Journal of Liberty and International Affairs · Volume 10 · Number 2 · 2024 · eISSN 1857-9760
Published online by the Institute for Research and European Studies at www.e-jlia.com

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(*) Corresponding author
Peer review method: Double-blind
Original scientific article
DOI: https://doi.org/10.47305/JLIA24102014s
Received: 09.04.2024 • Accepted after revision: 10.06.2024 • Published: 12.06.2024
Pages: 14-32

The "Revival" of PiS: The Transformation of Campaign Strategies from the Kaczyński Twins to Andrzej Duda

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Abstract: *The paper analyzes the campaign strategies of the "Prawo i Sprawiedliwość" (PiS) political party during the Polish elections from 2009 to 2020. It examines how the gradual modernization of communication strategies and the adoption of a less aggressive narrative contributed to the party's revival after a decline in support caused by the political crisis of 2007 and the death of leader Lech Kaczyński in 2010. The research aims to identify the changes in campaigning that contributed to regaining electoral success since the 2015 national elections. The analysis is based on audio-visual materials produced by PiS for the elections during both the "crisis" period (2009-2013) and the "revival" period (2014-2020), allowing for a comparative analysis of the main changes between these two periods. Through content analysis of these materials, the study investigates the topics, genres, formats, national and European dimensions, personalization strategies, and use of negative advertising.*

Keywords: *Polish Elections; PiS; Campaigning; Visual Politics; Personalization; Audio-Visual; Political Communication; Propaganda*

INTRODUCTION

The political party "Prawo i Sprawiedliwość" (PiS) has experienced some phases of transformation as proved by the entrance of new political personalities within the party's structure, e.g., Andrzej Duda as President, both Beata Szydło and Mateusz Morawiecki as Prime Minister, the re-defining of the political manifesto, and the use of a less "violent, nationalist, and conservative" narrative. The main changes have followed a period of crisis for the political party. The decline of consensus among the citizens and the loss of votes could be considered a result of a season of internal uncertainty within the party due to the unexpected death of its leadership, Lech Kaczyński, and the end of the "honeymoon" phase, which characterized the party from its founding in 2001 till the early collapse of the government that led to the anticipated elections in 2007.

The work aims to identify the main transformations of PiS campaigning strategies through the study of electoral campaign materials produced for the Presidential, Parliamentary, and European elections between 2009 and 2020, and the analysis is focused on the audio-visual materials. These messages are entirely managed by the parties or candidates, free from any manipulation by the mainstream "media logic" (Altheide and Snow 1979). They are also characterized by high adaptability and effectiveness on social network sites - which nowadays represent the leading platforms for political propaganda (Chadwick 2013).

Political advertising is a valid object to study political parties' strategies, specifically topics, visual and aesthetic forms, languages and narratives, and personalization strategies, and

to investigate the historical and political contexts and the cultural and visual heritage in different countries (Kaid and Holtz-Bacha 2006; Veneti et al. 2019).

In line with this work's goals, analyzing the audio-visual materials produced by the PiS during the electoral campaigns allows us to outline the transformation of the PiS campaign strategies, which appear to have played a role in regaining success and support since 2015. The analysis focuses on propaganda videos spread via television (TV commercials) and social media and produced by PiS during two different periods: firstly, the years characterized by the decline of consensus and the fall of the PiS founders and leaders, Lech and Jarosław Kaczyński, namely the "crisis" period (2009-2013), and secondly the years marked by the beginning of a transition process and the advent of new candidates, Andrzej Duda, Beata Szydło, and Mateusz Morawiecki, namely the "revival" period (2014-2020).

The chronological analysis and the comparison between the campaign strategies used by PiS during these two dissimilar periods offer us an effective overview of the political party's transformations during the two decades analyzed. Moreover, using objects and methods of political communication and visual studies, specifically election campaigns and audio-visual propaganda, the work provides a new approach to observing the political, cultural, and social heritage of political parties and countries.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODS

The analysis is focused on electoral materials, in particular on political advertising, which is defined as the communication process through which political candidates or parties get the opportunity to diffuse their political messages through the mass media to influence political attitudes, beliefs, or behaviors of the voters (Kaid 1981; Paletz and Vinson 1994). The spread of short, creative, and persuasive audio-visual messages by television can reduce the distance between politics and civil society, reaching voters directly in their "homes", persuading them with suggestive and emotional images, and giving them the role of "spectators" (Bodrato 1991). TV ads are considered the first form of "politics of the spectacle" characterized by spectacular narrative, aesthetic visual style, "common" language, and simplification of issues discussed. All these elements contribute to making politics more understandable and bringing the political system closer to the everyday life of citizens (Diamond and Bates 1984; Kellner 2017). As parties and candidates control political advertising and thus are not subject to manipulation by the media system and its professionals, it is a valid object for analyzing the political parties' communication strategies and electoral campaigning.

The transformations of political communication resulting from the advent of the web and the intensive use of the SNS have increased the interest in audio-visual materials (Bimber 2003; Chadwick 2013; Esser and Strömbäck 2014; Papacharissi 2016) and have stimulated some crucial changes in languages, styles, and rules of the traditional forms of political communication (Grabe and Bucy 2009; Veneti et al. 2019). Audio-visual propaganda seems to be experiencing a new significance, mainly because of the low production and dissemination costs, the possibility of creating original, unconventional, and innovative products, and equal access to these platforms for minor political forces.

The exponential increase in audio-visual materials' production, circulation, and consumption brings back some "older" questions and troubles. Should the electoral campaigns

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be based more on the strategies and principles of marketing than on the political manifestos and candidates' competencies? Is there an "ethical problem" in giving images and emotions a dominant position at the disadvantage of arguments and issues? Is it "the best man" or "the most telegenic performer" who wins the election? (Diamond and Bates 1984).

The corpus comprises 128 audio-visual materials[1] produced by the PiS party during the Parliamentary, Presidential, and European elections from 2009 to 2020. The videos were diffused via televisions, official websites, and social network accounts.

Table 1: Number of Videos Produced for each Election by PiS from 2009 to 2020 (Source: Data collected by the author)

Year	Type of Elections	No. of Videos
2009	European	17
2010	Presidential	3
2011	Parliamentary	4
2014	European	13
2015	Presidential	29
2015	Parliamentary	21
2019	European	8
2019	Parliamentary	14
2020	Presidential	19
Total		**128**

The audio-visual messages are complex objects composed of a combination of different components and concepts, such as the verbal and non-verbal elements, the modalities for the building of a specific candidate's image, the defining of arguments, narratives, and the framing strategies (Kaid and Davidson 1986; Kaid and Johnston 2001). It is possible to catch this complexity and to observe the meanings of the audio-visual materials as a whole using the methods of content analysis, defined as a set of procedures that aim to deconstruct a complex object into more straightforward elements, i.e., the variables, which allow capturing its constitutive components (Benoit 2011; Krippendorff 2019). In his earliest reflections, Berelson (1952) considers content analysis as a research method that can describe the contents and meanings of a message in an objective, systematic, and quantitative manner. Thus, we can "interrogate" the objects of the research corpus with a single codebook that allows us to compare the various components, such as themes, genres, styles and languages, national and European dimensions, personalization strategies, and many others.

The codebook[2], created to analyze the audio-visual materials diffused by social media and televisions during the nine election campaigns in 2009-2020, includes 24 variables divided into three parts: basic information, content-related variables, and format-related variables.

[1]The author collects videos browsing on the official website and official SN profiles (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube) of the PiS party. The corpus could be considered as the universe of cases.

[2]Besides the testing on some materials finalized to get strengths and weaknesses of the codebook, the validity is also evaluated by the comparison with other works focusing on the same goals: Holtz-Bacha, C., et alii. 2012. "Advertising for Europe. TV Ads during the 2009 European Election Campaign in Four Countries". *Nordicom Review* 33, no. 2: 77-92; Holtz-Bacha et al. 2017. *Political Advertising in the 2014 European Parliament Elections*. London: Palgrave

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The first part collects the basic details related to each video, i.e., year and type of elections, length, and description; it is necessary to organize the entire corpus.

The second part gathers the content-related variables, such as the topic addressed (economics, labor, welfare, security, values, politics, immigration, environment, social issues), the evaluation of the European Union (criticism of EU policies, institutions, and its representatives), the general dimension of the message (national/European), the personalization strategy (presence of leader/candidate), and the negative advertising (presence of direct attack to national or European politicians/institutions/other representatives).

The third part collects format-related variables to analyze the aesthetic forms, styles, and languages of videos, in particular the tone(positive/negative), the purpose (acclaim/attack), the genres (program, biographical, talking-head, common people, testimonial, feeling good, negative), and the formats (graphic animation, historical/documentary, fiction, real life).

The content analysis of the 128 videos offers a comparative overview of the main trends, strategies, and aesthetic forms used by the PiS party in the European, Presidential, and Parliamentary election campaigns that took place in the period 2009-2020 and provides an analysis of the transformations occurred not only considering the evolution of the party, particularly its "crisis" and "revival" periods but also relating them to the Polish domestic context.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The "Crisis" Period (2009-2013): The End of the Kaczyński Twins' Hegemony

PiS focuses the 2009 EPE campaign on the domestic context. The nationalist and conservative nature of the campaigning is finalized to preserve the national interests versus the European ones and to enhance Poland's political role in Europe. The most discussed topics are unemployment, the reform of the retirement system and public health, the modernization of the infrastructure thanks to the EU funds, the protection of the local economy, and the opposition to both euro and market liberalization. The economic crisis, which is a trending topic in the other member states (Mosca and Novelli 2010), is still marginalized in Poland since the national economy is among the least affected by the 2008 crisis (Szczerbiak 2010; Gagatek et al. 2010).

Not being able to count on the figure of President Lech Kaczyński, who remains in office after the distrust of the PiS government, and neither on the "weak" figure of ex-Prime Minister Jarosław Kaczyński, the party urges new strategies to overcome the leadership gap and to re-establish its credibility. Thus, it uses a polarized narrative based on the opposition between the two main Polish political parties, the ruling party, "Prawo i Sprawiedliwość" (PiS), and the opposition party, "Platforma Obywatelska" (PO), and the negative campaign towards the members of the PO, notably Donald Tusk, Ewa Kopacz, and Bronisław Komorowski.

The two ads entitled "Yes, We Can't" and "A Yellow Card to the PO" (Figure 1) aim to criticize the action and credibility of the incumbent PO government by highlighting the "broken promises" of the 2007 electoral manifesto.

Macmillan; Novelli et al. 2022. *The 2019 European Electoral Campaign in the Time of Populism and Social Media*. Cham-Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.

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Figure 1: Video Produced for 2009 European Elections (Source: PiS 2009)

Images of supporters and voters who join events by waving a yellow card are central in evoking a feeling of belonging to a community, but also to foster confidence in the PiS party by comparing what the PO didn't achieve and what PiS could do for Poland. Several attacks addressed to Donald Tusk have a double purpose. He is the expression of the PO government as Prime Minister and the EU as part of the Polish political élite who supports and encourages relations with European institutions. Direct attacks are also used against other personalities, such as the German Chancellor Angela Merkel, the French President Nicolas Sarkozy, and the Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The emotion-based materials intend to affect the voters on an emotional rather than a logical-rational level. Only two videos in which Jarosław Kaczyński and PiS members present the points of the party's manifesto have an informative purpose. The simple and basic structure of the program and talking-head formats are balanced using animations and graphics, humor, and linguistic games, which make the narrative less "boring" and the personal attacks "soften".

The Presidential and Parliamentary elections are characterized by the rebuilding of Jarosław Kaczyński's image, which is even more necessary after the death of President Lech Kaczyński and his wife in the accident at the Russian Smoleńsk Airport occurred while traveling to Katyń for the commemoration of the 1940 massacre of Polish soldiers and citizens by the Russian services.

The Presidential election campaign is influenced by the "Smoleńsk effects" (Żukiewicz and Zimny 2015) that forced political parties to focus the campaign on issues, then limiting personal issues and attacks. As a result, candidates decide to avoid talking about the past but to focus on the future of Poland; to restrict the covering of foreign policy issues and the violent narrative, especially concerning Russia; to target attacks on policies and not on people, particularly about former President Lech Kaczyński out of respect.

Despite his earlier failures, PiS endorses Jarosław Kaczyński and emphasizes his image. The feeling-good ads point to the future and identify the "heroic" leader as a guide and a new opportunity to improve Poland and its citizens. The new strategy leads to a change in the relationship between the candidate and citizens: previously, the "distance" contributed to allocating authority and competence to the candidate, as confirmed by the "coldly", formal, and non-empathic talking-head ads; now, the leader seems to be closer to the citizens, and the "proximity" is reached through the common people ads (Figure 2).

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Jarosław Kaczyński gives up the harsh and violent narrative to promote the image of a compassionate and kind leader - raising quite a few doubts about the credibility of his new soft communication strategy (Rosset 2011; Żukiewicz and Zimny 2015).



Figure 2: Video Produced for 2010 Presidential Elections (Source: PiS 2010)

PiS leaves this unusual *soft* narration at the next Parliamentary elections, refocusing the campaign on the "cultural war", ethnoreligious nationalism, and xenophobia. The anti-European attitude and criticism of Putin's expansionist ambitions are back (Tworzecki 2012), as is the negative advertising towards the PO government and the outgoing Prime Minister Donald Tusk. The PO-PiS opposition emerges from the polarization between modernity and tradition, influenced on the one hand by the escalation of the religious dimension of PiS, which highlights resistance to cultural and social modernization, and on the other hand, by the intention of PO to reinforce the role of Poland in the EU through a social and economic modernization (Szczerbiak 2013).

The "Revival" Period (2014-2020): The Transformation of the Campaign Strategies

The Advent of the New Leadership: Andrzej Duda

During the 2014 and 2015 elections, PiS began changing its communication strategies to overcome the crisis caused by the previous electoral defeats. Firstly, the candidacies of the "young" Andrzej Duda and the "woman" Beata Szydło for the 2014 EPE are crucial to give them visibility and to acquire consensus given the following national polls. Jarosław Kaczyński maintains his centrality, as emerges in many videos analyzed. He's portrayed at rallies and conventions with many voters, evoking a sense of membership and cohesion within the party. PiS supports the new candidates through talking-head videos that emphasize their competence and reliability and are dedicated to economics, labor (Figure 3), and family (Figure 4). The campaign promotes the candidates and the electoral manifesto, opting for a simple narrative and realism. Thus, there is a lack of innovation regarding formats and topics.

Negative advertising is hardly used compared to the previous period, as is the presence of a few videos evoking the party's conservative, religious, and traditionalist ideology.

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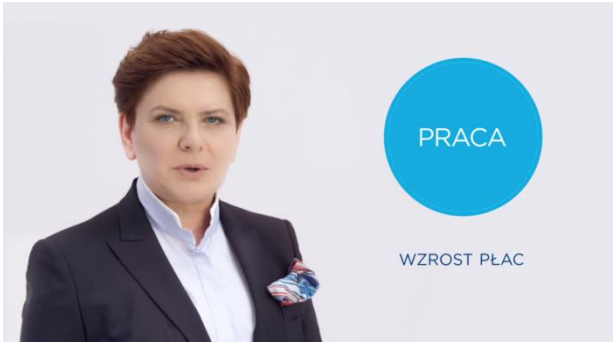


Figure 3: Video Produced for 2014 European Elections (Source: PiS 2014)



Figure 4: Video Produced for 2014 European Elections (Source: PiS 2014)

The European Union's issues are weakly covered, but the EU is mentioned regarding the Ukrainian crisis, which started with the Euromaidan protests on 21 November 2013. On one side, the PiS stresses the importance of European security because of Russian aggression against the neighboring countries. On the other hand, it demands new reforms to manage the arrival of Ukrainian refugees in Poland (Cichosz 2014; Sula 2014).

The efficiency of the new strategy was confirmed by the 2015 Presidential and Parliamentary election results, which marked the end of the party's "crisis". The "freshness" of the new candidates, Duda and Szydło, and the strategic use of social media play a central role in the party's modernization (Peszyński 2016). According to the so-called "contemporary authoritarian populism" (Inglehart and Norris 2017), PiS adopts an anti-establishment position, focusing the campaign on the preservation of national identity and traditional values, and stands up "for the people". The electoral debate is mainly centered around domestic issues, allowing the PiS to attack the activity of the previous government led by the PO. The leitmotifs for the campaign are both the opposition between the old politics embodied by the outgoing President Komorowski and the new politics embodied by the future President Duda, as well as the polarization realized by the clash between the dissatisfaction towards the old politics and the will for change expressed by the new politics. The comparative strategy is also used to contrast the images of the old and tired Komorowski with the young and energetic Duda, who becomes the symbol of the ongoing change (Fomina and Kucharczyk 2016). Duda's image is also supported by the presence of his wife, Agata Kornhauser-Duda, in some biographical

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videos, where Duda is shown as a "common man" engaged in daily activities, such as walking in the park (Figure 5) and having lunch with his family, but also during public events and rallies (Figure 6). Whereas the earlier PiS strategies were focused on the political life of the Kaczyński twins to provide authority and credibility, now the party uses the private and common life to reduce the distance between the candidate and the voters.



Figure 5: Video Produced for 2015 Presidential Elections (Source: PiS 2015)



Figure 6: Video Produced for 2015 Presidential Elections (Source: PiS 2015)

In addition, Duda talks about economic growth, industry and agriculture, reforms, and employment in many talking-head videos with a black background where lots of data and overlay graphics are provided. These informative videos are very different from the emotional ones, where music, images, aesthetic forms, and symbols are more important than data. The migration issue aligns with the PiS rhetoric based on cultural and religious diversities, security and criminality, and control of national borders. Various symbols evoke national identity, including family and Christian values, national foods, traditions and folkloristic elements, landscapes and monuments, and cultural icons. Economic instability offers new opportunities to address young people and talk to them about new employment policies. The position on the EU issue is quite ambiguous because there is strong opposition to the eurozone and full support for the integration process and the membership, as stated in the slogan "Yes to Europe. No to the Euro".

The candidacy of Beata Szydło in the 2015 Parliamentary elections is necessary to increase consensus and attract new targets, such as younger people and women. The unpopularity of the candidate protects her from attacks by political opponents, and the

promotion of its image and competence becomes the main campaign goal. The debate is issues-oriented, i.e., reforms for family, health services, and retirements, confirming the typical narrative frame of the PiS, such as national identity and sovereignty, traditions, and Christian values. The significant use of images of family, in particular the children with a direct recall of the social role of mothers (Figure 7; Figure 8), is a very efficient strategy in the presence of a female candidate who promises to develop a better country for the citizens of the future. Compared to the previous Presidential elections, there is a more extensive use of negative ads to highlight the incapacity and unreliability of the incumbent party, starting from the scandals involving the PO-led government.



Figure 7: Video Produced for 2015 Parliamentary Elections (Source: PiS 2015)



Figure 8: Video Produced for 2015 Parliamentary Elections (Source: PiS 2015)

The "Moderate Turn" and De-Radicalization Strategy

Despite the strong results in the Presidential and Parliamentary elections of 2015, PiS experienced a decline in support in the following years. Therefore, the 2015 and 2020 elections are crucial to test the transition from the Kaczynski twins' leadership to the Duda one.

The 2019 European elections have a national focus to probe the salience of specific issues and to identify the needs and attitudes of citizens. The European elections are considered a preparatory phase to the Parliamentary elections scheduled a few months later by both the political party and the voters, according to their nature of "second-order elections" (Reif and Schmitt 1980). PiS government decides to strategically implement "Kaczynski's five major

proposals" just in the run-up to the European elections, contributing to the campaign agenda (Zaręba 2019). Apart from the 2015 narration centered on the change, the campaign is focused on the concepts of unity and community, as emerges from the slogan "team of good change", and on the preservation of the Christian values, traditions, and national identity, primarily through a solid opposition to the common actions within the migration crisis and an increasing criticism against EU institutions. The talking-head videos - a distinctive treat of the Duda and Szydło's previous campaigns - are replaced by feeling-good videos. The soft narration contributes to underlining the party's stability and strength and overcoming the PiS internal contrasts that might influence voters' consensus. PiS exploits the Internet's opportunities to use unconventional formats and languages, especially for negative ads. The "empty promises" campaign contains a series of attacks towards PO, including Ewa Kopacz, Donald Tusk, and the leader of the opposition, Grzegorz Schetyna, who was accused of breaking electoral promises and not defending national interests in the EU by the PiS.

The 2019 Parliamentary elections represent an unusual time for PiS because of its role as the incumbent party. The victory isn't given due to several challenging situations, such as the strike of teachers demanding higher salaries, the protests of taxi drivers against Uber, the recurrent constitutional violations, the threats to the independence of the Courts, the control over the public media system, and the anti-liberal and anti-European positions (Markowski 2020). PiS attempted a "moderate turn" to contrast justice reform between the conservative government majority and President Duda and to de-radicalize the government by replacing Prime Minister Szydło with the Minister of Economics Mateusz Morawiecki in 2017. Partly due to his experience as President of the Bank Zachodni WBK (2007-2015), the new Prime Minister re-establishes relations with the EU, notably after the EU Commission initiatives to secure the rule of law of Poland and to face the Polish opposition over the non-compliance migrant intake quotas. The "Morawiecki Plan", which aims to stabilize the economy through the equal distribution of resources and support for families on a geographical criterion, also contributes to the success of the new leading man.

As the incumbent party, PiS needs to leave the narration based on the past-future dichotomy, i.e., the campaign slogan "country in ruins" in 2015, and presenting the government activities and the consequent improvement of the country, as in the slogan "happy times for Poland" in 2019. Morawiecki is always accompanied by Jarosław Kaczyński, whose image becomes crucial to give confidence and credibility to the new candidate. This "marriage" is also expressed by the resumption of the 2019 "Kaczynski's Five Proposals", which became the campaign topic together with the "Morawiecki Plan". Moving away from the family- and child-based narrative used by the predecessor Szydło, one of the campaign goals is to reach out to younger, moderate, and business-oriented voters. Additionally, according to the de-radicalization of the party, PiS doesn't focus its audio-visual materials on topics such as abortion and civil rights, nationalism and religion, migration, and xenophobia. Videos aim to both inform and raise positive emotions. The use of the common people format contributes to fostering among citizens the idea of being directly involved in the country's development and increasing the common sense of belonging to the nation (Figure 9; Figure 10). The attacks are addressed to the "coalition of chaos" led by the PO with criticism about the absence of a valid common electoral manifesto for this civic coalition.

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Figure 9: Video Produced for 2019 Parliamentary Elections (Source: PiS 2019)



Figure 10: Video Produced for 2019 Parliamentary Elections (Source: PiS 2019)

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the 2020 Presidential elections occur under exceptional circumstances, and candidates have to face troubles in planning campaign activities considering the pandemic restrictions. Social media become the main channel for campaign activities, forcing candidates to follow its rules, styles, and languages (Piontek and Ossowski 2021). The challengers are the conservative and anti-European Andrzej Duda (PiS) and the progressive and pro-European Rafał Trzaskowski (PO). Even if the two candidates are younger and more energetic than their predecessors, a substantial difference emerges on issues and political visions. Dud represents himself as a defender of the traditional family and values, religion, and national identity; Trzaskowski promotes civil unions and LGBTQ+ rights, liberal ideals, and globalization. Civil rights became a central issue that polarised the election campaign, as they were perceived as a threat to the Christian-Roman tradition and the Polish identity, and at the same time as necessary for the social and cultural modernization of the country. Audio-visual materials focus exclusively on Duda's promotion. The presence of Kaczynski and Morawiecki is limited, as is the presence of the wife, Agata, who had an active role in the 2015 elections.

He is shown with celebrities and public and political personalities, i.e., Arnold Schwarzenegger, Donald Trump, Angela Merkel, and Xi Jinping, who empower Duda as the "defender of the Polish interest in the world". In feeling-good videos, the candidate presents himself as part of the community that supports him (Figure 11; Figure 12), and there is a continuous reference to the nation through folkloristic elements, monuments, cultural icons, and historical heritage.

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Promoting nationalism and sovereignty, the main topics are the protection of national identity and borders from external threats and the rejection of the "others", the "different", and the "foreign".



Figure 11: Video Produced for 2020 Presidential Elections (Source: PiS 2020)



Figure 12: Video Produced for 2020 Presidential Elections (Source: PiS 2020)

More changes are observed in the informative videos than in the formats used in the previous period. The talking heads are replaced by graphic-animation videos dedicated to the points of the "Plan Duda", such as economic development, modernization, school reforms, health service, welfare, and family. The "Calculate simply, choose Duda" campaign shows how the PiS actions have improved the conditions of some citizens by displaying data and graphics. These emphasize the candidate's and party's competence and experience (Figure 13; Figure 14).

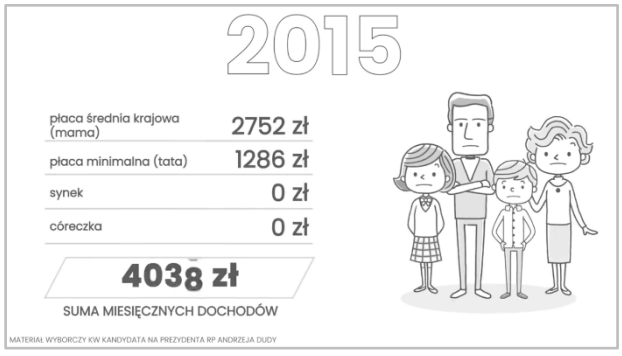


Figure 13: Video Produced for 2020 Presidential Elections (Source: PiS 2020)

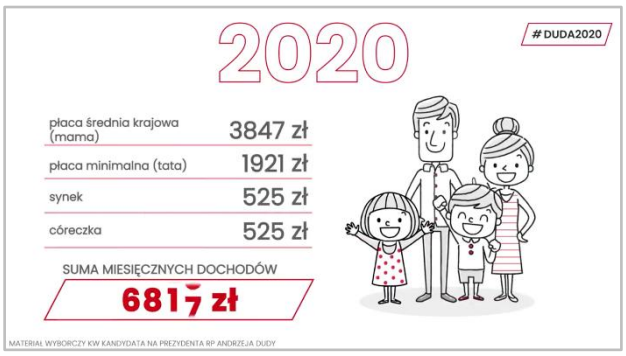


Figure 14: Video Produced for 2020 Presidential Elections (Source: PiS 2020)

Also innovative is the choice to attack and criticize the challenger, Trzaskowski, by letting the citizens speak. Using common people for the negative ads is a successful strategy because it makes the criticism more realistic, and Duda doesn't appear as the instigator of these attacks. The candidate establishes a new point of contact with the voters by including some calls to action to ask people to help him fight the hypocrisy of his political competitor.

CONCLUSION

The qualitative analysis of the audio-visual materials produced by PiS on the occasion of the European, Presidential, and Parliamentary elections from 2009 to 2020 reveals a series of transformations in the campaign strategies influenced by the country's historical, political, and social context.

The PiS success suffered a halt in 2007 when the dissolution of both Chambers of Parliament led to political "cohabitation". The 2009, 2010, and 2011 elections were held in the "crisis" period of the PiS (2009-2013), as demonstrated by the victory of the PO in the three consultations mentioned above and the attempt of the PiS party to regain the lost consensus, particularly after the death of the leader Lech Kaczyński in 2010. PiS campaigns are characterized by intensive negative advertising towards its most significant competitor, the PO, creating a marked polarization between the two parties, PiS-PO. In addition to the use of attacks, the presence of common people in many videos is also used to promote the candidate's image and to bring him closer to the electorate. The party leaves the unusual "soft" narration, a feature of the 2010 elections due to the Smolensk tragedy. It confirms his violent discourse and tone around topics such as migration, borders, national traditions, and identity.

The next elections are included in the "revival" period of the PiS (2014-2020). During the 2014 and 2015 elections, PiS started changing its communication and campaign strategies to overcome the crisis and the Kaczyński twins' hegemony. Although Jarosław Kaczyński is still the party's leader, maintaining his central role, new personalities appear in the Polish political scenario. The revival began with the candidacy of Andrzej Duda and Beata Szydło in the 2014 European elections before, and then respectively at the 2015 Presidential and Parliamentary elections. Both the candidates focus their campaign on the PiS political manifesto; in fact, they spread the idea of being able to improve the social and economic conditions of the country

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through talking-head videos in which they explain how they want to manage specific issues, such as the economic plan, the labor reforms, and the family welfare. On the one hand, Andrzej Duda presents himself as a strong young man who can protect Poland's interests on a European and international level; on the other hand, Beata Szydło presents herself as a woman and a "mother" who intends to improve the country's conditions for the next generations as well.

Despite winning the 2019 and 2020 elections, the voting results show a widespread decline in consensus and, thus, a gradual strengthening of opposition political forces, i.e., the PO. These elections represent a chance to test the efficacy and validity of the new leadership, campaign strategies, governing actions, and political manifesto. The popularity of President Duda seems to have decreased yet, and the party is obliged to re-introduce the leader, Jarosław Kaczyński, to revitalize consensus and bring greater stability to the party. Videos focus on the political party, namely its membership and community, rather than emphasizing the leader's image. The lower personalization, the return of the negative advertising, and the use of a future-based narration contribute to handling attacks due to President Duda's position as an incumbent. Likewise, Prime Minister Beata Szydło no longer seems to benefit from the success achieved in the previous 2015 Parliamentary elections, and her replacement with Mateusz Morawiecki is necessary to maintain the stability and reliability of the PiS-led government. Even the many domestic concerns in the country, resulting in several strikes and protests against the PiS-led government, and the tricky relations with the European Union on issues such as justice reform, the rule of law, and civil rights impact the image of the outgoing Prime Minister Szydło. To soften the tone of the electoral campaign and to avoid increasing the hostility towards the leadership and government measures, the PiS party decided to use a less violent and hostile narrative, which could be considered a moderate turn, and to start a process of de-radicalization on issues like family, civil rights, and abortion.

While it is true that the analysis of electoral manifestos and leadership changes are valid elements to study the historical and political transformations of parties in the field of political and electoral studies, it is also essential to recognize that the analysis of campaign strategies within the field of political communication provides an insight into the scale of some transformations. The personalization strategies, the presence of negative advertising, the tones and narratives of messages, the formats and genres of electoral materials, and the topics on which campaigns are built contribute to delineating whether and how political parties try to overcome periods of "crisis", to appropriate new themes, to address new voters, but also to see if the transformation is "real" or whether it represents a strategic choice made during the election campaign to persuade undecided voters and obtain votes. As shown by the results of this work, that's precisely the case for the PiS party, which tries to overcome the loss of support by changing exclusively the genres and formats, tones, and frames of its campaigning, particularly the audio-visual materials analyzed. Instead of aligning its political manifesto, which seems to have remained unchanged over the years, with the new social, political, and economic demands and needs emerging in the country, the PiS party decided to modify the frames and tones of its messages and narrations. The changes in the party's leadership and candidates represent a way to reach out to different citizen-voters, in particular Andrzej Duda for young people, Beata Szydło for women, and Mateusz Morawiecki for "moderates"; the use of negative advertising, specifically *ad personam* attacks, plays a central role in the creation of a highly polarized campaign and a dichotomic narrative that impoverish and simplifies the political and

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electoral debate. Through the candidacy of Jarosław Kaczyński in the 2023 Parliamentary elections, the PiS party gets back the "old" leadership. The very small difference in votes between PiS (35,38%) and PO (30,70%) and the success of the new political alliance PL2050 - KP ("Polska 2050" and "Koalicja Polska") - which aims to provide an alternative to the two main parties, the "Trzecia Droga" (14,40%) - launch a new period for the Polish political scenario and then for the PiS' campaign strategies.[3]

The analysis of PiS's electoral campaigns over the years shows that the change is not related to the manifesto points or the political-ideological dimension. Instead, it concerns only the narratives and tones of the messages. The transformation of the PiS party seems to be only a strategic feature, and this is one of the findings that should prompt us to consider the value of carrying out studies on the transformation and the evolution of political parties that consider both the categories of analysis typically used into the more strictly political field (i.e. manifestos, leadership, electoral results), as well as the ones related to the field of the political communication (i.e. campaigning, visual and symbolic elements, personalization, genres, negative advertising, frames).

[3] The results of the voting of Polish elections reported in this article are available at the National Electoral Commission website: https://sejmsenat2023.pkw.gov.pl/sejmsenat2023/en/sejm/wynik/pl (Accessed: June 2024).

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COMPLIANCE WITH ETHICAL STANDARDS

Acknowledgments:
Not applicable.

Funding:
Not applicable.

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This article does not contain any studies with animals performed by any authors.

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Not applicable.

Disclosure statement:
No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author/s.

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

The Institute for Research and European Studies remains neutral concerning jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

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