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STUDIA I ANALIZY

The President – creator or prisoner of his own image? Psychopolitical determinants of the functioning of the Head of State exemplified by the Polish Presidency of Andrzej Duda

Abstract: *Political leadership is among the fundamental political-science categories, it remains to be defined clearly as a phenomenon. Nevertheless, as the years have passed, conditions in and around political systems have given rise to leadership models models describable in line with a triad of change from traditional leadership to marketing-oriented leadership and then to neo-leadership. The innovative definition of the latter has then been brought together with considerations of political image, with the resultant category then proving of interest to those researching either the political, or the sociological, or the communicological perspectives. The images of all key players in politics are both created and managed, while leadership that is actually effective or perceived to be so is essential if political power and support are to be built and maintained. The example of Polish President Andrzej Duda is here used in an analysis of the image of Head of State, in the circumstances of the 2015–2020 period overall, as well as the 2020 (re-) election campaign. This is done with a view to answering a general question regarding the extent to which a given politician (and here A. Duda specifically) is the creator or the prisoner of his/her own image. Account is thus taken of the factors shaping the image of this particular President (i.e. advisors and family, the media and the electorate). While the conclusions obtained here are not unequivocal, they do open up new questions relating*

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to the future of leadership in times of crises and the existence of major populist movements. Consideration of these issues is here based mainly on the comparative and historical methods.

Introduction

In recent years, image has proved to be a concept of exceptional applicability and broad scope in various different areas of human activity. It may thus be hypothesised that people in general are more and more aware of the issue and idea, be it their own image, or the images of others – not least the holders of public posts.

Drawing on its economic and business roots, political marketing is a sphere yielding numerous studies, not only on how an image is constructed, but also on how it may be managed, in particular in time of crisis[1]. On the aforementioned economic grounds, P. Kotler and J. A. Casoline[2] noticed that due to the progressive processes of globalization, the effects of the global crisis and changes in social behavior, integrated, multi-channel and interactive strategies are becoming more and more important in building the brand image. The above remark can be transposed into the political space, because creating a politician's image is the same as building an image of a personal brand.

Before starting the proper analysis, it is worth referring to the nodal terms of the adopted concept grid, delineating the research field, presenting the adopted aim of the work and its methodology.

And at the very outset it is worth recalling that 'image' is a Latin-origin word denoting a depiction or portrayal, but also a symbol (up to and including one actually so unrealistic that it is entirely fantastic and unattainable in the real world) and an ideal. As is clear from this etymological aspect, the term 'image' can be seen in at least two ways – as a real state capable of being managed, and as a state proving desirable to any given entity, and in fact desired by them. This, however, does not make it easier to adopt a logically strict definition.

A review of the current literature on image[3] leads inevitably to a summary statement that the plethora of definitions and differences in con-

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[1]   See: W. Cwalina, A. Falkowski, B. I. Newman, *Political Marketing Theoretical and Strategic Foundations*, New York 2011.

[2]   P. Kotler, J. A. Casoline, *Chaos. Zarzadzanie i marketing w erze turbulencji*, MT Bizens, Warsaw 2013.

[3]   See D. Nimmo, R. Savage, *Candidates and Their Images: Concepts, Methods and Findings*, Goodyear Pub. Co 1976; M. Cichosz, *Wizerunek lidera politycznego*, [in:] M. Jeziński (ed.), *Mar-*

ceptualisation (*inter alia* psychological, relating to political science, socio-logical, communications-related, derived from management, or whatever) only serve to blur the specific nature of image in its most fundamental significance. So, with the essence of the subject matter taken up here kept in mind, the optimal proposal has seemed to be for image to be understood as a depiction or portrayal of a given entity created to meet the needs of external recipients, and as furthermore adjusted in line with the goals of the given time that the entity in question seeks to achieve. Use of the term external recipients' here is no chance phrase, as what individuals generate for themselves (via self-appraisal) may of course dif-fer from the image created to meet the needs and expectations of others.

Psychological analysis points to a relationship between the degree to which personality is integrated and the answer to questions as fol-lows, i.e. a) what do I think of myself? b) what do I think others think of me? and c) what do others really think of me? The optimal situation is one in which the answers to these questions are all in line with each other, but the reality – in particular where related to those exercising public functions – is actually very complicated, not least on account of media involvement in the process. A desire or need to achieve theatrical-ity has accompanied politics from the earliest times, but has in recent decades become the subject of exceptional media encouragement, with the effect that the significance of image has risen.

Combination of this knowledge and a conviction as to the existence of a new leadership paradigm that has justified the present analysis, which is theoretical in nature and approach, though grounded in politi-cal science, and first and foremost in the phenomenon that is political leadership. Its aim is to present the conditions influencing the building and management of the image of the head of state and an attempt to assess the degree of independence of these activities. At the same time, the subject matter taken up here is novel, in the sense that the author is the first to come up with a definition of neo-leadership as a category that the analysis run here is able to expand upon and deepen in respect of the image of the so-called 'new leader' or 'neo-leader'.

To exemplify and flesh out the theoretical aspect here, the post of President of Poland has been chosen for consideration, and in particular the case of President Andrzej Duda, who has been the holder of that high office since 2015. The fact of the existence of what is a kind of

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keting polityczny – w poszukiwaniu wyborczego sukcesu, Toruń 2004; W. Cwalina, A. Falkowski, *Marketing polityczny. Perspektywa psychologiczna*, Gdańsk 2005.

"one-person Executive" supports a more complex analysis of image than would a collective-type player in the state (such as a political party). Moreover, the fact that the politician in question has now gone into his second (final) term in office offers a good chance to track possible change when it comes to image creation and management.

It is within this field of research, and in respect of a 2015–2020 interval, that historical analysis has been pursued here, and the comparative method deployed. The research question kicking off the reflection process is as encapsulated in the title, concerning as it does the extent to which Presidents may today create their own image, or else be left mere "hostages" to those who foist images upon them, and indeed to those foisted images as such.

Relevant sub-questions have in turn related to the role of the mass media in the image-shaping process *vis-à-vis* the Head of State, the role played by political support staff and any wider camp, and the expectations of society or 'the public' as regards the Head of State's image.

The hypothesis adopted in line with all these considerations assumes some dependent relationship between the degree to which politics has become a media phenomenon (or indeed circus) and the limits imposed on their independence that Heads of State experience and are subject to, when it comes to their own image being installed and managed.

Political image and leadership changing

The construction of an image in political space is a complex activity in need of strategic planning so as to minimise the risk of mistakes being made. Classically, the solutions available in this area point to two groups of construction elements, i.e. internal ones dependent on the entity itself, and external ones linked with the surroundings. Where the above division is applied to the case of an actor on the political scene it is possible to state that, while that person is able to influence how he she appears by him/herself or with the aid of specialists, the means of communication or education (for example as pursued while the office is actually held)[4]

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[4] The election campaign is a special time of communication with voters, also at the level of creating the image of new political actors or the image rebranding of those political entities which once again enter the competition. In the latter case, the elements that make it possible to distinguish the candidate from rivals and emphasize the desired competences are strengthened. See M. Mazur, *Polityka z twarzą. Personalizacja parlamentarnych kampanii wyborczych w Polsce w latach 1993–2011*, Katowice 2015.

entail such factors as the efficacy of the political support team or the party brand – which are of course dependent on other entities.

And, irrespective of the definition of image that is adopted, it is possible to note how the stereotypes present in society 'build demand' in a potential electorate for some kind of model of a politician, and most especially where the post held is as personalised as that of Head of State.

The situation now taking shape is one in which the image of a political actor should take account of:

– aspects of personality;
– the expectations and interests of the political backup or camp;
– an image conjured up by society on the basis of stereotypes (and hence generalisation);
– media attractiveness favouring the conferment of a positive portrayal.

The last requirement arises from the way in which the political public assess politicians under the influence of a second-hand experience, i.e. one acquired via the media. It is on this assessment that the possibility to build electoral potential is seen to depend, and on that basis also that a real influence on reality may be exerted, thanks to the power and authority acquired. *The image need not be (and in fact rarely is) the same as the real object or person. Important, though, that it should be consistent with identity*[5].

A political image is also the subject of manipulation – in the context of a phenomenon that has its history. While propaganda mechanisms were once more channelled than they are now, today's development of the system of media ensures the generation of a mass of persuasive content and form, while at the same time obstructing true perception and a genuine assessment of reality. Via media favourable to the given politician, those engaged in image-creation strive to impregnate the 'political public' with unfavourable communiques whose reliability is to be questioned. In that way a recipient convinced about the artificiality of the image-shaping process, or about an aim to mislead deliberately, may withdraw support for the so-called carrier of the image, as well as the idea(s) that person represents

Concluding, it is possible to see full justification in the statement that image should be the product of real features of policy on the one hand and diagnosed public expectations on the other. Also needing to be seen as crucial is an awareness of the way it has evolved up to now.

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5   J. Cianciara, B. Uścińska, *Komunikacja społeczna. Komunikowanie się z mediami w praktyce*, Wrocław 1999, p. 90.

'While in its initial phase, this remains a reflection of the person (…), what happens in practice after a certain period of time is that the person must start to adjust to the image. The process reflects the way in which it is what is public and featuring in the media that becomes the reality. The rebuilding of an image is connected with superficial changes, rather than structural ones')[6].

If we proceed on the above assumption that changes made through a time *continuum* are superficial in nature, it becomes important to ask whether the politician remains the 'captain of the ship' in shaping his or her own image, or does indeed become a kind of prisoner of the image that has been built. It is during the above-mentioned election campaigns that politicians are most motivated to convince the voters that behind their image there are real leadership skills, and that it is not just an attractive but untrue 'packaging'. The outlined relationality (ruling-ruled) is one of the determinants of the phenomenon of political leadership. which, like the image, is subject to transformations. The conducted research in the field of leadership theory allows to indicate the evolution of political leadership from the traditional model, i.e. based on personality traits and natural abilities of a leader, through marketing-oriented leadership, and now we are dealing with leadership developed on the basis of populism and media-conditioning (neo-leadership).

The description of the Head of State's image as a leader requires better acquaintanceship with the three proposed models in order to indicate where the analyzed leadership of Andrzej Duda is located. Traditional leadership is understood here as a relationship emerging and pertaining between a leader and a group (of adherents), under which the leader gains support on account of and in line with personal features and competences. The leader sets objective and motivates followers to achieve them, while the latter follow the path indicated for them, trusting that they will obtain goods (material or non-material) of positive value.

The next model of leadership developed with the mediatization of election campaigns, that is, on a mass scale, from the 1980s. Marketing-oriented leadership is therefore a relationship between a leader and his followers based on 'buying promises', i.e. a declaration of meeting the previously diagnosed needs of voters[7]. After the election, there is

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6   P. Czaplińska, *Strategia budowania wizerunku osób znanych*, [in:] A. Grzegorczyk (ed.), *Perswazyjne wykorzystanie wizerunku osób znanych*, Warsaw 2015.

7   A. Kasińska-Metryka, *Proces kreacji przywódców politycznych. Od ujęcia tradycyjnego do współczesnego*, Kielce 2012.

a marketing command to maintain the interest of supporters (permanent campaign), mainly through the mass media.

In contrast, the next model for leadership is one that has developed out of the way in which election campaigns came to be more and more fully media-dominated. That is to say that they are mainly a product of the time from the 1980s onwards. The leadership oriented in the direction of marketing that is present here is one in which the relationship between the leader and those who follow bases itself on "the purchase of pledges", i.e. declarations that needs of voters diagnosed in advance will be attended to. Under this scenario, the election as such is followed by marketing-related activity to ensure the continued interest of supporters in what therefore becomes permanent campaigning – and this is achieved primarily via the mass media.

However, just when it seemed that this new model of leadership had become universal in democratic systems, the political reality in fact bore witness to a further sea change. For the post-modern circumstances described by Zygmunt Bauman led to a revaluation in line with a feeling that the peak 'achievement' has been reached. While the leadership understood in the traditional way had been based on an individual's personality and competence, leadership oriented towards and by marketing was the joint creation of the leader and specialists responding to public tastes – but it had yet to witness (and begin to fall victim to) the emergence into 'DNA' of the "non-leadership" that would later grow out of widespread dissatisfaction.

By making comparisons among those European democracies in which populist movements are strong, and by extending the analysis to include the circumstances surrounding the change of President in the USA (as the post has been taken on by Joe Biden), it becomes possible to assert that the new model for the relationship between governing and governed has the following several key features:
– well-developed associative communication;
– an erosion of political elites as they have been conceived of up to now (with a 'flattening of the pyramid of power');
– a remodelling of the roles and significances of political backup;
– management by way of conflict;
– a crisis facing the traditional values of liberal democracy;
– 'scissors of inequality' serving to escalate the conflicts alluded to.

While this 'neo-leadership' is only now taking shape, it remains possible to attempt a definition – as a social phenomenon arising out of support a group extends on the basis of what is actually a fragmen-

tary image created and transferred around using networked models of communication. Supporters or aficionados conferring their support on a leader are directed by the need for change, notwithstanding the fact that the status as an authority figure is external in nature, with the process of communication with the surroundings actually founded on propaganda transferred with the aid of new technologies[8].

As we seek to have the subject matter here exemplified by the Polish Presidential leadership of Andrzej Duda in the years 2015–2020, it becomes quite clear that the style adopted to achieve the exercise of power and authority is indeed characterised by the distinctive features invoked above. In the first place, the President manifests consistent and ongoing activity online (often beyond the scrutiny or control of advisors), in this way building up the associative communication aspect. This is one of the variants of political communication – and it comprises the official website of the given politician, profiles on social media, and activity on *Twitter*, *Instagram*[9] (or even *Tik-Tok*); but also so-called factories of paid trolls whose activities do not cease when an election campaign comes to an end.

Andrzej Duda (like US President Donald Trump) often makes his virtual-space presence felt in unconventional ways. This can be best exemplified if we for example recall the media debate generated by *Twitter* correspondence in which the President followed teenagers, and even responded to their questions – e.g. as regards what to do with a broken heart. In the view of most experts, activity of this kind arises where appropriate advisors are lacking, and results in some harm being done to the image of the Head of State. Such an assessment is not affected even by the fact that *Twitter* features two founded profiles of relevance here, i.e. an official one (@prezydentpl) and a private one (@AndrzejDuda), with it being via the latter that the President has been seeking to "build his capital" among young people.

Presidential online activity commented on so broadly via the Internet ultimately resulted in speculations in a narrative authored by "netizen" Jolanta Rosiek, to the effect that there was some kind of alleged romance with the Head of State taking place. So after some time, the President began to eschew all informal contacts of a virtual nature – a response that can be thought to reflects the influence of advisors, and a desire to

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8   See A. Kasińska-Metryka, *The Neoleadership paradigm*, [in:] A. Kasińska-Metryka, T. Gajewski (ed.), *The Future of Political Leadership in the Digital Age*, New York 2020.

9   A. Duda's profile on Instagram (Andrzej Duda(@andrzej.duda) currently has approx. 104 thousand followers and over 500 posts. In terms of the visual aspect, it is distinguished by communication coherence and the use of national colors.

correct or even rectify image. This was also made necessary for the sake of First Lady of Poland Agata Duda, who found herself left in a situation awkward from the image point of view. Even the 2105 campaign featured determined propagation of an image whereby this marriage was based around harmony, was attractive visually, and involved two people who were close to each other. That picture was only added to by the existence and presentation of daughter Kinga Duda.

Agata Duda was to exert a warming influence on her husband's image, and gave rise to election-time expectations that the role of the First Lady would be an active one, albeit constructed in line with her own concept. However, the passage of time made it clear that Agata Duda had shaped an image for herself that was not in line with the expectations. This involved her being so restrained or reticent (in both virtual and real space) that some media came to describe her as 'the silent First Lady'. The President himself sought to offer an assurance that his wife was mainly engaged in charity work and activity of an educational profile, while hard politics (or even hard policy?) fell outside her remit as First Lady. However, the lack of a standpoint on many questions of key importance (for women in particular) came to be seen as a communique more resonant than any potential declarations Agata Duda actually made.

The next "neo-leadership" factor – cited here as the erosion of elites as they have been conceived of hitherto – also attests to the "non-leadership" of Andrzej Duda. For, while – say – Lech Wałęsa also failed to adopt responsible political stances prior to his Presidency, his image was anyway built on the foundation of his being a hero. But no such option was available in the case of A. Duda, given his age and professional career (as Under-Secretary of State, then Member of the Tribunal of State, *Sejm* Deputy and MEP). Indeed, as we analyse existing typologies (*vide*: M. Cichosz and M. Jeziński)[10] it is more possible to perceive in A. Duda features of the 'ordinary person', i.e. a politician who could be our neighbour, who does not really put distance between himself and us. However, this ensured a blurring of perceptions given the need for the Head of State to be the individual topping off (or 'crowning') the pyramid of power and authority in the country, and hence differing from the masses on account of exceptional traits (or competences).

However, in the minds of the electorate, the President was linked with the person of head of the Law and Justice (*Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, PiS*)

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[10] The ones invoked most frequently are in fact: ordinary person, lover, expert, hero, clown, father, lightweight or pushover, eccentric, etc.

party Jarosław Kaczyński – unsurprising really, given that the latter was indeed author of the idea that the Presidential throne might come to be occupied by A. Duda.

A thesis therefore arising is that this party-context significance and identification represented a first reason for the President to become "imprisoned" by his own image. The political support structure, though mostly built upon trusted officials, was not strong enough to allow a view that Duda was a President for all Polish people to take root and achieve credibility. Indeed, the management by way of conflict and polarisation of society observable in Polish politics from 2015 on also precluded any Presidential pursuit of an above-politics arbitration function. Indeed, given the crisis of liberal democracy observable around the world, the public's expectations of the Head of State had changed to become far more utilitarian than ideological.

Particular note was in fact taken of the Polish President's relationships with representatives of the major world powers, above all the USA. However, tangible successes achieved in these contacts lost their edge when the Polish President was shown signing a Polish-American declaration of partnership as he stood at a desk behind which President Donald Trump was sitting. The photographs of this faux-pas for protocol were taken up by media around the world and read as violating the dignity of the Polish state – of which the President was the lead representative. This was simultaneously one of the situations involving and surrounding the President that helped ensure the appearance of a huge number of the online memes more and more often now representing – or taken to represent – intelligent comment on today's political reality.

The last indicator mentioned above – involving the so-called 'scissors of inequality' – has also shaped or determined A. Duda's Presidency through to the present time, given an official narrative making frequent (reference to social injustice and disparities (pre-2015), as well as more-recent reference to remedial activity. However, only some of this can really be verified in any more-positive way.

A tailor-made image, or Andrzej Duda's first term

The 2015 campaign run for Andrzej Duda as he sought election to the post of President of Poland was based around a well-prepared strategy in which 'time for something fresh' was a leading motif. Just as Aleksander Kwaśniewski had been evaluated against the background

of Lecha Wałęsa, and in terms of his not being Wałęsa, so in this campaign it was especially important for Duda as candidate and his strong points to be set against those of the in-office Bronisław Komorowski. Indeed, at the very moment A. Duda was first presented in the context (on 11th November 2014 – Polish Independence Day) these issues were present. It was of course Jarosław Kaczyński who did the honours, and he emphasised Duda as someone bringing together and personifying both youth and experience. So was the image of the future President sealed symbolically from the outset; and it is reasonable to advance a thesis that a nationalist-party character linked up with so-called 'activity in the field' was what determined the image for this Head of State, and in fact coincided with the candidate's natural predispositions.

Where conceptualisation revolves around comparison with previous struggles, the 2015 campaign has (and also had at the time) to be viewed as rather lacking in emotion, or indeed boring. However, observers of the political scene tended to feel that a kind of breakthrough came with the organisation (on February 28th) of a *Law and Justice* party convention offering Duda the chance of American-formula presentation in line with his slogan of the family, work, security and dialogue (*Rodzina, praca, bezpieczeństwo i dialog*). But those invoking the theory of slogan-generation would have to view this line taken as being of somewhat limited creativity, as well as hard to remember, and difficult to associate directly with the actual candidate. Equally, it would need to be noted that, with Duda lacking experience in leadership posts, there were obvious limits to his possibilities of conveying a message founded on relevant past achievements.

The low turnout (48.96% in the first round and 55.34% in the second) only served to confirm the moderate level of engagement of the Polish people in both the campaign and the actual election – all the more so as the failure on the part of Bronisław Komorowski (only the second post-1989 case of a sitting President losing) had to be set against the very creditable result achieved by Paweł Kukiz, as well as Andrzej Duda's ultimate win; and encouraged a question as to the latter's true source of success, especially when it came to image as such.

As has already been noted, a certain novelty here was the way in which the formula characterising the candidate's campaign for the Presidential post was combined with a deliberately local focus of promotional activity. It was thus possible to note the use of instruments otherwise deployed mainly in local election campaigns, notably direct local-level meetings often rather free of all the usual media trappings. Unlike the

previous President, Andrzej Duda had neither an Opposition past to draw on, nor experience in politics at the central level, so his image had to refer largely to personal success he had himself worked on and for (not least through his education and career path in general).

And on May 10ᵗʰ 2015 an Andrzej Duda making his debut at this level received 34.76% of the vote, and thus entered the second round with Bronisław Komorowski, whose level of support was at just 33.77%. That made it possible for Duda to beat the sitting President in the second round, albeit with only a 51.55% result crowning the achievements of *PiS* leader Jarosław Kaczyński, who had conceived of Duda for President in the first place.

Duda's 2015–2020 Presidency has already been the subject of much analysis, mainly of a dichotomous nature, given the desire to balance achievements against failures. However, it would be hard to point to any single comprehensive study on the evolution of the image of a politician who crowned his career as a state official as leader enjoying the most trust in Polish society, and then went on to win his second election.

But there can be no doubting that the support extended by 'his' party was huge (with the campaign chief – in the form of ex-Prime Minister Beata Szydło – proving extremely efficient at organising election meetings), as was the determination on the Polish right that success would be achieved once again. At the same time, there was also a proper and effective diagnosing of public expectations that bore fruit in victory for a candidate whose initial image had been more about correctness than distinctiveness. In matters ideological, Duda avoided expressing controversial opinions (on either *in vitro* or the Smolensk air crash that had killed 96 Poles, including President Lech Kaczyński and his wife, back in 2010). This policy reflected a desire to avoid generating cognitive dissonance among supporters, but it left it hard to interpret some of the views held by the Head of State – all the more so where the President in fact changed his opinions on certain issues.

An event of obvious importance from the image point of view was the Presidential Debate held on May 5ᵗʰ 2015. Duda's tactic there was to address his remarks straight to viewers (something the public approved of), while the lead content he had to offer concerned the need for pensionable age to be lowered, and the size of the tax-free personal allowance increased! Naturally, substantive content is – and was – not everything, so Duda's appearance and performance were not without their imperfections from an image point of view. These mainly reflected a lack of self-assurance, tension, stress, and problems emerging in the

grey area between the Presidential hopeful's natural narrative and the one that was supposed to have been acquired by him. The first election image was thus of a Duda looking rather passive in the debate context, tending to dodge around in the middle of his slogans, and to resort to generalities. And in fact, not too much of that would change, as this kind of image emerged as typical Duda. And post-debate polling anyway suggested that the status quo regarding support for the candidate had been maintained (with the main loser being Paweł Kukiz, who had clearly failed to cope with this kind of arena for putting candidates' rivalry in display).

In consequence, when set against a Bronisław Komorowski who was older, variously burdened yet still convinced of his own likely victory and re-election (to the point where he had even refuse to participate in the key debate prior to the first round of voting), Duda as the candidate of the right made an impression as a well-educated, polished, dynamic and straight-shooting politician.

This was then a vision for the candidate that had indeed been founded on his personal features and private successes (notably a status as a Doctor of Law), as opposed to political productivity or capital that had been achieved – since Duda basically lacked that, at least in any strict sense. But an origin in Kraków, traditional family home, university education and rhetoric receivable with clarity by substantial chunks of the electorate all contributed to an image of a polite, mostly-smiling candidate pledging things to groups that had tended to be (or feel) missed out on hitherto. And the President's wife and daughter only served to strengthen this image as they accompanied him on the campaign and helped build the idea of this being a loving, attractive family living in harmony.

Elements of the media did what they could to raise the issue of the First Lady's education (in German Studies) and style of dressing, but the suggestion here was rather that the President's wife might usefully draw on her language skills while in 'the job', while also reinforcing her husband's attractiveness in the *salons* of the world.

It was at the May 20th Duda Rally that Agata Duda made a relatively playful remark directed at J. Kaczyński, to the effect that she "had no fear of *Prezes*" (the *PiS* Party leader). This was in fact an utterance seen by the party as maybe going too far, but a section of Duda's (supportive) electorate actually appreciated it, given its fear of a potential lack of autonomy of the would-be President Duda; and thus looking for and finding a sign of hope that the First Lady would help secure the Head of State's status as independent.

When it came to mobilising family in image-building, Duda was actually ahead of the game, and making the best of the resulting contrast with Komorowski, who chose not to bring his grown-up offspring into the campaign, even as wife Anna Komorowska had been seen to focus on charitable activity nearly all realised "in the shadows". And care for the family (large families in particular), the "Sarmatian" smartness somewhat linked with Kraków, and a love of history in general, were all woven into a Duda campaign that also drew on his European credentials and general determination.

That said, it is of course worth asking how much that created vision was the result of strategic planning from start to finish, and how much it was a response arrived at intuitively in the face of intersecting national complexes and the experienced need for a "modern" Poland to be appreciated at world fora – with a President to match.

There is no doubt that the vision arrived at for Duda in the context of the 2015 campaign was a positive and straightforward one, i.e. one exposing the candidate's strong-points and pluses. Furthermore, it proved possible for that content to be conveyed without too many surprises or controversies along the way. The construction of an unambiguous image serves to elimination vacillation and hesitation among voters, as well as cognitive dissonance and a consequent need to seek out further information. The candidate being described here was characterised by a set of image aspects that proved cohesive with one another (in respect of appearance, dress, verbal and non-verbal communication), and were positive.

Equally, Duda's 5-year Presidency cannot be said to have gone on the offensive from an image point of view. The several attempts made to stress the independence of the Head of State brought no refocusing of his image, and were seen by experts as nothing more than symbolic. Equally, even a lack of follow-through on many election pledges did not really change the image of the President in the eyes of his followers. *It is true* (said an Andrzej Duda embarking upon his campaign for re-election) *that not all of the 2015 election commitments could be put into effect so far. But it has been possible to implement those we regard – and I regard – as the most important or significant, and the ones of broadest application in society as a whole*[11].

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[11] *Wybory prezydenckie. Andrzej Duda – nie wszystko*, https://www.rp.pl/Wybory-prezydenckie-2020/200629849-Andrzej-Duda-Nie-wszystko-udalo-sie-zrealizowac (1.27.2020).

In conclusion, it is possible to single out the activities and circumstances ensuring that a "second-order" politician came to hold the highest office in the Polish land. Key amongst these were:

– the level of organisation, determination and efficiency of campaign staff;
– the construction of an image for the candidate as having views less radical than those characterising *Law and Justice* in general;
– effective exposure of the weaknesses of Bronisław Komorowski's Presidency;
– the tone achieved as Duda went on the offensive in the pre-Second-Round debate;
– an effective online presidential campaign (running in parallel to the main one on TV).

In summary, the Andrzej Duda embarking upon his path to the Presidency can be regarded as the creator or at least shaper of his own image, given the high level of congruence between his personal traits and the expectations of the public as diagnosed. The "impact of the new" strengthened the level of interest in the candidate and his candidacy, and allowed it to be presumed that this would be dynamic in nature (given the age), as well as autonomous in its actions (given the non-identification with the extreme wings of *PiS*).

The second term – the same idea for the image

The theory of marketing dictates that a look be taken at candidates seeking office once again, before any strategy gains automatic renewal or repetition. Indeed, even where a prior strategy (including as regards image) is confirmed as optimal, each successive election famously (or notoriously) takes place in a different socio-political situation, and (even more importantly) with different rivals present in the race.

Opinion-poll research prior to Poland's 2020 Presidential Election pointed to a very high level of support for the sitting President, and in fact to the lack of a genuine alternative capable of posing a threat to the leadership. The main opposition candidate – Małgorzata Kidawa-Błońska – did not emerge as distinctive or determined enough, so it was only after her place was taken by sitting President of Warsaw Rafał Trzaskowski that the balance of power changed. A "dark horse" was candidate Szymon Hołownia, though polling revealed his lack of any chance in a Second-Round face-off against the *Civic Platform* candidate.

Did the image of Andrzej Duda change in the course of the 2020 election campaign, and especially before its second round? In fact it proves difficult to single out any elements as confirming that idea. From an image-management perspective, the time at which an entity has passed through all the different phases of "shaping" would be expected to bring renewed evaluation for effectiveness, so that weak points might be addressed and corrected, with action taken to maintain and uphold image where this is regarded as optimal.

Where Duda is concerned, it has to be presumed that the Presidential image was indeed deemed optimal, while the other candidates were not seen as strong enough to threaten the re-election. Full use was undoubtedly made of the privileged position of the sitting President, who was starting for the second time and made unceasing efforts to tour "the Polish counties" in his *DudaBus*, mostly arriving for what locals seemed genuinely to regard as important "events". Image specialists are ready to emphasise how natural Poland's Head of State looked as he attended such meetings in minor localities around the country. *"I am asking you for your support. I would like our Poland to be more and more beautiful, you to have more and more beautiful homes and cars; you to be able to afford those things, and have both the time and money to buy them"*[12].

Crucially, the fact that the campaign coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic ensured that President found himself thanking farmers for supplying food (that was never in short supply) far more often than he otherwise would have; and this of course allowed him to raise the matter of the (high) quality of Polish farm produce and products.

Nevertheless, analysis of the Duda electorate in small localities up and down the country revealed that this mostly comprised a grouping of a "social" rather than agricultural nature. Likewise, analysis of Andrzej Duda's 2020 election manifesto effectively identifies its target group as those who feared the post-2015 loss of social benefits (not only financial), and those who – for that or other reasons – felt marginalised during the time in office of the coalition government forged between *Civic Platform* and *PSL* (the Polish Peasant or People's Party). Such an electorate is particularly susceptible to "new populism" content, given the way this does not reject democracy *per se*, but does have major fears regarding "the way democracy in this country operates", and is therefore ready to accept certain "direct" democracy-related concepts. Many of those being

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[12] *Prezydent A. Duda odwiedza kolejne miejscowości, Prezydent A. Duda odwiedza kolejne miejscowości. M. Kidawa-Błońska i W. Kosiniak-Kamysz w sobotę mają przedstawić swoje programy –* RadioMaryja.pl (10.11.2020).

identified here no longer believe that "people like us" have a voice, and so they reject the idea that representatives they elect share their fears in regard to problems on their individual lists of priorities[13].

It would be hard to research to what extent this was achieved on purpose, as opposed to by chance, but President A. Duda managed to project his image successfully to those who saw it as important that maintained economic status (or social privilege) be accompanied – at last – by a restoration of dignity (through the so-called "ordinary person" starting to be noticed by the elite). Duda's fairly free and easy style, with regular forays into pomposity mixed with generality of content, failed to erect any clear cognitive barriers, and allowed the worse-educated and small-town-resident to feel valued through activity engaged in by the Head of State, who was thus worthy of support. This phenomenon is in line with Francis Fukuyama's thesis on psychological conditioning, which boils down to the idea that certain matters in today's politics are more associated with status than actual financial resources[14].

The message Duda was able to address to voters was comprehensible, capable of evoking emotion and augmentative *vis-à-vis* the image of the Head of State that had taken shape up to that time. *Everything that took place in the years 2015–2020 was entered on my last election manifesto. Despite such external problems as the pandemic, we are today – as a country – in a better starting position than we were back then when I took office. As the first President to visit every poviat in Poland, I meet up with people, and know how much is still waiting to be done. Our country was very much neglected during the time of the economic transformation, and it's just not possible to put everything right in such a short time. And not all areas developed evenly, so disparities in society piled up. While there was rapid enrichment for some, most of society did not experience any improvement in its existence. That was the kind of Poland I encountered back in 2015, but today things are far fairer, even though the task is not completed yet. And the changes need to be permanent. In particular at a time of turmoil externally, Poles have to be sure that they will not once again fall victim to governments that dip into their pockets when they want to save themselves during a crisis. The President has tools at his disposal to prevent that*[15].

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[13] R. Eatwell, M. Goodwin, *Narodowy populizm. Zamach na liberalną demokrację*, Katowice 2020, p. 107.

[14] F. Fukuyama, *Tożsamość. Współczesna polityka tożsamościowa i walka o uznanie*, Poznań 2019, p. 112.

[15] *Program wyborczy Andrzeja Dudy, Andrzej Duda – kandydat na Prezydenta RP – Program* (1.01.2021).

By using simple tools of associative communication to build the so-called *Team Duda* (*Do you want to come and play an active part in Andrzej Duda's Presidential Campaign? Then join us now! Fill in the form so that we can assign appropriate tasks to you. Just mark the points relating to forms of involvement in the Andrzej Duda Presidential Campaign*); as well as possibilities to sign up online for the "Social Support Committee" (*Społeczny Komitet Poparcia*), the impression could be given that people were jointly responsible for shaping the candidate's success. In turn, as we seek to relate the campaign as described to factors delineating today's communication in politics, it is possible to discern: a transfer of the media message to a more-local level, the generation of pseudo-impressions, and the injection of a further dose of celebrity status into politics.

As an augmentation to the direct meetings, a further key role in the campaign was played by the *TVP* television company, which was able to aim attacks at Rafał Trzaskowski. Public television thus offered assistance to Andrzej Duda, who did not wish to participate in a debate with his opponent prior to the Second Round. Rather than hosting the debate that *TVN* and *Polsat* competed for, *TVP* organised an event at Końskie that was in the nature of propaganda. Likewise a public TV station in a position to reach a large part of the electorate engaged in the skilful silencing of any controversial happenings relating to the President (like the pardoning of a person accused of being a paedophile), while seeking to strengthen the convictions of those whose minds had already been made up in regard to Duda.

Creator or prisoner?

Analysis of selected activity on the part of Polish President Andrzej Duda sustains the idea that he has been both creator and prisoner of his image. In the case of the first Presidential term – during which the image in question was only in the process of being shaped – certain natural features of Duda's personality came to be incorporated into PiS envisaging of how the ideal candidate it fronts ought to look (relatively young, polished, dynamic, not burdened with political past). However, as the months of the Presidency passed, the limited autonomy of the Head of State *vis-à-vis* that political party was made somewhat apparent; along with the way in which many decision-making processes were actually something of a superficial facade. A target of special criticism was the President's activity in the legal sphere – seen by both the Opposition

domestically and certain international entities as infringing the rule of law in the Republic of Poland.

The First Lady also failed to meet the expectations invested in her by at least part of the electorate. Both Agata Duda and the President's daughter Kinga so avoided taking the floor that their presence was essentially confined to visual manifestations of political support.

However, the campaign preceding Duda's re-election may be regarded as a time in which the incumbent became more of a prisoner of his image than the shaper or creator thereof; with the image in question being the one that had been constructed for him over the previous 5 years. For strategic reasons, no correction of that image for the Head of State was made, even as there was yet-more grandstanding directed at voters, as well as clear efforts made to promote the politician in and by (certain) media. 'Americanisation' of the campaign was observable, even if only selectively so – and most visibly at the time of the election convention. Appearances then by Jarosław Kaczyński, Mateusz Morawiecki and Beata Szydło all served to strengthen both the candidate's image in question, and his ideological placement within the system.

And, as any answering of questions on difficult topics was curbed or precluded, what remained on offer to voters was a visual spectacle involving patriotic scenography, packed auditoria and impressive halls. The framing here thus ensured an image of the President in office that boiled down to its patriotic dimension, as sustained by slogans, but lacking any real reference to ongoing political challenges.

That said, this was all quite justified action given the way that it was now a second term in office being sought. For, as researchers have made clear, a major change of image of the politician at this point might have been read as an attempt to distance him from activity he had engaged in previously, with the President's credibility and/or reputation potentially impinged upon for that reason.

Indeed, this kind of perspective might also account for a kind of 'dual imprisonment' of Andrzej Duda within his image. Capable of being viewed as restrictive here were – on the one hand – activity arising out of subordination to the will of the governing party; as well as – on the other – activity more generally engaged in through the whole 2015–2020 period.

As far as may be forecast, the onset of Andrzej Duda's second term in office will most likely fail to bring any change of Presidential activity.

At most, some kind of course corrections might involve the form by which autopresentation takes place, where the latter is understood – after

Leary – as "manipulation of the impression made on other people"[16]. Such activity might allow resources (i.e. support) to be gained, even as an idealised own image is built up further. However, a threat where it is the Head of State who is involved in this relates to the increasing amount of time spent in 'the information bubble' – as those working most closely to a given office-holder filter inputs of information from the outside so fully that the President (or anybody in a similar position) has every reason (or in fact no alternative than) to become convinced that activity engaged in is universally well-received. Furthermore, where it is the fate of a politician seeking re-election that is at stake, a further emerging factor is fear of loss of privilege that is also capable of engendering an 'imprisoning' mindset/mental imprisoning.

The hypothesis about the dependence existing between the mediatization of leadership and independence in creating the image of a leader is confirmed in the analyzed political space, although it is a complex relationship. While in the times of marketing-oriented leadership, it was the professional background of politics that created and disseminated information related to it to the greatest extent, currently, as part of neo-leadership, leaders have greater access to communication tools that they use on their own. On the one hand, successive horizontal relations are built in this way, on the other, however, there is a serious risk of weakening or even ridiculing the leader's image through ill-considered entries or comments (which A. Duda has experienced many times).

In what areas and in which directions might the image of Andrzej Duda still evolve? Is it probable or conceivable that the image present up to now might be augmented by certain further features? In essence the answer to that would have to be "no" as, for all that the image together with a programme or manifesto are what are put on offer for the given addressee, the process of their further management sees everything possible done to ensure that the image built is not misused, overused or abused. But this is activity that depends on independence, professional advice given, and a conviction that there are no factors capable of impairing the image of the given politician (e.g. in non-compliance with the law, or reflecting a lack of good habits, an unclear material situation, irresponsible connections made or company kept, "blank spaces" in the CV and so on). The relatively narrow margin of Duda's 2020 election victory over Rafał Trzaskowski in fact lays bare a possible loss of potential for the President to manage his own image, with the remaining challenge

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[16] D. T. Kenrick, S. L. Neuberg, R. B. Cialdini, *Psychologia społeczna*, Gdańsk 2006, p. 181.

thus being to protect that image from further erosion, as opposed to its being subjected to political rebranding.

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