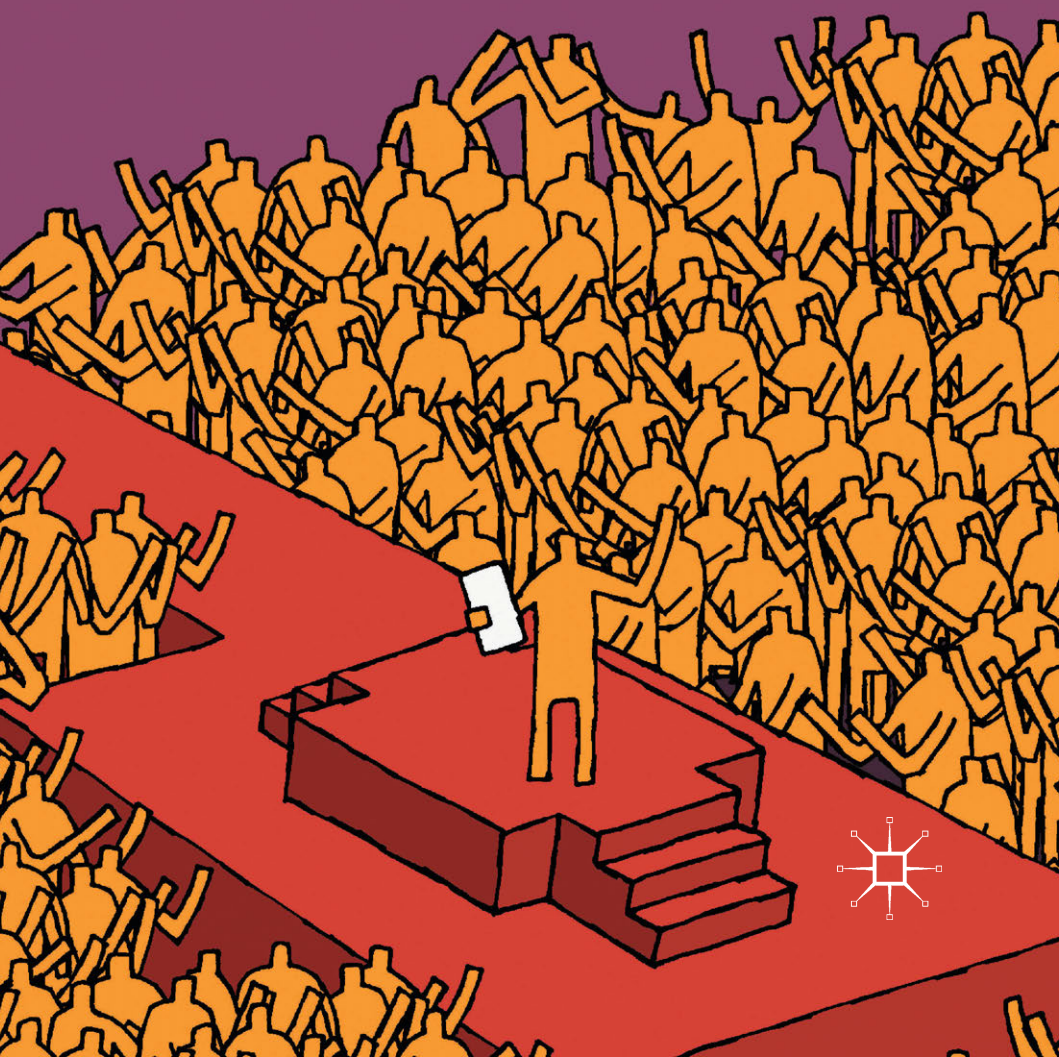


# The Presidentialization of Political Parties

Organizations, Institutions and Leaders

Edited by Gianluca Passarelli



# 6

## Poland: The Presidentialization of Parties in a Young Democracy

*Cristina Bucur and Iain McMenamin*

### Introduction

Poland is a semi-presidential and relatively new democracy. It is premier-presidential because the prime minister is responsible only to the legislature, and the president does not have the power to dismiss the government (Elgie, 2011b, p. 2). Although the office maintains a high public profile, the power of the Polish president is quite limited, and most ambitious politicians nowadays set their sights on the prime minister's office. Therefore, we mainly consider presidentialization in terms of party leaders and the premierships, instead of focusing on the political parties' strategies to win the presidency. Poland's oldest major parties date back to the transition from communism, and all prime ministers since 2005 have been provided by parties founded in the 21st Century. This lack of continuity constrains us to concentrate on the four major parties in the current parliament. We draw on a variety of primary sources to examine three areas where the presidentialization phenomenon may occur: election rules, electioneering, and policy and strategy. We find that most of the variations in the behavior and organization of major Polish parties are better explained by their genetic features rather than by the semi-presidential institutional framework. Direct presidential elections could have led to the presidentialization of Polish parties, had the presidency been recognized as an important position for control over the political system and the policy process (Samuels and Shugart, 2010a, p. 15). This outcome was not unlikely, considering the wide-ranging powers granted to the head of state under the 1989 Roundtable Agreement negotiated between the communist regime and the Solidarity opposition, most of which were preserved in the 1992 Little Constitution (Millard, 2000, pp. 41–2), and Lech

Wałęsa's unchallenged position as the leader of the anti-communist opposition (Meer Krok-Paszkowska, 1999, p. 175). However, Wałęsa's reluctance to develop a strong political base in a party organization deprived Solidarity parties of the opportunity to evolve into "rallies" around their presidential leaders (Samuels and Shugart, 2010a, p. 175). The frequent occurrence of cohabitation in Poland has also prevented the presidentialization of parties by exposing the limits of the presidential office, particularly when its constitutional powers are not extensive, which has been the case since 1997.

Under these circumstances, the political context, including the constant reinvention of the party system after 1989, the adversarial nature of party competition, and the long-lasting divide between the communist successor parties and the Solidarity parties (Millard, 2008), emerges as a better explanation for the variation in the level of presidentialization among the major Polish parties. Ultimately, one has good theoretical reasons to expect a gradual increase in the level of party presidentialization. As in older democracies, post-modernization should gradually bolster the personalization of parties. Also, the institutionalization of Polish parties should gradually increase the role of a leader.

### **Constitutional structures and party presidentialization in Poland**

Poland is a semi-presidential system with a directly elected president and a prime minister who is responsible to the legislature (Elgie, 1999, p. 13). However, semi-presidentialism was not adopted as a full institutional package after the fall of communism. The negotiated agreement was meant to leave the executive under the control of the Communist Party and its satellites while Solidarity deputies were allowed to organize as a parliamentary opposition. For this reason, the presidency was endowed with wide-ranging powers, although the right to elect the officeholder was granted to the parliament (Meer Krok-Paszkowska, 1999, pp. 173–4). It was only after a Solidarity-led government was formed following the partly free elections held in June 1989, and after the Polish United Workers Party (Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza, PZPR) dissolved in January 1990, that the decision to hold direct presidential elections was taken. Popular elections for the head of state were not only motivated by the need to endow that role with democratic legitimacy, but also because of the rift created among the Solidarity deputies between the supporters of Wałęsa and Tadeusz Mazowiecki, the prime minister. Thus, the

semi-presidential institutional arrangements result from power struggles between the president, the government, and the parliament in the early 1990s (Meer Krok-Paszowska, 1999, p. 177).

The institutional change of 1990 did not encourage the same kind of political personalization, decline in the importance of ideology, and marginalization of party organization from political campaigns as the separation of executive origin had on French parties under the Fifth Republic (Samuels and Shugart, 2010a, p. 171). First, Wałęsa's leadership style during the inaugural presidential term may explain why Polish parties reacted in different ways to these institutional incentives than French parties. During his time in office (1990–95), Wałęsa's reluctance to join any political party and build a personal power base explains why none of the parties emerging from the Solidarity movement evolved as a presidential machine and an organizational resource for the incumbent president (Samuels and Shugart, 2010a, p. 175). The presidential alliance that competed in the 1993 general election was a mere association of individuals united by a pro-presidential stance. Wałęsa's reluctance to cultivate a good relationship with the opposition after the 1993 election and the center-right's inability to unite behind a candidate for the 1995 presidential contest contrasted with the Social Democrats' unity around Aleksander Kwaśniewski (Millard, 2010, p. 80). It was only after Wałęsa's defeat in 1995 that the parties of the center-right recognized this and came together to win the 1997 general election as Solidarity Election Action (*Akcja Wyborcza Solidarność*, AWS).

In addition, the high fragmentation of the Solidarity movement, coupled with the permissive electoral system used in the first completely free general election held in 1991, cancelled out any coattail effects that Wałęsa's election might have had for any of the ex-Solidarity parties in the 1991 contest. Furthermore, in comparison with Western democracies and contrary to the expected characteristics of post-communist politics, Polish electoral politics stood out because of their lack of focus on party leaders as late as 1997 (Szczurbiak, 2001a, p. 151).

In the original and woollier sense of semi-presidentialism, which requires the president to have substantial powers (Duverger, 1980), some would question whether Poland has been semi-presidential since the promulgation of a new Constitution in 1997. The greatest power retained by the Polish president is the package veto on legislation, subject to a 60 percent override by the Sejm (Art. 122.5), the lower house of the Polish parliament. The president also has a role in government formation (Art. 154), can dissolve the Sejm (Art. 98), and features in the appointments of many state officers (Art. 144), as well

as holding several other powers. The constitutional definition suits Poland because the president's actual power varies quite significantly according to political context. As in other countries, the president can fill a power vacuum when governing parties are weak. For example, in 2000 President Kwaśniewski successfully managed to impose his own cabinet on the Sejm when the Democratic Left Alliance (Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej, SLD) government of Leszek Miller imploded. An important element of context in Poland has been the president's conception of his office (McMenamin, 2008, pp. 125–8). Under the 1997 Constitution, Kwaśniewski and Bronisław Komorowski have held a relatively consensual and strategic conception of the presidency, largely staying above the party-political fray and only occasionally directly interfering in policymaking, and then from a position of strength. Kwaśniewski took a very similar line whether his own SLD were in government or whether he was cohabiting with his political opponents. Komorowski has yet to cohabit but has tended to avoid confrontation with his own party's government. For example, he has been reluctant to directly criticize the government too often. By contrast, President Kaczyński tried to use the presidency for maximum partisan advantage when cohabiting. These contrasts are, to some degree, matters of personality, but are also ideological. The Polish right has tended to advocate the unification of the head of state's symbolic power with day-to-day political power, while the liberal and left-wing parties have been content for the prime minister to dominate policymaking.

Due to Poland's semi-presidential constitutional structure, there are potentially two figures in relation to whom a political party might presidentialize – the (candidate) prime minister and the (candidate) president. In recent practice, the potential for a diarchy of (candidate) president and (candidate) prime minister has been relatively marginal and has been restricted to only one of the four major parties. The Polish Peasant Party (Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe, PSL) has always been too small to have a realistic chance of the presidency and therefore semi-presidentialism has not been a source of diarchy. The SLD did exhibit this phenomenon in the past. From 1993–95, party leader Kwaśniewski stayed out of government to concentrate on a run for the presidency and was known as the “prime-minister without portfolio.” From 2001 to 2005, he had a tense relationship with SLD Prime Minister Miller, but, by then, it was very clear that Miller controlled the party.

A significant turning point in Polish politics was when Prime Minister Tusk of the Civic Platform (Platforma Obywatelska, PO) eschewed a

second presidential campaign to continue as prime minister. The prime minister of Poland's only re-elected government had learnt, from his cohabitation with President Kaczyński, that the prime minister usually wins in intra-executive conflict. This was in contrast to Marian Krzaklewski of AWS, who avoided government in 1997 to run against Kwaśniewski in 2000. Krzaklewski made the same choice as Kwaśniewski in 1993, when he avoided cohabiting with President Wałęsa in order to run for president in 1995. Krzaklewski's humiliating defeat and the breakup of his party served as a warning to others considering abandoning government for future presidential elections.

The exception had been the Law and Justice Party (*Prawo i Sprawiedliwość*, PiS), in relation to which, during the minority coalition (2006–07), the party could have been "presidentialized" around Prime Minister Jarosław Kaczyński or his twin, President Lech Kaczyński. Since his brother's death in a controversial plane crash in 2010, Jarosław has been the only candidate for the presidentialization of the PiS.

Ministers, rather than the cabinet or prime minister, have dominated the government's legislative program, and the standing orders of the Sejm have allowed deputies a substantial input into legislation (Goetz and Zubek, 2007). The Polish Constitution requires that elections to the Sejm be "universal, equal, direct and proportional and shall be conducted by secret ballot" (Art. 96). Poland has an open-list electoral system, although there have been adjustments to, and manipulations of, the exact formula, district magnitude, and thresholds. Public funding of parties was provided to parties with over 3 percent of the vote in 1997, and to electoral alliances with at least 6 percent in 2001 (Gwiazda, 2009, p. 369).

These institutional characteristics justify a focus on the prime minister, rather than the president. They leave a wide scope for the increase in the level of party presidentialization, which involves a gradual shift in intraparty power to the benefit of leaders (Poguntke and Webb, 2005, p. 9). Control over legislation, ballot order, and state subsidies, could be concentrated in the hands of party leaders, for a high level of presidentialization, or they could be controlled by the wider party organization, or party factions, indicating a low level of party organization. The institutional structure also affects presidentialization through its effect on the party system. Semi-presidentialism has, to some extent, undermined Polish parties, very much along the lines envisaged by critics of presidentialism. On the other hand, the party-list system has supported parties in general and subsidies have favored incumbent parties.

## The genetic features of parties

Poland's party system has been very volatile since the transition of democracy (McMenamin and Gwiazda, 2011). However, it has become more stable recently (Gwiazda, 2009).

Poland's political parties have their genesis in the struggle between the communist regime and the Solidarity opposition movement in the 1980s. In the cases of the center-left Democratic Left Union (Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej, SLD) and agrarian PSL, the relationship is more or less direct. These parties inherited the property, organization, and much of the personnel and ideology of their communist-era predecessors. The SLD is the heir of the PZPR that dominated Poland until June 1989. In 1990 the party was dissolved and replaced by Social Democracy of the Polish Republic (Socjaldemokracja Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, SdPR), which jettisoned communist ideology in favor of a social democratic, secular, and pro-European standpoint. The leaders of the new party were younger PZPR elites who had already rejected much of the communist ideology and culture. The SdPR formed an electoral alliance with an array of much smaller left-wing groups, which was called the SLD. Kwaśniewski's victory in the 1995 presidential elections as a single candidate of the left allowed the SdPR to consolidate its position within the political system as it effectively dominated parliament and both elements of the dual executive (Millard, 2000, p. 45). In contrast to Wałęsa, Kwaśniewski cultivated his personal base in the party during his first presidential mandate (1995–2000) and benefited from the full support of SLD's party organization during his re-election campaign in 2000 (Millard, 2002). In 1999, the electoral alliance transformed itself into a party. The SLD formed an electoral alliance with the smaller left-wing party Labor Union (Unia Pracy, UP) in 2001, and ran as part of an electoral alliance called the Left and Democrats (Lewica i Demokraci, LiD) in 2007. The SLD has been present in all parliaments but its electoral fortunes have varied. In 2001, it won 41 percent of the vote but imploded under the pressure of a series of corruption scandals and only won 11 percent in 2005. In the 2011 election, it received 13 percent. The SLD has had several leaders, but none of them equaled Kwaśniewski's performance in uniting the party behind an unchallenged leader (Szczerbiak, 2007, p. 215). As of 2014, the leader is the veteran, Miller, who was leader from 1999 to 2004 and returned to the leadership in 2011, after a period during which he founded his own party (Pomorska, 2011). The party governed in coalition with the PSL (1993–97, 2001–04) and as a single-party minority government (2004–05).

The PSL was formed in 1990 by a merger of Polish Peasant Union (*Zjednoczone Stronnictwo Ludowe*, ZSL), a satellite party under the communist regime, and a new party, which was, in turn, a merge of the Solidarity Farmers' Union (*Niezależny Samorządny Związek Zawodowy Rolników Indywidualnych "Solidarność,"* NSZZRI) and the historic PSL, dating from the 1940s. The satellite parties were leftovers from a popular front pseudo-coalition in the 1940s. They did not contest the communist monopoly of power (Kolankiewicz and Lewis, 1988, p. 82) but constituted substantial patron–client networks. The PSL is the only Polish political party that has a clear social profile. Its organization, policy profile, and popular support are very much concentrated on rural areas. With the exception of the 1993 election at which it received 15 percent of the vote, the PSL's vote has varied between 7 percent and 9 percent, and the party is always worried about falling below the electoral threshold of 5 percent. Waldemar Pawlak has been the PSL leader for most of the party's history: (1991–97 and 2005–12). In 2013 he lost a leadership election to Janusz Piechociński (*Polish News Bulletin*, 2012a, 2012b). The party has governed in coalition with the SLD and, from 2007, with the PO.

The center-right parties can trace their origins back to the Solidarity opposition movement, but have undergone a very complex series of splits and mergers since 1990. The PO was founded in 2001 by three senior politicians, Andrzej Olechowski, Maciej Płażyński, and Donald Tusk, on the ruins of the anti-communist Solidarity Electoral Action (*Akcja Wyborcza Solidarność*, AWS) and the liberal Freedom Union (*Unia Wolności*, UW). As such, it was a center-right project, and the party remains subject to tensions between liberal, conservative, and pragmatic tendencies. Tusk gained ascendancy over the other founders and other rivals, who left not only the party but the political arena itself. He became the party's president in 2003 and was nominated to run in the 2005 presidential race. Although he lost the second election round by a clear margin, Tusk recovered to lead the PO to victory in the 2007 general election. In 2011, the PO made history when it was returned to power after four years in government with the PSL. It is the bitter rival of the right-wing PiS. PO won 24 percent of votes in 2005, before resoundingly defeating PiS in 2007 with almost 44 percent, and again in 2011 with 39 percent. Not only did Tusk assume the prime minister's position in 2007, but he also announced, in 2010, that he had no intention of contesting the presidency. Thus, the electoral context, as well as Tusk's ability to prevail in inter-executive conflicts with President Kaczyński during Poland's second period of cohabitation, explains



why the presidency is no longer the most valued political prize for this party's leadership.

PiS was founded by the Kaczyński twins, also in 2001 and also out of the ruins of AWS. The Kaczyńskis had been involved in a number of right-wing parties throughout the 1990s. Lech gained prominence as a traditionalist with a particular emphasis on law and order as Minister of Justice in the AWS–UW government and as Mayor of Warsaw. He narrowly defeated Tusk of PO in the 2005 presidential election and died in the Smolensk air crash in 2010. PiS is clearly right wing in that it is nationalist and conservative on social issues (Rosset, 2011). However, it usually emphasizes a more “solidaristic” attitude than PO (Szczerbiak, 2007). Lech's tragic death in Russian air space, and various overlapping and incompetent inquiries, statements, and actions since have increased the already emotional nature of PiS rhetoric. The party represents an important strand of Polish political culture but is very much centered on Jarosław Kaczyński. This appears to have frustrated some talented politicians and contributed to several party splits. However, the resulting new parties have failed to make an impression, and PiS is now profiting from a drop in support for PO. PiS has had steady support over the last decade or so, scoring 27 percent of the vote in 2005, 32 in 2007, and 30 in 2011, and it even led a minority coalition government (2005–07).

The Polish parties do not vary much according to the basic categories of Panebianco's (1988) account of the genesis of parties. They are all essentially internally legitimated, even though the SLD and PSL had somewhat close relationships with labor and agricultural unions in the 1990s. Also, each party developed essentially by penetration rather than diffusion. All parties were founded by professional politicians. Nevertheless, there are some potentially important differences in their origins. The PiS has been very closely identified with the Kaczyńskis, with other members only ever enjoying ephemeral public profiles. The PiS seems quite likely to be presidentialized. The PO has less personal origins and has evolved from a center-right grouping to a party of power. Nonetheless, it also began as a party of notables. Its leader has been prime minister for six years, so it too could be relatively presidentialized. However, Tusk's lack of ideological fervor and the party's access to power may have motivated a more determined challenge to the leader's control than in PiS. The SLD has a much stronger organization than its center-right competitors and a leader that cannot count on either great charisma or recent success. The PSL looks the most like a traditional mass party with its clear social profile, stable election results, large property portfolio, and relatively dense organization. Therefore, there is more potential

for limits on the leader's power. However, Pawlak's long tenure as leader might suggest the opposite.

In relation to the level of presidentialization of parties in Poland relative to other countries, we might expect Polish parties to be highly personalized, as they were born "postmodern." Their first democratic elections were held not in the context of encapsulated social groups, but rather in a situation of flux. Poland never went through the golden age of the mass party (Szczerbiak, 2001a; van Biezen, 2003). While Polish parties were born postmodern, postmodernity has developed further since the transition from communism, with further deindustrialization, the emergence of the Internet, and the increasing importance of public relations and marketing, as well as the decline of the nation state in the context of European integration and economic globalization. These trends should point toward presidentialization, as some argue they have done in older democracies (Szczerbiak, 2004; Poguntke and Webb, 2005). However, this period has also seen the consolidation of Polish democracy and many of its institutions. Parties, partly perhaps because of their postmodern genesis, have been relatively slow to institutionalize. Very uninstitutionalized parties are too unstructured for effective leadership, never mind presidentialization. Take, for example, the broad umbrella party Solidarity Electoral Action, or even the SLD in the aftermath of its implosion in 2004. Even if we had a clear expectation about the trend of presidentialization, there has been too much flux in the party system to enable a usefully long time series.

### **The level of centralized party leadership**

We examine three aspects of party organization and behavior that capture the extent to which a shift in intraparty power to the benefit of the party leader can be noticed within Polish political parties: the selection of party presidents and election candidates, electioneering, and policy and strategy (Poguntke and Webb, 2005, pp. 9–10).

In the PO, the leadership franchise was initially restricted to the parliamentary party. Maciej Płażyński, the party's first president, was elected by the PO parliamentary group formed after the 2001 general election. After Płażyński left in 2003, Tusk was elected by the national convention to succeed him and then re-elected in 2006 and 2010. In June 2013, Tusk asked the executive board to give all party members the right to choose their president. This reform was adopted when the party experienced falling support in opinion polls and was losing ground in local by-elections. Ahead of the 2010 presidential election, PM Tusk

proposed that the party's presidential candidate be selected through primary elections (Gazeta Prawna, 2010). Bronisław Komorowski, the Speaker of the Sejm, and Radosław Sikorski, the Foreign Affairs Minister, competed. The turnout was slightly lower than 50 percent of registered members and Komorowski won with 68.5 percent (Gazeta Wyborcza, 2010a). In June 2010, Komorowski won the presidential election against Jarosław Kaczyński (see Figure 6.1).

More intraparty democracy has not meant more competition. Tusk has never had to compete against more than one challenger. Maciej Płażyński and Andrzej Olechowski, cofounders of the party along with Tusk, as well other prominent leaders, preferred to leave the party rather than to confront Tusk. In 2010, only 3 of the 872 delegates to the National Convention voted against him (Gazeta Wyborcza, 2010b) (see Figure 6.2).

There has been some factionalism in the PO. Former Interior Minister Grzegorz Schetyna attempted to undermine Tusk's position in the party (Gazeta Wyborcza, 2010c). Schetyna's defeat was completed in December 2013, when he was not re-elected to the party's executive board (Stankiewicz, 2013). In April 2013, Tusk sacked Justice Minister Jarosław Gowin, who decided to challenge PM Tusk in the first party election open to grassroots members. Shortly after losing the party race, Gowin left the PO and formed a new political party.

The new party statute adopted in June 2013 is permissive enough to allow candidates who are supported either by the central leadership or by local organizations to run for the presidency of the party. The organizational reform carried out in the PO in 2013 did not, however, extend to the candidate selection process. The central leadership and the party president preserved their full control over the composition of electoral lists (Bichta, 2010, p. 174). Tusk's extensive authority over the party organization has been put down to his control over the electoral lists (Fusiecki and Szpala, 2006).

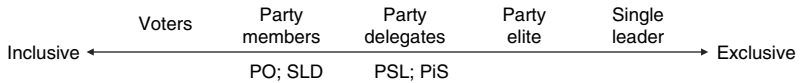


Figure 6.1 The level of exclusiveness in parties' selectorate in Poland  
 Source: Authors' elaboration. Hazan and Rahat (2010, 35)

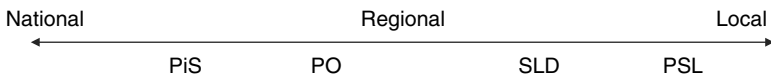


Figure 6.2 The level of centralization in political parties in Poland  
 Source: Authors' elaboration. Hazan and Rahat (2010, 35)

The PiS leader is elected by the triennial National Congress (Art. 12.4). The delegates to the party congress are *ex officio* members and territorial delegates. The territorial delegates must comprise two thirds of the total (Art. 13). The statute does not mention any special requirements that must be satisfied by party members in order to run for the party president position. In spite of the relative permissiveness of the leadership contest rules and the inclusiveness of the party selectorate, the PiS leadership elections have always been “coronations” (Kenig, 2009, p. 244). Jarosław Kaczyński has always been re-elected unopposed and almost by unanimity (Gazeta Wyborcza, 2006; Gazeta Wyborcza, 2007; Graczyk, 2010; Rzeczpospolita, 2013).

The PiS leader can appoint up to 10 percent of the Political Council (Art. 16.2.6). The president’s authority also extends over the leadership of local party organizations. The presidents of district boards (*zarządokręgowy*) are elected by district congresses (*zjazdokręgowy*) at the president’s request (Art. 26.5.a). Furthermore, he draws up and submits the list of candidates for national and European elections, for the Political Committee’s approval (Art. 15.2.9).

The SLD’s defeat in the 2011 general election after spending six years in the opposition led to a complete reorganization of the party. With a score of just over 8 percent of the vote, the SLD parliamentary group was comprised of only 27 deputies and no senators. Shortly after the election, SLD leader Grzegorz Napieralski called for the organization of an Extraordinary Congress to elect a caretaker president, and announced his decision not to run in the race. In October 2011, Miller succeeded Napieralski as president of the SLD parliamentary group. He was also elected as the party’s interim president at the Extraordinary Congress organized in December 2011 (Pomorska, 2011). The 2011 Congress also decided to open up the party leadership contest to all party members and scheduled the election for April 2012. The SLD was thus first Polish party to fully democratize the party leadership election. Miller intends to rebuild the party, strengthen its organization, and underline its distinct identity against other center-left competitors, such as Your Movement (TR) (Twój Ruch, previously Ruch Palikota) (Skrzypek, 2012).

According to the new SLD statute adopted at the 2012 Congress, the president of the party is elected by all party members (Art. 24). Party members of six months’ standing can run for any leadership position in the party (Art. 9.3). Miller won 92 percent of 37,000 votes (Kublik and Czuchnowski, 2012). The central party office dominates both the electoral process and the selection of central leadership bodies.

The extensive organizational network inherited from the communist era has allowed the PSL to come closer to the mass-party model than

any other Polish party (Szczerbiak, 2001a, p. 38). The formal distribution of power within the party's decision-making structures reveals the subordination of the party in public office to the central leadership and the ability of the rank-and-file intermediary bodies to hold the leadership to account and to influence the composition of electoral lists (Szczerbiak, 2001b). The PSL is the only party where the procedural rules of its parliamentary group are developed by the National Executive Committee and need to be approved by the Supreme Council (Art. 60.1.i). In 1997, the party executive voted to remove the deputy premier and Agriculture Minister, Roman Jagieliński, from government (Szczerbiak, 2001b, p. 563).

Also, the party's intermediary bodies, such as the Congress, the Supreme Council, and the National Electoral Convention, have considerable influence over the appointment and dismissal of the members in the central membership. Half of the members in the Executive Committee were dismissed after Pawlak's defeat in the 1995 presidential election (Szczerbiak, 2001b, p. 564).

The composition of the National Congress that elects the party leader exhibits the power of the party grassroots. It is made up of both *ex officio* and territorial delegates. The number of regional delegates depends on the number of votes cast for the PSL list in parliamentary and local elections in each region, on the membership size of each regional organization, and on "other aspects of activity" (Art. 14.c). The candidates for the party leadership are nominated by the Electoral Commission of the Congress or may be put forward by at least 50 Congress delegates (Art. 63.2). However, the PSL statute stipulates that at least two candidates must compete for the presidency of the party, as well as for the presidency of each territorial unit (Art. 11.4).

The PSL statute grants local organizations considerable autonomy and influence over the composition of the party's electoral lists. The main power to select candidates for local and national elections is reserved for provincial organizations. The central leadership's recommendations are not binding. The influence of local organizations in the PSL statute has not, however, entailed an excessive weakening of the central leadership. The powers of the party leader and the Executive Committee are more broadly defined in the party statute than those of the intermediary bodies to which they are accountable (Art. 64; Art. 67–8).

Under Pawlak, the party came across as centralized and leader-dominated (Janicki, 1994). His cabinet position gave him the legitimacy to rule the party with a strong hand as long as he could deliver electoral success. However, his leadership was challenged by the low score

he obtained in the 2010 presidential election, and by PSL's feeble performance in the 2011 general election. He was challenged on this ground by Janusz Piechociński, who had previously competed against him in intraparty elections and lost (Polish News Bulletin, 2012b). Pawlak asked Piechociński to run for the presidency of the party at the 2012 Congress (Polish News Bulletin, 2012a). Unexpectedly, Piechociński won the race by just 17 votes and replaced Pawlak as leader and in government.

Studying the presidentialization of party electioneering is not easy. Newspaper reports and broadcast coverage are mediated. Party documents are intended for internal and media consumption. Politicians know that hardly any voters read them. Opinion polls sometimes ask about the importance of leadership or particular personalities. Such an approach measures mass behavior, not the nature of the parties themselves. However, election spots provide a good unmediated measure of how a party tries to appeal to voters.<sup>1</sup> Poland's most recent legislative election was held on October 9, 2011. The proportion of coverage dedicated to the leader in turn presents a straightforward measure of the presidentialization of electioneering. It is also possible to observe differences in the nature of the presentation of the leader across a wide spectrum, from that of a spokesperson for a set of policies to the personal characteristics of a charismatic leader. Broadly speaking, the election spots agree with the evidence from the party organization. The PiS spots centered on the personality of the leader and his deceased brother. The PO's spots tended to be dominated by Tusk but other senior politicians were also prominent. In the SLD's spots, the leaders came across as just members of the team. The PSL's spots often did not feature any politician at all, but Pawlak was more prominent than any other candidate.

Gauging the presidentialization of party policy and strategy in Poland, understood as the extent to which party leaders exercise power *past* rather than *through* parties (Poguntke and Webb, 2005, pp. 8–9) is also a relatively fraught affair. Intraparty tensions between executive candidates concerned with vote maximization at the expense of policy maximization phenomena are unlikely in Poland, where parties do not have century-old party programs or ideological traditions. Indeed, only the SLD and PSL can go back as far as 20 years. They began by disowning much of the history and ideology of their communist-era predecessors. Polish parties are ideologically diverse but pragmatic, reducing the potential for disagreements between leaders and members on such issues. Nonetheless, there must be some distribution of power between leaders and others in relation to party policy and strategy. One potential indicator is cabinet appointments. Since ministers have tended to

have a substantial amount of legislative autonomy, leaders can have the most impact by selecting ministers who will conform to their policy and strategic preferences. Most discussions of ministerial appointments contrast the prime minister's power with that of the president. When prime ministers need to share this power it is because the party leader has remained outside the cabinet (Jednaka, 2004, pp. 184–8; Śmiłowicz, 2005; Leszczyńska, 2007, p. 89) or because they have to take into account the preferences of the leader of a coalition party. So, in most cases, it is very difficult to separate the power of the leader and the power of the party. One way in which the two could be separated would be if the leader were to select ministers from outside the party, thereby very clearly signaling his autonomy. Some Polish prime ministers have sought to do this (Jednaka, 2004, pp. 143–6, 180; Leszczyńska, 2007, p. 58). Unfortunately, for good reasons, non-partisan appointments are usually regarded as due to presidential influence. Further research should consider the extent to which non-partisan cabinet appointments are also used by prime ministers in order to increase their ability to govern past their parties.

Defection is probably a better indicator of the level of presidentialization of policy and strategy. Politicians who leave a party will often claim to do so for ideological reasons, while their former party leaders will claim they left because of political ambition.

A quantitative study of legislative switching in four Polish parliaments did uncover some very limited evidence for ideological switching, but this effect was dwarfed by switching motivated by an increase in re-election chances (McMenamin and Gwiazda, 2011, p. 852). The most important defection suffered by PO has been that of former Minister of Justice, Jarosław Gowin. Gowin had always been a prominent advocate of conservative views within PO and had been upset by the government's treatment of in vitro fertilization and other issues with a pronounced conservative sensitivity. His co-defector, John Godson, also had a clear conservative profile. It is clear that Tusk saw their ideological assertiveness as a challenge. It is not so clear that this episode indicates the presidentialization of policy and strategy within the PO. Conservatism had always been a tendency, not a central ideology, for the PO. The party was originally founded by the remnants of liberal and conservative parties and always had a rather broad, catch-all character. Indeed, liberals have also complained that the PO's economic policy has not been sufficiently free-market focused.

The PiS is perhaps a more interesting example. Its most prominent split was the expulsion of another former Minister of Justice, Zbigniew

Ziobro, and several of his associates. Most commentators agree that the PiS gains popularity when it reaches beyond its core right-wing constituency by emphasizing bread-and-butter issues at the expense of emotional matters and symbolism (Szczerbiak, 2013). Kaczyński's justification for expelling Ziobro and associates was that they had refused to follow agreed party electoral strategy and were disrupting the party with their personal political ambitions (Polska Agencja Prasowa, 2011b). The expelled claimed to be motivated by the party's disappointing second defeat to the PO in 2011. They stood for a democratization of the party, an opening to different milieux, and a concentration on the important issues, namely the economy and holding the government to account (Polska Agencja Prasowa, 2011a). Ziobro was the second most popular politician in the PiS, and many activists sympathized with his fate. Thus, this episode probably does indicate a presidentialization of policy and strategy, but Kaczyński asserted his prerogative not to move toward the center but rather to cleave to the party's shibboleths.

### **The presidentialization of parties**

Poland's semi-presidential institutional framework has had a limited impact on the behavior and organization of political parties. Wałęsa's inaugural presidency and his anti-party stance might explain, to a certain extent, why ex-Solidarity parties have not developed as rallies around their leaders and presidential candidates during the 1990s. The fragmentation of the center-right during the 1990s, followed by splits in the center-left in the first half of the 2000s, also accounts for the difficulty with which party leaders have been able to keep the party united around their own personality. Cohabitation periods have also taken their expected toll on party presidentialization (Samuels and Shugart, 2010a, pp. 83–8) by increasing the importance of the prime ministerial position at the expense of the presidency. Although there is variation in the extent to which capturing the presidency is important for political parties, overall, Poland's directly elected presidency has not focused politics on national leadership, nor has it defined the presidential election as a first-order political contest.

Judging the presidentialization of parties from the perspective of the shift in intraparty power to the benefit of the leader, we can aggregate the three areas of party personalization (election rules, electioneering, and policy and strategy) in a straightforward manner. The PiS is undoubtedly the most personalized of the three parties. The PSL is the least personalized in terms of electioneering and election rules, even if



it is harder to tell to what extent policy and strategy is controlled by the leader. The PO and the SLD are moderately personalized, in spite of the adoption of a wide franchise for the election of party leader. This is often a strategy for the party leader to outmaneuver challengers. The PO appears more personalized than the SLD in electioneering and policy and strategy, and perhaps in terms of election rules.

Given the reduced impact of the directly elected presidency on the organization and behavior of Polish political parties since early 2000s, the genetic approach provides a more satisfactory account for much of this variation. The PiS and PO were internally created parties that have always been very oriented toward their elected representatives, even if the PO has offered all members a vote in important elections and the PiS has joined or instigated mass demonstrations. The SLD and PSL inherited an organizational structure from their communist-era predecessors. The genetic approach can also distinguish the PSL from the SLD. The PSL continues to represent a very specific social category, while the SLD has tried to appeal to many sectors of society. The genetic approach cannot really distinguish between the PiS and the PO. In the cases of the short histories of the PiS and PO it is hardly worthwhile. The level of personalization in the SLD has undoubtedly changed in reaction to the extreme variation in the party's electoral fortunes. The PSL has probably undergone much more muted changes in the role of its leader in response to electoral setbacks, but then its electoral reverses have been marginal compared to those suffered by the SLD.

## Conclusions

Political parties may presidentialize even in premier-presidential systems, where the cabinet is formally accountable only to the legislature, if presidents can use their informal, *de facto* position as party leader to control the executive (Samuels and Shugart, 2010a, p. 121). Given the wide-ranging powers granted to the presidency under the Roundtable Agreement and in the Little Constitution, the ability of Polish parties to overcome the formal configuration of authority and act like fully parliamentarized parties might seem puzzling at first sight. However, the continuous transformation of the Polish party system during the period of democratic transition, and the fragmentation of both the center-right and the center-left on ideological grounds, have prevented a lasting impact of the dual-executive format on political competition. Overall, there is little evidence that the dual-executive constitutional format has "reduced the importance of ideology, decreased the importance of party

organization in campaigns and in policy formulation, and increased the level of personalization in both interparty and intraparty politics” (Samuels and Shugart, 2010a, p. 179).

The second understanding of party presidentialization was developed to capture some important trends in party politics and organization that appeared to be effects of the broader post-modernization of politics and society in old democracies, across different regime types. Therefore, it is somewhat questionable how useful the concept is when applied to a post-communist polity that was, to a large extent, born postmodern. A major concern for democratization and post-communist studies has instead been that of institutionalization. We should expect institutionalization and post-modernization to work in opposite directions in relation to party personalization, so it is difficult to study trends in Poland in the same vein as in older democracies. More prosaically than these theoretical problems, empirically there has been too much flux in the Polish party system to trace levels of presidentialization over time.

Nonetheless, the level of presidentialization is an important difference between political parties. We have found that Polish parties do vary quite substantially in their level of presidentialization. We have also found that the genetic approach appears to be a good explanation for much of that variation. Poland was a difficult test for the genetic approach, which was, yet again, developed for older democracies, and, indeed, before the fall of communism. This is an impressive achievement for any theory, especially a relatively inductive one.

Comparatively, Poland’s parties should be relatively presidentialized, even if there is some, but less, potential for institutionalization to confuse the issue again. The post-modernization and genetic approaches both predict high presidentialization in Poland, for essentially the same reason. Polish parties were born in the postmodern era. They began to compete in a country that had skipped the era of mass democratic politics. Therefore, they had much less opportunity and incentive to develop modern mass-membership parties. It was easier and more effective to establish postmodern, personalized parties.

## Note

1. We looked at election spots from July onwards, placing more emphasis on those uploaded in September and October. We concentrated on national spots, rather than those for particular regions or constituencies, which, unsurprisingly, featured local candidates.