

I. RESEARCH ARTICLES

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KNOCKING DOWN THE SYSTEM.

POPULISM IN PAWEŁ KUKIZ'S POLITICAL DISCOURSE*

Abstract. Populism in the discourse of the Polish politician Paweł Kukiz is manifested both on the content plane and in its linguistic expression. Kukiz's parliamentary speeches and Facebook posts contain all the features constitutive of populism, such as the central position of the people (in contrast to the establishment of "the others"), a simplification of the linguistic worldview (including values), and the figure of a leader representing the people. The language of the discourse is colloquial, close to that of the average speaker, imbued with emotions and expressive evaluations, using metaphors and stereotypes and other means. This kind of communicative style helps the politician project an image of himself that appears coherent with the roles he plays, by invoking the archetypes of a warrior and "a regular guy", but one that always enjoys a dominant position.

KEY WORDS: populism; political discourse; Paweł Kukiz; values

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**1. *It is the citizen, not the government or political parties,
that should be at the heart of the state.***

Populism and persuasion

Despite the fact that discourse, including political discourse, has long been investigated by political scientists, media experts, and linguists, it remains notoriously difficult to define in an unambiguous manner. In this article, discourse is understood in the spirit Teun van Dijk's model, discussed in detail by Bartmiński and Niebrzegowska-Bartmińska (2009: 32–33).¹ Following the latter authors, we will be analysing discourse taking into account the attitude of the speaker (sender), as well as the communicative relationship between the speaker (sender) and hearer (receiver), which derives from the speaker's strategies in producing populist statements.

To deal with the problem of populism nowadays means facing, at the very outset, two major difficulties: (1) the disputes on the essence of populism between the researchers who view it as a form of ideology (Canovan 1981; Albertazzi and McDonnell 2008; Mudde 2007) and those who prefer to see it as a particular thinking style (Karwat 1998: 99) or a variant of a political strategy (Kazin 1995; Laclau 2005), and (2) the totally different everyday understanding of this notion (with its strong evaluative load and semantic fuzziness). Says Pierre-André Taguieff:

It is ironic that for the word *populism* to become popular has been an unlucky development. Populism has broken free from scientific discourse and has flourished in the polemical space controlled by politicians, journalists, and media intellectuals, in the form of polemical phrases such as a "populist trend", "populist aspirations", "populist threats", etc. [...] The term has been adopted as a negative category with dangerous connotations, without having been subjected to critical analysis. (Taguieff 2010: 145)

In order to restore the explanatory utility of the notion, it is necessary to reconstruct its vital elements, starting from the fundamental category of THE PEOPLE, mentioned by all sides of the debate. In their attempt to identify the essence of populism, Albertazzi and McDonnell distinguish four principles, all directly related to "the people": (1) the people are one and are inherently "good"; (2) the people are sovereign; (3) the people's culture and way of life are of paramount value; and (4) the leader and the party/movement are one with the people (Albertazzi and McDonnell 2008: 6).

It is the reference to the various ways that the people – always positively understood – (along with the declaration that one speaks for the people and on their behalf) that determines the characteristic dichotomous structure of

¹ Bartmiński and Niebrzegowska-Bartmińska mainly rely on van Dijk 2006.

populism. This, in turn, gives rise to a simplified vision of the socio-political reality, with its antagonism between the “people” and the “non-people”. As Harald Bergsdorf has aptly put it, “[p]opulists aim to crush the Gordian knots of modern politics with a sword of alleged simple solutions” (Bergsdorf 2000: 624; after Mudde 2004: 542). The framework of populism – founded on that opposition – is filled with various (socially and culturally relativised) content that embodies the linguistic worldview of a given speaking subject. Therefore, particular examples of populism largely differ from one another in terms of ideology (there is left-wing vs. right-wing populism), the elements of a political system they refer to (populist regimes, parties, movements, leaders), origin (Latin American, European, Russian, American populism), and time in history (19th-c. populism, contemporary populism) (Moroska 2010: 25).

Such a great variety of forms and mutations leads one to believe that populism is not “a fixed constellation but a series of discursive resources which can be put to very different uses” (Laclau 2005: 176). Indeed, populism has a multi-faceted nature:² it consists of a body of variously related content, focused on the overarching idea of “the people”, selectively borrowed by the discourse author and freely combined with new content or a new linguistic form. In “populist hybrids”, formed in this way, the new elements (which simultaneously reflect the socio-political context and the populist’s linguistics skills) are always subordinated to the concept of the people as the highest value (Tokarczyk 1999: 541–558). In the case of populist discourse, a distinction between strictly populist components and complementary strands woven into them is drawn by first identifying the constitutive elements of populism and then indicating the points that link it (at the level of subject matter) with politics (which is also multi-faceted by nature, but equipped with a different repertoire of ideas)³ and (at the level of linguistic form) with persuasion.

In this article, five elements are taken as constitutive of populist discourse: (1) the people occupy the central position in the populist worldview (with the properties mentioned above); (2) the people are always presented in opposition to “non-people” (e.g. the privileged elite or strangers); (3) the linguistic worldview of the society is simplified; (4) there is a leader who performs the role of the (genuine or self-proclaimed) *vox populi*; (5) the message is intelligible enough to be communicated directly to as many

² Being multi-faceted is a nonspecific property, ascribed also to other social phenomena. Its essential significance is that it implies a unique kind of “connectivity”, analogous to the connectivity of words, through which its constitutive elements involve complementary components interwoven into them.

³ Karwat 2009.

recipients as possible.⁴ These components are necessary features; however, their prevalence in the analysed variant of discourse varies depending both on the linguistic devices used by the specific speaker, and on extralinguistic factors, including the political situation (especially the specific character of contemporary liberal democracy) (Meny and Surel 2002), the individual way the speaker interprets the category of *THE PEOPLE* (which determines his/her broader social worldview), and the way the speaker puts into practice their individual vision of the political “people’s voice” (self-creation through an archetype). It should be emphasised, however, that in categorising social personas, populism does not appeal to the classical, horizontal political division into left-wingers and right-wingers, but introduces its own, new, vertical division that excludes, from the category of the glorified and virtuous people, both the elites (from the top of the social hierarchy) and “others” or “strangers”, however defined (from its bottom) (Moroska 2010: 26; Meny and Surel 2002).

As far as the linguistic plane is concerned, the populist picture of the social world is often drawn with persuasive devices, although the connection between populism and persuasion is more of a statistical correlation than a substantive relationship. One cannot, after all, rule out the existence of persuasion-free populism: for instance, when the speaker is a sincere follower of populist ideology, his/her dominant need to “serve the people” would overshadow the will to effectively “persuade the people”. Persuasion is broadly used by populists, as an effective linguistic strategy designed to “exert real influence on the recipient’s thinking or behaviour – not by direct command, but by sending a hidden, indirect message, so that the dominant function of the discourse appears to be other than connotative” (Barańczak 1983: 31). However, persuasion is not unique to this type of discourse. Signals of persuasion in populist discourse (or any other discourse) include the following characteristic rhetorical mechanisms: (1) emotionalisation of reception; (2) creation of a world community of people and a community of language; (3) simplification of the distribution of values; and (4) alternative-free reception (Barańczak 1983: 33–35). The strength of the link between these linguistic devices and populism can be judged when persuasion, understood as relieving the recip-

⁴ Ożóg also mentions other linguistic features of the populist discourse: prominence given to a specific axiological system, emotional slant of the texts, use of irony and rhetorical questions, arbitrary assignment of meanings, and colloquial style (Ożóg 2006: 206–216; cf. also 2005: 325–334). Some of these elements fall into the categories identified here; for example, the axiological system, colloquial style, and emotionality are components of the linguistic worldview, which we understand in accordance with the assumptions of cultural linguistics.

ient of the obligation to engage in independent intellectual activity, is confronted with a description of the “leader of the people” – a demagogue who is a rather slovenly sophist student, but [who] does not have to make too much of an effort, because he/she does not address the kind of people they would have to confound with perverse logic. Instead they address those who prefer to feel rather than think, believe rather than know and test, and make decisions that are suggested to them. (Karwat 2006: 16).

2. *Knocking down the system.* Paweł Kukiz’s populism

In this article, we analyse transcripts of the parliamentary speeches and Facebook posts of the Polish politician Paweł Kukiz from between August 2015 and September 2016. The study covers the politician’s own posts and excludes other users’ posts he had shared on his Facebook profile. The content analysis was focused on the linguistic features that contributed to the creation of the populist image of the politician. These features are related to the specific ways in which statements characteristic of populist discourse are shaped.

As already mentioned, by far the most important identifying feature of populist discourse is the peculiar use of the category of THE PEOPLE. In Paweł Kukiz’s discourse, the lexeme *lud* ‘the people’ appears only once in his parliamentary speech of November 18, 2015, in which he portrays the people as a sovereign in a democratic state:

I had really hoped that this would be a government of great change, that this would be a government that would seek to empower the citizen, give the citizen control over the authorities, that this would be a government that would speak loudly about the need to change the electoral system to a majoritarian model, a government that would stay in touch – and the Prime Minister has mentioned the necessity of such direct contact – with citizens. This is what is really needed. But at that moment I expected them [the government] to go further, to speak about the referendum, about strengthening the role of this basic practice of democracy – of making contact with the people [*lud*]. (*Sejm*,⁵ Session no. 1, 18 Nov 2015)

The infrequent use of *lud* is probably also associated with its negative connotations that go back to the communist era (cf. WSJP online, entry: *lud*). Another lexical item that appears in the same context as *lud* is *obywatel* ‘citizen’ (often used in plural), as well as adjectives derived from it that allow the speaker to describe various elements of reality as *obywatelskie* ‘civic’. The use of the word *obywatel*, defined as ‘a member of the state who has specific

⁵ The *Sejm* is the lower house of the Polish Parliament; its upper house is the *Senat* (Senate). [editor’s note]

rights and obligations stipulated in the constitution' (SJP Szym 1988, vol. 2: 435), allows Kukiz to accentuate not only the existence of a particular social group, but above all its relationship with the Polish state and the rights granted by the constitution to every human being.⁶ Furthermore, by using the noun *obywatel*, the politician chooses a form which, in contrast to the collective noun *lud*, allows him to treat his recipients individually and thus recognise their status as individual subjects. It is also worth noting that in Kukiz's Facebook posts and commentaries, the lexeme *obywatel* and its derivatives are often spelled with a capital letter. The politician seems to be doing more than just applying the spelling rule associated with the use of honorifics, since both the noun *obywatel* and its derivatives are capitalised not only when they are used to address the recipients, but also when they are used in informational and promotional material, descriptions of projects and bills prepared by Kukiz himself or his movement (*Kukiz'15*):

It was not my intention to speak against decent Citizens. (FB, 22 Dec 2015)

First of all, I was one of the people who informed the Citizens via the Internet, a couple of years ago, that a bill was being drafted on the assistance of foreign services. (FB, 6 Jan 2015)

Consolidated by the idea of a Civic state, mutual respect, friendship and work. (FB, 9 Jan 2015)

Look what power Citizens have when they speak in unison! (FB, 21 Jul 2016)

The fact that the category of CITIZEN is marked in this way in many utterances is not the only signal marking its "extraordinary" usage in political discourse. Importantly, the citizen, citizenship and civic rights are treated as prime values to which, as Kukiz declares, the actions of both the electoral committee of Kukiz'15 and the movement's leader are subservient. In many of his statements, the politician says explicitly that the purpose of his political activity is to serve citizens:

It is the citizen, not the government and political parties, that should be at the heart of the state. [...] Our true and only coalition partner is the Republic of Poland and its citizens. (*Sejm*, Session no. 1, 18 Nov 2015)

Both Kukiz's parliamentary speeches and Facebook comments feature a kind of paradox. On the one hand, the politician comes across as someone who is working for the citizens, having been elected to fulfil the tasks entrusted to him, while on the other hand, he fits perfectly the role of the

⁶ The dictionary defines *lud* 'the people' as "individuals living in the same area, having a common culture and language, who, however, have no national awareness or tradition of political statehood" (accessed Sep 15, 2016).

leader, a know-it-better disputant, who possesses knowledge and uses it. His Facebook discussions often show that he sets himself up in the role of the one who knows and is right, who knows and reveals the secrets of the government, who breaks down the walls concealing those secrets, especially those that negatively affect the situation of Polish citizens:

[in reply to the journalist Tomasz Lis, who had teased Kukiz about the fact that he had allegedly been promised the position of Director of TVP 2 (Polish Public Television Channel 2) but was not in the end appointed] You have a bad source of information, Mr. Tomasz.⁷ We have fought for pluralism and a place in the Polish Television for you.⁸ Unfortunately, it is Gucwiński who holds the copyright to *With a Camera Among Animals*.⁹ (FB, 15 Jan 2016)

During the election campaign, Paweł Kukiz appealed in his public statements to the archetype¹⁰ of the Rebel – an uncompromising dissident whose goal is to fight against the existing norms and values, and whose greatest opponent is the current system (Pearson and Mark 2001):

For the first time, we have a chance to bring Poland back to its citizens, to restore a real democracy in which the citizen is the politician's employer and not a serf of the neo-aristocracy of party members. (FB, 13 Aug 2015)

I wish to thank the TRUE Warriors who want to take it all. [...] For their defiance, consistency, courage. [...] Remember: we've already won. We have a clear conscience and we will go down in history as heroes.¹¹ (FB, 6 Sep 2015)

It is difficult to state for sure whether the utterance was “embedded” in an archetypal context deliberately as a marketing strategy or whether the word for warrior was used intuitively; nevertheless, it seems appropriate to invoke the notion of archetypes for three reasons. First of all, the allusion to

⁷ A honorific that implies familiarity.

⁸ Lis used to be TVP's star news presenter in the 1990s.

⁹ A popular TV series about animals at the Wrocław Zoo, broadcast in the years 1971–2002.

¹⁰ The typology of archetypes used in contemporary political discourse is not the classic Jungian typology with the archetypal figures of the Shadow, the Anima, the Animus, the Great Mother, the Old Wise Man, and the Self (Jung 1938), but a variant thereof modified for use in commercial marketing and later adapted for the purpose of political communication. This typology uses only positive role models, which are classified by reference to one of the recipient's four needs. It distinguishes archetypes whose appearance in discourse is to satisfy the need for security: Ruler, Caregiver and Creator; the need for achievement: Hero, Outlaw, and Magician; the need for happiness: Innocent, Explorer, Sage; and the need for acceptance and the sense of belonging: Regular Guy/Girl, Jester, Lover (Pearson and Mark 2001).

¹¹ In the Polish original, the word *WoJOWnicy* ‘warriors’ has the acronym JOW embedded in it, which stands for ‘single member constituencies’, a “winner-take-all” model of voting, for which Kukiz had famously campaigned during his bid for a parliamentary seat.

the archetype of the Rebel is a continuation of Paweł Kukiz's scenic image of a socially engaged rock musician; secondly, it gives prominence to the speaker's antagonistic attitude to the *status quo* and his desire to change the political situation;¹² and thirdly, the archetype of the Rebel stimulates change, making the narrative more lively, while at the same time it accounts for the change within the archetype itself.¹³ These qualities of the archetype of the Rebel have made it easy for the politician, after his electoral success, to smoothly transform this role model by "embedding" his discourse in the archetype of the Regular guy, a character who (in its "pure" variant) focuses on aspects of everyday life, whose goal is to derive satisfaction from living in a community, and who strives for acceptance from that community. Donning the garb of the Regular guy, Paweł Kukiz the MP presents himself as an "ordinary" member of the community of citizens, who uses their language (as discussed below) and who knows and shares their daily toils and troubles. He acts (an attribute of the Rebel) to overcome these problems and threats (an attribute of the Caregiver), despite the obstacles thrown in his way by the institution he works in.

The transition from one archetypal character to another in Kukiz's Facebook comments does not make him lose his credibility because the basic content of the messages does not change – even though the emphasis is variable: the pre-election Rebel, out of concern for the people, becomes the leader of his "squad" to expose and combat the iniquities of public institutions, in particular of political parties and of the party system (a holistic perspective, top-down demarcation). At the same time, the Regular guy (the boy next door) is no longer so strongly focused on contesting the political order which he, after all, is a part of, but rather concentrates on hunting down the threats that endanger the average citizen, such as callous civil servants, corrupt lawyers, refugees who threaten Polish interests, the Germans, the hypocrisy of the public media, etc. (this is an individualistic perspective, bottom-up demarcation).

¹² Laclau (2005) or Canovan (1981, 2005) also treat these properties as constitutive elements of populism: "Populism is designed to mobilize ordinary people as a political force against the established structure of power and dominant ideas of the society and values with the intention of devaluing the latter as the basis of political legitimacy, and replacing them with the common sense of the ordinary people" (Canovan 2005: 70).

¹³ This practice confirms the idea that "[e]ach story gradually loses its potential if it ceases to surprise. Today's audience look for non-stock identities, and to get or keep them interested, one is allowed to break conventions by adding a twist to the story. That is why more and more importance is being attached to narrative devices that divest the characters of their perfection: a character should not be identical all the time, and ideally, he/she should, to some extent, act against the rules. This is what the rebel type embodies" (Wasilewski, Brach, and Bartnik 2011: 228).

The category of THE PEOPLE understood as CITIZENS is closely correlated with the worldview based on the US–THEM opposition. The positively appraised WE encompasses the Polish citizens, including Paweł Kukiz himself and his electoral committee (i.e. people who represent the same mode of thinking). The negatively appraised THEY, on the other hand, along with the “strangeness” or “otherness” of their political views, includes the ruling parties and the individuals responsible for political decisions in the country. This means that the antinomy of *the familiar* and *the strange* features very prominently in the analysed discourse, providing a framework for the creation of a simplified, dichotomous world.

The positive side of this antinomy is constructed by means of inclusive verb forms, which the interlocutor uses in order to locate himself among his audience, the citizens he addresses. This is an easily recognised and frequently used persuasive device that allows the speaker to build a world that he or she shares with their audience. But Kukiz does not stop here. He frames his statements in a such a way that every average citizen can regard the leader of Kukiz’15 not only as their spokesman but in fact as someone who speaks their colloquial language – the characteristic features of Kukiz’s style are discussed below. At this point, however, it is worth paying attention to the distinctive way in which the politician refers to the various figures on the political scene: apart from using official first name-plus-surname forms, he often uses a diminutive of the first name, that name alone, or a distorted form of the surname. This manner of speaking adds to Kukiz’s discourse certain emotional features typical of exchanges between people of equal social status. This practice of colloquialisation is bidirectional: the voters who communicate with Paweł Kukiz either address him familiarly, using the pronoun *ty* ‘you-infml.’ and calling him by his name, or else use a colloquial address form *Panie Pawle*,¹⁴ in which the first name *Paweł* is prefixed by the honorific *Pan* ‘Mr.’.

Well, well! And here we have a solution to the authoritarianism of the Law and Justice party! It is enough to simply move to Thailand, where (and I quote Przemek¹⁵)

¹⁴ Łaziński (2006) treats this formula as a universal polite form, which is used in direct interactions as an unmarked honorific. This stands in contrast to Marcjanik (2006), who finds such formulas clumsy and points out that “according to the Polish custom, a person’s first name, even when prefixed by *Pan/Pani* ‘Mr./Mrs.(Ms.)’ points to an unofficial relationship between the interlocutors. *Pani Ewa* ‘Ms. Ewa’ is, so to speak, halfway between *Proszę Pani* ‘Madam’ and the simple *Ewa* [...] If the addressee does not accept the rules of the language game imposed on them, they will feel that the speaker is being overfamiliar, and fraternisation is treated by the Polish custom as inappropriate behaviour” (Marcjanik 2006: 231).

¹⁵ A diminutive of Przemysław, with reference to Przemysław Saleta, a Polish kick-boxer.

the weather is nice, the food is tasty, and where you are surrounded by smiling people. The thought of such a dream refuge, where one could wait for the rule of Law and Justice to end is probably tempting for many Poles. [...]

Przemek... An excellent idea! But tell me this – who will defend democracy in Poland when you, Kraśko, Lis, Petru, Rycho, Zdzicho, Bronek,¹⁶ and other Boleks¹⁷ have left us – reactionaries – in this cold country with terrible weather and dramatically bad food? (FB, 7 Jan 2016)

I wonder if Donald [Tusk]’s grandfather took the same position towards Germany’s “good faith” when it demanded a “corridor” to East Prussia. (FB, 20 Jan 2016)

The first line of division between the *citizen* (and the speaker) and the *stranger* is manifested in the way political parties are portrayed, as well as in the negative evaluation of the current party system. Kukiz refers to this system with the negatively charged noun *partiokracja* ‘particracy’ (a neologism coined by Józef Piłsudski¹⁸), derived from *partia* ‘party’ and *demokracja* ‘democracy’, to emphasise the contrast between the two concepts. Particracy is thus a *system* (another key word in Kukiz’s idiolect) of government in which the political process is dominated by political parties rather than citizens. Since, in Kukiz’s view, Poland follows a particratic model of government, to which he refers with the clearly negatively valuated noun *system*, the politician often describes his own attitude, as well as that of his followers, with the attribute *antypartyjny* ‘anti-party’.¹⁹ The opposition between the concepts discussed here is clear in one of Kukiz’s Facebook posts: “One thing is certain: citizenship is awakening, and the days of particracy in Poland are numbered” (FB, 11 Jan 2016).

On the other hand, the lexeme *system* itself, in the sense of particracy, appears in many statements, usually in a tone of accusation, a hope for the

¹⁶ Surnames of familiarised first names of journalists and politicians. [editor’s note]

¹⁷ *Bolek* was an alleged pseudonym of Lech Wałęsa in the files of the Communist secret service. [editor’s note]

¹⁸ The First Marshal and leader (1920–1935) of the Second Polish Republic.

¹⁹ In political science, the concept of a *political system* is, of course, used as an axiologically neutral analytical category; it is defined as a complex set of five political elements: (1) all institutions (public authorities) that make up the structure of the state; (2) non-state elements of the system, such as political parties, local government, pressure and interest groups, non-governmental social organizations (as long as their activity is politicised); (3) political values, principles, and norms; (4) the actions of political subjects; and (5) the mechanisms relating these elements to one another (Maj and Paruch 2008: 71–72). In other words, it is a category with a broad but precisely defined content. In Paweł Kukiz’s statements, the term functions as a label (similarly to the word *układ* ‘establishment, behind-the-scenes scheme’, previously used by the Law and Justice party); its content is imprecise and variable (usually it covers institutions; on other occasions, political parties, and on yet other occasions, procedures and mechanisms for action). See also the concept of “occasional evaluative labels” in Polkowska (2015: 67–68).

better (conditional on the abolition of the current system), or an explicit election promise:

[To Lech Wałęsa] Twenty six years too late, Mr. President. The failure to de-communise and the “thick line”²⁰ led to the “dirt-digging” system in Poland. To a system based on blackmail, on the absolute power of those who were the holders of [Security Service] files. [...] It is thanks to you, Mazowiecki, and other Michniks,²¹ that we have a particracy and families at variance in Poland today. Twenty six years too late, Mr. Many Names. (FB, 11 Jan 2016)

[In a commentary] I’ll be happy to leave [this gutter]. But only when this System has been routed. Precisely because I’m a musician. (FB, 22 May 2016)

I keep my fingers crossed for Iceland. They broke the mould and swept away the system at home; let them fight and win on the pitch. Let them show that it can be done, that all you need is perseverance, work, and faith. That the hierarchy is not established once and for all. (FB, 27 Jun 2016)

Divided, we will be swept away by the system. United, we will sweep the System away. (25 Apr 2016)

... we have promised the citizens to return the state to them, we have promised to remove party influence from state institutions. (*Sejm*, Session No. 11, 11 Feb 2016)

In Kukiz’s *Sejm* speeches, the concept of *particracy* appears only occasionally, although it also has a negative valuation there. Used as an attribute of the noun *propaganda*, it intensifies the negative evaluation of the party to which the statement refers:

It was very important to us that the television should indeed be public, that it should not be the same as in the times of Civic Platform,²² so that it should not be a tool of particratic propaganda. (Session No. 17, 29 Apr 2016)

Importantly, in Kukiz’s political discourse, *particracy* is a broad concept that encompasses not only the malfunctioning party system and the frequently criticized electoral law, but also the previous ruling parties, the various policy-makers, and even more broadly – the entire institutional structure of the state. The most common grudge voiced by the MP in his speeches and comments is that citizens are being robbed and cheated:

In our country, every government will, to a greater or lesser extent, rob the Citizens. Until the moment comes when we will have changed our mentality of the serf. (FB, 24 Jun 2016)

²⁰ Allusion to an expression used by a former Polish Prime Minister, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, interpreted (rather mistakenly) as a sign of leniency towards former Communists. [editor’s note]

²¹ Adam Michnik, Ed.-in-chief of the daily *Gazeta Wyborcza*, former opposition activist. [editor’s note]

²² *Platforma Obywatelska*, a Polish political party, in power 2007–2015.

The enemy, i.e. partocracy or the system, is evoked by using unequivocally negative labels, such as *partyjniak* ‘party official’, *gang* ‘gang’, *bandyta* ‘thug’, *klan* ‘clan’, *zbrodniarz* ‘criminal’, *aparaczyk* ‘apparatchik’, or *targowiczanie* ‘member of the Targowica Confederation’, a synonym of ‘traitor’,²³ etc. These labels refer to specific social groups or political contexts; they are evaluative and of varying intensity. Moreover, many contain historical allusions, which serves to bind the community of its users. Consider further:

In all those situations where partocracy is in danger, where the interests of the party people are weakened, these two gangs merge into one PO PiS²⁴ and go hand in hand to protect their positions established at the round stool...²⁵ (FB, 1 Jun 2016)

Read the article by the late Professor Jerzy Przystawa, an avid advocate of single-member constituencies. If this electoral system was in force in Poland today, we would not have any disputes about the Constitutional Tribunal, the dramatic division of the Nation, and the thuggish all-powerful sovereignty of party clans over Citizens. (FB, 4 Jun 2016)

A referendum is a matter of regaining freedom and coming out from under the boot of the Magdalenka²⁶ criminals. (FB, 17 Aug 2016)

The metaphor of theft is a frequent one; it contains lexical elements derived not only from colloquial Polish (*tupić* ‘rob’), but also from prison slang, e.g. *jumak* ‘thief’, as in the following quote: “I’ve seen up close what these thieves [*jumaki*] are up to. This was the main reason why I entered politics – to remove the thieves [*jumaki*] from power” (FB, 15 Jun 2016).

As mentioned above, the vertical division characteristic of populism is seen as a dividing line that separates the people not only from the establishment or elites, but also from those in the bottom rungs. In Kukiz’s online comments, one social group that stands in prominent opposition to the people are refugees, depicted as enemies threatening Poland and the Poles. This opposition is often represented by a graphic sign, a kind of logo that has appeared several times on the politician’s social networking account, which is a stop sign with an inscription: *to refugees*. The explicitly negative valuation of refugees as enemies and strangers calls into question the stereotype of the hospitable Pole, who is open and welcoming to foreigners. Paweł Kukiz

²³ A 1792 confederation of Polish and Lithuanian magnates, supported by Catherine II, the then Russian Empress. Its aim was to oppose the newly drafted Polish constitution of 1791. [editor’s note]

²⁴ A commonly used acronym for the allegedly joint endeavours of two political parties: PO (Civic Platform) and PiS (Law and Justice). [editor’s note]

²⁵ An allusion to the Round Table talks of 1989, between the then Communist authorities and the opposition. [editor’s note]

²⁶ A conference centre of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, where talks were held in late 1980s between the Communist authorities and representatives of the Solidarity Trade Union. [editor’s note]

does not try to hide this. On the contrary, he brings it into the limelight by referring to refugees as “guests”, putting the word in inverted commas, or preceding it with “so-called”: this is ironic and changes the valuation from positive to negative. The aversion is highlighted and the negative emotions are aroused by using the metaphor of home – the refugee is an unwelcome guest in the Polish home, the home of all Poles: “It is unacceptable that politicians should invite ‘guests’ to our home without asking Citizens for their opinion” (FB, 6 Jan 2016). The escalation of negative emotions and valuations is expressed through vulgar language and ironic comments directed at people who hold a different view on this matter. The explicit apologies Kukiz makes for his boorish, politically incorrect remarks turn into an ironic commentary that ridicules and discredits the opinions of those being apologised to, who are compared to astronauts, too far away from the earth to see what is really going on:

Apparently, on Friday, the Americans shot this motherfucking savage...²⁷ Thank God...

And, right away, I would like to apologise to Ms. Lubnauer, Ms. Pihowicz, Mr. Petru, the entire *Nowoczesna*,²⁸ and the HateStop Lady (I do not remember her name, so double apologies) for calling the co-religionist of the “refugees” a “motherfucking savage”. I also apologize to Mr. Kijowski. And, generally, the entire KOD²⁹ and the Civic Platform. I also apologise to Angela Merkel, comrade Kwaśniewski,³⁰ and gays. I apologize to lesbians, too. And astronauts. (FB, 25 March 2016)

Kukiz, in building the opposition between the *familiar* and the *strange*, actualised in his discourse primarily in the form of the citizens-vs.-parties antinomy, creates a narrative founded on a potential conflict between these actors. However, the component that determines the narrative’s dynamics, its coherence and credibility is not so much the antagonism itself, but, above all, the model of the protagonist that appears in the narrative (Nowak 2010: 213). This kind of protagonist uses the rhetoric of domination, visible not only on the content plane but also in linguistic forms that break moral taboos (Wasilewski 2009: 331). The populist, casting himself in the role of the “voice of the people”, uses well-entrenched archetypes which allow the audience to quickly identify the features that the speaker attributes to himself, the goals he sets, and the enemies he finds standing in his way.

The ease with which the recipients are supposed to identify the role of the leader of the Kukiz’15 movement, who also expresses their own

²⁷ Abdel Rahman al-Kaduli, a prominent member of ISIS.

²⁸ An opposition party. [editor’s note]

²⁹ *Komitet Obrony Demokracji* (Committee for the Defence of Democracy). Mateusz Kijowski is the Committee’s founder. [editor’s note]

³⁰ Aleksander Kwaśniewski, a former President of Poland. [editor’s note]

judgements, leads to the emergence of an axiological worldview, in which the most important values are the frequently evoked flagship concepts of *God*, *Honour*, and *Fatherland*.³¹ In Kukiz's statements, this axiological triad is presented as timeless. These values can be called absolute or transcendent (Puzynina 1992: 39): they allow the language-user to categorise reality in a bipolar manner by dividing its elements into positive instrumental values, which serve to preserve the absolute values, and negative values, which pose a threat to the *summum bonum*, the highest good.

In the case of Paweł Kukiz's discourse, the polarity of the axiological hierarchy, characteristic of persuasive texts, is distorted. The politician creates a vision of absolute, ultimate values, which give meaning to and explain all political activities – the axiological world is thus maximally simplified. The addressees, on the other hand, are not so much excused from making a choice between the alternatives they have been given: they are deprived of the opportunity of seeing the negative side of the axiological opposition. There is only one right and correct set of values, a simplification that frees the politician, clad in the archetypical roles of the Rebel, Warrior, or the Regular Guy, from the task of convincing his audience to choose the *sacrum* he professes. Instead, Kukiz emphasizes and names those (negative) values that pose a direct threat to the axiological triad of God, Honour, and Fatherland. Persuasion has been replaced here with typically populist instruments: Kukiz, convinced of the rightness of his worldview, treats *the people* (in this case *citizens*) as co-believers in the same values. However, he directs the sharp barb of exclusion not only against the threats that are lurking to harm citizens, but also the threats to the highest community-uniting values.

It should be noted that Kukiz never defines the ultimate values: they are only implied and intuitively understood, albeit in association with contextualised statements that make direct reference to Christian values. The latter are evoked through frequent exclamations, such as *God forbid* or *Thank God*, as well as through the use of set phrases of biblical provenance, which allow the speaker to discredit a political opponent, as in a FB post containing a reference to “pieces of silver”:

And I must admit that I had great satisfaction blowing up (by pressing the green button) all those media apparatchiks for whom God, Honour, and Fatherland are symbols of reactionism and fascism. All those who served the political jet set for pieces of silver. Tons of silver coins. (FB, 3 Jan 2016)

³¹ According to Michael Fleischer (2003: 116–118), they belong to the group of concepts constitutive of Polish collective symbolism.

Rzepliński,³² like Wałęsa, is in love with himself. If he was an honourable man, he would resign. (FB, 18 Mar 2016)

The concept of honour, the second one in the triad, is understood as self-respect (SJP Szym 1988, vol. 1: 753) and embraces the notion of citizen(s), a superordinate category in the populist discourse. For Kukiz, the two notions seem to be synonymous. A true citizen is someone who is guided by both Christian and patriotic values, who is ready to fight for them, as well as for his/her own dignity and honour. The last element of the triad, Fatherland, is a concept that encompasses such values as ‘Poland’, ‘our home’, ‘the state’, ‘Polish culture and traditions’, ‘history’, and ‘Polish identity’. The symbolic nature of this axiological triad allows the politician to portray specific persons or institutions as a threat to absolute values. What he does most often, however, is mount his argumentation against what he considers threats to a certain value. For example, refugees are presented as a threat to Christianity (God), Polish tradition (Fatherland), or the individual citizen’s freedom and dignity.

This portrayal of values also evokes stereotypical images of the Pole as a Catholic and a patriot faithful to his fatherland: the stereotypes thus aspire to the status of the axiological canon. The hierarchy of values is simplified: as a result, Kukiz’s message is unambiguous and makes greater impact on the receiver.

3. I do not intend to use the “language of the salons”. It’s an alien way of speaking for me today. Paweł Kukiz’s idiolect

Kukiz’s axiological worldview, as it transpires through his speeches and FB posts, is shaped by both the content and the form of his statements. The language the politician uses is characterised by an emotional and colloquial style, as well as a measure of vulgarity. It is a continuation of the way he used to express his opinions as a politically engaged stage performer. His mode of speaking in both types of texts analysed here is similar, although his parliamentary speeches contain fewer vulgar elements. However, his speeches in the *Sejm* are far less numerous than the number of FB posts (the latter appearing nearly every day, often several times a day).

As the title of this section suggests (from FB, 20 Jan, 2016), the speaker regards the official variety of Polish as alien. With several potential reasons

³² Andrzej Rzepliński, president of the Polish Constitutional Tribunal in the years 2010–2016. [editor’s note]

for the this, it seems that emotional, often vulgar colloquial language, with elements of prison slang, allows Kukiz to exert greater influence on the emotions of his audience. Moreover, the choice of a style that “does not fit the salons” allows for greater bluntness of expression. With frequent use of colloquial metaphors – including the metaphors of fight, theft, or swindling – as well as biblical phrases, the speaker can vividly project his worldview, with its clear good-vs.-evil dichotomy.

Obscenities, insults, and evaluative labels in Kukiz’s parlance are often used in reference to “others” or “strangers” as a demonstration of power, the power to breach the ethical taboo of avoiding abusive language in official situations. In this way, the politician puts himself in a superior position not only in the eyes of fellow politicians, but also of future voters.³³

In demonstrating his power and reinforcing his political position through language, Kukiz plays a peculiar game with language norms. A singer and musician whose song lyrics abound in witty and attention-grabbing plays on words, Kukiz brings his linguistic creativity into political discourse. Several such devices can be mentioned. One of them was used in the debate on the government programme 500+ (a family income-supporting benefit). The template in the programme’s name, “something offered by the state” with the “+” sign, was transformed by substituting its first element. The names coined by Kukiz and members of the Kukiz’15 movement were: *Koryto+* ‘Trough+’, *Korytko+* ‘Little Trough+’, *Reaktywacja+* ‘Reactivation+’ or *Cela+* ‘Prison Cell+’: they do not stand for the government’s offers to the citizens but, instead, expose the manoeuvres of the ruling elite aimed to improve their own situation at the expense of citizens. The “+” sign is being discredited in that it no longer connotes positive values. An exception here is the programme referred to as *Cell+*, whose aim is to clear the Polish political scene of criminals who have deceived or robbed Polish people:

When a project of mass pay rises for top state officials, MPs, and senators appeared in July, we started the “Trough+” action and managed to curb the aspirations of “the Nation’s chosen ones”. But only for a moment. A month later, in August, the “Trough+” programme, a salary increase scheme for the officials of the Chancellery of the Prime Minister, was introduced through the back door. A substantial increase. By 100%. Now, we have a continuation of this soap opera – today, episode three: “Trough+. Reactivation”. A bill has been submitted to the Chancellery of the Sejm, providing for an increase of funds to cover the costs of running MP offices. (FB, 23 Aug 2016)

³³ According to Jacek Wasilewski, communicative behaviour which violates the principles of etiquette is a rhetoric of dominance, in which the speaker wins advantage over their interlocutor through the use of insults and profanities. This is a symbolic act of violence (Wasilewski 2009: 331, 345–346).

Well, good. We have the “Apartment+” and “500+” programmes... It’s time for a “Prison cell+” programme. (FB, 13 July 2016)

Another example is play on full forms and acronyms of the names of parties, especially those whose policies Kukiz disagrees with. The new names formed in this way are not only ambiguous but also evaluative, e.g.: *POPiS* (from PO ‘Civic Platform’ and PiS ‘Law and Justice’) also means ‘a show, display’,³⁴ *Platformiarze* ‘Platformers’,³⁵ or the ironic *Platforma Oburzonych* ‘the Platform of the Outraged’ (PO, ‘Civic Platform’). In another example, the politician transforms a conventionalised proper name through an intentional axiological shift:

It is necessary to change the rules for the Constitutional Tribunal [*Trybunał Kon-stytucyjny*] because, so far, it has often been at the beck and call [*dyspozycyjny* ‘subservient’] of those in power. (Sejm)

By using such ironic devices, the politician consolidates his powerful position manifested through his acts of violation of moral and linguistic norms.

The final aspect of Paweł Kukiz’s public statements to be considered is their degree of comprehensibility. The politician’s style in itself does not allow one to draw any conclusions in this regard; we have therefore resorted to the Gunning FOG Index, an instrument that measures the level of text intelligibility without the need to test the receivers’ competence (Broda, Maziarz, Piekot, and Radziszewski 2010: 26–28).³⁶

Kukiz’s parliamentary speeches, tested with Gunning’s index, had a FOG score of 7.60: they should be comprehensible to anyone with eight years of formal education, i.e., in the Polish context, to graduates of the 8-grade primary school. For the Facebook posts, a mean FOG score for 30 longer posts from the period covered by the study was 7.79 (the minimum score was 4.04; the highest score, of 12.48, was obtained for a post that contained quotes,

³⁴ *POPiS* is not a very recent creation and cannot be attributed to Kukiz. [editor’s note]

³⁵ This brings associations, for example, with the negatively evaluated and derogatory *zadymiarze* ‘troublemakers’. [editor’s note]

³⁶ A FOG test adapted to Polish texts is available at www.fog.uni.wroc.pl. The index determines the degree of a text’s difficulty by estimating the duration of formal education required of the reader to understand it on first reading. The Gunning FOG Index is calculated using an algorithm that takes into account the number of words in the text, the length of sentences (the number of words in a sentence), and the number of words with one, two, and more syllables. The formula, developed by Robert Gunning, converts these data into the number of years of education necessary for the reader to understand that text.

sentences in parentheses, and neologisms composed of three lexemes³⁷). These results demonstrate that Kukiz's speeches and comments are also addressed to young people, secondary school students, whose education involves civic matters and conscious use of full civic rights.

4. Conclusion

The discussion above shows that Paweł Kukiz's public linguistic performance has a clear populist style. Firstly, its populist aspect is manifest in its content, making use of all the features constitutive of populism: the central position of *the people* in the speaker's worldview (always in opposition to elites or "strangers"), the simplification of the linguistic worldview (including values inherent therein), the figure of a leader representing "the people". The style of Kukiz's speeches and internet posts is far from accidental. The politician's style is colloquial, typical of an average speaker of Polish. The performances are emotionally loaded and evaluative, both aspects being reinforced through the use of stereotypes and metaphors. Fashioned in this manner, the style in which Kukiz communicates with his audience is consistent with the image of himself: as both a warrior and a "regular guy" (albeit one that always enjoys a dominant position). The statements seem to have been premeditated and the author is certainly aware of the wide variety of receptive capacities of his Facebook followers. He distinguishes two categories of receivers, the better and not-so-well prepared to understand his message: "I will explain what the basic systemic changes would involve, in writing for the Eagles, and in pictorial form for the Fledglings" (FB, 15 Sep 2015).

The populist dimension of Paweł Kukiz's Sejm speeches and online commentaries explains why the politician is popular and why he was successful in the 2015 parliamentary elections. The elements that directly point to the populist character of his statements, including their idiosyncratic features, can serve as a basis for comparisons with the discourse of other Polish politicians. It appears that the various shades of populist political discourse in contemporary Poland can only be properly characterised if due attention is paid to Paweł Kukiz's parlance.

Translated by Klaudia Wengorek-Dolecka

³⁷ Longer posts often contain an abridgement of the content on a banner in the form of a one- or two-sentence caption explaining the message in the post, usually a topic for discussion or a demand made by the author and his political circles.

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