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Rafał Leśniczak*

Politicization of Catholic Media in Poland (2015-2023)

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to examine whether Poland's most prominent nationwide Catholic media have been dominated by political influences and instrumentally used for partisan purposes. This review-based study systematizes previous research on the politicization of Polish Catholic media during the rule of the United Right camp (2015–2023). The literature review and criticism methods were employed. The analysis indicates that nationwide Catholic media have legitimized the United Right's political program and activities, with right-wing politicians being prominently featured in newspaper publications and on Radio Maryja. This article contributes to research on media politicization during the governments of Beata Szydło and Mateusz Morawiecki.

Keywords

 $Catholic\ media\ in\ Poland, politicization\ of\ the\ media, United\ Right$

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Introduction

Researchers studying the processes of the mediatization of politics and the politicization of the media highlight the mutual coexistence of these phenomena in the public sphere. They emphasize the need for an integrated perspective on the relationship between the media and politics, as well as a proper understanding of their reciprocal influence. As Bogusława Dobek-Ostrowska notes, election campaigns, where politicians seek to legitimize their political agendas and gain public support, demonstrate the relevance and even indispensability of the media in achieving these goals. The aspiration of politicians to gain and maintain power necessitates their cooperation with the media, providing a rationale for securing media support and often leading to various forms of pressure on media outlets. These dynamics of interaction between the media and politics are evident in the Polish public sphere and also apply to Polish religious media, which serve as channels for political communication by churches and other religious associations.

In the analysis, based on published theoretical and empirical studies, an attempt was made to synthesize the issue of the politicization of Catholic media in Poland during the rule of the United Right (2015-2023).⁵ It was hypothesized that Poland's most prominent nationwide Catholic media have been dominated by the political sphere and instrumentally used to achieve partisan political goals. The study employed literature review and literature criticism.⁶ The text is of a review nature and draws on the research of social science scholars such as: Stanley Bill, Mariusz Chrostowski, Agnieszka Graff, Anna Gwiazda, Elżbieta Korolczuk, Konrad Pędziwiatr, Piotr Żuk, Paweł Żuk. Research reports and communications were also used.

The Politicization of Catholic Media
- Theoretical
Perspective
and Empirical
Research

The research adopts specific definitions of the terms "politicization" and "Catholic media." Politicization of the media refers to the dominance of the media by the political sphere and their instrumental use to achieve political objectives. As a result, politicized media become partisan and aligned with particular political interests. Significant criteria for assessing the degree of media politicization include: political pressure on media, politicians taking control of media outlets, the media's overt involvement in political reporting with a clear party preference, the subordination of media operations to the interests of a specific political group, and violations of the principle of pluralism, such as an asymmetrical presence of different political parties in the media agenda. According to Zbigniew Oniszczuk, the most important strategies for the instrumentalization of the media by political actors

- 1. C. Wiesner, Politicisation, Politics and Democracy, in: Rethinking Politicisation in Politics, Sociology and International Relations, ed. C. Wiesner, Palgrave Macmillan 2021, pp. 19–42; Z. Oniszczuk, Mediatyzacja polityki i polityzacja mediów. Dwa wymiary wzajemnych relacji, "Studia Medioznawcze", 2011, No. 4 (47), pp. 11–22.
- 2. B. Dobek-Ostrowska, *Polish media* system in a comparative perspective: Media in politics, politics in media, Peter Lang 2019, pp. 77–78.
- 3. K. Gajlewicz-Korab, Ł. Szurmiński, Politicizing Poland's Public Service Media: The Analysis of Wiadomości News Program, "Central European Journal of Communication", 2022, Vol. 15, No. 1 (30), pp. 72–91, DOI: 10.51480/1899–5101.15.1(30).4; P. Olechowska, Divisions of Polish media and journalists as an example of polarization and politicization, "Journalism Practice", 2022, Vol. 16, Issue 10, pp. 2125–2146, DOI: 10.1080/17512786.2021.1884991; A. Weglińska, Ł. Szurmiński,
- A. Węglińska, Ł. Szurmiński, M. Wąsicka-Sroczyńska, Politicization as a Factor of Shaping News in the Public Service Media: A Case Study on Public Television in Poland, "Athenaeum. Polskie Studia Politologiczne", 2021, No. 72, pp. 29–51, DOI: 10.15804/athena.2021.72.02.
- 4. D. Guzek, Mediatizing secular state: Media, religion and politics in contem-



include: "(1) exerting direct or indirect influence on media coverage of political actions and decisions, (2) expanding their own public relations institutions and adapting their operational rules to the specifics of journalistic work, and (3) diverting media attention from inconvenient issues by increasing the use of personalism, ritualization, and symbolism in political actions."

The text adopts the definition of "Catholic media" proposed by Polish media scholar Damian Guzek. According to Guzek, Catholic media encompass both mass and demassified media that operate with the approval or support of a competent ecclesiastical authority. They provide a comprehensive view of reality, including information about the life of the Church, and represent journalism grounded in Catholic principles of communication.¹⁰

The nationwide Catholic media with the largest reach and the most influential covered in this analysis include the weekly magazines "Gość Niedzielny," "Niedziela" and "Idziemy," as well as Radio Maryja and online Catholic websites such as deon.pl, gosc.pl, and wiara.pl.¹¹

study of the media agenda of the Catholic weeklies "Niedziela," "Gość Niedzielny" and "Idziemy" from 2015 to 2023 reveals their communication strategy, which involves legitimizing the political program and activities of the United Right camp, associating negativity with politicians from liberal-left groups, and portraying right-wing leaders in a positive light as outstanding statesmen.¹² It is also worth noting that the content analysis and discourse analysis of the publications of "Niedziela," "Gość Niedzielny" and "Idziemy" do not prove any significant differences in terms of the political involvement of these periodicals. For example, during the 2019 parliamentary campaign, all of the above titles made every effort to indicate the achievements of the United Right government. The analysis of the publications of Catholic weeklies from the period of the election campaign mentioned above proves that the construction of the press discourse consisted in highlighting the new quality of power created by PiS (pl. Prawo i Sprawiedliwość). The "new quality" consists in remembering the ordinary citizen (hence the emphasis on social programs, achievements in the area of historical policy or international cooperation in the media agenda) and in keeping election promises (which strengthens the credibility of United Right politicians).¹³ Moreover, the scandals of the PO-PSL government before 2015, reported in Catholic weeklies, provide a contrasting background for the right-wing's actions.¹⁴ It is also worth emphasizing the exposure and legitimization of right-wing politicians (including Kornel Morawiecki, Andrzej Duda, Mateusz Morawiecki, Daniel Obajtek, Łukasz Piebiak, Elżbieta Witek, Sławomir Mazurek, Marek Jurek) by Catholic weeklies,

porary Poland, Peter Lang GmbH 2019, pp. 47–55; M. Grabowska, Religiosity, the Catholic Church, and politics in Poland, in: Religion, Politics, and Values in Poland: Continuity and Change Since 1989, eds. S.P. Ramet, I. Borowik, Palgrave Macmillan - Springer Nature 2017, pp. 257–288.

- 5. K. Kowalczyk, *Polityka historyczna rządu RP na przykładzie działalności Ministerstwa Kultury i Dziedzictwa Narodowego (2015–2023)*, "Historia i Polityka", 2023, No. 45 (52), p. 58, DOI: 10.12775/HiP.2023.022.
- 6. S. Cisek, Metoda analizy i krytyki piśmiennictwa w nauce o informacji i bibliotekoznawstwie w XXI wieku, "Przegląd Biblioteczny", 2010, Vol. 78, No. 3, pp. 273–284; J.W. Knopf, Doing a literature review, "PS: Political Science & Politics", 2006, No. 39 (1), pp. 127–132.
- 7. P. Olechowska, Media w komunikowaniu politycznym, in: Komunikowanie polityczne w teorii i praktyce, eds. P. Kuca, W. Furman, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego 2023, p. 33.
- 8. W. Dopierała, S. Ossowski, *Polityzacja* audycji informacyjnych w *Polsce na* przykładzie "Wiadomości" TVP i "Faktów" TVN, "Com. Press", 2018, No. 2 (1), pp. 6–8; Z. Oniszczuk, *Mediatyzacja* polityki i polityzacja..., op. cit., pp. 18–19.
- 9. Z. Oniszczuk, *Mediatyzacja polityki i polityzacja...*, op. cit., p. 19.



and at the same time the criticism of PO (pl. Platforma Obywatelska) politicians, including Donald Tusk and Klaudia Jachira. 15

s Rafał Leśniczak notes, press publications of Polish Catholic weeklies supported Andrzej Duda in both the 2015 and 2020 presidential elections in Poland. Analyses by other researchers examining the content of nationwide Catholic press titles reveal similar observations regarding their more or less explicit political commitment to the United Right. One notable example is the dissertation by Paweł Lasiuk, "Good Change' in the Discourse of Right-Wing Opinion Weeklies." In this work, Lasiuk, a researcher affiliated with the University of Warsaw, argues that the portrayal of the United Right's rule in magazines identifying as conservative-Catholic – such as "Gość Niedzielny," "Sieci," "Do Rzeczy," and "Gazeta Polska" – exhibits characteristics of the post-dependence discourse, which can be analyzed through Ewa Thompson's post-colonial theory. Furthermore, Lasiuk notes that the right-wing opinion weeklies he examined employed specific linguistic strategies and selectively highlighted facts, photos, opinions, and viewpoints to construct a positive image of those in power while simultaneously advocating for particular directions in social reform.¹⁷ The cited analysis covering the period 2015–2019 indicates that "Gość Niedzielny" featured political and social conservatives, including Marek Jurek, leader of the Right Wing of the Republic (Polish: Prawica Rzeczypospolitej) party, and Barbara Fedyszak-Radziejowska, an advisor to President Andrzej Duda. 18 The Catholic weekly invited right-wing politicians to interviews, including Minister of Family, Labor, and Social Policy Elżbieta Rafalska, Minister of Health Konstanty Radziwiłł, Minister of Finance Paweł Szałamacha, Secretary of State at the Ministry of Family, Labor, and Social Policy Stanisław Szwed, MEP Marek Jurek, head of the National Security Bureau Paweł Soloch, advisor to President Duda Zofia Romaszewska, and President's spokesman Marek Magierowski.¹⁹ Nevertheless, the editors of "Gość Niedzielny" also interviewed representatives of the then opposition, including Civic Platform (PO) MEP Jan Olbrycht and Civic Platform MP Paweł Kowal.²⁰ However, during period of analysis from 2015 to 2019, the weekly did not feature political topics on its covers. 21 This could suggest that the weekly adheres to the principle of pluralism and lacked a clear commitment to Law and Justice (PiS). However, the significant dominance of quoted statements from the "Good Change" camp, along with the portrayal of statements from the "liberal-left camp" as negative, irrelevant, intellectually immature, naïve, or unworthy of consideration, indicates the editorial support given to the United Right by "Gość Niedzielny."22

10. D. Guzek, *Media katolickie w polskim systemie medialnym*, Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek 2016, p. 24.

11. R. Leśniczak, Political Communication in Selected Polish Religious Web Portals (2019–2020), in: Politics and the Media in Poland from the 19th to the 21st Centuries, eds. E. Kristanova, R. Habielski, M. Such-Purgiel, Brill 2024, pp. 229–255, DOI: 10.1163/9789004687998_014; D. Gospodarek, Media katolickie w Polsce (dossier), eKAI.pl 2021, https://www.ekai.pl/ media-katolickie-w-polsce-dossier/, (access 26.08.2024); K. Przybysz-Polakowska, Polish Catholic Magazines and Bioethical Dilemmas: A Critical Discourse Analysis, "Journal of Religion, Media and Digital Culture", 2020, No. 9 (3), pp. 368-384, DOI: 10.1163/21659214-BJA10027; I. Krzemiński, Radio Maryja and Fr. Rydzyk as a creator of the national-Catholic ideology, in: Religion, Politics, and Values in Poland: Continuity and Change Since 1989, eds. S.P. Ramet, I. Borowik, S.P. Ramet, I. Borowik, Palgrave Macmillan - Springer Nature 2017, pp. 85-112.

12. R. Leśniczak, Die Parlamentswahlen in Polen 2023. Wahlkampfberichterstattung in katholischen Wochenzeitungen, "Communicatio Socialis (ComSoc)", 2024, No. 57 (2), pp. 259–271, DOI: 10.5771/0010-3497-2024-2-259; R. Leśniczak, Personalizacja wizerunku



Radio Maryja is the most influential radio station in the Polish Catholic media market, boasting the largest reach. However, it is also often regarded more broadly as a socio-political movement that promotes national Catholicism, opposes gender ideology, and, according to many researchers, exhibits strong undertones of anti-Semitism. For more than 30 years, under the leadership of Redemptorist priest Tadeusz Rydzyk, the Toruń-based broadcaster has openly expressed its political sympathies. During the analyzed period (2015–2023), it consistently supported right-wing politicians in parliamentary and presidential elections, particularly those affiliated with Solidarna Polska and Law and Justice.

This support is reflected in the disproportionately larger airtime dedicated to the United Right compared to other political groups. It is also evident in the near absence of criticism or negative associations regarding the political actions and programs of Law and Justice and Solidarna Polska. Andrzej Duda also received such endorsement from the Catholic radio station in both the 2015 and 2020 elections. Michał Puzio notes, "during the 2015 presidential campaign, Radio Maryja devoted equal airtime to presenting both candidates [Duda and Komorowski]. The key difference, however, was that nearly the same amount of time was spent promoting Duda as was used for negative campaigning against Komorowski (approximately 66% of all airtime dedicated to the then-president consisted of negative coverage)."

The governments of Beata Szydło and Mateusz Morawiecki were also legitimized by Radio Maryja. Notably, it endorsed key social programs (such as the Family 500+ income support), supported the government's anti-abortion policies, and advocated for lowering the retirement age. Additionally, Radio Maryja, in alignment with Law and Justice politicians, promoted populism, deepened social polarization, and emphasized the Catholic Church's leading role in both ideological and social spheres.³²

As Irena Grosfeld, Etienne Madinier, Seyhun Orcan Sakalli, and Ekaterina Zhuravskaya note, after Law and Justice came to power in 2015, the public broadcaster TVP covered events related to the Catholic Church exclusively in a highly favorable tone, consistently supporting its positions on moral, social, professional, and cultural issues. According to the cited social scientists, this lack of critical assessment of the Church's role in the political sphere stemmed from its close ties with the ruling party. For instance, Radio Maryja was reportedly granted generous state funding in exchange for political support for the United Right during election campaigns.³³ It is worth noting that TVP news services

prasowego obozu Zjednoczonej Prawicy w okresie pandemii COVID-19. Analiza medioznawcza "Tygodnika Powszechnego", "Niedzieli" i "Gościa Niedzielnego", in: Zatruta studnia? Media w czasach pandemii COVID-19, ed. M. Sokołowski, Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek 2021, pp. 307–334.

13. R. Leśniczak, Komunikowanie polityczne Konferencji Episkopatu Polski podczas kampanii parlamentarnej 2019 r. w kontekście procesów mediatyzacji, in: Teorie i praktyki komunikacji, ed. G. Habrajska, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego 2020, p. 517.

14. Ibidem.

15. Ibidem, pp. 510-514.

16. R. Leśniczak, Did Polish nationwide Catholic weekly newspapers support Andrzej Duda in the presidential campaign in 2020? A case study, "Social Communication", 2021, Vol. 22, No. 1, pp. 42-57, DOI: 10.2478/sc-2021-0004; R. Leśniczak, Wizerunek prezydenta elekta Andrzeja Dudy w polskich tygodnikach katolickich "Gość Niedzielny" i "Niedziela", "Politeja-Pismo Wydziału Studiów Międzynarodowych i Politycznych Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego", 2017, Vol. 1, No. 3 (48), pp. 299-318, DOI: 10.12797/Politeja.14.2017.48.14; R. Leśniczak, The communicative role of the Catholic Church in Poland in the 2015 presidential election and its perception by the public, "Church, Communication and Culture", 2016, Vol. 1, Issue 1, pp. 273–277, DOI: 10.1080/23753234.2016.1234123.



are treated in the period 2015-2023 not only as biased, but also in terms of contemporary political propaganda. 34

ccording to Krzysztof Łabedź, a clear indication of the political alliance between Fr. Rydzyk's $oldsymbol{\Lambda}$ radio station and the "Good Change" camp is the presence of leading right-wing politicians at religious ceremonies, where public speeches by clergy serve to legitimize the actions of the authorities. The political scientist argues that "the most glaring example of the use of religion and the Church for political purposes may be the fact that politicians attend religious ceremonies and often give speeches that have very little to do with religion. Numerous key government figures attended, e.g. the closing ceremony of the 27th pilgrimage of the Radio Maryja Family to the Jasna Góra Monastery. They included Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki and Ministers Mariusz Błaszczak, Joachim Brudziński, Zbigniew Ziobro, Marek Gróbarczyk, Jan Krzysztof Ardanowski, Witold Bańka, and Andrzej Adamczyk. Also present were Minister in the Office of the President of Poland Adam Kwiatkowski, as well as Beata Kempa and Joanna Kopcińska from the Prime Minister's Office. Additionally, letters from Jarosław Kaczyński and Andrzej Duda were read out, filled with praise for Fr. Rydzyk's activities and projects. During the event, the Prime Minister publicly entrusted the country to the Mother of God and criticized the government's opponents. With an audience of more than 100,000 people, these speeches not only paid tribute to Fr. Rydzyk but also functioned as an effort to secure political support from the gathered faithful."35

In turn, in 2015, during the celebration of Radio Maryja's 24th anniversary, Jarosław Kaczyński thanked Fr. Rydzyk "for what he has done for the Polish Church and for Poland" and emphasized that "there would be no victory without the Radio Maryja Family."³⁶

As Ireneusz Krzemiński notes, the period after 2015 marked a clear alliance between the Church in Poland and the anti-democratic government. This contributed to deep social divisions in Poland, which had not been as pronounced before.³⁷ Krzemiński states: "Representatives of the Catholic Church, primarily the bishops, express the content of national-Catholic ideology, religiously and morally legitimizing the anti-democratic rule of the Law and Justice. Special payments from public funds to the Church have flowed to Fr. Rydzyk and his media conglomerate. The independent journalism platform OKO.press investigated the financial ties between the state and Fr. Rydzyk's enterprises." At the end of March 2021, it reported that "from the beginning of the Law and Justice rule until the end of 2020, entities affiliated with Fr. Rydzyk received at least 325,034,641 zlotys from the

- 17. P. Lasiuk, "Dobra zmiana" w dyskursie prawicowych tygodników opinii, doctoral thesis, University of Warsaw 2022.
- 18. Ibidem, p. 38.
- 19. Ibidem, p. 44.
- 20. Ibidem, p. 45.
- 21. Ibidem, p. 40.
- 22. Ibidem, pp. 54–55.
- 23. M. Gierula, Publiczna radiofonia i telewizja w Polsce na rozdrożu, in: Granice wyobraźni politologicznej. Księga jubileuszowa dedykowana Profesorowi Sylwestrowi Wróblowi, eds. R. Glajcar, Z. Kantyka, M. Obrębska, Uniwersytet Śląski 2019, p. 465.
- 24. E. Kwidziński, Radio Maryja. Katolicka rozgłośnia czy ruch społeczno-polityczny?, in: Oblicza dialogu we współczesnych mediach, Vol. 2, eds. M. Łosiewicz, A. Ryłko-Kurpiewska, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego 2023, pp. 61–82; K. Pędziwiatr, Church and State Relations in Poland, with Special Focus on the Radio Station Mary, in: Religion, politics and nation-building in post-communist countries, eds. G. Simons, D. Westerlund, Routledge 2016, pp. 163–178.
- 25. I. Krzemiński, *Radio Maryja and...*, op. cit., pp. 85–112.



state coffers [...]"³⁹ Furthermore, the actual "donations to Rydzyk" may have been even larger, as some transfers may not have been disclosed in official public records. At the January 2022 zloty exchange rate, this would amount to approximately 71 million euros! Fr. Rydzyk is a figure admired by the political elite of the Law and Justice party, as journalists have reported in detail. The language used by MPs and ministers of the current government, as well as their media and press statements, reflects the ideological narrative promoted by Radio Maryja. Law and Justice operates within the ideological framework shaped by Radio Maryja and Fr. Rydzyk."⁴⁰ The OKO.press portal, cited by the sociologist, precisely reveals the scale of public funds allocated to the creation and operation of Radio Maryja's enterprises. For example, between 2015 and 2020, the Ministry of Culture transferred 185 million zlotys to these initiatives, the Ministry of Justice provided at least 26 million zlotys, and the Environmental Protection Fund contributed nearly 74 million zlotys.⁴¹

An analysis of the content of the deon.pl, gosc.pl, and wiara.pl portals in the 2019-2020 period shows that they basically legitimized the actions of the United Right and provided political support to right-wing leaders, including Prime Minister Morawiecki. Additionally, during the 2020 presidential campaign, these Catholic sites endorsed Andrzej Duda. It is worth noting, however, that deon.pl also questioned the validity of some decisions of the "Good Change" camp, e.g. regarding the presidential elections on 10.05.2020, and boldly asked about their constitutionality and indicated the difficulty of conducting them. Many publications on the deon.pl portal did not evaluate the political actions of the leaders of the United Right, but were merely informative. In turn, the ambivalence of the assessment of the right-wing leaders, Morawiecki and Duda, was noted, for example, in the matter of the assessment of the amendment to court laws, highlighting the arguments of the opposition, parts of the judicial community, the Ombudsman, the Supreme Court and the Venice Commission. When it comes to the portals wiara.pl and gosc.pl, criticism of the actions of the PiS government or President Duda appeared, but also very sporadically.

In the case of the analyzed portals, there is no evidence that they financially benefit from providing political support to right-wing candidates in parliamentary elections. This political involvement by Catholic websites can be explained, for instance, by the operations of the National Media Council, which since 2016 has significantly influenced the composition of management and supervisory boards of public media, including the Polish Press Agency (PAP). In turn, PAP serves as the primary source of information for more than 80 percent of the publications posted on deon.pl, gosc.pl, and wiara.pl.⁴⁵

- 26. A. Graff, E. Korolczuk, *Anti-gender politics in the populist moment*, Routledge 2022, p. 42.
- 27. I. Krzemiński, Polish National Antisemitism, "Polin Studies in Polish Jewry", 2019, No. 31, pp. 515–542; S. Czapnik, G. Omelan, Jak Polak, to katolik. Odcienie nacjonalizmu Kościoła rzymskokatolickiego w Polsce, in: Religia i Kościoły w polskiej przestrzeni publicznej, eds. A. Kusztal, S. Czapnik, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Opolskiego 2015, pp. 49–52; M. Kucia, Antisemitism in contemporary Poland, in: Global Antisemitism: A Crisis of Modernity, ed. Ch.A. Small, Brill 2013, p. 315.
- 28. M. Chrostowski, "Unholy Alliance": Identification and prevention of ideological and religious frames between right-wing populism and christianity in Poland, "Zeitschrift für Religion, Gesellschaft und Politik", 2023, Vol. 7 (1), pp. 321–348, DOI: 10.1007/s41682-023-00146-3.
- 29. A. Węglińska, Astroturfing internetowy a zagrożenie bezpieczeństwa-protesty w obronie sądów w Polsce, boty i dezinformacja, "Rocznik Bezpieczeństwa Międzynarodowego", 2018, No. 12 (1), pp. 72–74, DOI: 10.34862/rbm.2018.1.6.
- 30. E. Zgut, Informal exercise of power: undermining democracy under the EU's radar in Hungary and Poland, "Hague Journal on the Rule of Law", 2022, Vol. 14 (2), p. 306, DOI: 10.1007/s40803-022-00170-0; P. Żuk, P. Żuk, Dangerous Liaisons between the Catho-



Conclusions

The conducted analysis confirms the validity of the research hypothesis. The most important na-▲ tionwide Catholic media in Poland have been dominated by the political sphere and instrumentally used to achieve partisan political goals. The strong ties between Catholic media and United Right politicians not only substantiate the thesis of their politicization but also highlight the social consequences for the Catholic Church as an institution in Poland. As Przemysław Sadura and Sławomir Sierakowski note, the Law and Justice party's close relationship with the Church harms the Church itself but does not negatively impact the politicians of the "Good Change" camp. 46 The politicization of Catholic media, along with other factors – such as publicly disclosed cases of sexual misconduct involving the clergy, ⁴⁷ particularly in the media – has contributed to a decline in trust in the Catholic Church as an institution. Teresa Sasińska-Klas aptly describes this phenomenon as a "spiral of delegitimization." The Polish sociologist's observations are confirmed by CBOS surveys, which clearly indicate that the alliance between "the throne and the altar" is one of the key reasons for the decline in trust in the Church as an institution and the decrease in religious practices.⁴⁹ Public opinion polls on the Church's social authority in Poland in 2022 show that 58% of respondents consider avoiding politics and maintaining neutrality toward political parties as an important expectation of the Church.⁵⁰

The agenda of the Catholic media should be considered within the framework of the Church's institutional communication. Given that the ecclesiastical institution directly influences the staffing of editorial boards, it is therefore accountable for any politicization processes within these confessional media. The analysis demonstrates that the period of United Right rule from 2015 to 2023 marked a close alliance between the Church and Law and Justice politicians. In the social dimension, this had negative consequences for the Church as an institution, leading to a significant erosion of its authority and a decline in religious practices.

The processes of politicization of Catholic media in the Polish context should also be analyzed taking into account the processes of mediatization of religion (the consequences of which include individualization and privatization of religion), the process of secularization, and the decline of religious authority. The crisis of the ecclesial institution in Poland may contribute to a significant change in the policy regarding the management of Catholic media and their proper distancing from the world of politics. Whether this will happen remains an open question. Further research into the media agenda of Catholic media will certainly be a good verification of this, as it will quite clearly in-

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