-2.7	1.2	-0.3	-0.1	0.7	-2.2	0.2
<b>Hungary</b>	-3.6	-4.6	-4.5	-5.5	-2.3	-2.5	-2.5
<b>Latvia</b>	-4.1	-9.1	-8.5	-3.4	-0.8	-0.9	-1.5
<b>Lithuania</b>	-3.1	-9.1	-6.9	-8.9	-3.1	-2.6	-0.7
<b>Poland</b>	-3.6	-7.3	-7.5	-4.9	-3.7	-4.0	-3.3
<b>Slovakia</b>	-2.3	-7.9	-7.5	-4.1	-4.2	-2.6	-2.8
<b>Slovenia</b>	-1.4	-5.9	-5.6	-6.6	-4.1	-15.0	-5.0

Source: Eurostat

**Table 4. Government debt-to GDP ratio of Central East European countries (%)**

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
<b>Czech Republic</b>	28.7	34.1	38.2	39.9	44.7	45.2	42.7
<b>Estonia</b>	4.5	7.0	6.6	5.9	9.5	9.9	10.4
<b>Hungary</b>	71.6	78.0	80.6	80.8	78.3	76.8	76.2
<b>Latvia</b>	18.7	36.6	47.5	42.8	41.4	39.1	40.6
<b>Lithuania</b>	14.6	29.0	36.2	37.2	39.8	38.8	40.7
<b>Poland</b>	46.6	49.8	53.3	54.4	54.0	55.9	50.4
<b>Slovakia</b>	28.2	36.0	40.8	43.3	51.9	54.6	53.5
<b>Slovenia</b>	21.6	34.5	38.2	46.4	53.7	70.8	80.8

Source: Eurostat

control its public finances, as the mandatory funded pension was reduced from 7.3% to 2.3% and also changed from a mandatory to an optional pension. As a result of this pension reform, 5.15% of assets and all government bonds of private pension funds were transferred to the public pension fund (Rae 2013, 421).<sup>7</sup>

As for the negative side, the problem of disparity in income has not been solved, and there exists bigger disparity in income than in other East European countries. The degree of disparity in Poland is higher than that of the other East European countries and close to that of the Baltic countries, as shown in Table 5 and 6, and there was no clear effort by the government to remedy this situation.

In particular, the economic situation of the younger generations severely deteriorated during these years. As indicated in Figure 1 and 2, the unemployment rate and the at-risk-of-poverty rate of the younger generation (less than 25 years old) are much higher than those rates of the national average. This situation was caused by the revision of the Labor Code in 2002, which relaxed previous constraints on the employment of temporary workers and, since then, many younger people have been employed as temporary workers with low salaries (Ingham and Ingham 2014, 306). The younger generation was once the base of PO's support, but this situation has changed because they began to feel that the government was disregarding them, and their discontent with the PO government is growing gradually.<sup>8</sup>

7 In addition, the PO government had tried to reduce the pension expenditure by raising the statutory retirement age from age 60 for women and age 65 for men to age 67 for both sexes. This measure has been cancelled by the PiS government in 2017.

8 In the 2005 general elections, 34% of young voters (from age 18 to 24) voted for PO (*Rzeczpospolita* 26.09.2005), and 55% of them voted for PO in the 2007 elections (*Rzeczpospolita* 22.10.2007), but PO could gain only 14% of the vote from them at this election (see Table 13).

**Table 5. S80/S20 quintile share ratio of Central East European countries (%)**

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
<b>Czech Republic</b>	3.4	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.4	3.5
<b>Estonia</b>	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.3	5.4	5.5	n.a.
<b>Hungary</b>	3.6	3.5	3.4	3.9	4.0	4.2	4.2
<b>Latvia</b>	7.3	7.4	6.8	6.5	6.5	6.3	6.5
<b>Lithuania</b>	6.1	6.4	7.3	5.8	5.3	6.1	6.1
<b>Poland</b>	5.1	5.0	5.0	5.0	4.9	4.9	4.9
<b>Slovakia</b>	3.4	3.6	3.8	3.8	3.7	3.6	3.9
<b>Slovenia</b>	3.4	3.2	3.4	3.5	3.4	3.6	3.7

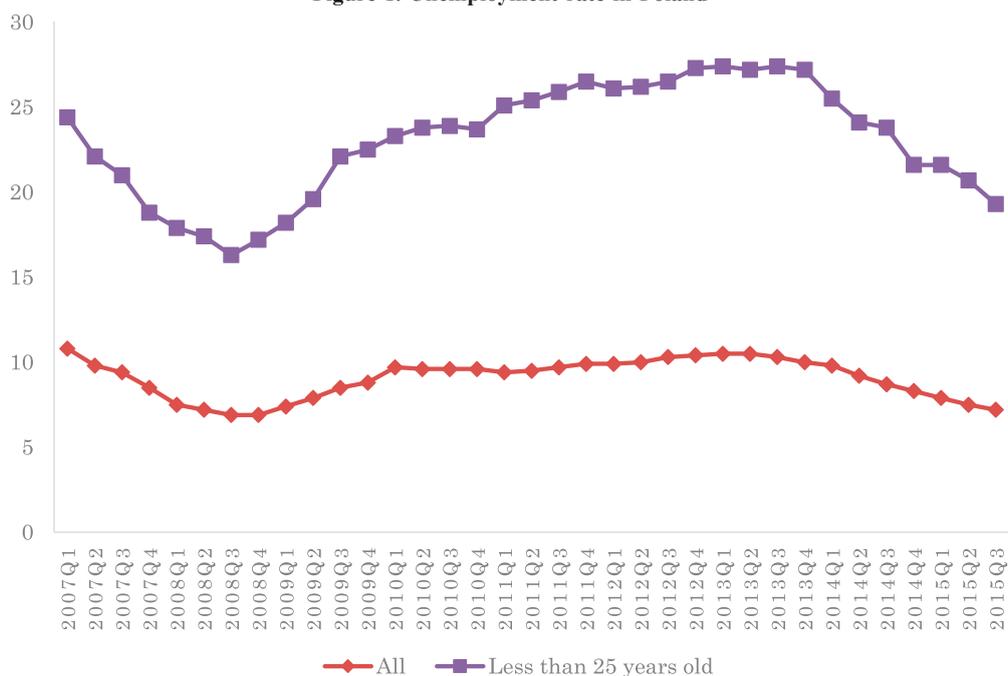
Note: The S80/S20 quintile share ratio compares in a given population the share of the income of the richest 20% with that of the income of the poorest 20%. The further the quotient deviates from 1, the greater the inequality of the spread of income between these population groups.

Source: Eurostat

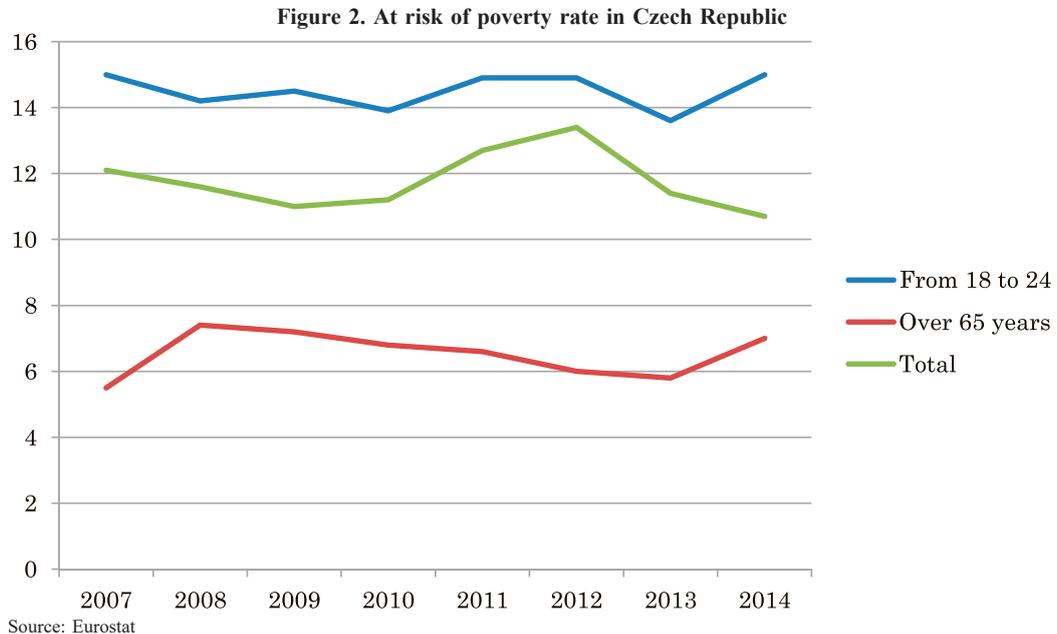
**Table 6. Gini coefficient of Central East European countries**

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
<b>Czech Republic</b>	24.7	25.1	24.9	25.2	24.9	24.6	25.1
<b>Estonia</b>	30.9	31.4	31.3	31.9	32.5	32.9	n.a.
<b>Hungary</b>	25.2	24.7	24.1	26.8	26.9	28.0	27.9
<b>Latvia</b>	37.5	37.5	35.9	35.1	35.7	35.2	35.5
<b>Lithuania</b>	34.5	35.9	37.0	33.0	32.0	34.6	35.0
<b>Poland</b>	32.0	31.4	31.1	31.1	30.9	30.7	30.8
<b>Slovakia</b>	23.7	24.8	25.9	25.7	25.3	24.2	26.1
<b>Slovenia</b>	23.4	22.7	23.8	23.8	23.7	24.4	25.0

Source: Eurostat

**Figure 1. Unemployment rate in Poland**

Source: Eurostat



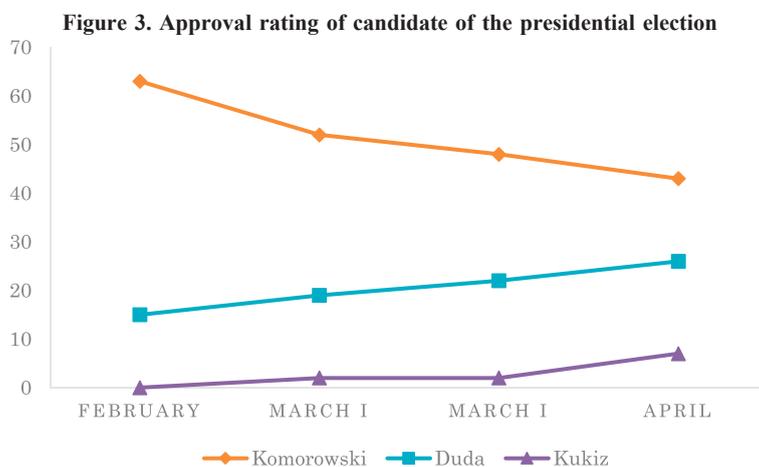
To explain this voting tendency, we can use the theory of “economic voting,” which means that when the condition of the economy is good, voters tend to vote for the incumbent, and when the economic condition is bad, voters tend to vote for the opposition. And as for the election held in 2011, Kotnarowski and Markowski argue that the hypotheses drawn from the theory of economic voting are confirmed, as positive assessment of the economy increases the probability of voting for the incumbent PO, but voters dissatisfied with the economic situation tend to vote for the main opposition PiS (Kotnarowski and Markowski 2014). In accordance with this theory, the support of the younger generation would move away from PO. And it turned out exactly as the theory predicted in the presidential election held in May 2015, just before the migrant/refugee crisis become more acute.

## 2. Presidential election as a sign of change

The dissatisfaction of the young surfaced from the beginning of 2015, several months before the presidential election. At the beginning of this year, it was thought that the incumbent president Komorowski would win the presidential election again. But the support from voters moved gradually from Komorowski to Andrzej Duda, the PiS candidate, and the independent candidate Kukiz, as shown in Figure 3.

Kukiz is a singer and actor of Poland. He ran for the presidential election criticizing “partyocracy,” which means the “neoribocratic” party system or party dictatorship, but he had no clear policies except the introduction of the single-member election system to the parliamentary election for weakening the influence of existing political parties.<sup>9</sup> At first, he was thought of as a fringe candidate, but he gradually

<sup>9</sup> “Your guide to the 2015 Polish presidential election,” *Kraków Post*, 08. 05. 2015 (<http://www.krakowpost.com/9337/2015/05/your-guide-to-the-2015-polish-presidential-election>, accessed 1 October 2017).



Source: "Preferencje w wyborach Prezydenckich," *Komunikat z badań CBOS*, Nr55/2015, p. 3.

**Table 7. Results of the first round of the presidential election  
(10 May 2015, Voter turnout: 48.96%)**

CANDIDATE	NUMBER OF VOTES	PERCENTAGE OF VOTES
<b>Duda, A.</b>	5,179,092	34.76
<b>Komorowski, B.</b>	5,031,060	33.77
<b>Kukiz, P.</b>	3,099,079	13.68
<b>Korwin-Mikke, J.</b>	486,084	3.26
<b>Ogórek, M.</b>	353,883	2.38
<b>Others</b>	749,736	4.99

Source: Website of the State Electoral Committee

(Available at <http://prezydent2015.pkw.gov.pl>, accessed 1 October 2017)

gained the support of the young, especially young men who had a strong sense of dissatisfaction with Komorowski's presidency irrespective of political position.<sup>10</sup>

The result of the first round of this election is shown in Table 7. More than 80% of the vote was obtained by these three candidates (Duda, Komorowski, and Kukiz), so, to win in the second round, it was necessary to obtain the vote of those who had voted for Kukiz in the first round.

And the result of the second round is shown in Table 8. Komorowski lost the second-round election by losing the support of the young, one of the main groups supporting PO. This point is also supported by the fact that about 60% of voters who had chosen Kukiz in the first round voted for Duda in the second round.<sup>11</sup> But, in this election, Komorowski obtained the support of the main PO supporters except the young (those highly educated, living in mid-size and large cities, and living in the western part of the country), as shown in Table 9 and 14, so the difference between the candidates is not so large in this election.

But this situation changed after the presidential election, as the European migrant/refugee crisis intensified rapidly between the two elections. We will analyze the change in social mood in the next section.

10 "Kim są wyborcy Pawła Kukiza," *Komunikat z badań CBOS*, Nr86/2015.

11 "Ostatni akcent kampanii," *Rzeczpospolita* 26 Maja 2015, p. 3.

**Table 8. Results of the second round of the presidential election  
(24 May 2015, Voter turnout: 55.34%)**

CANDIDATE	NUMBER OF VOTES	PERCENTAGE OF VOTES
Duda	8,630,627	51.55
Komorowski	8,112,311	48.45

Source: Website of the State Electoral Committee

**Table 9. Support for three candidates in the first round of the presidential election**

	DUDA	KOMOROWSKI	KUKIZ
Basic education	50.5	27.2	11.0
Vocational education	48.9	28.7	12.9
Secondary education	33.1	31.2	22.3
Higher education	27.0	35.8	23.3
Age 18~29	20.7	13.8	41.1
Age 30~39	26.3	30.8	29.9
Age 40~49	35.4	34.6	19.2
Age 50~59	44.6	35.1	11.1
Age 60 and over	44.9	44.3	3.8
Village	43.8	25.6	18.5
Town under 5000	31.1	33.8	21.6
Town under 200,000	31.0	32.8	24.1
Town under 500,000	28.3	37.9	21.2
Five large cities*	27.0	41.8	17.9

Source: "Pojedynek będzie wyrównany" *Rzeczpospolita* 11 Maja 2015, p. 5.

\*Warsaw, Łódź, Kraków, Poznań, and Wrocław

### 3. European migrant/refugee crisis and the attitude of voters

Now, we will survey the change of attitude of society towards migrants/refugees between the presidential and the general election, which means comparing the attitude of the people before and after the migrant/refugee crisis became more strained.

In Poland, there appeared a polarization of opinion. On the one hand, the proportion of those who have a negative attitude toward accepting refugees increased, especially after the crisis had become an issue, but, on the other hand, the rate of those who have a positive attitude was also increasing until September, as shown in Table 10 and 11. The main reasons of those who think Poland should accept migrants/refugees are as follows: moral reasons (help for those in need) 66%; out of reciprocity 29%; and as an international obligation 7%.<sup>12</sup> In contrast, the main reasons of those who think Poland should not accept migrants/refugees are: lack of resources and bad economic situation 44%; fear and concern about the consequences 41%; cultural and religious distance 13%; and questioning reasons for offering help 10%.<sup>13</sup> In general, the reasons for accepting are mainly abstract and idealistic, but the reasons for opposing are concrete and realistic. This situation is a result of the fact that Poland has not experienced massive inflow of migrants/refugees as, among the four Visegrád countries, only in Poland did the rate of

12 "O uchodźcach w przededniu unijnego szczytu poświęconego kryzysowi imigracyjnemu," *Komunikat z badań CBOS*, Nr133/2015, p. 5.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 7.

**Table 10. Do you agree that Poland should receive some of the refugees arriving in Europe from the Near East and Africa?**

	<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>Moderately agree</i>	<i>Moderately disagree</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
<i>V 2015</i>	3	30	32	21	14
<i>VIII 2015</i>	6	30	29	26	9
<i>IX 2015</i>	8	38	19	29	6
<i>X 2015</i>	7	36	21	30	6
<i>XII 2015</i>	5	25	30	34	6

Source: "Stosunek do uchodźców po atakach terrorystycznych w Paryżu," *Komunikat z badań CBOS*, Nr172/2015, p. 3.

**Table 11. Should Poland accept refugees from countries affected by military conflict?**

	<i>Admitting settlement</i>	<i>Admitting stay until conflict ends</i>	<i>Should not receive refugees</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
<i>V 2015</i>	14	58	21	7
<i>VIII 2015</i>	6	50	38	6
<i>IX 2015</i>	8	48	40	4
<i>X 2015</i>	8	46	43	3
<i>XII 2015</i>	5	37	53	5

Source: "Stosunek do uchodźców po atakach terrorystycznych w Paryżu," *Komunikat z badań CBOS*, Nr172/2015, p. 2.

disagreement not exceed 50% until September.<sup>14</sup>

In this situation, Prime Minister Kopacz was reluctant to accept the so-called obligatory migrant quota at first,<sup>15</sup> but she finally accepted the 5000 quota decided by the EU summit, as rejecting the migrant quota would affect the international reputation of Poland, and it may also cause limitation of access to various EU funds and the Schengen Zone for Poland.<sup>16</sup>

It seems that the atmosphere of society itself was not so hostile to the migrants/refugees until September, but opposition to acceptance of migrants/refugees grew after Kopacz expressed acceptance of the quota.<sup>17</sup> The general election in October was held in these circumstances.

#### 4. Parliamentary election in October and its results

The result of the general election is shown in Table 12. PiS became the leading party and obtained an absolute majority for the first time in history of elections in Poland since 1991. But the reason PiS could win an overall majority is not because PiS obtained the majority vote, as the rate of voting for PiS (37.58%) in this election was lower than the rate obtained by PO in 2007 (41.51%) and 2011 (39.18%). PiS could win more seats than estimated because the political alliance of parties Zjednoczona Lewica (ZL:

14 Comparing the results of the four countries' opinion polls conducted in September 2015, 68% of the respondents were opposed to the acceptance of migrants/refugees in the Czech Republic, 74% in Slovakia, and 71% in Hungary (this rate is the sum of those who answered "strongly disagree" and "moderately disagree"). "Stosunek do uchodźców w krajach Grupy Wyszehradzkiej," *Komunikat z badań CBOS*, Nr151/2015, p. 3.

15 "PM Kopacz stands firm on Polish 'NO' to EU migrant quotas" Radio Poland, 14.09.2015 (<http://www.thenews.pl/1/10/Artykul/220987,PM-Kopacz-stands-firm-on-Polish-NO-to-EU-migrant-quotas>, accessed 1 October 2017).

16 "Poland to accept 5,000 refugees: A summary of events" *Krakow Post*, 24.09.2015 (<http://www.krakowpost.com/10477/2015/09/poland-to-accept-5000-refugees>, accessed 1 October 2017).

17 As indicated in Table 10, the quota of "disagreement" exceeded 50% in the opinion polls of October, conducted just before the general election (15-21 October).

**Table 12. Results of the election (Lower House (Sejm))  
(25 October 2015, Voter turnout: 50.92%)**

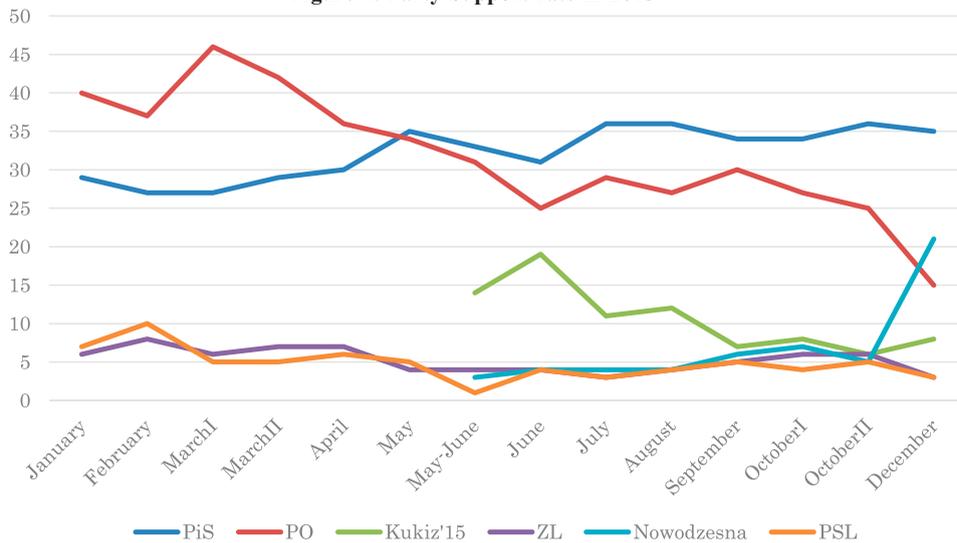
<i>Party</i>	<i>Votes</i>	<i>Rate of votes</i>	<i>Seats</i>
<b>PiS</b>	5,711,687	37.58%	235
<b>PORP</b>	3,661,474	24.09%	138
<b>Kukiz'15</b>	1,339,094	8.81%	42
<b>Nowoczesna</b>	1,155,370	7.60%	28
<b>ZL (United Left)</b>	1,147,102	7.55%	0
<b>PSL</b>	779,875	5.13%	16
<b>KORWiN</b>	722,999	4.76%	0
<b>Partia Razem</b>	550,349	3.62%	0
<b>Others</b>	132,721	0.87%	1*

Source: Website of the State Electoral Committee

(Available at <http://parlament2015.pkw.gov.pl>, accessed 1 October 2017)

\*Seat assigned to Mniejszość Niemiecka (German Minority Party).

**Figure 4. Party Support rate in 2015**



Source: "Preferencje partyjne przed wyborami," *Komunikat z badań CBOS*, Nr142/2015, p. 3.

United Left) failed to obtain the seats. According to electoral law, political alliance was required to acquire 8% to win seats in the Lower House instead of the 5% required for a single party. However, political alliance ZL, formed by several leftist parties including Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej (SLD: Democratic Left Alliance), the party succeeding the former Communist Party, could not meet this requirement (obtained only 7.55%). Accordingly, the seats that ZL might have obtained were allocated to the parties that won large sums of votes, following the D'Hondt method, which the electoral law of Poland has adapted, favors large parties.<sup>18</sup>

However, PiS would certainly be a leading party in this election. As is shown in Figure 4, the support rate for PO has been decreasing after the presidential election and PiS has taken first place in

18 If we suppose that United Left were a single party, the allocation of seats would be as follows: PiS 191; PORP 122; Kukiz'15 44; Nowoczesna 38; United Left 38; PSL 26; German minority 1.

**Table 13. Support for the top three parties in the general election**

	PiS	PO	Kukiz'15
<b>Women</b>	39.7	26.4	7.5
<b>Men</b>	38.5	20.3	10.6
<b>Basic education</b>	55.9	15.4	6.9
<b>Vocational education</b>	53.0	19.3	7.6
<b>Secondary education</b>	39.2	23.0	10.4
<b>Higher education</b>	30.4	26.7	8.5
<b>Age 18~29</b>	26.6	14.4	20.6
<b>Age 30~39</b>	30.6	23.8	12.6
<b>Age 40~49</b>	38.7	25.8	7.7
<b>Age 50~59</b>	47.1	23.0	4.9
<b>Age 60 and over</b>	48.7	28.1	2.0
<b>Village</b>	46.8	17.3	9.4
<b>Town under 5000</b>	37.4	25.3	9.6
<b>Town under 200000</b>	36.2	25.2	10.3
<b>Town under 500000</b>	32.0	30.0	8.4
<b>Five large cities</b>	31.3	28.6	6.0

Source: "Absolutne zwycięstwo PiS nad PO" *Rzeczpospolita*, 26.10.2015.

**Table 14. Difference between the presidential and the general elections by prefecture**

	PiS		PO	
	President	Parliament	President	Parliament
<b>Eastern prefectures</b>				
<b>Podkarpackie</b>	50.0	50.0	20.4	20.4
<b>Lubelskie</b>	43.9	47.8	22.7	14.8
<b>Podlaskie</b>	40.7	45.4	27.7	16.7
<b>Świętokrzyskie</b>	38.1	42.8	22.4	17.3
<b>Małopolskie</b>	44.2	48.2	27.3	19.4
<b>Central prefectures</b>				
<b>Mazowieckie</b>	36.0	38.3	32.8	22.6
<b>Łódzkie</b>	36.4	38.4	32.3	23.2
<b>Kujawsko-Pomorskie</b>	29.8	31.9	39.3	27.7
<b>Northern prefectures</b>				
<b>Warmińsko-Mazurskie</b>	29.4	30.9	39.4	28.4
<b>Pomorskie</b>	22.7	30.5	43.1	34.0
<b>Zachodnio-pomorskie</b>	26.0	28.9	42.0	31.3
<b>Western prefectures</b>				
<b>Lubuskie</b>	26.7	28.3	41.6	28.2
<b>Wielkopolskie</b>	28.6	29.6	41.8	28.5
<b>Dolnośląskie</b>	30.1	32.6	37.9	29.3
<b>Opolskie</b>	27.9	27.8	37.7	26.2
<b>Śląskie</b>	31.4	34.8	32.3	25.6

Source: "Młodyi, wykształceni zdradzili PO, socjalni zostali w domach," *Rzeczpospolita*, 28.11.2015.

Note: President: Vote obtained in the first round of the presidential election (%)

Parliament: Vote obtained in the general election of the Lower House (%)

opinion polls. In addition, PiS employed a skillful electoral strategy in this election. PiS avoided extreme claims such as strict limitation of abortion, and concentrated on an economic campaign, especially for those who had suffered from the liberal economic policy of PO by cutting taxes for small and medium-

**Table 15. Should Poland accept the quota of immigrants?**

	SUPPORTERS OF PiS	SUPPORTERS OF PO
Yes	42	70
No	52	28
Difficult to answer	6	2

Source: "O uchodźcach w przededniu unijnego szczytu poświęconego kryzysowi imigracyjnemu," *Komunikat z badań CBOS*, Nr133/2015, p. 5.

**Table 16. The percentages of PiS and PO supporters that would vote**

SUPPORTER OF	50% AND UNDER	60-70%	80-90%	100%	DIFFICULT TO ANSWER	AVERAGE
PiS	7	12	13	67	1	90.05
PO	10	12	25	53	0	86.82

Source: "O udziale w wyborach, pewności głosowania, obawach i przewidywaniach wyborczych," *Komunikat z badań CBOS*, Nr136/2015, p. 6.

sized enterprises, lowering the pension age that PO had raised before the election, introducing universal family benefits, and lowering taxes on families. PiS also insisted on imposing taxes on banks and large foreign-owned supermarkets for increasing child care benefit. In addition, PiS chose a woman, Beata Szydło, as a candidate for premier to attract the women's vote. On the other hand, PO had no clear strategies or policies for the election. They emphasized "eight years' success" or "avoiding the return to the authoritarian style of politics by PiS," but these phrases did not attract any support, especially from the young generation.<sup>19</sup>

However, there is a striking difference between this parliamentary election and other elections, which cannot be explained only by the dissatisfaction of the young, the difference in electoral strategy, or the electoral system. The difference is that in this election PiS obtained support from all strata of society, genders, education levels, age groups, places of residence, and even regional bases, as indicated in Table 13 and 14. And as for this expansion of support for PiS, there is a possibility that the migrant/refugee crisis affected it to some extent.

As I have mentioned before, many Poles are sympathetic to refugees even after the migrant/refugee crisis. In addition, as shown in Figure 4, after the presidential election, the rate of support for PiS exceeded that for PO since May, so this crisis itself is not a decisive factor in the victory of PiS. However, there are two factors that have worked to the advantage of PiS. One is that, according to opinion polls, there appears a tendency that those who are less generous in their attitude to refugees support PiS, and that the supporters of PiS are more eager to vote than the supporters of PO, as shown in Table 15 and 16. It is also said that the prefectures where PO fought well are places where the voting rate was low.<sup>20</sup> So we can estimate that those who are opposed to the obligatory quota voted for certain and voted for PiS.

The other factor is that, if we check the difference in attitude toward migrant/refugees between generations, we can see that the younger the respondents are, the less tolerant to migrants/refugees they are, as indicated in Table 17. In particular, more than half of the age group under 35 are opposed to accepting migrants/refugees. It seems that the discontent of the younger generation with the current situation is

19 "Młodzi, wykształceni zdradzili PO, socjalni zostali w domach," *Rzeczpospolita*, 28.11.2015.

20 "Młodzi, wykształceni zdradzili PO, socjalni zostali w domach," *Rzeczpospolita*, 28.11.2015.

**Table 17. Should Poland accept refugees from countries affected by military conflict? (as of October 2015)**

	<i>Age 18-24</i>	<i>Age 25-34</i>	<i>Age 35-44</i>	<i>Age 45-54</i>	<i>Age 55-64</i>	<i>Age 65 and over</i>
<i>Admitting settlement</i>	5	8	9	8	8	6
<i>Admitting stay until conflict ends</i>	26	38	48	51	58	51
<i>Should not receive refugees</i>	69	51	41	36	32	37
<i>Don't know</i>	0	3	2	5	2	6

Source: "Polacy o uchodźcach-w internecie i w 'realu'," *Komunikat z badań CBOS*, Nr149/2015, p. 3.

exacerbated by this migrant/refugee issue. It is said that a rising feeling of insecurity, lack of hope for the future, alienation, and distrust of the political class among the youngest generation brought about not only the Kukiz phenomenon but the negative attitude towards migrants/refugees.<sup>21</sup> They may think that the government should take care of the young of their own country, instead of accepting refugees.

## Conclusion

From the discussion in this paper, we can conclude that the main factors behind the victory of PiS in the general election are criticism by the younger generation of PO, skillful electoral strategy of PiS, and the electoral system. However, PiS could obtain a landslide victory because of the migrant/refugee crisis, as those who oppose the acceptance of migrants/refugees tend to vote more than those who support the acceptance of migrant/refugees.

Lastly, I refer briefly to the situation after the election. The feelings of Poles towards migrants/refugees are deteriorating, especially after the Paris terrorist attack occurred in November 2015. According to opinion polls conducted in December, the rate of approval of accepting migrants/refugees decreased dramatically, as shown in Table 10 and 11. The rate of opposition exceeded 50% even among the supporters of PO.<sup>22</sup> And most of the respondents worry about the financial burden and international insecurity by accepting migrants/refugees.<sup>23</sup> Though Poland has not yet experienced a massive inflow of migrants/refugees, it may be difficult to accept the quota under this situation, as promised by Kopacz.

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21 "Divided Poland faces foreign policy crossroads," European Council of Foreign Relations, 25.09.2015 ([http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary\\_divided\\_poland\\_faces\\_foreign\\_policy\\_crossroads4047#](http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_divided_poland_faces_foreign_policy_crossroads4047#), accessed 1 October 2017).

22 "Stosunek do uchodźców po atakach terrorystycznych w Paryżu," *Komunikat z badań CBOS*, Nr172/2015, p. 4.

23 "Stosunek do uchodźców po atakach terrorystycznych w Paryżu," *Komunikat z badań CBOS*, Nr172/2015, pp. 4-6.

