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Abstract of the doctoral dissertation of Bartłomiej Kulas

**Electoral law in Poland and the results of parliamentary elections
Variant analysis of possible changes in terms of electoral geography**

This doctoral dissertation was conducted in the field of socio-economic geography. The issues discussed fall within the scope of electoral geography research - a sub-discipline of political geography.

The work contains eight chapters, introduction and summary, and is supplemented with five appendices. The dissertation was supported by references to nearly 300 sources, including over 200 scientific publications, supported by legal acts and internet sources. To better illustrate the obtained results, the work is supplemented with a number of tables and figures.

The subject of research in the work is the rarely undertaken scientific issue of the concept of modifying the electoral law in elections to the Sejm in Poland. The reason for taking up such a problem are the election experiences in 2015 and 2019, when it was possible to observe highly disproportionate and inconsistent with the actual will of voters expressed in voting - election results in allocation of seats in the Sejm obtained by political parties. Law and Justice won, respectively, 37.58% and 43.59% of the vote in these elections, i.e. far below 50% of the vote, and won 235 seats in both cases (out of 460), i.e. 51.09% of the total. Despite several times in the past, the occurrence of similar election results of other parties, it has never before happened (despite the observed imperfections) that the distribution of seats was so grossly disproportionate that would result in an absolute majority in the Sejm of a party that did not enjoy the absolute support of the majority of voters.

The first chapter discusses the aim, thesis, scope of the work, research methodology and a discussion of the literature. The work had two main goals. Firstly, a detailed examination of the functioning of the current electoral system and answering the question of how to change it in order to reduce the shortcomings of the electoral law without destroying

the adopted and functioning order in its entirety. Secondly, to analyze the possible shape of the political scene in Poland in the proposed alternative legal and organizational reality. Side objectives include: comparison of the electoral law in Poland with the electoral systems of other countries with recognized democracy and an overview of the evolution of the electoral system in Poland in a historical perspective.

The thesis of the work is that there is such an electoral system that would ensure the reconciliation of two aspects important in political systems: in Polish conditions, it would firstly reduce the perceivable shortcomings, in particular the disproportionality of elections, and secondly - despite the introduced changes - maintaining the stability of the party and political system and maintaining the conditions for building stable parliamentary majorities.

The scope of the work was divided into material (legal and organizational issues of the electoral law), spatial (the territory of Poland divided into constituencies) and temporal (three main periods - historical, the period after 1989 and the formation of the electoral system to date, and an alternative reality - forecast).

A practical-constructivist model of building knowledge was adopted. The research concept was the traditional-empirical approach (after Z. Chojnicki). The empirical model of explanation dominated throughout the work. Relating the work to the region (after Z. Rykel), a realistic pattern of explanation and a relationalist model of explanation were adopted (after Z. Chojnicki). The work uses all three main research approaches typical for electoral geography proposed by Z. Rykel - descriptive-cartographic, historical-sociological, statistical, but with the dominance of the first. The statistical and quantitative methods were of less importance in this study, however, several indicators and indices were calculated, e.g. the domination index, the polarization index, and also typical for political science: Gallagher index, Loosemore-Hanby index, effective number of parties index, effective number of parties reduction, fractionation index and aggregation index (after M. Kamiński, B. Michalak, M. Banaś, P. Śleszyński, M. Kowalski and others). The work was based primarily on literature and statistical sources (including in particular data from the National Electoral Commission).

Analyzing the literature on the subject of research to date, it was indicated that the achievements of Polish electoral geography deal with the discussed issue to a very limited extent, despite a relatively large number of research works in this discipline. The authors mostly focus on studying the spatial distribution of political party support and analyzing

election results. There is little conceptual work. Only a few indirect (e.g. works by R. Matykowski, A Gendźwił, J. Flis and D. Stolicki) and direct (works by M. Kamiński, J. Flis and B. Michalak, D. Dudek, D. Kała and P. Potakowski, K. Składkowski, J. Haman and S. Gebethner) publications were indicated responding to the discussed research problem. The work of P. Śleszyński, which considered the introduction of a majority model in Poland, was the closest to the problem in question. A similar, but much more modest attempt was also made by O. Skomski, B. Korinth, T. Wiskulski and D. Wilk. However, none of the discussed works dealt with in such an in-depth and detailed way the analysis of the introduction of mixed electoral law in Poland as a response to the research problem posed.

The second chapter discusses the typology of electoral systems in the world and the attitude of the right and left in Poland to various electoral systems. With the help of maps and graphs the division of electoral systems by types and their use in different countries of the world was made. The methods of allocating electoral mandates in the most important types of electoral regulations were characterized, including various variants of converting votes into mandates in the proportional model. Different approaches to the classification of left and right were indicated. Based on the political spectrum model of authorship J. Szczepański, Polish parties were classified. It was noted that the current leading political parties (Law and Justice, Civic Platform) derive from Solidarity Electoral Action and Freedom Union, which co-created the current electoral law (later revised by the Democratic Left Alliance, and in elections to the Senate - by the Civic Platform). Currently, among the programs of the main political parties, only in the document prepared by the Polish People's Party does there be a mention of the introduction of a mixed law in Poland with half of the seats in single-member constituencies. The other parties present in the Sejm did not raise this issue before the 2019 elections.

The third chapter is entirely devoted to the shaping of the electoral system in Poland in historical times. The beginnings of Polish parliamentarism (noble democracy) and the establishment of the first Sejm, its glory days in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and attempts at modernization during the reign of Stanisław August were discussed. The functioning of the partitioning powers parliaments in the post-partition period and their influence on the shaping of the parliamentary model in the Second Polish Republic was discussed. The next part discusses in detail the formation of the electoral law after the rebirth of Poland and its functioning until the May coup, and then - changes in the system introduced by Sanacja. The following are puppet parliaments functioning during the communist period,

which, however, also influenced the contemporary functioning of the Sejm. It was concluded that the current number of deputies was shaped during the Polish People's Republic, but the attachment to the proportional electoral law dates back to the interwar period. The well-established, historical position of the Polish Senate was also proven. In all election periods, the representation standards, the number of deputies and the shape of constituencies were discussed.

The fourth chapter deals with the shaping of the current electoral law, starting with the changes initiated in 1989. Successive electoral regulations applied are discussed in elections to the Sejm, Senate, local government elections, elections for the President of the Republic of Poland and the European Parliament. It was indicated that the current electoral system for the Sejm (with minor corrections) it was formed in 2001, and until the Senate in 2011. Since then, Poland has had a proportional system (to the Sejm) based on 41 constituencies in which 460 deputies are elected. The D'Hondt method is used to convert the votes into seats. In elections to the Senate, since 2011, a majority system based on single-member constituencies with one voting round has been applied.

Electoral law so shaped was assessed both quantitatively and qualitatively in chapter five. Among the main problems identified were unequal constituencies (especially in elections to the Senate) and glaring cumulative disproportionality, especially in the elections in 1993 and 2015, but it remained high also in all other elections, and only in 2001 was it less than 10 percentage points. The calculated Gallagher and Loosemore-Hanby indices also indicated a high disproportionality, which in the 2015 elections had reached the highest value since 1993. At the same time, it was pointed out that the elections to the Senate carried out in the majority electoral system, with only single seats won by independent senators.

Chapter six deals with the international situation. Areas indicated on recognized democracy by using the Democracy Index prepared by The Economist. The state of democracy outside Europe was also discussed. Then, the practical functioning and impact on the results of elections of various types of electoral regulations was described, analyzing the majority systems in, among others, Great Britain, the USA, Canada and the two-round version of this system used in France. Next, mixed systems of Germany and New Zealand and slightly different systems of Lithuania and Hungary are discussed. The study also covered the so-called "preferential" regulations used, in Ireland, Malta and Australia. The last ones discussed are the proportional systems of selected European countries: the Czech Republic, Spain, the

Netherlands and Sweden. The conclusion compares the parameters of the Polish system with the parameters of the electoral systems of the discussed countries.

The seventh chapter analyzes the possible directions of modification of the Polish electoral law to the Sejm. Four variants of the majority system were presented (with the number of Members respectively: 460, 360, 230 and 100). However, these proposals were rejected as they did not give any chance for a positive answer to the research thesis. Then, the possibilities of modifying the proportional system were analyzed, also in four variants - changing both the number of constituencies (and thus the number of deputies elected in a constituency) as well as the method of converting votes into seats. Election thresholds and the elected number of deputies were discussed as a separate issue. However, none of these proposals was accepted for further analysis due to concerns about the excessive fragmentation of the political scene. In the last part of the chapter, variants of mixed systems were analyzed, three of which were proposed (with the dominant majority, proportional and balanced components). The proportional-majority variant was indicated as the most promising for further analysis, with 360 deputies elected in 17 constituencies (16 voivodeships + the "Warsaw" district) using the Hare-Niemeyer method for allocating seats and 100 deputies elected in single-member constituencies on principles similar to the current ones Senate elections, but using two voting rounds. Other considerations were treated as theoretical, rejected as too complicated (with a large number of invalid votes) or as contradicting the idea of proportionality (100 multi-member constituencies). The problem of the Senate was discussed separately. It was recognized that the elections to this House in their current form are passing with purpose, drawing on international experience, where in recognized democracies the upper house rarely comes from direct election. It is indicated that in Polish conditions, the Senate could be transformed into a local governments chamber, or into a chamber of "distinguished", or a combination of both solutions. The idea of direct elections to the Senate also loses sense when the proposed mixed ordinance is implemented in the Sejm.

In the final, eighth chapter, the adopted variant of the mixed system was analyzed. Based on empirical evidence about the election strategy used by Polish political parties (especially with regard to the majority component based on Senate experiences), it was indicated that despite the application of the majority component, such system would be the most proportional in the history of Polish elections after 1989. (6-fold decrease in disproportionality). In the proportional component, the deviation of the number of seats from the support on the national scale for each political party would not exceed 1.41% (in 2019 -

7.5%), on average around 0.5%. At the same time, preserving the majority component creates an opportunity to build a stable parliamentary majority, and even to obtain an absolute majority in parliament. The overall deviation (including both components) is not more than 4.56%, the average deviation for most batches is lower than in the current system. In the analyzed alternative reality, smaller parties would benefit primarily from it, but most of all the strongest party would be weakened, which in the discussed variant would not obtain an independent majority, and the percentage of seats would be only slightly higher than the support obtained in the popular vote. The values of the calculated indices: Gallagher and Loosemore-Hanby would be the lowest in the history of the Polish elections after 1989, despite the mixed nature of the system.

To sum up, the work deals with an important and so far rarely discussed issue in the field of electoral geography. The objectives of the work were achieved and the thesis was positively verified. The developed solution would be suitable for adaptation in Polish conditions, without threatening the stability of the political scene, while at the same time correcting the shortcomings of the current electoral law, and creating an opportunity for non-party candidates (in the majority component) to obtain seats in the Sejm.