

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS IN POLAND AND THE UNITED STATES AND DEMOCRACY

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Abstract: The aim of the study is to show the weaknesses of the democratic system on the example of the presidential elections in the United States and Poland. The electoral system (US) and direct elections (Poland) were put together. The research used an analysis of the literature on the subject and simulated the results of the elections for the president of Poland, in accordance with the election system for the president of the United States. The simulation with the use of the electoral college showed that the real results in some presidential elections do not depend on the voters' decisions, but on the adopted electoral system only. The rules for electing the president in Poland meet the conditions of democratic elections to a greater extent than in the United States.

Key words: democracy, election, president, Poland, United States

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INTRODUCTION

Democracy – November 11, 1947, in a speech in the House of Lords, Winston Churchill stated that „democracy is the worst form of government, apart from all the other forms that have been tried from time to time”. He also claimed that „Politics is not a game. It is an earnest business”. The democratic system that prevails in many countries today is more of a power exercised and controlled by politicians than of conscious voters. It is politicians who set the rules under which citizens can make election decisions. And given the level of civil society in many countries, it is not surprising that Aristotle, as early as the 4th century BC, placed democracy with tyranny and oligarchy among three degenerated political systems, in opposition to politics, monarchy and aristocracy.

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The democratic system can be defined in different ways. However, choices are always its *sine qua non* feature. Democratic elections in which the electorate shows its preferences. It seems simple and obvious, and it is. However, in a democratic system in which the majority of voters win, from the moment their number exceeds the gathering possible, in the symbolic amphitheater carved on the Pnyx hill, a group of citizens, we begin to have problems with counting. And the well-known saying of Joseph Stalin: „It does not matter who votes, it is important who counts”, confirms in us our belief that authoritarian power over citizens while maintaining the appearance of democratic procedures. However, it is not only important who counts the votes, but also according to what system they are counted.

The systems of dividing parliamentary seats according to the D'Hondt or Sainte-Laguë methods, known and used in many democratic countries, lead to the allocation of a party to parliamentary elections, with the same support, a different number of seats (Chmaj and Skrzydło, 2015). Hence, there is more and more discussion about new electoral models (Flis and Michalak 2017; Skomski et al., 2017). Similarly, the introduction of the electoral threshold eliminates from the distribution of seats the parties that did not exceed it, awarding other parties sometimes in a much more than representative dimension. An example from the parliamentary elections in Poland in 2015. The winning party won 37.58% of the vote with a turnout of 50.92%, but *absens carens*. However, thanks to the division of seats using the D'Hondt method, in force in accordance with the electoral law, and several election committees that did not exceed the election threshold (5% for election committees and 8% for the coalition of election committees), she obtained 235 seats in the Polish parliament out of 460, i.e. 51, 09%. Simple calculations show that in this case, with half of those eligible to vote in the elections, the distribution of seats according to the D'Hondt method and the operation of the election threshold, a party with real support of approx. 18.8% of the total electorate wins over half of the seats in parliament. . Similar problems concern elections to local self-governments (Kulas and Wendt, 2018), to the parliament (Markowski, 2016; Sieklucki, 2018) or to the European Parliament. In each of these cases, we are dealing with a large number of possible mandates. The democratic system functions quite differently in the case of the election of the president of the country (Brzezińska et al., 2016; Robak and Wojtasik, 2016) or, for example, the president of the city (Wendt, 1998a; Przybylska et al., 2016).

THEORETICAL REVIEW BASED ON UNITED STATES PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Compared to the parliamentary elections, the logic of direct presidential elections is much simpler (Blais et al., 1997). In the second round, in the event that the first did not bring any of the candidates a victory with a result exceeding 50%, two candidates are met. And voting is an election in a single-member constituency, in which the result is difficult to question. However, this simple system managed to be complicated, as shown by examples this time from the United States (Belenky, 2016; Coleman et al., 2000; Maisel and Brewer, 2011) and the election of the president of this country in 2000 and 2016, but a similar situation occurred also in 1824, 1876 and in 1888. It is possible thanks to the two-tier electoral system of presidential elections in force in the US.

The constitutional state body of the United States Electoral College elects the country's president and vice-president every four years (Peirce and Longley, 1981; Mann, 2001; Vinadia, 2016). From 1964 the number of electors equals the number of congress members and representatives of the District of Columbia (DC). There are 435 congressmen in the House of Representatives; there are also 100 senators and 3 DC representatives. Each US state has two senators, and the number of representatives depends on the population size, the most populous state - California, in this situation has 55 electoral votes (3 electors). And the smallest states in terms of population, Alaska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Delaware, Montana, Vermont, and Wyoming each have 3 electoral votes (3 electors). Although the District of Columbia has no representation in congress, it elects 3 electors, which is as many as it could if it were a state. Thus, the Electoral College counts 538 votes, and for the presidential election, 50% plus one vote should be won. In 48 of the 50 states of the United States, voting votes for electors are based on a winner's wins all electors' votes in the state. If the electoral list of a party in one of these 48 states receives more than 50% of the votes, all electoral votes from that state are awarded to that party's candidate (Hall, 2016). The exceptions are the votes in the states of Nebraska (5 electors) and Maine (4 electors). In these two states, the winner gets two votes corresponding to the number of senators, and the rest are awarded in proportion to the voting results for the electoral lists. If, in each state, a different list of electors issued by the parties supporting the two most important candidates wins, the "senatorial" votes "cancel out", as each candidate would get two votes. Thus, the influence of the different system in these two states does not matter much in relation to the total number of votes, since only 5 electoral votes out of 538 are left to an unequal split.

In 2000 George W. Bush won the election with 48.35% (5 045 6002) of the vote and 271 electors, his rival Al Gore won 48.87% (50 999 897) of the vote and 266 electors. Similarly, in 2016. Donald Trump won 46.09% (62 984 825) votes and as many as 304 electors, and Hillary Clinton was supported by 48.18% (65 853 516) voters, but only 227 electors. Donald Trump became president despite gaining almost 2.9 million less than Hillary Clinton (Duncan and Levett; 2016; Fowler et al., 2016; Sides et al., 2017). His victory was determined by the victory in three states of the so-called Rust Belt: Michigan (16 electors), Pennsylvania (20 electors) and Wisconsin (10 electors), in which he won 48 electoral seats (Stolicki, 2016; Stoetzer et al., 2019). His total score in these three states was higher than that of H. Clinton only by approx. 78 thousand votes, however, this slight difference in number of votes gave him all the electoral votes from those states and the seat of the president of the United States. This system arouses more and more discussions and calls for its modification (Wright and Wright, 2018; West, 2019; Wood and Weisberg, 2019).

AIM, DATA AND METHODS

Compared to the US elections, the presidential elections in Poland are direct elections. However, to show the weakness of the democratic system based on the simple will of voters, in opposition to the system dependent on politicians, which is the thesis of the analysis undertaken, a simple experiment was carried out. 2016 elections in the United States won by Donald Trump, who won about 2% of the votes less than Hillary Clinton, but received the majority of the electoral votes (304 to 227). In 2020. The presidential election in Poland was won

by the incumbent president, Andrzej Duda, also gaining 2% more votes than his opponent - Rafał Trzaskowski. Taking into account all the differences between the political system in the USA and in Poland, the following research question was posed: "What would be the result of the presidential election in Poland in 2020 if the votes were converted according to the system in force in the USA?" (Bałuka, 2020). That is, if instead of direct elections in Poland, elections with the participation of the Electoral College were held. In the text by M. Bałuka it was assumed that the number of deputies would be reduced to 295, which corresponds to an average of one deputy per 130 thousand residents. The number of senators was set at 32, two for each province, together there would be 327 electors. With these assumptions, the election would be won by Rafał Trzaskowski, who won ten provinces and would win 219 electors votes against Andrzej Duda's 108 electors.

However, the differences between the political system in the USA and Poland, the number of inhabitants, changes in administrative divisions (Wendt, 1998b), changes in the distribution of seats in the Polish parliament and changes in the boundaries of electoral districts to the senate, prompted the authors to adopt different assumptions. When answering the research question posed above, two variants were assumed. In the first one, the country was divided into 16 voivodships and the number of deputies was calculated accordingly. On the other hand, the number of senators was reduced to 32, two for each province. In the second variant, in order to better show the phenomenon of electoral preferences and the potential distribution of electoral votes, a division into 49 regions was adopted, in line with the boundaries of district election committees. In this case, due to the location of the seats of district election commissions in the former 49 voivodeship cities, the number of electors in each district corresponds to the number of deputies and senators in the former voivodships, according to their division from before the country's administrative reform, which entered into force in 1999. After calculating the number of electoral votes in each of the two variants, theoretical results of the presidential elections in Poland were obtained, if they were held in the system adopted for the presidential elections in the United States.

Data on the number of deputies and the results of elections by constituencies come from the official announcement of the National Electoral Commission stating the results of the election of the President of the Republic of Poland of 13.07.2020, in which Andrzej Duda was re-elected in a direct vote, winning 51.03% (10 440 646) votes, and his opponent Rafał Trzaskowski received 48.97% (10 018 263) votes. With a slight difference in votes, the official results were released with a one-day delay, because in Poland, unlike, for example, Estonia and Slovenia, the E-Governance level desired from the point of view of digital security was not achieved (Bógdał-Brzezińska, 2018; 2020).

ELECTIONS OF THE PRESIDENT OF POLAND BY THE COLLEGE OF ELECTORS – DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH RESULT

In the first of the analyzed variants of presidential elections in Poland, the following assumptions were adopted in accordance with the system of the Electoral College functioning in the United States. The territorial division of Poland into 16 voivodeships, each of which is represented in the potential Electoral College by votes of two senators. In fact, in Poland we have one hundred senators elected in single-member constituencies. The number of deputies in

each voivodship plus two senators corresponds to the number of votes of electors from that voivodeship (table 1). In total, we have 460 deputies and 32 senators, which together give 492 votes of electors. The winner of the elections at the voivodeship level wins all the votes of the electors from that voivodeship. If the American system was adopted in Poland, 246 electoral votes + 1 would have to be won to win the presidential election.

Table 1. Number of potential electors and the result of the election of the President of Poland 2020 – division of the country into 16 voivodeships)
(Data source: own study based on official results by voivodeships)

Voivodeship	Result of elections (%)		Number of electors' votes = Deputies + Senators	
	Duda Andrzej	Trzaskowski Rafał	Duda Andrzej	Trzaskowski Rafał
Dolnośląskie	44,61	55,39	0	36
Kujawsko-pomorskie	46,77	53,23	0	27
Łódzkie	54,46	45,54	33	0
Lubelskie	66,31	33,69	29	0
Lubuskie	40,20	59,80	0	14
Małopolskie	59,65	40,35	43	0
Mazowieckie	47,74	52,26	0	65
Opolskie	47,36	52,64	0	14
Podkarpackie	70,92	29,08	28	0
Podlaskie	60,14	39,86	16	0
Pomorskie	40,16	59,84	0	28
Śląskie	48,99	51,01	0	57
Świętokrzyskie	64,41	35,59	18	0
Warmińsko-mazurskie	46,84	53,16	0	20
Wielkopolskie	45,07	54,93	0	42
Zachodniopomorskie	41,24	58,76	0	22
Together	x	x	167	325

As it results from the presented data (table 1), with the adopted election assumptions, Rafał Trzaskowski would be the winner of the presidential election, gaining 325 electoral votes, while Andrzej Duda would receive 167 electoral votes. In fact, Andrzej Duda won in direct voting with an advantage of about 422 thousand votes over the opponent.

The differences in the results of direct and electoral voting are a simple result of Andrzej Duda's high victory in the provinces where he won the majority of votes. In four voivodeships it obtained over 60%, in Małopolskie 59.65% and only in Łódzkie 54.46%. Rafał Trzaskowski won in ten voivodeships, but he did not exceed the 60% threshold in any of them and in six of the voivodeships he won, he won with a vote difference of less than 10%.

Of course, one can also adopt other assumptions for simulating the election results in the system with an electoral college. However, taking into account the 100 seats of senators, as it is in reality, the final result will still reward Rafał Trzaskowski. In the case of 100 senators, we receive a total of 560 electoral votes. As Andrzej Duda won in the provinces of Małopolska (8 senatorial seats), Łódzkie (7), Lubelskie (6), Podkarpackie (5), Podlaskie (3) and Świętokrzyskie (3), together he would receive 32 electoral votes instead of 12. However, with this assumption, the number of senators will increase even more,

Rafał Trzaskowski would win instead of 20 as much as 68 electoral votes. His advantage would increase from 325 to 373 electoral votes in relation to the votes of Andrzej Duda, who would receive 187 electoral votes instead of 167.

Methodologically correct for the adopted simulation is also the division of senatorial seats by 2019 constituencies. However, in this case, too, it would give Rafał Trzaskowski an advantage with five votes (248: 243). The results of the 2019 parliamentary elections in which the party supporting Andrzej Duda won 48 seats as electoral votes for each of the candidates can also be accepted, which, however, does not allow to directly conclude that the remaining 52 seats would fall for the opponent.

The following research assumptions were adopted in the second variant, which, due to the greater number of territorial units, better corresponds to the actual election results. Each of the 49 District Election Commissions (DEC) was assigned a number of deputies corresponding to the former voivodeships. However, in the election system to the Sejm in Poland before 1999 Only 391 Members were directly elected. The remaining 69 seats were filled from the national list. Until 1993 they were divided in relation to the results of election committees according to the Sainte-Laguë method, and then D'Hondt. The national list of nisiono in the new 2001 election law. With this in mind, individual constituencies were assigned only 391 parliamentary seats and each of them two senatorial seats, except for the districts of Warsaw and Katowice, where 3 senatorial seats were granted, with a total of 100 senators, which corresponded to the reality of changing the electoral law and introducing in elections to the senate of single-member constituencies. After adding the adopted number of deputies and senators, we get 491 votes of electors. In order to win the presidential election, if it were held in the manner of the United States, it would require 246 electoral votes.

Table 2. Number of potential electors and the result of the election of the President of Poland 2020 – division of the country into 49 district election commissions)
(Data source: own study based on official results by District Election Commissions)

No.	District Election Commissions	Voivodship	Result of elections (%)		Number of electors' votes = Deputies + Senators	
			Duda Andrzej	Trzas-kowski Rafał	Duda Andrzej	Trzas-kowski Rafał
1	Wrocław	Dolnośląskie	40,02	59,08	0	14
2	Jelenia Góra	Dolnośląskie	45,32	54,68	0	7
3	Legnica	Dolnośląskie	53,50	46,50	7	0
4	Wałbrzych	Dolnośląskie	46,50	53,50	0	10
5	Bydgoszcz	Kujawsko-pomorskie	44,44	55,56	0	13
6	Toruń	Kujawsko-pomorskie	46,04	53,96	0	9
7	Włocławek	Kujawsko-pomorskie	53,88	46,12	6	0
8	Lublin	Lubelskie	64,47	35,53	12	0
9	Biała Podlaska	Lubelskie	68,08	31,92	5	0
10	Chełm	Lubelskie	64,76	35,24	5	0
11	Zamość	Lubelskie	66,31	33,69	7	0
12	Zielona Góra	Lubuskie	40,22	59,78	0	9
13	Gorzów Wielk.	Lubuskie	40,20	59,80	0	7
14	Łódź	Łódzkie	46,48	53,52	0	13
15	Piotrków Tryb.	Łódzkie	64,72	35,28	9	0

16	Sieradz	Łódzkie	63,83	36,17	6	0
17	Skierniewice	Łódzkie	65,52	34,48	6	0
18	Kraków	Małopolskie	51,15	48,85	15	0
19	Nowy Sącz	Małopolskie	72,46	27,54	9	0
20	Tarnów	Małopolskie	70,00	30,00	9	0
21	Warszawa	Mazowieckie	35,79	64,21	0	28
22	Ciechanów	Mazowieckie	66,45	33,55	6	0
23	Ostrołęka	Mazowieckie	69,67	30,33	6	0
24	Płock	Mazowieckie	59,39	40,61	7	0
25	Radom	Mazowieckie	67,53	32,47	10	0
26	Siedlce	Mazowieckie	68,58	31,42	9	0
27	Opole	Opolskie	47,36	52,64	0	12
28	Rzeszów	Podkarpackie	70,54	29,46	10	0
29	Krosno	Podkarpackie	70,14	29,86	7	0
30	Przemyśl	Podkarpackie	72,86	27,14	6	0
31	Tarnobrzeg	Podkarpackie	70,84	29,16	8	0
32	Białystok	Podlaskie	53,95	46,05	9	0
33	Łomża	Podlaskie	73,25	26,75	6	0
34	Suwałki	Podlaskie	60,15	39,85	7	0
35	Gdańsk	Pomorskie	37,57	62,43	0	17
36	Słupsk	Pomorskie	42,33	57,67	0	6
37	Katowice	Śląskie	44,96	55,04	0	43
38	Bielsko-Biała	Śląskie	53,62	46,38	11	0
39	Częstochowa	Śląskie	52,67	47,33	10	0
40	Kielce	Świętokrzyskie	64,41	35,59	14	0
41	Olsztyn	Warmińsko-mazurskie	44,63	55,37	0	10
42	Elbląg	Warmińsko-mazurskie	49,88	50,12	0	7
43	Poznań	Wielkopolskie	33,74	66,26	0	16
44	Kalisz	Wielkopolskie	54,03	45,97	9	0
45	Konin	Wielkopolskie	56,77	43,23	7	0
46	Leszno	Wielkopolskie	48,38	51,62	0	6
47	Piła	Wielkopolskie	45,07	54,93	0	7
48	Szczecin	Zachodniopomorskie	40,65	59,35	0	12
49	Koszalin	Zachodniopomorskie	42,17	57,83	0	7
	Together	Poland	x	x	238	253

The division of votes of potential electors, with the division of the country into 49 regions corresponding to District Election Commissions, assuming that the winner in the district receives all the votes of electors, gives bonuses to Rafał Trzaskowski. With the research assumptions given, Rafał Trzaskowski gains 253 votes, and Andrzej Duda 238 votes. This result is also different from the real one, but definitely closer to the real voting results. electorate. Based on the data (Table 2), it can be concluded that Rafał Trzaskowski, who is running for the presidency, definitely wins in districts that can be described as dominated by large cities. Out of twenty constituencies, he received over 60% of the votes in the constituencies of Poznań, Warsaw and Gdańsk. Over 55% of votes in Wrocław, Gorzów Wlk., Zielona Góra, Szczecin, Koszalin, Słupsk, Bydgoszcz, Olsztyn and Katowice. In the remaining eight, in which he won, the difference to the president applying for re-election was below 10%, including in the Elbląg district he had a minimal advantage, as he received 50.12%

Andrzej Duda, in turn, won in 29 districts. However, as many as in seven he won 70% or more of the votes. In another 13 constituencies, he received over

60% of the votes. Only in seven out of 29 districts his victory over his opponent was less than 10%. If the US system was adopted, Rafał Trzaskowski would be the winner of the elections, but in the Polish system with direct voting, Andrzej Duda wins.

It would be interesting to analyze the results of elections aggregated to the level of counties, in which Andrzej Duda definitely won, winning the majority of votes in 236 counties, including 20 town counties (municipal communes with the land county rights). Rafał Trzaskowski won in 144 counties, including 46 town counties. He also won the fight for the votes of Poles abroad, winning 73.61% of the votes, and among the crews of Polish ships with the result of 69.44%. In the case of analyzing the results of elections in communes, Andrzej Duda's victory is even more clear. The president, who was seeking re-election, won in 1872 communes, and his opponent won only in 601 communes. In some of the communes, the president received over 90% of the support (the communes of Godziszów, Chrzanów and Kulesze. The best results, over 70%, were achieved by Rafał Trzaskowski in the communes of Suchy Las, Dobra and Osielsko. However, the analysis of the differentiation of electoral results in the presidential elections in Poland goes far beyond the in this work, the aim of the research and deserves a separate, analytical study.

CONCLUSION

In recent years, researchers of political systems and international relations have noticed a deepening polarization of the processes of hierarchization of power as opposed to traditionally understood democracy. This is expressed in several tendencies: firstly, in the oligarchization of party elites in post-communist countries, which coincides with the entry into political life of a new generation of 25-30 year-olds who do not know the reality of the communist regime and do not take into account the socio-political values of the older generations. Secondly, it is expressed in the popular belief that power is the highest value among broadly understood social expectations, which is easily combined with the concept of strong leadership, which allows for shortening the decision-making process and enclosing it with accessible populist arguments.

Results of the presidential elections in Poland in 2020 confirmed the relationship between the efforts of the right-wing groups to consolidate the system of power based on populism, the oligarchization of the party elite and their support from conservative voters (the overwhelming majority of the Catholic faith) living in the overwhelming majority of the southern and eastern parts of the country as well as rural areas and towns with a relatively small population. The conducted research shows that Andrzej Duda's election success, as a candidate supported by the above-mentioned part of the electorate, was achieved not only with a slight advantage, but also reflected the delusion of the double-counting system typical of democracy. The comparison of the case of the American and the Polish electoral system made it possible to demonstrate the clerical bias accompanying the designation of electoral districts, as well as the discretionary nature of determining the rules and procedures for counting votes. Summing up, democracy perceived through the prism of the Polish and American presidential election systems seems to be an illusory camouflage of the interests of party and official elites.

What should be emphasized, however, is that, with all the similarities and differences in the presidential elections in Poland and in the US taken or not

taken into account - democratic elections are held in accordance with the adopted and generally recognized electoral law. Recognized, in the case of the US does not mean that it is not questioned. And the example of elections in Poland shown in opposition to the US clearly shows a more complete presentation of the actual election decisions of the electorate carried out in direct elections in relation to elections in which we have an Electoral College system. But as Winston Churchill said „You can always count on Americans to do the right thing – after they’ve tried everything else”.

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