Structures of Polish Political Parties in the Second Decade of the 21st Century

Introduction

The key Polish political parties as of 2015 constitute an element of a political system that has arisen over the last 25 years as a consequence of the difficult departure from the totalitarian rules underpinning the communist system.

At the beginning phases of the transition period, reforms were carried out amidst political chaos. These included introducing democratic political solutions, reinstating a pluralist party system, and reconstructing political programs (Kurczewska 1995). With each passing year, the remnants of communist solutions were eliminated and replaced with democratic principles and institutions, not fully anchored in the social consciousness of the Polish people. Consequently, the political parties that have emerged since 1989 have undergone many structural and organizational changes.

In the four parliamentary elections that took place from 1991–2001, only three parties ran under the same name each time. Two of these – the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD – Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej) and the Polish People's Party

Note 1: In each of these four elections, new parties succeeded in passing the electoral threshold (Antoszewski et al. 2003).
(PSL – Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe) – were stable contenders to power until 2001, exist until this day and are analyzed in this work. The year 2001 was a key turning point in post-communist Polish party system, as it marks the emergence of a new group of parties more stable than those formed in the 1990s. Among these are Civic Platform (PO – Platforma Obywatelska) and Law and Justice (PiS – Prawo i Sprawiedliwość). The last of the parties examined here, Your Movement (TR – Twój Ruch), emerged in 2011. Originally named Palikot’s Movement (Ruch Palikota) after its founder Janusz Palikot, the party adopted its current name in 2013. These five parties will be subject of our analysis. We will begin with a treatment of their origins to give context to our subsequent examination of their structures and functioning.

Aside from being among the oldest Polish parties, the SLD and PSL are in the strictest sense “post-communist”, as they inherited some organizational and programmatic elements from their communist predecessors (Antoszewski et al. 2003). The SLD emerged in 1999 as a homogenous party, functioning previously as a coalition of several dozen political parties and organizations centered around SdRP, a social democratic party created in 1991 out of the remnants of the former Polish communist party (PZPR – Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza) (Sieklucki 2006). The PSL\(^2\) can be similarly categorized, as it was heir to the organizational basis of the ZSL, a satellite party of the PZPR. The heritage of these parties still influences how they operate today.

PO and PiS fit into the second group of parties to emerge after 1989; namely, “post-Solidarity” parties. Both were created in 2001, but to a large extent are based on anti-communist opposition groups that functioned before 1989. The Independent Self-Governing Trade Union “Solidarity” was the main structure unifying the opposition activists during communism. It became a symbol for the Solidarity camp, a broadly defined group of political activists engaged in anti-communist opposition. Post-1989 events led to disintegration of the Solidarity camp, and the emergence of independent, distinct political parties. Unfortunately, they had no organizational stability. The only thing that united them was a symbolic affiliation with the Solidarity camp, and the fact that they all emerged from within Parliament. The latter factor affected their development, as they were all organizations concentrated around political elites, with limited ability to grow outside of the parliamentary framework (Antoszewski et al. 2003). In 1996 however, the Electoral Action Solidarity (AWS – Akcja Wyborcza Solidarność) was created, which somewhat reunified post-Solidarity organizations. It was led by the Solidarity trade union, but dozens of other organizations contributed to its activity (including the post-Solidarity political parties). The AWS was short-lived however, and only existed for one parliamentary term of office from 1997–2001. Its disintegration gave rise to PO and PiS.

In terms of organizational development, PO and PiS constitute a departure from the paradigm of early post-Solidarity parties. They are more stable, and have a well-developed bureaucratic apparatus and local structures. Although the relevance of post-communist and post-Solidarity cleavages is decreasing, traces of

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2 This party is a descendant of the original PSL, which was created in 1895 and functioned until 1949.
these cleavages can still be seen in the organizational structures of Polish parties. For example, post-communist parties feature many organizational holdovers from the mass parties of the past, including stronger links between the party on the ground and the party in central office and the party in public office. In contrast, central structures play a more important role in most recently founded parties. Your Movement, on the other hand, cannot be categorized as either post-communist or post-Solidarity. This is due its recent establishment in 2011, as well as the role played by its leader, Janusz Palikot. Instead, it can be better described as an entrepreneurial issue party (Harmel and Svasand 1993).

If we plot the parties on a left-right political spectrum, SLD and TR are on the left, PSL is in the center (with qualities of an agrarian party), PO is on the center-right, and PiS is on the right.

It is the aim of this article to give a comparative outline of the most important organizational solutions utilized by the five parties in question. We will examine legislation, as well as organizational schemes from the local to the national level. In addition, we will describe the functions of, and distribution of power among, party members and party leaders. Structural patterns, dominant schemes, and exceptions thereof will be identified. Two schematic depictions of the organizational structures of the two largest parties in Poland: PO (Figure 1) and PiS (Figure 2) will also be included.

The key sources used for this paper were current party statutes.\(^3\) Also useful however, was other research on the structure of Polish parties (Bichita 2010), as well as our own research conducted from 2007–2009, including interviews with political party members at different levels (Sobolewska-Myślak et al. 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010; Kosowska-Gąstol 2010; Borowiec 2011).

### Legal Aspects of Creating Party Structures

According to the 1997 Constitution of the Republic of Poland, political parties operate on the principles of free will and equality of all citizens. It introduces the principle of political pluralism (Article 11), and prohibits the operation of parties that are undemocratic in their program or functioning, in particular those that practice

totalitarian methods of national socialism, fascism, or communism (Article 13). The first Political Parties Act (Party Law) from 1990 introduced very liberal principles on the establishment and funding of political parties, aimed at reinstating political pluralism after the collapse of communism. This was fully achieved, as in the 1991 elections 29 parties entered the Parliament (Jednaka 2002: 8).

The next act regulating political parties was passed in 1997, and amended in 2001. It both expanded the formal requirements for the registration of parties, and allowed grants and state subsidies as sources of party funding. The latter has had a negative impact on smaller parties which have not crossed the electoral threshold (5% for parties, 8% for coalitions) and thus are not eligible for reimbursement of campaign. However, parties and coalitions which received 3% and 6% of votes, respectively, are eligible for state subsidies for their statutory activities. Moreover, access to parliament is not impossible for smaller parties that do not receive the state subsidies, as demonstrated by the election of several members of Palikot’s Movement to Parliament in 2011.

The articles of the 1997 Party Law outline basic organizational rules. Polish parties shall “shape their structures and rules of operation based on democratic principles, in particular through ensuring the transparency of these structures, electing party bodies, and passing resolutions on the basis of majority votes” (Article 8). Since the Party Law clearly enumerates what a party statute should contain, statutes are similar across all parties. To a certain degree, this also applies to party structures. Party statutes must delineate party bodies, including those representing the party externally and those responsible for party finances, their scope of power, and their terms of office. The statute must also determine how party bodies are elected, as well as principles for the creation and dissolution of local party bodies (Article 9). According to Maria Winctawska and Barbara Brodzińska-Mirowska (2016), the legal provisions adopted in Poland exert influence on party structure and stipulate organizational principles reminiscent of those in the mass party model, whereby the ultimate power is held by parties’ national decision-making and executive bodies, and parliamentary party groups are subordinate to these authorities.

**Political Party Membership**

With the exception of Your Movement, the parties analyzed here do not face difficulties in maintaining a solid membership base. According to information from party activists responsible for maintaining member registries, in 2015 the key political parties were made up of approximately: 42,000 members (PO); 22,000 (PiS); 100,000 (PSL); 36,000 (SLD); and 1,000 (TR). These numbers are similar to membership numbers in 2010 (once again with the exception of Your Movement, which was founded in 2011) (Sobolewska-Myśliń et al. 2010: 22). Nowadays however, parties are not expected to have large membership bases. Unlike in the
previous era, having more members does not translate into efficient operation or strong electoral support. All the parties need is a membership base sufficient for “organizational coverage” of the entire country. In practice, parties do not use members to their full potential (Winclawska and Brodzińska-Mirowska 2016).

Recruitment of members depends on a number of factors, including: the political culture of society; past experiences of party leaders; assessment of gains and losses related to having members; and interim initiatives aimed at inflating membership numbers (Tomczak 2014). Recruitment is mainly driven by a policy of “party openness” (usually determined by party founders upon establishment). Despite the above, some party statutes stipulate limitations on membership (for example, that of PO).

The policy of “party openness” is defined by statute regulations, and includes rather lax requirements on the accessibility, transparency, and length of the member recruitment process. Member rights and responsibilities are also well-defined (Sobolewska-Myślik et al. 2007: 439). For all parties, a basic requirement is that prospective members must be citizens of Poland and at least 18 years of age (1997 Party Law, Article 2.1). Parties usually add their own requirements as well; for example, that candidates must possess full public rights, and may not be members of another political party. Prospects must also accept the party program, statute, values, political strategies, and leadership decisions. Convicted criminals are barred from party membership. Additionally, PSL and PiS require recommendations from two existing members, and SLD from one member with at least two years of membership. Parties must accept or reject member applications in writing within the period provided for by their statutes.

The statutes of PO and SLD automatically allow founders of new basic units to join their parties. New members are accepted by basic organizational units (in PO by the unit board, and in PSL and SLD by a vote from the membership body) or higher-level organizational units (PiS and TR). The former three parties thus recruit from the bottom up, and the latter two from the top down. In PO, candidates are required to give a speech to the members of the relevant basic unit. In case of a negative decision, it is possible to appeal to a higher body in the party structure. PiS and SLD allow for objections by party authorities to the recruitment of a member, especially when the candidate is “undesirable.” In PiS and PSL, candidates obtain full rights and responsibilities as soon as they are accepted into the party. In PO and SLD, new members acquire active electoral rights (the right to vote) within the party after six months. In PO, however, this period can be limited by the PO National Board. In TR, the rights to vote and run for office are acquired by new members after 30 days of membership.

Candidates holding certain public offices and candidates with previous membership in other parties are admitted according to different procedures. In the case of PO, members of parliament, members of the European Parliament, and councilors of regional assemblies elected from PO party lists are automatically

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4 PO introduced limitations for candidates previously active in other parties or coalitions. See: Sobolewska-Myślik, Kosowska-Gąstol, and Borowiec 2009.
granted membership upon completing an application. Holders of other public offices need a recommendation from the national board or relevant regional board. These recommendations are binding for party structures. In PSL, candidates with previous membership in other political parties must have permission from the relevant County Board. In TR, candidates who hold or have held public offices must have permission from the National Board. These limitations result from the fact that, during the beginning stages of political transformation, party members often floated from party to party, and national-level structures had no control over admittance of new members on the local level.

Candidates who receive membership acquire full rights of members. The rights a party grants to its members are an indicator of "party openness," and can play a major role in attracting new members. This applies particularly to active and passive electoral rights, which enable quick career advancement within a party. In PO and SLD, members can directly elect a party leader. In addition, members have the right to run for public office under the auspices of the party they belong to. This is especially significant due to the proportional representation system in parliamentary elections in Poland. Independent candidates have limited chances of being elected to Parliament, the European Parliament, or local decision-making bodies, as running for office with party support greatly increases the chances of being elected. The SLD statute for example, explicitly promises support for its electoral candidates.

Participation in party life, passive and active electoral rights, and access to internal information are important privileges of party members. Information is disseminated via internal party press, information bulletins, and email. Members have guaranteed access to all resolutions and other party documents, and sometimes even the right to acquire information about the work of party representatives in state structures (SLD). This is done to formally ensure their influence on decision-making processes within the party as well as access to first-hand information. By enjoying the right to take part in discussions and express opinions, party members gain the opportunity to shape the program and personnel policies. In reality however, their influence on party decisions is little, as evidenced by research conducted among party members (Sobolewska-Myślik et al. 2010: 69–71). All parties grant members the right to participate in decision-making on program-related issues (albeit in different forms), and to create teams and commissions.

Parties provide their members with various social privileges, as well as forms of social and political support. The widest range of support is offered by SLD and PSL. SLD provides its members with support in holding state functions, when harmed due to political activism, or in case of "particularly difficult life circumstances" (Article 1.2). The PSL provides its members "with protection", which is not exactly specified in the party statute and the PiS provides support when its members are harassed due to their membership in the party.

5 In SLD, men and women must be equally represented among candidates for party authorities at all levels, as well as among delegate candidates. Each gender should be represented by a proportion not lower than 35%. The gender parity principle was also adopted in TR, in all party bodies, and on all party electoral lists.
Party members have four primary duties: participation in the activities of their party; active contribution to the party, and not just when campaigning (organizational loyalty); following party principles and strategies (ideological loyalty); and prompt payment of membership fees. In the case of SLD, members who hold certain state functions pay a “special” membership fee. The PSL statute requires payment of a “PSL Fund” fee; and the PiS statute provides for “other membership fees” (which can also include special fees for holders of the state offices). A lack of reference to special fees in a party’s statute does not mean that they cannot be collected in practice, as is the case in PO. Party members must also promote the party externally and contribute to its organizational development (PiS), attract new supporters and uphold the Ethical Charter (SLD), uphold the good reputation of the party (TR), and fulfill civic and social responsibilities (PO, PiS). In PO, members are expected to remain cordial to one another.

All analyzed parties allow other types of affiliation less formal than membership, such as honorary member (PiS), and supporter (PiS, SLD, TR). The PiS Political Council grants the title of honorary member to persons distinguished for their work on behalf of the party. Supporters of PiS are registered by the party’s regional boards and chairpersons of constituency boards. SLD and TR both require party supporters to be 18 or older, and to consent to the storage of their personal details in the party database. The SLD statute allows for their activity in program platforms, and the TR statute allows for their participation in the establishment of youth and women’s groups. Supporters however, do not have many of the privileges that members enjoy.

Basic Organizational Units

The policy of “party openness” dictates accessible recruitment via basic organizational units in an effort to strengthen party ties with society, facilitate grassroots social activity, and increase the chances of success in elections. In Poland, the organizational structures of parties are generally created according to the administrative division of the state, of which there are four levels: district (commune, municipality); county; regional (voivodship); and national. However, not all parties are structured accordingly. For example, SLD and PSL have five-level structures, with basic organizational units at the bottom in addition to the four levels of state administration. PO has adopted a four-level structure: basic; county; regional; and national. PiS too has a four-level structure, but with parliamentary constituencies situated above basic unit structures, and below regional and national structures. The statute of TR stipulates a three-level structure consisting of basic units, parliamentary constituencies, and national bodies. The party has no regional structures. In the absence of basic units, constituency-level structures can serve at the bottom-level.

In order to establish a basic unit in Polish parties, 5 to 15 members are required. An upper limit is usually not set; but in PiS, a basic unit (committee) may be divided
into two smaller units when its membership exceeds 50 people. All analyzed parties allow establishment of other units where the place of residence is not a deciding factor.

At this point, we will discuss how basic units are established, the transparency and simplicity of procedures, as well as the possibility to appeal a rejection of the request to establish a unit.

The statutes of PO and PiS are the most detailed in this respect. In these parties, the decision to establish a basic organizational unit is made by a higher-level executive body, and negative decisions may be appealed to national-level bodies. Basic units may be dissolved by the bodies that approved their establishment. General meetings of members serve as the decision-making bodies of basic units. Executive bodies at this level are both collegial (committee board) and individual (committee president). Judicial and monitoring bodies are rare. Disciplinary matters related to members of basic units are processed by higher-level bodies (Borowiec 2011). In all parties, the term of office for positions in basic units is identical to the parliamentary term of office.

Decision-making bodies of basic units elect representatives for higher-level meetings (except in TR), in addition to their own board and president, and assess the activity of basic-level executive bodies. In PO, basic units may be active in all areas not reserved for other bodies; in PO and TR they prepare and validate the party program; in PiS and PSL they formulate plans and strategies; in PiS they execute resolutions of party authorities. In SLD and PiS decision-making bodies of basic units may recommend candidates for party and state functions. Other parties grant this privilege to bodies at higher levels.

Overall, the privileges of executive bodies (both collegial and individual) are similar in all the parties, and are mainly related to: leading, managing, and representing basic units within the party; executing resolutions adopted at higher levels; and delivering information and reports on their activity to members.

**Mid-Level Structures**

Mid-level structures include: county, and regional structures, as well as constituency structures in the case of PiS and TR. As aforementioned, party statutes stipulate organizational structures that mirror the administrative division of the state. This is most evident in those of PSL, SLD, and PO. PiS and TR, on the other hand, emphasize constituency-based structures. In these parties, structures are not uniform on all levels, with those on the national-level being the most developed. All parties allow formation of a single district or county structure in areas encompassing more than one district and county, respectively, in an effort to prevent potential member deficits.

Decision-making bodies (member or delegate meetings) called congresses elect smaller collective bodies (councils) to deal with party affairs in between congress meetings, as well as collegial executive bodies known as boards. In PiS
and PSL, boards elect smaller bodies known as presidiums from amongst their members. Congresses are dominated by delegates elected by decision-making bodies of lower levels. The following party members also participate in congresses *ex officio*: representatives of executive bodies; members holding public functions; and members of councils. In PSL, SLD and TR, most members may take part in congresses convened at their level. Serving an integrative function, congresses are the main mechanism by which members can shape their party’s program and activities. However, the significance of these meetings is reduced by the fact that they only take place once every few years.

Mid-level congresses have similar privileges across all parties. They may shape party policies on key issues for mid-level structures, elect members of other mid-level bodies, elect delegates to meetings at higher levels, prepare and suggest program solutions, assess the political activity of individual and collegial bodies that they have elected, and approve candidates for local government elections (this applies chiefly to congresses at the regional level). These privileges and duties may be extended to include other tasks depending on party aims, experience, and program challenges.

Councils – decision-making bodies operating between Congresses are elected by the latter. Moreover, they are often made up of members of executive bodies, councilors, city mayors, members of parliament from the relevant regional area. The privileges of these organs are extensive. They may comment on party activity conducted within their regional area of influence, vote on the program created by program commissions, make decisions on pre- and post-electoral coalitions, and approve lists of candidates (including village, town, and city mayors) for local elections.

Individual executive bodies represent the party and manage the work of boards at each level of administrative structure. They are elected by all delegates for party member meetings (except in PO). In PO, mid-level structures are managed by a President, who is elected by all members directly, and enjoys a particularly wide range of privileges.

Collegial executive bodies are shaped in a variety of ways, and are usually consisted of both persons elected at Congresses, and important function holders at a given level of the party structure. Their functions include executing resolutions of regional and central-level authorities, formulating programs, creating lists of candidates for local elections (PiS), and managing lower-level bodies. In TR, the constituency-level board has particularly extensive power.

### National-Level Structures

At the national level, all parties have a collegial body called the Congress. It is mainly made up of delegates elected by regional or constituency structures, as well as *ex officio* holders of certain party and state functions, such as MPs and MEPs (PO, PSL, PiS). In PO, PSL, TR, and PiS, regional and national party leaders also *ex officio* take part in the Congress.
Party statutes only delineate the powers of their congresses in general terms. Congresses are representative bodies of the party, but do not play a primary role. They oversee party operation, formulate and adopt statutes, define the party program and strategy, and – their main function – elect persons to the majority of national-level bodies (executive, judicial, and supervisory). Moreover, they consider, evaluate, and pass votes of acceptance for reports submitted by these bodies.

The existence of councils is clearly defined in each of the statutes of the analyzed parties. In PO and SLD, they are called national councils; in PiS and TR, political councils; and in PSL, the Supreme Council. These bodies may be made up of party leaders, persons elected by the congresses, all members of the parliamentary group or only their representatives (in the case of PiS, PO, PSL, TR). In PSL and PiS, other persons may also be invited to participate in these bodies.

Moreover, these bodies have a wide range of powers, such as filling certain posts between congress meetings (e.g., in PSL, those of the party Chairperson and President of the Supreme Council). They have extensive powers in terms of developing party programs based on proposals from congress, entering into political alliances (PSL), shaping personnel policies (SLD), creating electoral lists (TR), and more. Their work is aimed at increasing organizational effectiveness and offering members a sense of control over the day-to-day functioning of the party.

Collegial executive bodies at the national level have varied structures and a wide range of powers in all the parties. In PO, SLD, and TR, these bodies are known as the National Board; in PiS, as the Political Committee; and in PSL, as the Supreme Executive Committee. They are made up of party leaders, general secretaries (if provided for in the statute), treasurers, parliamentary group leaders, and persons elected by the decision-making bodies that function between congresses (except in PiS and TR). In SLD, there is an additional executive body at the national level called the National Executive Committee.

Boards focus on organizational matters related to current party leadership, financial issues, coordination of local party structures (some may dissolve lower-level structures), repealing resolutions passed by lower-level bodies (SLD), and executing resolutions passed by national decision-making bodies. According to the statutes of SLD and TR, boards also play an important role in shaping electoral lists. In PiS, electoral lists are approved by the Political Committee. In PO and SLD, national executive structures function as electoral committees. In PSL, a special body called the National Electoral Committee organizes campaigns for local and parliamentary elections, as well as referendums.

The Role of Party Leaders at National Level

The President (PO, SLD, TR) and party Chairperson (PiS, PSL) enjoy various statutory powers, often strengthened by their charismatic qualities. Most often, the President and Chairperson are elected by the party congress, or by all members in
a general party election. The latter solution is used in SLD and PO, but whereas in PO it is the only solution (PO Statute, Article 54), in SLD it is optional. The manner of such elections is decided by the National Council of SLD in the form of a resolution. The PSL statute states that at least two persons must compete for the position of Chairperson. In TR – according to the statute – two Presidents are elected in order to retain gender parity.

The leaders of PiS and PO enjoy a wider range of powers than those of PSL, SLD, and TR. The PSL leader represents the party externally, is responsible for implementation of party policies, and manages the activity of the Chief Executive Committee. The SLD leader is both a member and the director of three collegial bodies: the National Council; the National Board; and the Council of Program Strategy. The party is represented externally by the National Board. The role of the leader boils down to representing the party only as far as legal activities are concerned and leading sessions of collegial bodies. Until 2012, the President was not considered a discrete party body. Despite a recent change in this respect, the scope of his powers has not changed significantly (Tomczak 2013: 66). In TR, the leaders' powers are limited to directing party affairs and organizational issues.

The PO leader enjoys wide authority, and directs and represents the party in public, social, and political life. She/he presides over the National Board and the National Council, and may propose sessions of other bodies (e.g. the PO parliamentary group). However, the PiS Chairman has the widest array of statutory powers. As in other parties, he directs party affairs, as well as the Political Council, the Political Committee, and the work of the parliamentary group. He can create and disband party organizational units, and appoint and dismiss their leaders. These powers demonstrate his supreme position and significance within the party.

**Summary**

Political parties in Poland have many organizational features characteristic of mass-party models, yet some also exhibit features of more modern “catch-all” or cartel party models. The age and heritage of a party also impact its current structures. While all the parties have hierarchical structures and formalized recruitment procedures, these attributes are more visible in parties with a longer history. The same applies to party structures overlapping with the administrative division of the state, where the most overlap is found in the oldest parties (SLD, PSL) with the most developed structures (five levels). These parties have also retained some very formalized recruitment procedures, including the requirement that membership candidates should be recommended by existing members. In both SLD and PSL, regional structures have a strong influence on important decisions with

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6 This happened for the first time in 2013 when Donald Tusk became the PO President with 79.58% of the vote, defeating Jaroslaw Gowin with 20.42% of the vote.
regard to leadership elections and creating electoral lists. The large influence of mid-level structures on decisions made by congresses and councils, as well as the precedence of representative democratic forms over the direct inclusion of rank-and-file members in decision-making processes, indicates that the parties analyzed in this paper fit the mass party model. It should be noted however, that the SLD statute allows election of the party leader either directly in a general party vote, or by congress delegates. However, the first solution is optional and was successfully used only once. The leaders of these two parties do not exert a strong influence, and have been alternated several times in each.

Parties with a post-Solidarity heritage also exhibit some characteristics of mass parties, albeit to a lesser extent. For example, both PO and PiS have a four-tier organizational structure. While PO's structure mirrors the division of the state administration, in PiS one of the levels mirrors parliamentary constituencies. Due to formalized procedures of recruitment, these parties do not require member candidates to produce recommendations from existing party members. Although the congresses of these parties have powers similar to those in other parties, their composition and influence on party decision-making is slightly different. While mid-level structures have a significant influence in SLD and PSL, many Congress delegates are appointed ex officio in PO and PiS. These features of the post-Solidarity parties point to the strong influence of their elites on decision-making processes (in contrast to post-communist parties, in which more power rests with the middle-level structures). This is guaranteed by the statutes of these parties, and further reinforced by the long reign of their charismatic leaders: Jarosław Kaczyński (leader of PiS since 2003); and Donald Tusk (leader of PO between 2003 and 2014). The differences between these two parties are related to the use of direct democracy – while the PiS statute does not provide for forms of direct democracy, PO is a pioneer in this area. The latter has not only introduced general leadership elections on the national level, but on lower levels as well. In addition, it is the only Polish party to adopt intra-party primaries for candidate selection (presidential elections of 2010).

The relationships between national party structures and their parliamentary groups in SLD, PSL, PO, and PiS unequivocally indicate the dominance of national structures (Sobolewska-Myślak et al. 2010: 147–149). Dominance of the party in public office over the party in central office is not visible in Poland (Winclawska and Brodzińska-Mirowska 2016). In this aspect as well, the parties analyzed fit the mass party model. It is also worth noting that in 2001, upon applying for registration, the PO submitted a statute that granted significant powers to its parliamentary group, which was rejected by the registration body as incompatible with the 1997 Party Law (Sobolewska-Myślak et al. 2009: 32–37).

The last of the five parties – Your Movement, founded by an entrepreneur who was originally active in PO – is significantly different from the others. This

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7 In 2012, the only candidate, Leszek Miller was elected in this manner. In last election in 2016 none of the candidates has obtained the support of an absolute majority of members votes and subsequently the new president (Włodzimierz Czarzasty) was elected by the Congress.
party has existed for only a short time, and therefore has not been able to fully develop its structures. However, the structural differences are not only a result of the party’s young age, but of a different vision of organizational structure. TR has only a three-level structure which does not mirror the administrative division of the state, and regional-level organization is based on units that mirror parliamentary constituencies. Shortly before the 2015 elections, the party introduced a dual presidency in keeping with the gender parity principle. During the 2011–2015 term, the party lost its influence in Parliament, and subsequently failed to renew its parliamentary mandate in the 2015 elections (running together with SLD as the “United Left” coalition). This raises questions about the survival of the party as an independent political organization.

In 2015, two new organizations emerged: the Kukiz’15 Movement (Kukiz’15), and the Modern Party of Ryszard Petru (Nowoczesna). What is particularly interesting about these organizations is that neither had well-developed local structures before the elections. They were created quickly just before the elections and were immediately successful. Well-developed local structures are thus not required for electoral success. These organizations are similar in that, like Palikot’s Movement in 2011 (currently Your Movement), they emerged around previously non-political celebrities. Paweł Kukiz is a rock singer, and Ryszard Petru is an economist who was widely known in the media even before founding his party. While the Modern Party originally functioned as an association and then has received the status of political party, Kukiz’s movement ran in the elections as an electoral committee of voters (and now it still has the status of an association).

We argue that the organizational structures of the five political parties represented in the 2011–2015 parliament in large measure resemble those of mass parties, albeit without mass membership. However, elements of later party models are also visible. The parties operate primarily on the basis of representative democracy, but do incorporate facets of direct democracy (especially in the case of PO and SLD). Finally, Polish parties do not appeal to specific social interest groups, but seek members in the whole society and are not maintained by membership fees, but financed mainly from the state budget. In this sense, they fit the model of catch-all or cartel parties, respectively.

Table 1. Abbreviations of parties’ names used in text

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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Name in native language</th>
<th>Name in English</th>
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<tr>
<td>AWS</td>
<td>Akcja Wyborcza Solidarność</td>
<td>Electoral Action Solidarity</td>
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<td>PIS</td>
<td>Prawo i Sprawiedliwość</td>
<td>Law and Justice</td>
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<tr>
<td>PO</td>
<td>Platforma Obywatelska Rzeczpospolitej Polskiej</td>
<td>Civic Platform</td>
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<tr>
<td>PSL</td>
<td>Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe</td>
<td>Polish People’s Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>PZPR</td>
<td>Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza</td>
<td>Polish United Workers’ Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>SdRP</td>
<td>Socjaldemokracja Rzeczpospolitej Polskiej</td>
<td>Social Democracy of the Republic of Poland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLD</td>
<td>Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej</td>
<td>Democratic Left Alliance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TR</td>
<td>Twój Ruch</td>
<td>Your Movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZSL</td>
<td>Zjednoczone Stronnictwo Ludowe</td>
<td>United People’s Party</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: developed by the authors.
Figure 1. Organizational scheme of the Civic Platform

NATIONAL CONVENTION OF PLATFORM

NATIONAL COUNCIL

President of Platform

National Board of Platform

Secretary General

Treasurer

National Audit Commission

National Court of Arbitration

CONGRESS IN REGION

President in Region

Board in Region

Secretary

Treasurer

Regional Audit Commission

Regional Court of Arbitration

CONGRESS IN COUNTY

President in County

Board in County

Secretary

Treasurer

COUNCIL IN COUNTY

COUNCIL IN REGION

COUNCIL IN COUNTY

MEETING OF BASIC UNIT’S MEMBERS

President of Basic Unit

Board of Basic Unit

Secretary

Treasurer

A → B = A is member of B (A is a part of B)
A → B = A elect B (all members of B)
A → B = A elects representatives of B (some members of B)

CONGRESS Decision-making bodies

Executive Board

Programme Council Program and consulting bodies

National Court of Arbitration Judicial bodies

Source: developed by the authors.
Figure 2. Organizational scheme of the Law and Justis

Source: developed by the authors.
References


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