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The Konfederacja Wolność i Niepodległość as a Protest Party on YouTube

Abstract: This article aims to explain how the Konfederacja uses protest party rhetoric to maximize its electoral outcome. The article analyses the content of 30 videos published as a part of the Bosak&-Mentzen format on YouTube for the presence of the protest party characteristics in the messages. It also tried to find similarities between the Konfederacja and other protest parties in Sweden, Germany and France. The research conducted allows us to conclude that the Konfederacja uses protest party rhetoric to position itself as an alternative to Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (PiS) and Platforma Obywatelska (PO), and to publicize specific social issues that allow it to gain support in society.

Key words: Konfederacja, YouTube, Protest Party

Introduction

A protest party expresses its opposition to certain elements and mechanisms of the political system and its disagreement “with the commonly held consensus both in the sphere of politically outlined conflict, existing procedures, institutions, and actors” (Michalak, 2011). This definition is adopted in this article.

The use of the term “protest party” instead of “anti-system party” in the context of this text excludes groupings that seek a complete revolution in the political system, such as fascist or communist parties. Political scientist Ryszard Herbut noted that protest parties are characterized by “weak anti-systemic” tendencies, consisting of “negation of certain rules of the political game, related primarily to the functioning of the party system and the directions of state policy in selected areas” (Herbut, 2002). The existence of a specific social base, the creation of a specific image of political reality, and the conduct of a debate on the shape of systemic transformation. Protest parties exhibit a kind of situational anti-systemicism as described by Giovanni Capoccia, consisting of opposition not to the rules of a democratic state under the rule of law but to certain political principles and derivatives of the operative system of such parties (Capoccia, 2002).

An important example of a party that situates itself in the Polish political system as a protest party is Konfederacja Wolność i Niepodległość. This text aims to examine which features of a protest party can be identified in the communication strategy of the Konfederacja Wolność i Niepodległość, which is a relatively new political entity. Noteworthy in previous research are articles analyzing the Konfederacja’s organizational structure, strategy, ideology, and social base (Tomasiewicz, 2020), the party’s media communication during the intra-party crisis (Szwed-Walczak, 2023a), discourse

(Szwed-Walczak, 2023b), the party's communication strategies (Kolczyński, 2020), and the presence of populism in its program (Litwin, 2023).

The Konfederacja is a federation party. It comprises three political entities: Nowa Nadzieja, Ruch Narodowy, and Konfederacja Korony Polskiej. These environments, despite their programmatic differences, have decided to run under the Konfederacja banner to maximize their electoral support. Turning our attention to the party's values and program, it should be noted that Konfederacja uses Eurosceptic rhetoric and advocates simplification and tax reduction while promoting conservative values. The Manifesto Project, which analyses party election manifestos to examine policy preferences of given parties, Data Base (the Manifesto Project analyses party election manifestos to examine party's policy preferences), shows that Konfederacja had the highest rate of negative attitudes towards migration (4.762), the European Union (5.556), and was the "most" right-wing party (37.302) (Lehman et al., 2024) in 2019. The survey also allows us to conclude that Konfederacja exhibits the characteristics of a protest party and stands out from other incumbents in the Polish Parliament.

This research aims to answer the question: What characteristics of a protest party does the Konfederacja exhibit in its communication strategy on YouTube? Identifying the characteristics of the protest party in Konfederacja's messages will allow us to understand how it uses the narrative characteristic of the protest party to achieve its own political goals.

A secondary goal is to find similarities between the Konfederacja and other parties such as the Rassemblement National (RN) in France, the Sverigedemokraterna (SD) in Sweden, and the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) in the Federal Republic of Germany. Showing the similarities between the Konfederacja and other protest parties allows for a better understanding of the common features and mechanisms of protest parties in Europe, and provides an international context for the entire analysis. In addition, it enables the identification of specific trends in protest party's political communication. It should be noted, however, that the comparative analysis was not based on a direct study of the content of the foreign parties' social media channels, but on available literature analyses of their political communication. The main features and strategies of the identified parties were taken into account, based on the existing literature on the subject, which made it possible to capture similarities between the Konfederacja and parties from other countries exhibiting features of protest parties.

Theory Section

Due to the fact that some researchers do not distinguish between protest parties and anti-system parties, this article follows the practice of understanding an anti-system party in the broad sense and calling anti-system parties all groupings that exhibit anti-system characteristics. It would often be more accurate to call them protest parties. Therefore, the literature review was conducted in terms of parties that exhibit characteristics of "weak anti-system," meaning those that protest certain elements of the system. The use of the phrase "anti-system party" in the literature review is justified by the fact that such a term was used by specific researchers, albeit with the understanding of weak anti-systemicity characteristic of protest parties.

According to Giovanni Sartori's narrow definition, anti-system parties are those that reject the fundamental principles and values of the existing political system. These parties do not seek to reform the system from within, but rather to change it completely or replace it with an entirely new system. Moreover, an anti-system party accommodates various categories of attitudes, e.g. alienation, total rejection or mere protest (Sartori, 2005). Parties displaying anti-system characteristics pursue anti-system policies, are political outsiders, and use populist promises in their narrative to discredit political opponents who, in their view, do not represent the interests of the people. This is aimed to attract an electorate frustrated with the political mainstream (Bar, 2009).

Researchers were interested in the reasons for the popularity of anti-system parties in Western democracies. Jonathan Hopkin noted that their popularity is primarily due to profound structural changes in the economies of Western democracies, which make life more risky for most people, leading to an increase in social inequality. These changes have made many citizens feel abandoned by traditional political parties, fostering an increase in support for parties that promise and represent ordinary people (Hopkin, 2020). Leszek Sobkowiak said that the popularity of parties displaying anti-system characteristics is related to the mediatization of politics and the dominance of the marketing option in the sphere of political action, which leads to a distortion of parliamentary democracy. According to him, there are changes in the criteria of political competition, where the main role is played by image and the personalization and entertainment of politics, which promotes the conciseness and shallowness of public messages, depriving them of politicization. Under such conditions, the simplified messages of anti-system parties find fertile ground in society (Sobkowiak, 2013).

The popularity of parties is also a result of voters turning to groups opposed to the mainstream in difficult times. Mattia Zulianello pointed out that voters tend to vote for parties that exhibit anti-system features (and therefore also protest parties) when they feel disillusioned with the political system (Zulianello, 2019). Kristina M. Teater noted that the popularity of the anti-system parties is also due to dissatisfaction with mainstream parties due to economic factors and global threats (Teater, 2006).

The Sverigedemokraterna (SD), a populist radical-right Swedish party, is an important example of a protest grouping. Authors of academic articles are interested in the reasons for the party's success, which came second in the 2022 parliamentary elections, as well as its anti-immigrant and nationalist rhetoric (Elgenius, Rydgren, 2017).

Scholarly sources also address a party showing anti-system features in France: the Rassemblement National. Initially, the party was considered to be on the far right, but in recent years it has adopted national-populist strategies to different regions of France. Researchers are interested in the party's Euroscepticism rhetoric (Ivaldi, 2018) and its current process of "dediabolisation" – a strategy of refocusing political lines and discourse to make the party more acceptable to the mainstream French electorate (Timraz, 2023). The party also decided to change its communication strategy to a more populist discourse and communication style, highlighting anti-immigrant themes in its program (Stockemer, Barisione, 2016).

The Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) was also studied. The party used anti-European, anti-immigrant, and anti-pandemic sentiment to maximize its support among the public (Hansen, Olsen, 2022). Researchers focus on justifying the thesis that the

AfD is a right-wing populist party (Berbair, Lewandowsky, Siri, 2015). According to the researchers, the official discourses of right-wing parties in Poland and Germany, namely the party manifestos of the Konfederacja and the AfD make the diagnosis of a “nation threatened by foreign influence” in their election programs, and are Euroscepticism groups with a negative attitude towards migration (Kajta, Myrczik, Karolak, 2023).

This section reveals that parties displaying anti-system characteristics used significant events to create an alternative discourse to the mainstream. They utilize new media channels, especially social media, to reach a wide audience. The parties often decide to soften their extreme messages, undergoing a process of dediabolization, using populist discourse in their messages, becoming attractive to a larger audience, as was the case with the Rassemblement National’s leadership even decided to change the party’s name from Front National to its current name in 2018, adjusted its leadership and modified its political program (Timraz, 2023). Theory Section allows formulating the second research question, namely, what are the similarities between the Konfederacja and other protest parties?

Data and methods

The study aims to find features of anti-system parties in Konfederacja’s messages on their official YouTube channel in 2023. The subject of analysis was 30 videos of the Bosak&Mentzen podcast. Each video was transcribed via the ChatTube tool, which made it possible to identify the issues raised by the party leaders and determine the party’s stance on the issues it discussed. All episodes were transcribed using the ChatTube tool to produce full transcriptions. The analysis was carried out manually using transcriptions generated in the ChatTube tool.

Using a qualitative strategy along with content analysis, all 30 videos published as part of the Bosak&Mentzen podcast (*Bosak&Mentzen*, 2023) on Konfederacja’s official YouTube channel in 2023 were examined for the presence of protest party characteristics. The titles, links, and lengths of each video are provided in the appendix to this text. All videos were published between January 8, 2023, and October 5, 2023. The restriction of the subject of analysis to the Bosak&Mentzen podcast format is justified by the fact that the videos featured party leaders Krzysztof Bosak and Sławomir Mentzen, who created the party’s main discourse in the media. Additionally, the videos published as part of the podcast made it possible to infer the party’s position on issues important to the party. The choice of the videos, published on YouTube as the subject of analysis, is not coincidental. Konfederacja, using social media, targeted its message primarily to young audiences.

Qualitative content analysis is used in this study. This is a method used to systematically classify and describe the content of communications according to predetermined categories (Wright, 1986). Gilbert Shapiro and John Markoff point out five characteristics of content analysis: scientific, systematic, objective, reproducible, and relevant (Markoff, Shapiro, 1997). The paper uses a theory-driven content analysis (Stemler, 2015), i.e., a priori coding was done based on theoretical justifications present in the literature (Wimmer, Dominick, 2008).

The characteristics of the protest parties, described in Bartłomiej Michalak's research article *The Anti-systemness of the Protest Parties* (Michalak, 2011), are considered as categories in the key. Content analysis was carried out using a qualitative method based on a priori coding using the theoretical framework of protest party characteristics proposed by Bartłomiej Michalak. In the published materials, the characteristics of the protest party are sought on the basis of specific indicators.

The object of the researcher's interest was the protest parties, to which he devoted a monograph *Partie protestu w Europie Zachodniej. Analiza relewancji politycznej*, in which he introduces theoretical issues related to protest parties and conducts empirical research on the relevance of these parties (Michalak, 2008).

The researcher distinguishes the following features of the protest party:

- **programmatic anti-consensualism**, i.e., rejection of state policy in selected areas of its activity;
- **use of the category of anti-party** – as a form of alternative politics free from party alignments.
- **strong message expressionism is understood as the use of diverse**, innovative, often controversial and surprising forms of political communication built based on negative and often even aggressive language;
- **protest populism**, understood as the use of populist methods and slogans in current political activity;
- **orientation to the active mobilization of supporters**, which makes protest parties similar to social movements in a strict sense;
- **weak institutionalization**, i.e., a structure that is not internally grounded, dependent on external actors;
- **anti-systems**, understood as opposition to certain political principles of the system within which such parties operate (Michalak, 2011).

Code tree

Main categories:	Subcategories (indicators in the case of the party):	Keywords Examples
1	2	3
Programmatic anti-consensualism	– criticism of specific laws or government policies, – presentation of an alternative vision of the state	– economic freedom, reform, – state that does not interfere in citizens' lives
Use of the category of anti-party	– criticism of traditional political parties, – criticism of corruption	– corruption, deals, systemic parties
Strong message expressionism is understood as the use of diverse	– use of emotional language and rhetoric, – organization of pseudo-events	– PiS propaganda, total hypocrites
Protest populism	– outbidding in electoral promises, – delegitimizing rhetoric, – demonizing political opponents	– tax reduction, promises
Orientation to the active mobilization of supporters	– considered exhortations to participate in rallies, demonstrations, or other events, – organizing social campaigns	– you are warmly welcome! Sign up, be with us
Weak institutionalization	– lack of a clearly defined party ideology, – weak organizational structure, dependence on charismatic leaders	– Leaders

1	2	3
Anti-systems	– criticism of the system's institutions	– changing the system, turning the table

Source: Own elaboration based on: B. Michalak, *Partie protestu w Europie Zachodniej. Analiza Relewancji politycznej*, Toruń 2008.

News framing theory was also referred to in order to detail the analysis. Interpretive frames dictate how a particular slice of reality is interpreted. They involve constructing the message in such a way, organizing its content, drawing attention to certain elements, and placing the issue from a certain perspective, as to directly influence how a particular message is interpreted by the recipient (Shab, McLeod, Gotlieb, Lee, 2009). The framing mechanism itself is often used by politicians who want to impose their opinions on specific topics, and this was also the case in the present study. The interpretation used the typology of H. Semetko and P. Valkenburg, who propose the following frames: the frame of conflict (between two parties), competition for power, resources, rationale, and interests, the frame of human focus, the frame of responsibility (suggesting who is responsible for specific mistakes), the frame of morality (considering specific issues in terms of right and wrong), and the frame of economic consequences (giving specific parameters and economic effects) (Semetko, Valkenburg, 2000).

Results

All of the analyzed videos contain features of a protest party, although they vary in intensity. Programmatic anti-consensualism is indirectly visible in the videos. Party leaders promote a model of a state that “does not interfere” in citizens’ lives, allowing working people to afford “a house, a barbecue, grass, two cars, and a vacation.” This reflects Konfederacja’s ideology, which can be described as a mix of libertarianism and national-conservatism. The videos highlight harmful government actions on the National Recovery Plan (episode 1), social programs like the 13th and 14th pensions (episode 26), the distribution of laptops to students (episode 3), judiciary changes (episode 2), and regulations believed to lead to citizen surveillance. However, the focus is mainly on criticizing the government’s actions and publicizing social problems, without offering direct solutions.

Qualitative content analysis suggests that programmatic anti-consensualism uses a frame of responsibility, aiming to hold the government accountable for harmful laws and resolutions. Konfederacja’s politicians propose simple solutions to complex problems, such as rejecting the KPO, abolishing social programs like the 13th and 14th pensions, and opposing citizen surveillance regulations. These actions are described as an example of ‘interference in the lives of citizens’, which fits in with the party’s advocated vision of a state that reduces its functions to a minimum. They attribute inflation partly to social programs and position themselves as commentators on the political scene, highlighting specific issues. For example, specific figures are given for the increase in inflation during the PiS government: ‘Cumulative inflation from mid-2016 to mid-2023, i.e. during the PiS government, is 45.6%’.

Konfederacja's politicians also address the European Union, criticizing specific changes the EU wanted to impose on Poland: the European Green Deal (episodes 5, 14, 16), the EU Expropriation Directive (episodes 8, 9, 11), ETS 2 (episode 18), the Migration Pact (episode 19), and proposed treaty changes (episode 30).

The Konfederacja presented a coherent strategy when approaching the topic of Poland in the European Union. They acknowledged Poland's economic gains from EU membership but criticized the increasing competencies of the EU over member states (episode 30) for example "we have a project already mature for the centralization of the European super state...", "...we are to move the veto issue to qualified majority voting...". They express concerns about EU institutions' influence on Poland, especially regarding imposed legal solutions affecting the country's sovereignty. The politicians also highlight the pressure from Brussels and extortion regarding laws and judicial reforms, which is criticized as interference in Poland's internal affairs.

The Konfederacja stresses the need to preserve the sovereignty of EU member states and criticizes centrism and bureaucracy in the European institutions. In the context of the European Union, Konfederacja points out that governments in Poland are unable to take an assertive stance on issues on the agenda. According to party politicians, the government should look after Poland's interests and use its veto right when the solutions promoted by the European Union are detrimental to the country they represent. The need to veto programs such as Fit for 55 or the Reconstruction Fund. According to the Konfederacja, Poland should build coalitions around projects that are important to it in order to stop changes that are considered harmful by the party politicians. In the context of the European Union, one can also see the application of the responsibility framework. However, responsibility for the "harmful" changes promoted by the EU, which are considered harmful by the politicians, was placed on both of the organizations themselves, which were criticized for violating treaties and attempting to interfere in Poland's internal affairs, and also on the PiS government, which agreed to implement the described legislation.

In the videos published on the party's official YouTube channel, the Konfederacja employed the anti-party category, highlighting their unique stance on lockdown laws (episode 21) and calling for accountability for the PiS government's COVID-19 policy (episode 28). Party leaders, Krzysztof Bosak and Sławomir Mentzen, point out harmful solutions proposed by both PO and PiS, criticizing the PiS government for scandals (including visa scandal and allowing immigrants into Poland; episodes 20, 21 for example: "PiS is the last party that can play the anti-immigration card because it is the most immigrant party in the history of Poland") and opposition leader Donald Tusk for populism and unreliable promises. For example: "Tusk is a hypocrite who uses populist slogans while at the same time making decisions himself that damage the economy" (episodes 13, 16, 27). They also criticized solutions like the PO's 0 percent loan (episode 6) and the "granny" program (episode 14), and Warsaw Mayor Rafał Trzaskowski's expansion of clean air zones. The latter, according to Konfederacja's politicians, makes life significantly more difficult for citizens who own older cars (episodes 4, 6, 12).

Konfederacja positions itself as the opposition to these changes, advocating for a common-sense approach. They present programmatic demands such as defending the Polish mining industry (episode 5), cash payments (episodes 4, 10, 12, 20), and internal

combustion cars (episode 30). They argue that EU policies threaten Polish mining and the citizen's freedom of cash payments.

The conflict framework is evident as the *Konfederacja* positions itself against PO and PiS, aiming to gain support by criticizing political opponents. The *Konfederacja* puts itself in the role of the ones to oppose the policies promoted by PO and PiS and propose a viable alternative. The videos were published in an election year, and their purpose was to gain support in the public at the expense of political opponents in order to achieve a good result in the elections.

The *Konfederacja* also opposes the Polish government's Ukraine-oriented policies, claiming that the PiS government pursues a servile policy toward Ukraine and neglects Polish interests. They demand accountability for issues like the Volhynian massacre by exhuming the victims (episodes 17, 20, 24) and criticize the social privileges granted to Ukrainian citizens. The party declares that these privileges for Ukrainian citizens would be taken away as soon as *Konfederacja* gains power. While condemning Russia's aggression against Ukraine, some politicians, such as Grzegorz Braun, use harsher rhetoric, spreading anti-Ukrainian and anti-immigrant slogans (Karpiuk, 2022). However, in the analyzed videos, anti-Ukrainian slogans did not appear, but party leaders advocated for sensible aid to Ukraine and protecting Polish farmers from uncontrolled Ukrainian grain influx for example: "Ukraine brazenly took advantage of this Polish naivety, they pretended some kind of sympathy, they just took money from us. The moment the Poles wanted something from the Ukrainians they showed us the shaft" (episodes 8, 12, 23, 26, 27, 28). They also suggested that "Ukraine should be billed" for the aid provided (episode 29).

The videos featured "strong expressive language," using emotionally charged and negative vocabulary towards political opponents. Terms like "total hypocrites" (episode 7), "the giveaway coalition of PiS-PO-Lewica-PSL" (episode 13), "the PO-PiS Pact" (episode 23), and "Car Death Zones" for clean air zones (episode 4) were used. Taxes were called "hardships" (episode 10), and politicians like Donald Tusk and Andrzej Duda were criticized harshly. The politicians argued that Tusk was a hypocrite and a populist (episode 13) while Duda was supposed to be "kneeling before Ukraine." Phrases like "Ukraine showed Poland the shaft" (episode 28) and emotional language aimed to attract viewers' attention and construct a specific political agenda.

Populism was defined as "a type of political strategy used by politicians to gain political support during elections, among other things. This strategy would involve appealing to the wisdom of the sovereign people and seeking to divide society into two antagonistic camps: the people, as represented by populist politicians, and elites of various kinds" (Przyłęcki, 2012). Elements of populism in *Konfederacja*'s program are described in the academic article by Tomasz Litwin. According to Litwin, there are contents in the party's electoral program that are indicators of populism, which constitute its essence and are more clearly discernible than in the case of other parties. In this case, the researcher points to anti-elitism, the presence of the theme of the crisis of the state, the emphasis on traditional values and state sovereignty, the apotheosis of the people-state and the concept of changing the current economic order (Litwin, 2023).

In the context of *Konfederacja*'s populism, Jarosław Tomaszewicz notes that in "comparison with the Western European new populist right, *Konfederacja* has a stronger traditionalist component and lacks social populism" (characteristic of, for example, National

Unity) (Tomasiewicz, 2020). Thus, in the case of Konfederacja, one can rather speak of a new form of populism, which can be considered to be the promise that the state will lower taxes, so to speak, to take less from the citizens.

Konfederacja's populist tax plans are evident in their promises to lower taxes and simplify tax law, positioning themselves as defenders of ordinary citizens against the state. They propose tax reductions for entrepreneurs, and eliminating the second tax threshold (episodes 10, 13, 16). At the same time, they advocate for the introduction of voluntary Social Security for entrepreneurs. The human-centered framework appears in some videos, highlighting the problems faced by ordinary citizens due to government policies. Konfederacja's politicians raise problems concerning the complicated tax law by drawing attention to the groups that suffer the most from the policies pursued by the government – entrepreneurs. They then try to describe the problems through the prism of the common man, namely explain how and why the common man would lose from specific solutions of the EU or the PiS government, and how the common man would gain from the solutions promoted by the Konfederacja. Thus, in this area, the Konfederacja pursues one form of populism – anti-elitism. The party positions itself as a defender of the rights of the ordinary citizen, who works and earns an honest wage and does not want “the state to interfere with him.”

However, the CenEA report indicated that the Konfederacja's promises would cost 39.9 billion zlotys annually, exceeding the state budget's capacity, making these promises populist and unfeasible (Myck, Król, Oczkowska, Trzeciński, 2023). To put it in other words, Konfederacja's tax cut promises are impossible to fulfill.

Konfederacja's American-like events, such as party conventions and the Bosak&-Mentzen tour, demonstrate their focus on active voter mobilization. Events are broadcasted on YouTube and the convention has the character of a pseudo-event (e.g. “We Can Do Everything” party convention). These events, advertised in the videos, combine political content with entertainment elements, fitting into the trend of *politainment*, characterized by combining political content with entertainment elements in the media, presenting them in a way that is attractive to a wide audience (Nowak, 2009).

Weak institutionalization is not evident in the videos, as parties typically present their best side in media communications. However, Konfederacja's dependence on popular leaders Slawomir Mentzen and Krzysztof Bosak is notable, as the Bosak&Mentzen podcast format gained the highest viewership among all videos published in 2023. Each of 30 episodes exceeded 100,000 views, significantly higher than other videos on Konfederacja's official YouTube channel. As for internal crises and conflicts, they were not found in the videos in question, which serve to promote the party, thus showing it as an efficiently organized organism with a coherent structure, characterized by stability in external relations. The aforementioned videos were intended to help solidify the party's position in competition with other subjects of political life in Poland. However, it should be noted that, in this context, such crises have occurred and have already been the subject of scholarly analysis, e.g.: in Anna Szwed-Walczak's scholarly article *Komunikacja medialna Konfederacji Wolność i Niepodległość w czasie kryzysu wewnątrzpartyjnego* (Szwed-Walczak, 2023a).

Konfederacja's anti-systemic stance, understood as “opposition to certain political principles of the system within which such parties function,” emerges indirectly through

their positions on lockdowns, foreign policy towards Ukraine, and the European Union, which were already discussed in the above sections. Konfederacja's leaders criticize the European Union and express willingness to vote for leaving the organization in a nationwide referendum, using the responsibility and conflict frames. They also oppose the uncontrolled flow of migrants and the EU migration pact, viewing these as threats to national sovereignty. Konfederacja's own goal is to stop the influx of foreign civilization, especially Muslim migrants (conflict frame).

Conclusion

An analysis of the content of the "Bosak&Mentzen" podcast videos published on the Konfederacja's official YouTube channel reveals that all characteristics of a protest party are present in the party's messages. The inclusion of these features, particularly anti-party and programmatic anti-consensualism, enables the Konfederacja to distinguish itself from other parties and appeal to voters disillusioned with the political duopoly of PO and PiS. Consequently, the party's messaging diverges from that of the mainstream parties. Bosak and Mentzen highlight the failures and corruption of current authorities and the risks of implementing certain regulations. They criticize social programs and promises from both PiS and PO, asserting that these contribute to inflation. To differentiate themselves, they emphasize that Konfederacja is the only party opposing lockdowns during the COVID-19 pandemic and defending agriculture and the transport industry against the influx of Ukrainian grain.

An important element of the communication strategy is also the skillful use of new media, especially the YouTube platform, which enables direct contact with the audience and bypasses traditional news channels, often criticized by Konfederacja's leaders as biased. The "Bosak&Mentzen" podcast is an example of a communication format dominated by long, casual conversations, allowing the topics discussed to be deepened and the politicians to be portrayed in a more accessible, almost collegiate manner.

To build public support, Konfederacja's politicians address significant issues like changes in the EU policy and social policy under PiS, as well as current social problems like the grain crisis and related disputes with Ukraine. Their communication strategy frequently employs frames of responsibility, conflict, and competition, with occasional use of the common man frame. This framework has a mobilizing function, increasing the sense of community and belonging among party supporters. By accentuating political conflict and exposing differences with the mainstream, the Konfederacja effectively builds a narrative based on the division of "us" versus "them," which in the communication of an anti-system party creates a strong mobilization mechanism. Political opponents are portrayed negatively, while Konfederacja is idealized as a party "friendly" for workers and entrepreneurs, offering "outside-the-box" solutions to improve the lives of ordinary Poles. This message construction allows the party to be effectively portrayed as the only alternative to the ossified political system and fits in with the wider trends of protest party political communication in Europe.

The Konfederacja shares anti-immigrant rhetoric and populist themes with the Sverigedemokraterna in Sweden, although Konfederacja's stance on immigration and the EU

is comparatively softer. The SD took advantage of public sentiment and the problems facing society to maximize its support over a 12-year period (from 2010 to 2022). During that time, support for the party rose from 5.7 percent to 20.5 percent, making the party part of a center-right governing coalition in 2022 (Sweden Statistics, 2022). Despite aiming for similar growth, Konfederacja's increase in parliamentary support from 2019 to 2023 was modest and rose by a few percent (Politico, 2023).

Similarities can also be drawn between Konfederacja and AfD in Germany, as both exploit anti-European, anti-immigrant, and anti-pandemic sentiments, but have low coalition potential due to their promoted values. Unlike AfD, Konfederacja positions itself not as radically against the EU but advocates for it as an organization of sovereign nations cooperating economically. Konfederacja promotes a situation in which Poland continues to benefit from its presence in the EU's structures, while not having to bear the costs of harmful changes. Thus, Konfederacja, in the context of the European Union, positions itself in contrast to the AfD. Konfederacja advocates the European Union should be an organization of sovereign nations that cooperate in the economic aspect and the free movement of goods and people. Such rhetoric is a consequence of the fact that support for EU membership is very high in Poland (although at the same time it should be noted that it has fallen relative to previous years). A CBOS poll shows that 72 percent of respondents are in favor of Poland's presence in the EU (Polish Press Agency, 2024). AfD, on the other hand, negates everything associated with the European Union (Polish Press Agency, 2024). In describing the similarities between the parties, it should be noted that the authors of the research claim that there are, however, several "fields" that link Konfederacja and AfD. Both Konfederacja and AfD draw attention to the weakness and dependence of the state and the need to strengthen it, as well as issues of national identity, which they believe need protection. Both also employ the politics of fear and use populist arguments in their messages (Kajta, Myrczik, Karolak, 2023).

Konfederacja, similarly to the Rassemblement National, avoids worldview content (such as abortion) in its official messages, focusing instead on tax cuts, government criticism, and hard-line stances towards the EU and Ukraine. Unlike the RN, this strategy was associated with a new form of populism centered on tax cuts, appealing to a self-interested society. However, controversial figures like Grzegorz Braun pose a burden. It remains to be seen whether Konfederacja will consolidate various right-wing factions, including extreme ones, or like RN, follow a dediabolization process to attract a broader electorate from the center-right and centrist electorate. At the moment, the aforementioned electorate often does not want to vote for Konfederacja because of the controversial messages of some of its politicians.

The party employs emotional language and events combining entertainment and politics, with leaders Bosak and Mentzen playing significant roles in communicating with the electorate. This strategy aligns with the personalization and presidentialization trends in politics (Mughan, 2000) and fits into the broader Americanization trend in Polish politics, using stigmatization of political opponents and political marketing (Jadczyzyn, 2020).

The scholarly article helps to understand the protest parties' demands, which can increase the awareness and critical approach of the potential party electorate to the political content they consume. Moreover, the article explains common mechanisms that attract voters and highlights the differences in the manifestos of the described protest parties.

A limitation of this study is that the fulfilment of the secondary objective was achieved through a comparative analysis. The analysis was based on the characteristics attributed to the selected protest parties in the academic literature, rather than a content analysis of the published material on the social media of these groups.

Author Contributions

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Konfederacja Wolność i Niepodległość jako Partia Protestu na YouTube

Streszczenie

Niniejszy artykuł ma na celu wyjaśnienie, w jaki sposób Konfederacja stosuje retorykę partii protestu po to, aby maksymalizować swój wynik wyborczy. W artykule dokonano analizy zawartości 30 filmów publikowanych w ramach formatu Bosak&Mentzen na YouTube pod kątem występowania w przekazach cech partii protestu. Starano się także znaleźć podobieństwa pomiędzy Konfederacją a innymi partiami protestu w Szwecji, Niemczech i Francji. Przeprowadzone badania pozwalają wnioskować, że Konfederacja korzysta z retoryki partii protestu, aby pozycjonować się jako alternatywa wobec Prawa i Sprawiedliwości (PiS) i Platformy Obywatelskiej (PO) oraz nagłaśniać konkretne problemy społeczne, które pozwalają jej na budowanie poparcia w społeczeństwie.

Słowa kluczowe: Konfederacja, YouTube, Partia Protestu