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THE PUBLIC SPHERE IN POLAND

How and to what extent did the media reform in Poland initiated by Law and Justice party affect other media like the Electoral Newspaper? To what extent did the media reform nationalise the Polish Public Sphere instead of Europeanising it?

Bachelor's project in European Studies

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May 2019

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BACHELOR THESIS IN EUROPEAN STUDIES WITH ENGLISH
Trondheim, May 2019

Acknowledgments

I wish to express my sincere thanks to my supervisor who helped me throughout the journey of writing this thesis. I am also grateful to my girlfriend who always managed to make me calm down when it was necessary. Lastly, I want to acknowledge two of my best friends, Sigmund and Rasmus for always providing me with the laughs needed to keep collected while writing this thesis.

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Introduction

“Today they came for the public media, tomorrow they want to come for the private media” said Jarosław Kurski, the deputy editor of Gazeta Wyborcza during a “free media” protest organized by the KOD movement. The protest happened after Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (eng. Law and Justice, abbreviation: PiS) announced that they are making a media reform in Poland. With the reform going through Sejm on 30th of December and through Senate on 31st of December, it does seem like the party tried to catch everyone off-guard while everyone was busy with New Year’s celebrations. As the party often pushes the idea of an “independent Poland”, giving as much as possible to the Polish citizens and “repolonizing” the states media and banking sectors the democratic backsliding has never been considered a bigger issue in Poland. PiS already made a number of reforms, one of which was the changes to the judicial system in the country which led to major protest and even the EU launching the Article 7 TEU against the state. Even though there were a lot of protests following the media reform passing the lower and upper house, Polish president Andrzej Duda signed the legislation which changed the nationally owned media channels in Poland in a drastic way.

Throughout this thesis I want to see whether the changes that were applied to the nationally owned media also influenced the private media. As for my research questions they are as following: *“Did the media reform affect the private newspaper Gazeta Wyborcza and if so to what extent? In what way was the public sphere in Poland affected by these changes, is the party trying to nationalize the public sphere through media?”* To answer these questions, I will be looking at the Public Sphere theory. To understand the situation in Poland it is important to look at studies made about the topic, I will also be doing my own research where I analyse the content in Gazeta Wyborcza where they write about the EU, before and after the reform to see whether the paper went through any changes.

By looking into these questions and research, this project concludes with that although changes have happened between the material from 2015 to 2019, it is unclear whether that was because of the media reform or because of the changes in governing parties. However, based on the daily’s stance, it would be logical to assume both have something to do with the change. The project also makes it possible to see that the public sphere media channels in Poland, controlled by the government, are getting more and more nationalized. The Gazeta Wyborcza daily however has managed to keep out of that sphere and continues to share their own centre-left views often encouraging the European Public Sphere to prosper.

Theory:

Public Sphere

In this thesis, the concept of a Public Sphere will be used in relation to the idea of a European Public Sphere as well as its normative models of Public Spheres, these being the elitist, liberal, discursive and participatory public sphere. This thesis will make use of mainly the general theory of a Public Sphere and only two of the normative models. This media analysis will focus on the media sphere. One way of conceptualising the Public Sphere is to organise it into different forums that can be differentiated on the basis of their scope. The way in which Stefanie Walter distributes these forums are "encounter publics" and "issue publics". The first one often emerges in day-to-day situations via discussions between normal citizens that will take place in the public. The role of the audience and the speaker is extremely fluid, meaning the two can fulfil both roles. The issue publics take place in the form of public events or demonstrations that mainly emerge spontaneously or possess a high organisational level. The difference between audience and speakers is bigger in this public (Walter, p. 52, 2019).

To find political discussion in modern times it is important to take a look at mass media and the so-called media sphere. This bulk of media consists of the press, television, radio and the

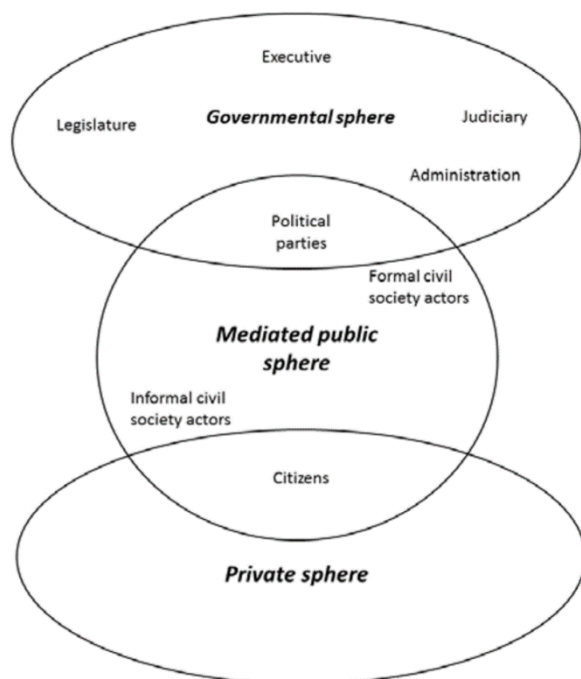


Figure 1: Source: Stephanie Walter, p. 55, 2017

internet and is the primary forum for political discussion (Walter, p. 53, 2017). The figure (1) made by Walter, visualises the function of a public sphere for the democratic process (Walter, p. 54, 2017). The

governmental sphere refers to institutions, the private sphere refers to the citizens while these two are connected by an intermediary system.

This system, the public sphere is supposed to provide state citizens with information thus directly influencing and forming a public opinion. Adding

to this, they also make room for politicians to state their case through their media (Walter, p. 53, 2017). Through the information spread by the media, citizens can check in with their

governments. This is the most important forum of the public sphere as it is visible to the society at large and it provides legitimacy to a large number of citizens. In this thesis, it is primarily the media sphere that will be considered.

Stefanie Walter introduces us to four different normative models of the public sphere as to show that the idea of a public sphere is not as straightforward as it seems. The four models are: elitist, liberal, discursive and participatory public spheres and they differ mainly in how visible the citizens of the state are (Walter, p. 57, 2017). For this thesis the focus will be put onto the elitist public sphere.

The elitist public sphere has its roots in the elitist democratic theory, where the term elite itself means a small number of people who have power and influence (Walter, p. 58, 2019). These elites are perceived as the ones that are elected to govern and that they are the “guardians of democracy”. The main function of this public sphere is to make the elitist politicians accountable as it provides information on what is going on in politics so that the citizens can make an informed voting decision (Walter, p. 60, 2017). The actors themselves are primarily the people that belong in the governmental system.

As the encounter and issue public spheres are almost totally excluded from elitist democratic theory, the key forum of the public sphere for the elitist public sphere is the media. Ferree says that “If the media are doing their job (...), the media will provide enough information about the parties and candidates so that citizens can choose intelligently among them.” (Ferree et. al. p. 291, 2002). The job of the media is to report from the governmental side to its citizens, but not to give citizens a voice to report back (Walter, p. 60, 2017). However, elitist democracy thrives most when the elite is divided, therefore both of the divided elites should have place in the public sphere as their opinions would shape each other based on what the other part does in the media (Walter, p. 61, 2017).

Media Negativity and Knowledge of the EU

According to Charlotte Galpin and Hans-Jörg Trenz, media negativity can play an incredibly constructive role in the democracy. One of the reasons why is that it can inform its readers and encourage engagement with politics (Galpin et. al. p.55, 2017). Though as Galpin points out, some scholars argue that media negativity is in fact an important element of a healthy democracy, it is important to have a voice that constantly subjects governments, politicians and other elites to keep everything in balance (Galpin et. al. p. 55, 2017). Media negativity can thus be a positive and negative thing to democracy as a whole. An example on this is that

a critical report can lead to better quality information, which then leads to better informed citizens which leads to better democracy during EU elections. However, media negativity can also lead to lack of political knowledge (Galpin et. al. p. 56, 2017). Which then again can lead to information and knowledge about EU creating deep scepticism towards the Union. One of the most important factors for media to keep in mind is how to frame stories. Framing means that the article and issue at hand is understandable for the citizen as the complex issues and problems often are hard to understand, thus creating an easy to follow frame and explanation of said issues and problems (Galpin et. al., p. 56, 2017).

Article 7 TEU

The Article 7 procedure is made of three parts, a preventive mechanism which is launched in case of a “clear risk of a serious breach of the values” and a sanctioning mechanism which is launched in case of “the existence of such breach of the Union’s values” made of two different Rule of Laws (European Commission, 2017).

Method:

This thesis will be a general media analysis with a small sample size of data. The data itself will be articles from Gazeta Wyborcza (eng. Electoral Newspaper) gathered from the Factiva archive. The Factiva search was done with the sites “free text search” with code words: *“Parlament Europejski or Unia Europejska or [PiS and Unia Europejska] or [PiS and Parliament Europejski] or Jean-Claude Juncker or Juncker or Komisja Europejska or integracji europejskiej or Integracja Europejska or Rada Europejska or Rada Unii Europejskiej or Przewodniczacy UE”*. The dates chosen are 01.01.2015-01.03.2015 and 01.01.2019-01.03.2019, this is done to prevent as many randomised events as possible. There are however other events happening at that time, in 2019 Brexit was supposed to be concluded and in 2015 the parties were fighting for the upcoming elections. Other Factiva search criteria were that: the source is “Gazeta Wyborcza & Wyborcza.pl (Poland, Polish Language), the region is put to Europe and language chosen is Polish. The sample size will be 45 articles before the media reform and 45 articles after. One of the main issues at hand right here is that clearly the paper has been focusing more on the EU the latest months than in the start of 2015, which shows in the number of articles that were available. The data from these articles will be analysed with different categories, these being whether the article speaks

positively or negatively about the EU. Who is the main actor in the article where the choices were between Donald Tusk, Jarosław Kaczyński, Jean-Claude Juncker or the PiS/PO parties and whether or not the article speaks positively or negatively about them. And finally, whether the issue in the article is national or European with a small mention of the theme/topic of the article as shown in figure 2.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	
1	Newspaper	Article Type	Coverage					
2			Positive or negative -> EU	Tusk/Kaczynski/Juncker/PIS		National/European	Topic/Theme	
3	Gazeta wyborcza				Positive or Negative towards them?			
4	GW	news	2	2	2	1	repolonisation	

Figure 2: The categories in the analysis, with an example. Here it is possible to see that the article is negative towards the EU, includes mentions of Kaczyński and is negative towards the politician. The problem in the article is on the national level with the topic being “repolonisation”.

It was not always possible to divide the author’s opinion into a simple “positive or negative” matter, therefore generalisation was needed to see the bigger picture of the article itself.

As I continued working with the project, I noticed certain elements that could have been done better and more consistent to get an even better result. Some of the major limitations with this method are the sample size, data sheet and the sample chosen to be considered as main data. First of all, a larger sample size would have given a more representative sample and get an even more comprehensive idea of the situation with the newspaper, further study can improve on this by for example expanding the sample before and after the media reform. A larger sample would also provide more information about the topics the newspaper is focusing on during the different times of the year, something that could be beneficial to get rid of the randomness of the data. Second, after analysing the data I have noticed that numbers that are pointed out in a straight forward fashion do not really paint the picture as well as for example percentages would do. Eg. do an even more thorough read of the articles and divide them into percentages of positive/negative. It would first of all make it much easier to quantify and second of all it would be way more comprehensive. Lastly, the articles chosen for the analysis part were chosen out of the Factiva search. However not every single one of them met all the criteria in the analysis, this was because of the lack of articles provided by the chosen words in the Factiva search. This could have been simply avoided by extending the search word count as well as extending the date of the Factiva search.

Background

To understand the further analysis, it is necessary to provide some background on what has happened in Poland the recent years, what the media reform changed within the country and some basic information about Gazeta Wyborcza. At the start of 2015 the government was made of the Platforma Obywatelska (eng. Civic Platform, abbreviation: PO) and Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe (eng. The Polish People's Party, abbreviation: PSL) in a coalition. In 2019 the government is made purely of PiS. Both parties, PiS and PO, have their differences when it comes down to policy issues, like for example with the question on EU and NATO they both want Poland to be a part of these (Chapman, p. 3, 2019). However, PiS takes the whole idea with a lot of suspicion and scepticism, thus making their party very eurosceptical.

When the PiS party won the presidential election with Andrzej Duda as their candidate, as well as both the Senate (upper house) and Sejm (lower house) it was certain that changes were on their way. The term "repolonization" comes up a lot in PiS speeches, it is applied to almost every factor within Poland like banks and increase of domestic ownership in Poland's financial sector. In media however, PiS politicians argue that foreign media spread information and coverage that is not favourable to the governments opinion and spread values that are not Polish and in the interest of Poles (Chapman, p. 3, 2019). With the ideas of making Poland more Polish and nationalising some of its sectors, PiS started making different moves to achieve these goals. Ever since the beginning, the party had different ways of implementing some of its laws or regulations. Like with their media reform which was voted in the lower house on 30th of December and approved in the Senate the following day (Beradi, 02.03.2016). This, however, did not happen out of the view of the public. Immediately after the reform was put into motion for the upper house to approve the reform, the TVP's (Telewizja Polska, eng. Polish Television) four directors decided to resign as a protest to the reform, whilst the Polish Radio's First decided to protest by playing Polish and EU's anthem each hour (Beradi, 02.03.2016). There were also huge protests put into motion by Polish citizens to stop the reform going through. This however failed as the president chose to sign it on the 7th of January.

The media in Poland are fairly diversified in terms of ownership (Chapman, p. 3, 2019). There are approximately 23 foreign owners, most of them are German making up for about ¾ of the Polish media market. The major Polish competitor to these foreign media owners is Agora,

which owns the biggest daily in Poland Gazeta Wyborcza, but also a bunch of other medias like radio stations, internet platforms and some magazines.

The media reform itself is all about the creation of something called National Media Council, which makes it possible for PiS to put all of its lawmakers into the highest seat of the national media. Responsibilities of this position were before mostly in Krajowa Rada Radiofonii i Telewizji's (eng. National Broadcasting Council, abbreviation: KRRiT) hands, this council had 5 members, two of them appointed by the Sejm, one by the Senate and two by the current president (Chapman, p. 4, 2017). These seats were always supposed to be neutral when it comes down to politics however the office in KRRiT has always been somewhat politicized as seen in 2007 when the chairperson stepped down from the position and stood for a parliament seat for PiS (Chapman, p. 4, 2017).

If one wants to see the changes that the TV station Telewizja Polska (eng. Polish Television, abbreviation: TVP) went through it is interesting to look at the 7PM news called "Wiadomości" that airs every single day throughout the whole year. Almost its whole staff has been changed after the reform, some of which boycotted the station for being partial. The program itself is watched by many Poles every day, however many have said that they prefer TVN24 or Polsat now that PiS is in power (Chapman, p. 11-13, 2017). One of the ways to see the changes is to look at what their news titles look like under the evening news program.

„The government invests in the security of Poles”,
“The world is jealous of Poles for their economic success”,
“PiS strengthens its position in the European Union”,
“There is full freedom of speech and art in Poland”,
“Tourists value beautiful and safe Poland”,
“Poles appreciate fulfilled election promises”,
“The end of the impunity of the legal caste”,
“The French envy the Poles for security”,
“A reform that restores just governments” (Agnieszka Kublik, 27.01.2019).

Some examples of how titles looked like before the reform are:

“New strategy”,
“The Eurovision final”,
“The magic of memories”,
“Poland reads”,

“Fairy Tale Valley”, (Archiwum Eurowizji TV, 2018)

“Debate about media”, (Reżimowa Telewizja, 2015)

The latter title was covered by Piotr Kraśko who later was laid off from the TVP. At the exact time that program was sent the Sejm managed to get the reform through, and to quote Kraśko:

“I see on Twitter that there is some waiting for what might happen at the end of the Wiadomości. I do not know ... is something out of ordinary going to happen? Let us stay with what is being debated today in the Sejm (...) the biggest debate was raised by the media reform that was adopted merely 10 minutes ago” (Reżimowa Telewizja, 2015).

After the reform the Wiadomości and the TVP channel are often considered as a mouthpiece for the PiS government by many authors and researchers but also by citizens (Chapman, p. 11-13, 2017). Information spread by the channels like this can lead to poor knowledge about the EU and what the Union does for Poles, as well as can lead to people becoming more and more sceptical in the country (Galpin et. al. p. 55, 2017). Gazeta Wyborcza covers the case that Piotr Owczarski, who is a former TVP journalist, put forth on the 21st of January in the European Parliament. Gazeta Wyborcza covers that during the 5 minutes Owczarski has in front of the European Parliament he put forth two objections to what happened within Polish media:

The first objection: that after the PiS public media took over in January 2016, the message was ideologized and subordinated to the ruling party with an intensity unseen earlier in the Third Republic. The new president allowed employees responsible for information and journalism. New journalists who for public television, among others with TV Trwam and TV Republika, they began to prepare materials presenting only the only right - PiS's view of the world and the surrounding reality, often created and idealized. Second: journalists who have remained intimidated and have to do it, the new ones. (Agnieszka Kublik, 20.01.2019)

The daily newspaper throughout the article points out that the media reform is not something they like at any costs. The general observation of the information given so far makes it clear that the government is indirectly influencing the public sphere and making it more into an elitist public sphere just by having the control of one of the most important news channels in Poland.

Gazeta Wyborcza was one of the first media outlets to launch in the country after the end of the Cold War and the USSR control of the country (Eurotopics, 2019). It then makes sense that it gradually became one of the biggest media outlets in Poland and that it has been one of the highest quality newspapers in the country. It is being published by Agora, which is one of Poland's largest media groups. The paper itself is pro-European and critical to all governments, however recently taken as one of the medias that calls for protests against the current government. The journalists that write for Gazeta Wyborcza often find themselves on the liberal and centre-left positions in politics (Eurotopics, 2019). Danuta Breguła who is Gazeta Wyborcza's Digital Strategy director states that their online subscription numbers have never been higher, peaking at 133,000 in December last year (Schmidt, 2018).

According to a Reuters report from 2017, about nineteen percent of Poles visit the site on a weekly basis (Newman, et. al. p.84-85, 2017). The same report also states that both state institutions and state-controlled advertisers have cut subscriptions and advertising in Gazeta Wyborcza, which led to layoffs in Agora, newspapers publisher (Newman et. al., p. 84-85, 2017). Even though the newspaper has been pressured by the government multiple times and in different ways Breguła says that they will stay ambitious and that she thinks it is the political situation in the country that is making them so motivated to do so (Schmidt, 2018). With the growth of the newspaper it seems like the public puts their trust into the daily and as the Reuters rapport states, the idea here is that if the journalists and outlets of Gazeta Wyborcza are transparent enough about the views and motives, they have about the world, it will attract readers with the same ideologies. Another reason for why people still trusts the media even though some of it have become a mouthpiece for the party is that the public still respects when journalists hold the people in power by constantly questioning their decisions (Newman et. al., p. 84-85, 2017).

Moneywise it is interesting to see the dailies subscription numbers going up. As the Polish media are pretty much filled with government side news and articles maybe it is the people that are looking for a news outlet that has a simple enough frame to understand the governments ideas and programs in a different spotlight. It can also be the people looking for news that are not PiS's mouthpiece and one that balances their news. Subscriptions are by far not the only revenue a media outlet like this receives though, and as good as it is to see the daily going up in subscription numbers, the advertising revenue made by the daily is actually going down. The advertising revenue has been declining since the record year of 2008, so far that in 2016 Agora decided to put out huge layoffs, at about 190 people which then equalled

to 9.6 percent of the total staff. One of the jobs that were lost that year was the newspaper’s Brussels correspondent (Chapman, p. 14, 2017).

Analysis

Looking at both tables, one of the main surprises was that in 2015 the Electoral Newspaper in the span of 3 months wrote a significantly a smaller number of articles that included the leading parties and the EU in the same articles. Generally, the topic of EU was substantially smaller than what was found in 2019, which is definitely something that could have had an impact on the numbers presented, which again is one of the reasons for why the sample size itself is smaller than what one would usually use for a study like this. One of the reasons for why this happened is probably the newspapers focus on Brexit and the governing parties’ approach on EU. In both 2015 and 2019 Jean-Claude Juncker seems to not be a big target in Gazeta Wyborcza’s articles.

Data from 2015

2015				
SUM POSITIVE ANGEL ON EU :	SUM NEGATIVE ANGLE ON EU:	SUM NEUTRAL:		
33	13	0		
SUM TUSK	SUM KACZYNSKI	SUM JUNCKER	SUM PIS	SUM PO
5	6	3	12	10
positive	positive	positive	positive	positive
1	3	2	4	4
neutral	neutral	neutral	neutral	neutral
0	0	0	0	0
negative	negative	negative	negative	negative
4	3	1	8	6
MAIN TOPICS:				
Migration crisis: 6				

Figure3: Data from 2015 analysis (own research)

Looking at figure 3, the numbers from 2015 show us that the newspaper had mostly a positive opinion on the EU as about 33 articles has had a positive note in them and 13 with a negative angle on it. A lot of the positive articles were focusing on how the EU makes funding of different projects possible. However, there are differences when it comes down to the topic of the article. Like with articles on birth control, one of them had a positive view about EU’s legislation of the “plan B” pill and negative towards the party’s opinion of such legislation, while the other article about the same matter had a negative view about the legislation and

was positive about the criticisms given towards it by the governing party and PiS. In the data from 2015 the number of articles about Kaczyński is 6, with 3 being positively opinionated and 3 being negatively opinionated about him. Again, two of the articles were talking about the 2018 elections both putting PiS as the candidates, however both were differently opinionated about PiS and Kaczyński which shows the level of integrity the paper has. At that time his party did not have the majority in Senate/Sejm, so it makes sense that the paper does not focus its resources on him. As far as articles about Tusk go, there were not really that many of them, landing at about 5 pieces however interestingly enough almost all of them were negative, something that goes well with the newspapers ideology of criticising the different parties in equal fashion. At that time, he was already the president of the European Council, even though representing the EU his views are still criticised by the newspaper.

One way the paper appears to be criticizing Donald Tusk and Jean-Claude Juncker is by pointing out how much they both earn. This was done during the time when Obama was supposed to meet EU politicians about the war in Ukraine. Whilst the paper is criticizing both of them it does throw more of a shade on Tusk and his “lack of manpower within the job”.

Tusk earns as much as the head of the European Commission Jean Claude Juncker – over 20000 euro on hand (with all the extras). But Juncker is the head of the EU government employing over 24 thousand people. The most important task of Tusk is to seek compromises between the leaders of the 28 EU countries, which must be sufficient for a political cabinet with 31 subordinates (Tomasz Bielecki, 09.03.2015).

Now, there were a lot of articles containing both PiS and PO, at about 22 articles in total, 10 about PO and 12 about PiS. At that time PO is in the coalition government with PSL and PiS is in the opposition. Most articles about both parties are written in a negative matter, when it comes down to PiS its articles about homophobia, birth control and the migration crisis whilst for PO it is a variation of different topics like the migration crisis or unemployment. Both parties also get positive opinionated articles about them which provides a sort of balance to the whole period. The positive articles for both parties often surround the topic of parties starting up projects that will get needed monetary support from the EU as shown further down with examples.

Data from 2019

Articles gathered from 2019 also have the same sum of positive articles about the EU, the topics of the articles are usually focused around Brexit, EU legislations and EU monetary contributions to the country. The results are as seen in figure 4.

2019				
SUM POSITIVE:	SUM NEGATIVE:	SUM NEUTRAL:		
33	10	3		
SUM TUSK	SUM KACZYNSKI	SUM JUNCKER	SUM PIS	SUM PO
4	9	2	20	0
positive	positive	positive	positive	positive
2	0	2	7	0
neutral	neutral	neutral	neutral	neutral
1	0	0	0	0
negative	negative	negative	negative	negative
1	7	0	13	0
MAIN TOPICS				
Brexit = 7				
Dotations = 6				

Figure 4: Data from 2019 analysis (own research)

Brexit surely made a lot of noise around Europe at the start of 2019, as it was getting closer to the date the UK was supposed to leave the EU. Most of these articles included either Kaczyński or his party making speedy remarks about how the UK might be doing the right thing or how the EU is trying to stall the process. Sometimes these articles even included right wing politicians discussing the idea of a “Polexit” happening, however not in a serious matter. The articles about monetary help to Poland were usually formed in a way where politicians or parties were mentioned early in the article about a project, eg. environmental strategies, and later on mentioning the EU as an “insurance” for solving a monetary problem a project like that would face:

The construction of new railway (...). Who finances it? The European Union from EU funds under the so-called Integrated Territorial Investments of the Jelenia Góra Agglomeration from the funds of the Regional Operational Program of the Lower Silesian for the years 2014-2020. (koz, 03.02.2019).

Mentions of a “Polexit” happening are seen both in 2015 and 2019. In both years they are criticizing the PiS party for saying it is a possibility. It is done in the same way Gazeta Wyborcza usually does it, by quoting the person and framing it in a negative way. In 2019 it

is a PO politician talking about PiS long term plans of a “Polexit” happening, and again the daily is quoting him and building the whole article around his expressions.

(...) Maybe with one exception – Mateusz Morawiecki and Beata Szydło repeated many times that Poland is part of Europe and even that it is a model for Europe. The stage in which the EU flag disappeared from behind the Prime Minister Beata Szydło who appears on TV is already closed. (...). PiS was seriously scared that voters, fearing the polexit in the next election, would vote against Kaczyński’s party (Witold Gadomski, 12.02.2015).

The European elections will be a real battle about whether Poland will stay in Europe or block this crawling polexit. This is something PiS does not want to talk about. They prefer to say that they have been in Europe for a thousand years – said Neumann, referring to the speech by Morawiecki. – (...). Kaczyński escapes from this. He prefers to hide behind social promises, lying and tricking Poles (Paweł Kościński, 23.02.2019).

By framing the quotes in such a way, Gazeta Wyborcza makes use of the media negativity and fires the negativity back at the governing party whilst defending their own values and ideologies (Galpin et. al., p. 56, 2017).

Further down is a quote from Antoni Macierewicz, who is a former Minister of National Defence for Poland (Sejm Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 2019). Currently he is still sitting as the Deputy Leader of the Law and Justice party. This interview came from a monthly paper called „Wpis” which is an abbreviation from “Wiara, Patriotyzm i Sztuka” which translates into “Belief, Patriotism and Art”, the monthly itself has a profile of being catholic-conservative often filled with articles that condemn the left and praise the far right governments.

“As in Orwell’s novels, it turned out that fighting for the highest values, we found ourselves in a world in which under the slogan of liberalism one tries to impose anti-values on us! And this is not science-fiction or lying anti-European propaganda. This is a long planned plan that is brutally implemented today.” – PiS politician said. The assurances made by the PiS politician does not really fit into the theses of Antoni Macierewicz from the article “The Price of Patriotism” published in the “Wpis” monthly. According to the deputy head of the party, „today it decides whether Poland will be a state at all, or will it lose its statehood”, “it is settled whether Poland will become a fragment of another international structure with liberal-anti-Christian

ideology or will win the independent status of the independent state on the international arena.” (Gazeta Wyborcza, 03.01.2019).

As far as the interview goes, it is nothing new that far-right news outlets often put out anti-Brussels propaganda, often leading to the spread of such information and emergence of new extremist movements or just negativity towards the Union. As such “negative” biased news often has better selling numbers than positive or even balanced ones it is not surprising that a new monthly goes with this sort of tactic (Galpin et. al., p. 50, 2019). However, as the paper keeps Macierewicz’s interview in a positive spotlight, Gazeta Wyborcza’s news on the matter is not equally nice. On the contrary it condemns the ex. Minister of Defence’s statements. The article is easily framed to be understood as a piece that stands negatively towards Macierewicz’s statements.

The newspaper continues to criticize the governing party, not by directly doing so but by quoting people doing exactly that. During the final of the biggest charity events in Poland called Wielka Orkiestra Świątecznej Pomocy (eng. Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity, abbreviation: WOŚP) a tragic terror event happened, where a terrorist killed the Mayor of the city Gdańsk, Paweł Adamowicz. This led to a number of articles published by all media, however as this politician was in the PO, a number of right wing outlets and national media often covered the news in the governments favour. Gazeta Wyborcza criticizes this approach by quoting people that criticize the government, like this:

„Gdańsk Mayor Paweł Adamowicz has become a victim of institutionalized hatred that we have been dealing with in Poland for three years – said the European Parliament member professor Barbara Kudrycka (PO). The MEP said: „Breaking the separation of power, politicizing the courts and prosecutors, constant lying in state media and the lack of reaction of the authorities to acts of aggression and hatred against political opponents lead to an atmosphere that feeds acts of terror. The victim of such an act of terror became the president of Gdańsk, Paweł Adamowicz.” (Maciej Chołodowski, 17.01.2019).

Looking at the article itself, Gazeta Wyborcza condemns the actions of people that are attacking the MEP that said this. Already from the title of the article “Attack on Barbara Kudrycka for statements in the European Parliament about the murder on Pawel Adamowicz.” one can realize that the article is supporting her stance (Maciej Chołodowski, 17.01.2019).

Another hot topic in media at the start of 2019 are the European Parliament Elections. The journalist and author of the article “Kaczyński’s nephews” does not spare a word about how Adam Andruszkiewicz is not a good candidate for the EP seat:

At the beginning of the year in which the elections to the European Parliament will be held, Adam Andruszkiewicz, a nationalist, a primitive homophobe and an opponent of the EU, was nominated for the post of deputy minister of digitalization. (Paweł Wroński, 05.01.2019)

As the TVP is currently filled with cases against the Polish ex. Prime Minister and current President of the European Council, Donald Tusk, I honestly expected lots of articles about him as well. What happened was on the contrary, there was a few articles about Tusk, and most of them in fact written in a positive matter. It is a known matter that the PiS government does not like having Donald Tusk as the President of the European Council and one of the Gazeta Wyborcza’s articles points it out like this:

“Since then, the representatives of the governing party have been seeking Tusk’s “anti-Polish” actions. It will be president Andrzej Duda accusing him of not representing Polish interests and that “he does not have respect to his own country”. Vice Prime Minister Szydło went even as far as accusing him of “attacking” Poland and its interests.” (Paweł Kościński, 05.01.2019)

As already mentioned earlier, Gazeta Wyborcza takes the very negative comment about Donald Tusk and puts it through a lens of a centre-left paper, making it clear that the daily wants to emphasize the absurdity of Duda’s comments on Tusk.

Summary of the analysis

In the data given, it is surprising that in 2015 the number of articles covering PiS and PO was almost the same, with PiS sitting at 12 and PO at 10. These had almost the same ratio of positive and negative coverages, making the paper extremally balanced in these times when it came down to news about the EU. In 2019 however this approach takes a drastic change, where the number of articles about PiS equals 20 and 0 about PO. Why is there such a difference? One of the main reasons why can be the fact that the Civic Platform is not as big as before and that there are other parties in the opposition that have a stronger media coverage at the moment. Another one can be that Gazeta Wyborcza has taken a strong stance against the leading party and mostly covers news about them, trying to make them look bad in the

amount of negativity spread by the party and later covered by the daily. In practice I think it is a mixture of both, as mentioned earlier in the project the daily's staff is motivated more than ever to produce content. The clashes that have happened between the daily and the governing party could have something to do with the amount of negative spotlight the party is getting in the daily, which also makes sense considering that the daily is a centre-left newspaper. This data shows that the Polish daily tries to keep the public sphere as European as before, because it neither goes more national nor does it try to become more European.

Something that there is much more of is that the daily focuses a lot on quoting PiS politicians and fact checking their statements as often as possible, something that was not seen in the data gathered in 2015. The quotes often put the governing party in a bad spotlight, leaving Gazeta Wyborcza to paint their frame just as they wish. This surely helps the notion of false numbers or information flow that is going around in the extreme right-wing media, and something that can be of help to the EU. Although this is the case, the people of Poland are still extremely fond of the EU. According to the Socio-demographic trendlines Eurobarometer from 2019 the Polish citizens still appreciate the EU on multiple levels (European Parliament, 2019). Across multiple statistics Polish people believe that their voice counts in the EU and that Poland should be a member of the European Union. Interestingly enough when asked whether or not people would like to see the European Parliament playing more or less important role there is a huge difference between 2014 and 2019. In 2014 about 51% answered that they indeed would like the EP to be more important, but this number dipped all the way down to 33% as of September 2015. In 2019 the percentages are rising again, at 42%, but seeing this data it is easy to see that the governing party might have lots to do with the public opinion therefore also the sphere of the country.

Article 7 TEU (Why not act on the media?)

It was in December 2015 when the controversial law to get a stronger grip on the Constitutional Tribunal was put into motion, something that led to the European Commission launching an investigation, which led to the European Commission deciding that the preventative arm of the Article 7 TEU should be activated against Poland. This was however done not because of the changes in the Polish media but because of the judicial issues that were ongoing in the country. Which is interesting, as the media is something the EU is very cautious about however it is understandable that judicial problems were their main concern

for Poland's democracy going forward. As Chapman states, the small media law that was pushed by PiS was actually discussed by the European Commission, however the talks were still mostly focused on the government's changes to the Constitutional Tribunal (Chapman, p. 10, 2017). As far as the changes made to the media by the governing party, I do believe that the EU should act faster and more now that the changes have been there for nearly three years. They affect the democratic situation in Poland as media has a role of defining what is happening in the country as well as delivering a constant flow of information about how the governing party is doing regardless of whether its negative or positive. In an even longer term the media reform will have a huge effect on the public sphere in Poland and the European Public Sphere within the country will get pushed to the side. As the situation within the TVP is something that can directly have consequences on the Polish media and thus the democracy, the EU should consider launching the first arm of the Article 7 or at least being more vocal about the situation there.

Conclusion

Given all the information gathered in this project it is clear that the Gazeta Wyborcza daily has undergone some changes with how their articles are between 2015 and 2019. Whether or not this is something that was affected by the media reform or the current governmental situation in Poland is uncertain, but because of their own statements I would say it is a mixture of both. The daily is making sure that their framing and news get covered in a way that makes the people understand what the politicians in the state are doing, so no misinformation happens. At the same time they keep on encouraging citizens to be interested and engaged in politics by making sure their coverage is easy to understand. According to the data gathered, it is also clear that the daily was more focused on the governing party in 2019 compared to 2015 when most of the coverage was split between the governing party and the opposition. Coming down to the Public Sphere in Poland right now it is extremely nationalized, especially the channels that are protected and ran by the governing party focusing on terms like "repolonization". Private outlets like the Gazeta Wyborcza, are however managing to hold their stance, and their news coverage of EU news and Polish politicians is often fact checked, and misinformation is cleared by the daily. Something that leads me to believe that the European Public Sphere is still emerging in the country, small steps at a time however greatly strengthened by private media in Poland like the Gazeta

Wyborcza daily even though they are facing almost direct hostility from the national media and PiS.

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Appendix: Own research of Gazeta Wyborcza 2019

2019				
SUM POSITIVE:	SUM NEGATIVE:	SUM NEUTRAL:		
33	10	3		
SUM TUSK	SUM KACZYNSKI	SUM JUNCKER	SUM PiS	SUM PO
4	9	2	20	0
positive	positive	positive	positive	positive
2	0	2	7	0
neutral	neutral	neutral	neutral	neutral
1	0	0	0	0
negative	negative	negative	negative	negative
1	7	0	13	0
MAIN TOPICS				
Brexit = 7				
Dotations = 6				

50 51	Newspaper	Article Type	Coverage			Topic/Theme
			Positive or negative -> EU	Tusk/Kaczyński/Juncker/PiS	National/European	
	Gazeta wyborcza			Positive or Negative?		
52	GW	news	2	PiS	1	birthcontrol
53	GW	news	1	PiS/PO	2	birthcontrol
54	GW	news	1	PO	2	unemployment
55	GW	opinion	1	0	0	birthcontrol
56	GW	news	1	PO	2	coal and dotations
57	GW	news	1	PO	1	banking
58	GW	news	2	1	2	
59	GW	news	1	0	0	National museum dotation
60	GW	news	1	0	0	dotations
61	GW	news	1	PiS/PO	1	Migration crisis
62	GW	news	1	0	0	Migration crisis
63	GW	opinion	1	PO	1	environmental
64	GW	news	2	0	0	Migration crisis
65	GW	news	1	0	0	environmental
66	GW	news	1	PiS	2	judicial
67	GW	news	1	2	2	homophobia
68	GW	news	1	PO	2	marriage
69	GW	news	2	PiS and 2	2	art 7
70	GW	news	2	3	1	supreme court
71	GW	news	1	2	2	supreme court
72	GW	news	1	PiS and 2	2	political situation/xenophobia
73	GW	news	2	PiS	1	Migration crisis
74	GW	news	1	0	0	dotations
75	GW	news	1	3	1	switzerland
76	GW	news	1	PiS	2	Bialowieza Forest
77	GW	news	1	0	0	environmental
78	GW	news	1	0	0	dotations
79	GW	news	2	0	2	Russia sanctions
80	GW	news	1	PiS and 2	2	2018 elections
81	GW	news	1	0	0	dotations computer course
82	GW	news	2	PO	1	roads
83	GW	news	1	0	0	environmental
84	GW	news	1	1	2	Migration crisis
85	GW	news	1	PiS and 2	1	2018 elections
86	GW	news	1	PiS	2	Party meeting
87	GW	news	2	2	1	Kaczyński stepping down
88	GW	opinion	2	PiS	2	Polexit
89	GW	news	2	0	0	ACTA
90	GW	news	1	2	1	Orban/Kaczyński
91	GW	news	1	1	2	Ukrainian issue
92	GW	news	2	1	1	Gazprom
93	GW	news	1	PO	2	In Vitro
94	GW	news	1	0	0	EU sanctions vs Russia
95	GW	news	1	1	2	"evaluation" of Tusk's position
96	GW	news	2	3	2	European Army
97	GW	news	1	PO	2	Russia sanctions
98	GW	news	1	PO	2	Russia sanctions

Own research of Gazeta Wyborcza 2015

50 51	Newspaper	Article Type	Coverage			Topic/Theme
			Positive or negative -> EU	Tusk/Kaczynski/Juncker/PiS	National/European	
52	Gazeta wyborcza			Positive or Negative?		
53	GW	news	2	PiS	1	birthcontrol
54	GW	news	1	PiS/PO	2	birthcontrol
55	GW	news	1	PO	2	unemployment
56	GW	opinion	1	0	0	birthcontrol
57	GW	news	1	PO	2	coal and dotations
58	GW	news	1	PO	1	banking
59	GW	news	2	1	2	
60	GW	news	1	0	0	National museum dotation
61	GW	news	1	0	0	dotations
62	GW	news	1	PiS/PO	1	Migration crisis
63	GW	news	1	0	0	Migration crisis
64	GW	opinion	1	PO	1	environmental
65	GW	news	2	0	0	Migration crisis
66	GW	news	1	0	0	environmental
67	GW	news	1	PiS	2	judicial
68	GW	news	1	2	2	homophobia
69	GW	news	1	PO	2	marriage
70	GW	news	2	PiS and 2	2	art 7
71	GW	news	2	3	1	supreme court
72	GW	news	1	2	2	supreme court
73	GW	news	1	PiS and 2	2	political situation/xenophobia
74	GW	news	2	PiS	1	Migration crisis
75	GW	news	1	0	0	dotations
76	GW	news	1	3	1	switzerland
77	GW	news	1	PiS	2	Bialowieza Forest
78	GW	news	1	0	0	environmental
79	GW	news	1	0	0	dotations
80	GW	news	2	0	0	Russia sanctions
81	GW	news	1	PiS and 2	2	2018 elections
82	GW	news	1	0	0	dotations computer course
83	GW	news	2	PO	1	roads
84	GW	news	1	0	0	environmental
85	GW	news	1	1	2	Migration crisis
86	GW	news	1	PiS and 2	1	2018 elections
87	GW	news	1	PiS	2	Party meeting
88	GW	news	2	2	1	Kaczynski stepping down
89	GW	opinion	2	PiS	2	Polexit
90	GW	news	2	0	0	ACTA
91	GW	news	1	2	1	Orban/Kaczynski
92	GW	news	1	1	2	Ukrainian issue
93	GW	news	2	1	1	Gazprom
94	GW	news	1	PO	2	In Vitro
95	GW	news	1	0	0	EU sanctions vs Russia
96	GW	news	1	1	2	"evaluation" of Tusk's position
97	GW	news	2	3	2	European Army
98	GW	news	1	PO	2	Russia sanctions

2015				
SUM POSITIVE ANGEL ON EU :	SUM NEGATIVE ANGLE ON EU:	SUM NEUTRAL:		
33	13	0		
SUM TUSK	SUM KACZYNSKI	SUM JUNCKER	SUM PiS	SUM PO
5	6	3	12	10
positive	positive	positive	positive	positive
1	3	2	4	4
neutral	neutral	neutral	neutral	neutral
0	0	0	0	0
negative	negative	negative	negative	negative
4	3	1	8	6
MAIN TOPICS:				
Migration crisis: 6				

