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## Why do Poles (still) Dislike Political Parties? Some Survey Insights into Anti-Party Attitudes in Poland, 1995–2011

*Abstract:* The article examines the negative approach of Poles towards political parties and partisanship in the recent years, presenting this phenomenon as a part of wider anti-party syndrome, characterizing Polish democracy after 1989. Adapting the approach of Torcal, Gunther and Montero (2002), the author constructs a scale of the anti-partyism, based on the statements typical for anti-party discourse, assessed by respondents in three surveys conducted in 1995, 2001 and 2011. Subsequently, some explanations of anti-party attitudes are tested. The analyses demonstrate that anti-partyism in Poland is relatively durable and embraces both cultural and reactive components. Anti-party attitudes are more visible among citizens socialized during the communist period. However, the consolidation of democracy generated its “own” anti-partyism: the youngest citizens were gradually more disinclined to political parties in the period analyzed (1995–2011).

*Keywords:* Anti-partyism, anti-party attitudes, political parties, party system institutionalization, public opinion, Poland.

### Introduction: Anti-Party Syndrome in Polish Democracy

Although the existing research shows that Poles present rather pro-democratic attitudes, they would rather live in a regime void of political parties. A relation between parties and democracy is not as evident for citizens as it is for the majority of theorists who have been continuously presenting an argument that democracy is unthinkable without parties and the parties have actually created modern democracy (e.g. Bryce 1921; Schattschneider 1942). When observing Polish politics, one might have an impression that many politicians would preferably distance themselves from the fact that they are members of political parties. “Partisan” (*partyjny*) in vernacular Polish, as well as in the discourse of the elites, is an adjective commonly evoking negative associations and very often it is a pure insult. Very frequent appeals to “de-party” (*odpartyjnić*) many spheres of public life usually refer “to curing” them.

In this article, I will examine the negative approach of Poles towards political parties and partisanship in the recent years. The analyses are based on the survey data; although, one should bear in mind that the unfavorable public opinion is only one of the indicators of a wider anti-party syndrome which might be observed in Polish democracy since 1989.

The anti-party syndrome is obviously not only a Polish phenomenon. There are numerous empirical studies documenting such tendencies in Western democracies that are interpreted as unfavorable for political parties. Researchers focused mainly on party dealignment, i.e. the decline of party identifications (Schmitt, Holmberg 1995; Dalton 2000; Dalton 2012), shrinking party membership rates (Katz et al. 1992; Mair, Biezen 2001; Mair, Biezen, Poguntke 2012), electoral behavior: decreasing turnout, increasing electoral volatility or increasing vote share for protest parties (Poguntke, 1996; Mudde 1996; Dalton, Wattenberg 2000; Mair 2005), decreasing citizens' trust in parties (Gidengil et al., 2002; Dalton, Weldon 2005) or wide-spread negative opinions about parties and party democracy (Torcal, Gunther, Montero 2002; Linek 2005). The most accessible element of the anti-party syndrome is the anti-party discourse, both at the elite level (i.e. the discourse of politicians, publicists, and experts) and at the popular/mass level (which might be observed in the daily conversations of "average citizens" about politics). Both sources of "what people say about parties" shape the public opinion that can be accessed through surveys. The important elements of anti-party syndrome are also weakly institutionalized parties and party system (Lewis 1994; Bértoa, Mair 2010), behavior of politicians and citizens (voters) which generates instable and unpredictable environment for party organizations.

Thanks to the weakness of particular parties and instability of the entire party system, many arguments that are evoked in the anti-party discourse gain on strength, yet the anti-party argumentation impacts political behavior to a certain extent. Separate symptoms comprising the anti-party syndrome are mutually reinforcing, as it is assumed in the concept of "mutual withdrawal" from parties proposed by Peter Mair (2005; 2006) or in the model of anti-party politics described by Susan Scarrow and Thomas Poguntke (1996). Peter Mair, concerned with the contemporary tendencies that are unfavorable for political parties, argued that the observed desertion from parties by citizens and power elites undermines the fundamental democratic values, e.g. popular involvement and control:

Parties are failing as a result of a mutual withdrawal, whereby citizens retreat into private life or more specialized and often *ad hoc* forms of representation, while party leaderships retreat into institutions, drawing their terms of reference ever more readily from their roles as governors or public-office holders. The traditional world of party democracy—as a zone of engagement in which citizens interacted with their political leaders—is being evacuated. (...) Traditional politics is seen less and less as something that belongs to the citizens or to the society, and is instead seen as something that is done by politicians. There is a world of the citizens—or a host of particularized worlds of the citizens—and a world of the politicians and parties, and the interaction between these worlds steadily diminishes (Mair 2005: 10, 21).

Thomas Poguntke, attempting to structure the research on anti-party symptoms observable in Western countries, differentiated between the selective (instrumental) anti-party sentiments which are aimed against the already existing parties and generalized anti-party sentiments which are addressed against the parties and party democracy *per se* (Poguntke 1996: 324). Many authors notice that a significant part of the anti-party arguments is used selectively, and instrumentally, by the critics of establishment, political outsiders who remaining critical attempt to enter party system as anti-party parties, or independent candidates (Scarrow 1996; Bardi 1996; Ignazi 1996; Owen, Dennis 1996).

Categories of selective and general anti-party sentiments could be coupled with two types of anti-partyism: reactive and cultural, respectively, described by Torcal, Gunther and Montero (2003) in their systematic study of public opinion on political parties in Southern European democracies. The authors define the reactive anti-partyism as a “critical stance adopted by citizens in response to their dissatisfaction with the performance of party elites and institutions.” Thus, it is related to the evaluation of current political parties’ activities, contrary to the cultural anti-partyism which is rooted in political culture and conditioned historically (by generational experience of undemocratic regimes, among others). The authors used the following statements to diagnose the anti-party attitudes:

- (a) *Reactive*: “Without parties, there can be no democracy,” “Parties are needed to defend the interests of various groups and social classes,” “Thanks to parties, people can participate in political life.”
- (b) *Cultural*: “Parties criticize one another, but in reality they are all alike,” “Political parties only divide people.”

Torcal, Gunther and Montero argue that the latter form of anti-party attitudes comprises a part of a broader syndrome of passivity and disaffection with politics. Thus, at the individual level, a very similar sets of variables account for cultural anti-partyism as for political apathy and disaffection.

Nonetheless, the literature notices also the systemic drivers of anti-party tendencies. Poguntke and Scarrow (1996) argue that the driving force of anti-party politics is to be modernization and social change as well as local factors, for example historical experience with parties or political culture characteristics. There are three processes that undermine the position of political parties in contemporary democracies:

- a) *individualization* and an accompanying profound *desegmentation of societies*, which results in the decline of significance of both collective interests and the traditional aggregating and representative institutions,
- b) *weakening of the nation state*, a natural environment of the political party activities; the state itself does not necessary become weaker, but its organization undergoes a change: regions and localities have been gaining on significance, but also the institutions of the European Union, as in the case of the majority of our continent’s democracies,
- c) *evolution of democratic legitimacy* (Rosanvallon 2011) that leads to complementing classical electoral legitimization with the new modes of legitimacy that are conveyed by new institutions (e.g. civil service, experts, independent audit institutions, constitutional courts, various institutions of civic consultations and participation).

What is interesting in the Polish case is the transitional context in which the anti-party syndrome occurs. In Poland, contrary to the “old” European democracies, it is hard to distinguish any “golden age” of party democracy to which one could refer claiming that parties are currently in decline. The consolidation of democracy in Poland, similarly to other post-communist countries, was taking place in the atmosphere of weakness of political parties as institutions of civil society, as they were predominantly top-down created, and the popular citizens’ dislike of partisanship.

Examining the case of Poland, one needs to study the historical process in which a new party system was created. This historical context is not only a heritage of hegemonic communist party (just to mention the wide-spread negative connotations with “the party,” partisanship, and party members or the anti-pluralistic view of political process), but also activity of post-Solidarity political elites in the first years of democracy. Their strategic decisions did not favor political parties and party democracy and in many cases they were directly against parties. After 1989, the Solidarity camp decided not to institutionalize itself as a strong political party or a few strong parties. Even after the 1989 elections, its leaders fantasized about “partyless democracy.” Foremost, for a long time its representatives quite effectively counteracted the stabilization of a party system. Among other decisions, in 1990, they lead to the creation of local democracy based on an ideological opposition of “party interests” and “local interests” with a prominent participation of non-partisan activists of Civic Committees (Grabowski 1996). These actions hampered the creation of local branches of national political parties. The post-Solidarity elites decided not to provide newly created political parties with assets taken over by the state after the Polish United Workers’ Party (PZPR). They are also responsible for the introduction of extremely liberal law on political parties (1990) and the electoral law without minimal threshold in the first free parliamentary elections (1991). This situation was conducive for the frequent party splits and the creation of parties without social rootedness (Jasiewicz 2000). Jacek Raciborski who studied Polish government elites between 1997 and 2005 also pointed out certain elements of anti-party rhetoric both in AWS (Solidarity Electoral Action) government between 1997 and 2001 and the post-communist SLD (Democratic Left Alliance) between 2001 and 2005 (Raciborski 2007; Raciborski 2008).

The “mutual withdrawal from parties,” or “mutual disloyalty,” is easily observable in the studies of party system stability in Poland. The electoral volatility in subsequent elections was co-produced by both: the disloyal elites and the instable, distrustful electorates easily shifting their party preferences or abstaining from voting.

Not only is the Polish electorate particularly demobilized—the mean turnout level after 1989 remains the lowest among post-communist countries (CzeŹnik 2007)—but also instable at the individual level. The data from Comparative Study of Electoral Systems shows that very different groups of voters participate in the respective elections (CzeŹnik 2009; CzeŹnik, Źerkowska-Balas 2011). Poland is also characterized by a low level of party identifications. The fifth edition of ESS reports that the percentage of citizens identifying themselves with parties was 30.2%; only two countries in 26 examined reported a lower level of party identifications. In four previous editions of ESS, when the level of party identification was examined, Poland consistently held the last position<sup>1</sup>; in 2002, a relation towards any party was declared by 28% of respondents, in 2004—22%, in 2006—26%, in 2008—23%.

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<sup>1</sup> The data of Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) in Poland, conducted as a Polish General Electoral Study (PGES) does not reflect such a remarkable difference on the level of party identifications between Poland and other countries. First of all, CSES employs a different form of questions concerning party identifications (with a complimentary question about a party that is “slightly closer to the respondent than other parties”). Foremost, all CSES surveys are conducted directly after the parliamentary elections when the party identifications are apparently induced and the question on identifications may be easily

Few years ago Polish citizens were also the most distrustful towards political parties among Europeans. The level of trust reported in 2004 was 3%, while the level of distrust—almost 90%. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of ESS (2004/2005) Poland held the last place among 25 countries examined. However, the moods are slowly changing. The Eurobarometer data series document that at least from 2010 the levels of trust regularly exceed 10% and are higher than the mean level for Central-Eastern European countries. In the 5<sup>th</sup> edition of ESS (conducted between 2010 and 2011), out of 26 countries examined, six countries reported lower levels of trust towards political parties than Poland. Even though in the recent years the level of trust towards political parties in Poland has ceased to stand out in comparison to other European countries, it still remains on a low level. Interestingly, in the 5<sup>th</sup> edition of ESS, the level of trust towards political parties declared by Poles was significantly lower than the level of trust towards politicians (who are usually equally or even more distrusted than parties).

Polish political elites were also frequently abandoning parties, even during the term of office (Millard 2010). Kamiński and Kurczewska (1994) called the post-Solidarity elites “institutional nomads” as they could not found stable parties as a counterweight to the post-communist left. This “nomadic” behavior has been shaping the citizens’ impressions about unstable and fluid party system for many years. It seems that the limited volatility observed after 2005 elections has been guaranteed mainly by the strong conflict between two main parties, enhanced intra-party discipline introduced by almost unquestioned leadership executed by Donald Tusk and Jarosław Kaczyński. Actually, only the replacement of these party leaders without causing splits in their parties could prove a sufficient party institutionalization, which comprises the fundament of party system stability.

The wider context of an anti-party syndrome presented above is important to interpret the opinion polls concerning the approach towards political parties. There is some evidence to prove that parties can ideally adapt to the unfavorable conditions and they evolve along with the evolution of contemporary democracy (Dalton et al. 2011). However, we can observe the rising tension between the systemic requirement for parties to govern and to manage the democratic dispute and the genuine reluctance towards parties, presented foremostly by the citizens, yet sometimes also by the governing elites (Poguntke, Scarrow 1996; Poguntke 1996; Deschouwer 1996; Bardi 1996). This tension should be systematically examined; social and political conditions of the aversion towards parties should be sought to understand the limits of legitimization of representative democracy and its key institutions. One should examine closely the content of the public charge towards parties in order for it to be addressed constructively.

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interpreted as the question concerning a particular party that he or she voted for in the elections. Moreover, in PGES 2005 and 2007 the questions concerning party identifications were placed before the question concerning electoral participation, while in other PGES editions the order of questions were reversed. It can be assumed that the ESS data, because of the time of conducting the surveys and the stability of the core questionnaire, reflects more precisely a permanent party identifications that are maintained also between the elections.

In the following section I will closely examine the anti-party attitudes of Poles that were measured in three respective opinion polls conducted in 1995, 2001, and 2011. They are inspired by the frequently cited research on anti-party attitudes in South European countries conducted by Torcal, Gunther, and Montero (2002). These analyses aim to identify the key structural and political determinants of anti-partyism in Poland and to test whether the assumption that the ongoing consolidation of democracy will result in the decrease of anti-partyism is correct.

## Data and Method

### Scale of Anti-partyism: Construction of the Dependent Variable

In this article, I will analyze a series of data concerning opinions on political parties taken from three public opinion polls which were conducted by the Institute of Sociology, University of Warsaw (IS) in 1995, 2001, and 2011. A scale of the anti-partyism will be constructed basing on these data and it will serve as a dependent variable in further analyses identifying major factors that favor anti-party attitudes. Unfortunately, this data is incomparable with the research on anti-party attitudes conducted in other European countries (Torcal, Gunther, Montero 2002; Linek 2005). A certain methodological drawback is also the fact that each of the surveys was conducted in a different political context<sup>2</sup>. Some elements of this context will be taken into consideration in the discussion of the results.

In each survey mentioned above, the respondents expressed their opinion about 8 statements describing the functioning of the political parties in Poland. The distributions of respondents' answers presented in Table 1 do not leave any doubts that the party image in public opinion remains negative and it did change between 1995 and 2011, but to party's disadvantage. In 2001, a certain improvement in the evaluation of political parties might have been observed which, interestingly, occurred simultaneously with the destabilization of a party system (disintegration of 'Solidarity' Electoral

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<sup>2</sup> *IS 1995* survey was conducted in October, about a month before the presidential election and more than 1.5 years after the parliamentary elections of 1993 that concluded with the victory of Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) and Polish Peasants' Party (PSL) and a failure of the disintegrated post-Solidarity camp. Simultaneously, it was the end of the term of office of President Wałęsa and the 18-month-long period of co-habitation under the rule of the ambiguous "small" constitution.

*IS 2001* survey was conducted in September and October, right after the Fall parliamentary election that gave victory to the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) after the tenure of the post-Solidarity camp (AWS-UW, later AWS). It needs to be mentioned that "Rywingate," which was the key reason for the crisis in the post-communist camp simultaneously augmenting citizens' distrust towards politicians and parties, was only revealed in the end of 2002.

*IS 2011* survey was conducted in October, just before the parliamentary elections that guaranteed the re-election of Civic Platform and virtually prolonged Donald Tusk term of office (PO-PSL coalition). The second party in the parliament remained Law and Justice (PiS) being in a fierce opposition to Civic Platform (PO). The election results marginalized Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) and welcomed the representatives of Palikot Movement (Ruch Palikota).

Action) and the decrease in the level of party identifications<sup>3</sup> in the electoral period. Interestingly, in 2011, 22 years after the democratic transformation, 23% of the respondents claimed that it would be profitable for Poland if political parties ceased to exist; 19% of them claimed that it would be neutral for Poland. It corresponds with the results discussed elsewhere by Jacek Raciborski: in 2007 PGES survey, 44% of respondents agreed with the thesis that “it would be sufficient to have one good, efficient political party in Poland” (Raciborski 2012: 135).

Generally, Poles eagerly agreed with the opinions of a negative character, representing well the dominant anti-party discourse referring to the oligarchic character of parties, opacity of their political programs, and a vision of parties constantly dividing the society; Nancy Rosenblum described the latter feature as “fatal divisiveness” (Rosenblum, 2008: 60). Simultaneously, respondents were rather moderate when negatively assessing the elementary functions of parties: representative (“solving problems of normal people”), aggregative (“collecting voters’ expectations), programmatic and governing (“proposing solutions to important problems of the country”). The division into opinions comprising anti-party discourse and assessment of the elementary functions of political parties becomes especially prominent in the exploratory principal component analysis (Table 2). For the methodological reasons, only 7 items with the same 5-point symmetrical scale were included in the PCA. The responses were decoded to numerical values ranging from  $-2$  to  $2$ , where the positive numbers corresponded with negative opinions about parties, and negative numbers—with positive opinions, “hard to tell” responses were assigned 0 value.<sup>4</sup>

The exploratory principal component analysis suggests that respondents’ opinions are arranged in two dimensions that might constitute separate, in terms of content, yet positively correlated syndromes<sup>5</sup>. The first dimension (four opinions most highly loading the first component) comprises opinions about parties, representative for the anti-party discourse based on negative associations and popular accusations towards political parties. The second dimension (three opinions highly loading the second component) comprises assessment of parties’ performance in their elementary functions.

In further analyses, I use a scale of anti-partyism based on statements comprising the first component as it clearly reflects arguments constituting the essence of popular anti-partyism. Furthermore, it is characterized by a higher internal coherence—its reliability measured by Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  ranges from 0.715 (in 2001) to 0.732 (in 2011). In case of the scale constructed from the remaining three statements, Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  values are no greater than 0.5. The scale of anti-partyism, constructed as a simple sum

<sup>3</sup> According to the data of Polish General Electoral Study, after 1997 elections, 70% of the respondents claimed that there was a party “close to me” of “at least closer than other parties,” after 2001 elections, about 55%, after 2005 elections—65% (PGES, 1997; PGES, 2001; PGES, 2005).

<sup>4</sup> It turns out that almost an identical structure of factors can be obtained after decoding the respondents’ responses to the values ranging from  $-1$  to  $1$ , i.e. without differentiating the responses between “rather” or “strongly.”

<sup>5</sup> In the Torcal et al. (2003) paper there is no discussion about the correlation between scales of cultural and reactive anti-partyism, as they used a Varimax rotation in the PCA, what enforces the 0 correlation between the identified dimensions.

Table 1  
**Opinions about Political Parties—Distribution of Responses**

	Strongly agree	Rather agree	Rather disagree	Strongly disagree	DK
<b>Parties try to solve problems of ordinary people</b>					
1995	3.0%	24.6%	41.8%	17.0%	13.2%
2001	4.1%	29.3%	43.7%	16.4%	6.4%
2011	2.2%	22.7%	50.0%	19.0%	6.0%
<b>Parties are cliques of politicians striving for power</b>					
1995	45.7%	32.5%	6.6%	0.8%	14.2%
2001	45.9%	35.4%	8.9%	0.2%	9.4%
2011	41.3%	44.4%	6.4%	0.9%	6.6%
<b>Parties cause quarrels and disturbance in the country</b>					
1995	55.6%	32.4%	4.2%	0.6%	7.0%
2001	53.0%	34.3%	6.3%	0.3%	5.9%
2011	42.3%	47.7%	5.3%	0.8%	3.5%
<b>Parties offer solutions for important problems of the country</b>					
1995	12.0%	45.1%	22.6%	5.8%	14.4%
2001	16.1%	48.0%	21.1%	4.2%	10.4%
2011	11.3%	53.8%	20.7%	4.7%	9.4%
<b>Parties unite those people for whom the most important are their own ambitions</b>					
1995	34.1%	39.5%	8.9%	1.2%	16.0%
2001	38.2%	40.0%	8.2%	1.1%	12.4%
2011	30.8%	45.8%	12.8%	1.0%	9.2%
<b>Parties collect voters' postulates and demands</b>					
1995	20.8%	43.4%	16.4%	4.2%	15.1%
2001	21.2%	42.0%	19.7%	4.1%	12.8%
2011	16.0%	44.1%	23.4%	5.7%	10.6%
<b>In fact, nobody knows what parties want</b>					
1995	37.5%	34.9%	13.1%	2.3%	11.9%
2001	35.1%	29.3%	18.5%	5.8%	11.0%
2011	30.4%	38.7%	20.4%	4.1%	6.3%
<b>If parties were to abandon their activity it would be...</b>					
	...destructive for Poland	...neutral	...beneficial	DK	
1995	43.0%	16.2%	17.8%	22.7%	
2001	53.5%	15.8%	9.8%	20.9%	
2011	40.7%	19.2%	23.2%	16.6%	

**Source:** IS (1995), N = 1585; IS (2001), N = 1651; IS (2011), N = 1099.

of recoded responses, might adopt values from  $-8$  to  $+8$  (the elementary descriptive statistics of the scale, later used as a dependent variable are described in the appendix). Contrary to the approach of Torcal, Gunther, and Montero (2003), I do not assume that this scale refers to one dimension of anti-partyism only. I attempt to link these dimensions to the independent variables.

Table 2

**Two Dimensions of Anti-partyism—The Results of Exploratory Principal Component Analysis**

Items	Factor loadings*					
	1995		2001		2011	
	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 1	Factor 2
Parties are cliques of politicians striving for power.	<b>0.771</b>	-0.098	<b>0.769</b>	-0.110	<b>0.722</b>	-0.040
Parties cause quarrels and disturbance in the country.	<b>0.812</b>	-0.158	<b>0.809</b>	-0.172	<b>0.811</b>	-0.088
Parties unite those people for whom the most important are their own ambitions.	<b>0.694</b>	-0.103	<b>0.732</b>	-0.111	<b>0.744</b>	-0.158
In fact, nobody knows what parties want.	<b>0.657</b>	-0.137	<b>0.641</b>	-0.098	<b>0.708</b>	-0.043
Parties offer solutions for important problems of the country.	-0.234	<b>0.791</b>	-0.186	<b>0.776</b>	-0.153	<b>0.781</b>
Parties collect voters' postulates and demands.	0.126	<b>0.734</b>	0.077	<b>0.748</b>	0.195	<b>0.686</b>
Parties try to solve problems of ordinary people.	-0.331	<b>0.685</b>	-0.406	<b>0.611</b>	-0.344	<b>0.663</b>
<i>% Variance explained</i>	<i>56.1</i>		<i>55.3</i>		<i>56.0</i>	

\* after Oblimin rotation (delta = 0, with Kaiser's normalization). Loadings higher than 0.5 are bolded.

Source: IS (1995), IS (2001), IS (2011).

**Possible Determinants of Anti-partyism: Independent Variables**

When searching for the explanations of anti-partyism on the individual level, many factors need to be taken into account. Apart from the structural explanations, one needs to take into account contextual factors, political attitudes that are typical for the reactive component of anti-partyism. In the case of the surveys analyzed, the fundamental limitation is a small set of variables comparable across the following years. Finally, the following set of independent variables was used in the regression analyses:

*Respondents' age.* Following Torcal, Gunther and Montero (2002), it might be assumed that generalized anti-party attitudes are strongly correlated with the historical period in which particular cohorts of citizens underwent the process of political socialization. If an individual underwent political socialization (mainly between 16 and 18 years of age) in the non-democratic period, the general (cultural) anti-partyism is stronger, the authors prove. However, assuming that political socialization is a process and it is related to the experiences of participation in democratic practices, it might be assumed that there exists additional influence of age on the evaluation of political parties, independent from the experiences in adolescence. Younger citizens would be then characterized by a greater anti-partisanship than older. The results of the research concerning the development of the so-called "habitual voting" (Cześniak, Żerkowska-Balas 2011) are convincing *per analogiam*. There is extensive evidence, mostly from the developed democracies, which proves that the inclination to party identifications strengthens with age (Dalton, Weldon 2007). In order to observe the

existence of both effects, the non-linear (square) dependence between age and anti-partyism will be tested in the regression analyses. For that reason, not only age but also squared age of respondents will be considered as an explanatory variable. In case of the non-linear age effect, the squared age will be also a significant predictor of the anti-party opinions.

*Living in town/city.* It might be supposed that the character of a place of living is a deciding factor about the intensity of citizens' contacts with a model of politics basing on political parties. It is true that the access to information about the parties' activities through the nation-wide media is almost common, yet an additional element in the larger towns is the so-called "party infrastructure," i.e. the presence of local branches of political parties and the significant participation of party members in local governments. The analyses of the local government elections prove that the parties' presence in local politics is strongly correlated with the size of a municipality (Gendźwiłł, Żółtak, forthcoming). In the analyses, a dummy variable was used to describe whether the respondent's place of living was larger than 20000 inhabitants (value 1).

*Level of education and interest in politics.* These variables might be treated as indicators of certain political sophistication, i.e. cognitive abilities needed to ascribe sense to the observed activities of politicians. These variables were employed by Russell J. Dalton (1984; 2012) who attempted to identify the phenomenon of *cognitive mobilization* among the voters without stable party identifications. In the following analyses, the level of education was simplified to four levels; interest in politics was coded as a dummy variable (details of coding can be found in the appendix). We might suppose that political sophistication will diminish the individuals' vulnerability towards the anti-party discourse and, in consequence, the individual level of anti-partyism.

Analogically, *participation in elections* can be acknowledged as a factor potentially decreasing anti-partyism. Participation in this basic democratic procedure almost always implies the need to make choice, i.e. acknowledge that one party is better than other. Electoral participation is, therefore, related with the legitimization of political parties and party system. Choosing one party in elections should induce citizens, at least through the mechanism of a reduction of cognitive dissonance, not to rashly accept the negative statements that include generalizations about all the parties.

*Participation in religious practices.* Some research results display a correlation between participation in religious practices and various democratic attitudes, mostly the ones related to the civic participation (Grabowska 2002; Grabowska 2007). It might be supposed that religiosity decreases inclination to accept general, negative statements about political parties. On the other hand, statements constructing the scale of anti-partyism include a strong moralistic component, addressing religious sensitivity of the mainstream of the Catholic Church in Poland. This, however, should lead to presenting an opposite speculation: a relation between religiosity and anti-partyism is positive.

*Left-right self-placement.* Declarations concerning the respondents' self-placement between the left and right poles of the political spectrum, were coded as two dummy

variables (the reference category, where both variables are of 0 values, comprises those respondents who were in the center of the scale and those who could not indicate their place on the left-right scale). Taking into account the short-term, situational perspective, we might assume that the influence of right or left orientation on anti-party attitudes varies depending on the extent to which current government's position (leftist or rightist) is in line with the respondent's position. Assuming that anti-partyism comprises a reactive component, we might deduct that the discordance of preferences between a citizen and a government strengthens anti-party attitudes. In the long-time perspective, one might propose a hypothesis that anti-partyism in Poland should be favored more by right orientation than left orientation, as the latter was characterized by larger organizational stability.

In order to better address the above-mentioned reactive character of anti-partyism, the regression analyses included also *voting for opposition* (in the last parliamentary election) as an additional independent variable, which might be a certain approximation of anti-partyism induced by the negative inclination towards the governing parties.

Just as parties are building democracy on the macro level, anti-partyism on an individual level should depend on anti-democratic attitudes. Clearly, we might observe a negative correlation between anti-partyism and pro-democratic attitudes. However, to emphasize nuances in the description of this relation, I used the survey question concerning attitudes alternative to pro-democratic, assuming that these attitudes are positively related to anti-party attitudes. In regression analysis, we will test an influence of two attitudes studied regularly: *consent for a non-democratic regime* (we might assume that this relates implicitly to the authoritarian regime) and *political apathy* (indifference towards the regime in which one lives).

In the analyses, respondent's gender was also controlled. Although it is known that this variable is connected with a part of independent variables tested (among them: religiosity, interest in politics, electoral participation), it needed to be tested if there existed an additional effect of gender influencing anti-party attitudes.

As it was signaled, the research scheme constructed that way is slightly different in terms of conceptualization from the research of Torcal, Gunther, and Montero (2002). It allows to identify the cultural component of Polish anti-partyism as well as its reactive component among the independent variables. The cultural factors are: the experience of living under communist regime and political socialization understood as a process (indicating variables will be: respondents' age, political apathy, acceptance of certain non-democratic attitudes), as well as the access to cognitive resources needed to interpret politics (education, interest in politics). On the other hand, the indicating variables for the reactive component will be: participation in elections, especially voting for opposition and placement on a right-left scale interpreted in historical context).

To describe the influence of particular factors on the anti-partyism at the individual level, a regression analysis (OLS) was employed. The results of the analyses are shown in Table 3. Initially, the set of explanatory variables included 13 variables. During the search for models best describing the anti-partyism determinants, three variables

were excluded from analyses: gender, living in town/city, and participation in religious practices. It turned out that in different configurations, in none of the models did they substantially influence the anti-party attitudes.

## Results

The analyses show that in each of the three surveys analyzed, a slightly different set of variables determined anti-party attitudes. It means that the character of anti-partyism has been changing along with the process of democratization, although its high level remained almost unchanged.

Nonetheless, it should be noticed that the values of  $R^2$  coefficients are considerably low; the models explain approximately 3–6% of dependent variable's variance. They demonstrate statistically significant effects; thus, they help to verify some of the hypotheses, but still a large part of the investigated phenomenon remains unexplained. It means that the anti-party attitudes are evenly distributed in the various segments of social structure. It suggests that the antipartyism is embedded in the political culture primarily as a supra-individual phenomenon. One of the possible reasons of low  $R^2$  coefficients is also the fact that the items building the anti-partyism scale, thus, also the scale itself, are burdened by the "ceiling effect": the large majority of respondents share anti-party views (cf. table 1). As a result, a considerable part of the dependent variable's variance could stem from random factors.

The most important result found in the regression analyses is a square dependence of the anti-party attitudes on age. The positive coefficients in the "age" variable and negative in the square of this variable indicate that the strongest anti-partyism characterizes cohorts of middle-aged citizens, those who underwent political socialization in times of People's Republic of Poland. The comparison of the following surveys' results suggests that the influence of age on anti-partyism has been gradually weakening (the B coefficients have been diminishing). It might be said that the anti-partyism level is approaching a "cross-generational average." In 1995, clearly least anti-party cohort was comprised of the youngest citizens whose political socialization occurred in the first years of Polish democracy (fig. 1). In the following measurements (2001 and 2011), the anti-partyism in this cohort was systematically rising. This result is particularly interesting. It means that in the period of the so-called democratic consolidation the disenchantment with political parties was rising particularly among the youngest citizens—that questions the hypothesis claiming that practical experience of political pluralism (electoral campaigns, participation in free elections) may gradually weaken the disenchantment with parties.

The influence of political sophistication measured by the level of education and interest in politics plays a prominent role in explaining anti-party attitudes no sooner than in 2011. In 1995, only the effect of education was observable (weaker than in 2011), and in 2001 the influence of both characteristics analyzed on the anti-party attitudes was statistically insignificant. Only 20 years after the introduction of pluralism and deep reconstruction of party system, both higher level of education

Table 3  
**Determinants of Anti-party Attitudes in 1995–2011—Regression Analysis (OLS)**

	1995	2001	2011
	B coefficients (Standard Errors)		
Constant	2.075 (0.549)***	2.476 (0.527)***	2.782 (0.640)***
Age	0.093 (0.023)***	0.090 (0.023)***	0.079 (0.028)**
Age-squared	-0.001 (0.000)***	-0.001 (0.000)***	-0.001 (0.000)*
Education (4-point scale)	-0.174 (0.082)*	-0.101 (0.080)	-0.288 (0.093)**
Political interest	0.018 (0.156)	0.223 (0.159)	-0.585 (0.273)*
Voted in previous elections	0.032 (0.181)	-0.402 (0.187)*	-0.063 (0.220)
Voted for opposition	0.082 (0.196)	0.231 (0.215)	0.936 (0.231)***
Left-oriented	0.329 (0.198)	-0.444 (0.183)*	0.082 (0.248)
Right-oriented	0.430 (0.166)**	-0.076 (0.202)	-0.490 (0.209)*
Political apathy	0.800 (0.159)***	1.314 (0.170)***	0.868 (0.234)***
Acceptance of non-democracy	0.800 (0.210)***	0.749 (0.204)***	0.168 (0.286)
<b>Adjusted R<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>0.034</b>	<b>0.054</b>	<b>0.058</b>
<b>N</b>	<b>1578</b>	<b>1647</b>	<b>1093</b>

Source: IS (1995), IS (2001), IS (2011).

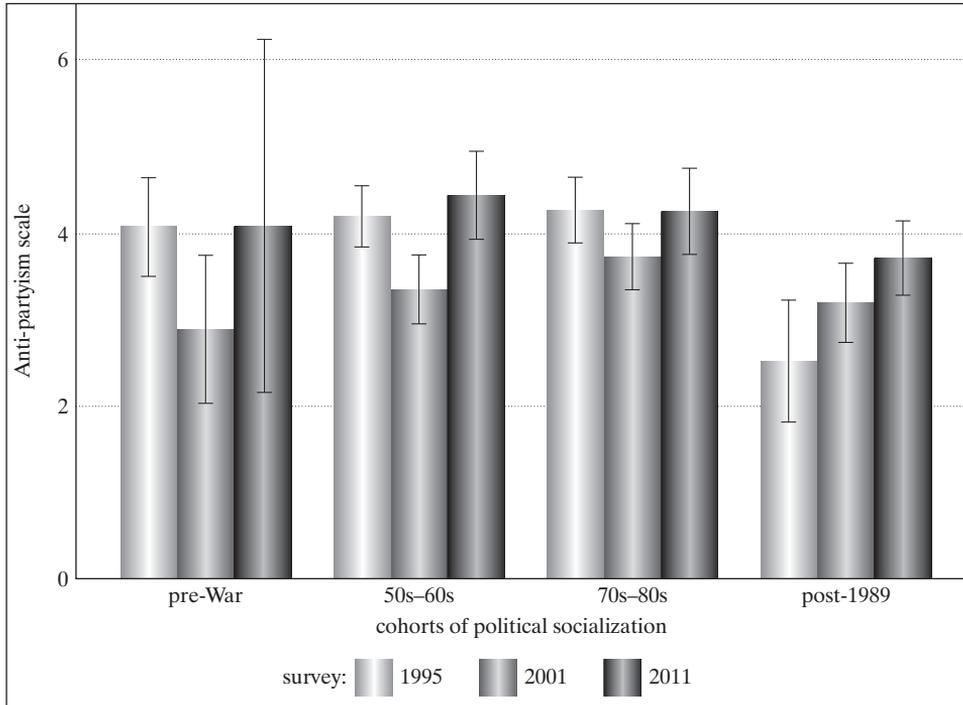
\*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

Details of variables' operationalization are presented in the appendix.

and the systematical interest in political affairs (while controlling the participation in elections), weakened the inclination to accept anti-party statements.

The interpretation of the influence of electoral participation on the anti-party attitudes should be approached with a highest caution. In accordance with the previously presented hypothesis, the effect of participation weakening anti-partyism was observed only in 2001. It should be reminded, however, that 2001 survey was conducted just after the parliamentary election, which the question on electoral participation concerned. The short-term influence of electoral participation on the reduction of anti-party attitudes indeed exists, yet neither in 1995 nor in 2011, when the question on electoral participation concerned voting taking place 2 or 4 years earlier, the mere fact of voting did not considerably influence the acceptance of negative opinions about parties. Therefore, one is entitled to reason that it was mainly the short-term electoral context that decided on a lower average anti-partyism level in 2001, in comparison with 1995 and 2011 surveys.

Figure 1  
Anti-partyism in different cohorts of citizens



**Note:** Additional lines represent mean standard errors.

Similarly to Torcal, Gunther, and Montero (2002), as the basis of defining the borders between cohorts, I use the most distinguishing political characteristics that occurred when the respondent was age of 17–18, when most political attitudes tend to stabilize (Newcomb et al., 1967; Krosnick and Alwin 1989). *Pre-War cohort* consists of the respondents who were born before 1928 and experienced political socialization before or during the World War II. *50s–60s cohort* consists of the respondents who were born between 1929 and 1953 and experienced political socialization during the first period of communist rule in Poland, since 1945 up till 1970 (when Gomulka was replaced by Gierek as the First Secretary of PUWP). *70s–80s cohort* consists of the respondents who were born between 1954 and 1972 and experienced political socialization during Seventies and Eighties. Finally, *post-1989 cohort* consists of the respondents who were born in 1973 and later and experienced political socialization in the post-communist democratic Poland.

**Source:** IS (1995), IS (2001), IS (2011).

There exists an influence of left-right orientation on the anti-party attitudes, although it does not comply unanimously with the initial hypotheses. In 1995, anti-partyism was augmented by right orientation and the effect of left-orientation was statistically insignificant. In 2011, right orientation weakened anti-partyism significantly and the effect of left-orientation was insignificant. Let us remind that in each of the models it was controlled whether a respondent voted for opposition in the former elections; this control variable should have revealed the existence of a reactive component of anti-partyism. This “effect of opposition” is visible only in 2011 and it should be noticed that it is relatively strong—voting for a party in opposition in 2007

election augmented respondent's position on the anti-partyism scale on average by 1 point in 2011.

How to interpret this mosaic of results? Probably, one should acknowledge that neither in 1995 nor in 2001 the fact of voting for opposition in the previous parliamentary election was a very accurate measure of a reactive component of anti-partyism. Right-left self-placement turned out to be a more precise measure. It was due to the fact that there was a higher percentage of citizens who could determine their position on this scale than the percentage of citizens participating in elections. Positioning oneself on the left-right scale might undergo a change in the period between elections. Therefore, it reflects more precisely the contemporary assessment of proximity to or distance from the government, if we assume that both governments of Oleksy in 1995 and Miller in 2001 were commonly considered as leftist. A different situation is observable in 2011, after a few years of presence of an axis of political rivalry between Law and Justice (PiS) and Civic Platform (PO) in the Polish party system that runs crosswise the divide between post-communists (identified with the left) and post-Solidarity (identified with the right). Although generally the right orientation weakens anti-partyism (Tusk's government is considered to be moderately right), the effect of voting for opposition (mainly for PiS) surpasses it with its strength, despite the fact that almost 4 years passed between the election in 2007 and the survey in 2011. Moreover, an index of electoral volatility has visibly fallen in Poland in the recent years—when the party system is more stable, “being in opposition” becomes a durable characteristic of a party and its voters. It should be noticed that there is no basis to claim that there exists a certain long-term effect of left orientation that would favor political parties and party democracy.

The analyses demonstrate that the anti-party attitudes—according to the initial expectations—were influenced by attitudes conflicting with the ideals of democracy and civic participation. The acceptance of negative statements concerning parties and party democracy was favored by political apathy—a feeling that from the respondent's perspective, political regime in Poland is not important; similarly, it was favored by the acceptance of non-democratic regime (the exception was statistically insignificant result of the 2011 survey, yet it might be attributed to the incomplete comparability of this indicator with previous years—see note in the appendix with a description of variables).

### **Conclusions**

The analyses show that anti-partyism in Poland embraces both cultural and reactive components while the cultural component prevails. In the recent years, the impact of reactive anti-partyism has been rising: disinclination towards political parties and party democracy has become one of the components of opposition. Anti-party attitudes, diagnosed in three analyzed surveys has remained an important element of political culture. To a certain extent, this is a heritage of the communist regime, as anti-party attitudes are more frequent and intense in cohorts of citizens socialized at that time.

Simultaneously, it needs to be noticed that the consolidation of democracy after 1989 generated its “own” anti-partyism: among youngest citizens, firstly least disinclined towards parties, the anti-partyism was systematically rising in the period analyzed (1995–2011). Participation in the elections diminished the willingness to formulate negative opinions about parties and party democracy only in short-term period.

To sum up, negative opinions about political parties in Poland are characterized by impressive durability. The consolidation of democracy process favored gradual (very slow) stabilization of party system and party organizations. It did not favor, however, transformation of citizens’ approach towards political parties. Anti-partyism comprises the mainstream of political culture and there are no prerequisites to claim that it will be disappearing.

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## Survey Data

### ESS (European Social Survey)

European Social Survey Cumulative File, ESS 1-4 (2011). Data file edition 1.0. Norwegian Social Science Data Services, Norway—Data Archive and distributor of ESS data.

European Social Survey Round 5 First Release (2011). Norwegian Social Science Data Services, Norway—Data Archive and distributor of ESS data.

### PGES (Polish National Election Study), a part of Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES)

PGES is affiliated with the Institute of Political Studies of Polish Academy of Sciences and distributed by Polish Social Data Archive. PGES 1997 has been sponsored by Scientific Research Committee; grant no. 1H01F01712. PGES 2001 has been sponsored by Scientific Research Committee; grant no. 5H02E02120 and supported by Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and Warsaw School of Social Sciences and Humanities. PGES 2005 has been sponsored by Scientific Research Committee; grant no. 1H02E06028 and supported by Stefan Batory Foundation, Center for Public Opinion Research (CBOS), Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of Polish Academy of Sciences and University of Glasgow. PGES 2007 has been sponsored by the Institute of Political Studies of Polish Academy of Sciences, Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung (WZB), Polish Confederation of Private Employers Lewiatan, Stefan Batory Foundation, and Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of Polish Academy of Sciences.

**IS (1995)** Survey *Polacy o swoim kraju*. Institute of Sociology, University of Warsaw, Center for Public Opinion Research

**IS (2001)** Survey *Polacy o swoim kraju*. Institute of Sociology, University of Warsaw, Center for Public Opinion Research

**IS (2011)** Part of the CBOS survey *Aktualne Problemy i Wydarzenia No. 257*. Institute of Sociology, University of Warsaw, Center for Public Opinion Research, Center for Public Opinion Research.

## Appendices

### A. Definitions of variables

<b>Antipartyism</b>	4-item scale with possible range [-8; 8]: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Parties are cliques of politicians striving for power</li> <li>2) Parties cause quarrels and disturbance in the country</li> <li>3) Parties unite those people for whom the most important are their own ambitions</li> <li>4) In fact, nobody knows what parties want</li> </ol> Strongly agree: -2 points, Rather agree: -1 point, Rather disagree +1 point, strongly disagree: +2 points, don't know: 0 points
<b>Acceptance of non-democracy</b>	1 was coded for these respondent who from these three statements: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Democracy has advantage upon all other forms of government,</li> <li>2) Sometimes non-democratic government can be more desirable,</li> <li>3) For people like me it makes no difference whether the government is democratic or not</li> </ol> chose the second statement. 0 was coded for all other answers.
<b>Political apathy</b>	In case of political apathy, 1 was coded for the respondents who chose the third statement. 0 was coded for all other answers. <b>Notice:</b> Unfortunately, in 2011 survey the methodological experiment (split-ballot) was conducted in which a half of respondents (randomly selected) was asked the question concerning attitudes towards democracy in a different format than in 1995 and 2001 surveys: instead of one single-choice question, they were asked whether they agree or disagree with each of three statements about democracy. In order to adjust the results, as accepting non-democracy were considered those who agreed that sometimes non-democratic government can be more desirable and, simultaneously, disagreed with the statements indicating clear preference for democracy or strong indifference in this respect. Similar procedure was used in case of political apathy. However, it seems that this adjustment overestimates the share of both groups in comparison with the previous question format.
<b>Interest in politics</b>	1 was coded for respondents who declared strong and fair interest in politics. 0 was coded for all other answers.
<b>Participation in parliamentary elections</b>	1 was coded for respondents who declared that they voted in recent parliamentary elections: 1993 elections in 1995 survey, 2001 elections in 2001 survey, 2007 elections in 2011 survey
<b>Left</b>	1 was coded for respondents who placed themselves at the left pole of the right-left continuum: 1-4 for 10-point scale (used in 1995 and 2001) and 1-2 for 7-point scale (used in 2011)
<b>Right</b>	1 was coded for respondents who placed themselves at the right pole of the right-left continuum: 7-10 for 10-point scale (used in 1995 and 2001) and 6-7 for 7-point scale (used in 2011)
<b>Religiosity*</b>	Coded on the basis of declared frequency of participation in religious practices (masses, services etc.): 0—never, 1—few times in a year, 2—about once a month, 3—once a week, 4—more frequently than once a week
<b>Education</b>	Simplified scale (recoded from more detailed scales): 1—elementary or lower, 2—vocational, 3—secondary, 4—higher
<b>Living in town/city</b>	1 was coded for respondents living in towns and cities above 20,000 inhabitants; 0 was coded for respondents living in rural areas and small towns (below 20,000 inhabitants)
<b>Gender*</b>	0—male, 1—female

\* Signifies variables the impact of which was tested but they were not included in the final regression analyses presented in the article.

**B. Descriptive statistics**

Variable	1995		2001		2011	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Antipartyism	4.44	2.87	4.27	3.02	4.09	2.96
Age	44.64	16.95	44.28	17.33	45.94	17.85
Age squared	2279.47	1646.71	2261.05	1663.45	2428.53	1730.69
Female	0.53	0.50	0.52	0.50	0.53	0.50
Urban inhabitant	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.49	0.50
Education	2.25	0.99	2.34	1.01	2.44	1.04
Interest in politics	0.41	0.49	0.41	0.49	0.13	0.33
Religiosity	2.51	0.94	2.50	0.88	2.13	1.18
Left-oriented	0.21	0.41	0.30	0.46	0.17	0.37
Right-oriented	0.36	0.48	0.20	0.40	0.30	0.46
Voted	0.58	0.49	0.59	0.49	0.66	0.48
Political apathy	0.37	0.48	0.31	0.46	0.18	0.38
Acceptance of non-democracy	0.16	0.36	0.17	0.38	0.11	0.31
Voted for opposition	0.28	0.45	0.24	0.43	0.22	0.42