universität wien

MASTERARBEIT / MASTER'S THESIS

Titel der Masterarbeit / Title of the Master's Thesis

„The Smolensk Myth – Instrumentalization of the Smolensk Catastrophe by the Prawo I Sprawiedliwość"

verfasst von / submitted by

Nikola Ksiazek, BA

angestrebter akademischer Grad / in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts (MA)

Wien, 2018 / Vienna 2018

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt /A 066 824
degree programme code as it appears on
the student record sheet:

Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt /Masterstudium Politikwissenschaft
degree programme as it appears on
the student record sheet:

Betreut von / Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Tina Olteanu

Table of Contents

Introduction 5

State and Rules of Research 10

Theory 12

- Populism 12
  - The Genesis of Populism 13
  - New Populism 16
  - Theories of Populism 18
  - Populism and Nationalism 23
- Myth and Memory 24
  - Questions of Identity 25
  - Understanding the Language of History and Constructivism 27
  - Memory 28
  - Myth 30
- Othering 33

Method 38

The Smolensk Connection 42

- The Course of the Catastrophe 42
- Investigating the Crash 56

The History of the Kaczynskis 66

- Origins in *Solidarność's* Shadow 66
- Prawo I Sprawiedliwość: Establishment, Ideology and first successes 71
- Lech's Presidency and Legacy 75
- The PiS in opposition 77
- Total Victory 82
- The PiS and Jarosław Kaczyński 85

Remembering Smolensk 88

- Monuments 88
- The Arts of Smolensk 93
- *Miesięcznice Smoleńskie* 96
- Experiencing the *Miesięcznica* of November 2017 102

The Smolensk Myth 106
Traitors and Collaborators 112
Conclusion 118
Bibliography 122
Internet Sources 132
Video Sources 138
Abstract (english) 140
Abstract (Deutsch) 141

Introduction

April 10th 2010 marks the date of Poland's most impactful tragic event in recent years. The Polish Airforce Tupolev Tu-154m plane carrying 96 people, among them Polish president Lech Kaczyński of the national conservative party Prawo I Sprawiedliwość (Law and Justice, PiS) and his wife, as well as dozens of state officials and political figures, crashed in the woods surrounding Smolensk, leaving no survivors. The passengers on the plane were heading to Russia to visit the commemoration event for the 70-year anniversary of the Katyn massacre. This was the first time that Russian officials organized such an event since Mikhail Gorbachev admitted Soviet responsibility for the massacre. The whole world reacted with gestures of mourning. Real Madrid and FC Barcelona held a minute of silence before their clash at the Estadio Bernabeu almost at the same time as Vladimir Putin was hugging Polish prime minister Donald Tusk at the crash site after laying down flowers. Officials and representatives of different political parties in Poland, including the PiS, but also the liberal conservative PO in power at that time, called for a time of unity in grief. The campaigns for the vacant presidential office moved into the center of the media's attention. Jarosław Kaczyński ran as the favorite for the PiS against the PO's Bronisław Komorowski, with both appearing in an appeasing matter. Kaczyński was aiming to present himself as similarly likable as his deceased brother. He appeared in public with workers, grieved with Tusk and even thanked his "Russian friends", Vladimir Putin and Dmitriy Medvedev, in a now famous TV Advertisement (Kaczyński 2010). None of that mattered in the end. After two electoral rounds Bronisław Komorowski emerged victorious, marking the second electoral defeat for Jarosław Kaczyński in his last two attempts. Voices of distrust, conspiracy theories contradicting the investigations into the accident and accusations against the liberal-conservative Platforma Obywatelska (PO) government, under charismatic leader Donald Tusk, grew louder and transformed all comments of "unity in grief" into ludicrous accusations. "Prime Minister Tusk and Vladimir Putin met and conspired against our president Lech Kaczyński", Antoni Macierewicz, a high ranking PiS Member and later Defense Minister, commented in 2012 when asked about why he despised Tusk. (Piechowicz et al. 2016) No one at that time did foresee that in five years, in 2015, the PiS would flip the tables in polish politics on their heads and get full control of the presidency, the government and the Sejm. What was once considered an ideology and cult from the fringes moved into the spotlight of everyday politics. Demonstrations and Counter-Demonstrations clashing in the streets of Warsaw, aggressive rhetoric against opposition and a never-ending hunt for a truth to support their claims of treason dominated the headlines in the first two-year tenure of the PiS with monthly memorial

events remembering Lech Kaczyński setting the center stage for this activity.

At this point I want to engage into my research surrounding this topic. Although the governments of both Poland and Russia investigated the crash and came to the conclusion that the crash was a pilot error due to thick fog, the PiS has been adamant about proving their theories, which most consider conspiracy theories, as the truth. Even in government with almost all the tools of research at their disposal, they could not present any evidence that finally legitimizes their outrageous claims. Yet they still clamor to these ideas and reinforce them whenever the opportunity to do so arises. This is what not only brought me to this case, but finally immersed me and pushed me to ask the questions which I want to tackle in this dissertation:

What is the Smolensk Myth?
Why is it so important for the PiS?
How does it function?

The scientific thesis I propose and challenge, is that the Law and Justice party in Poland uses the Smolensk catastrophe as a constructed historical myth that sets the foundation for its populist politics.

After almost a year of research, interviews and analysis I came to the conclusion that the answer is not as simple as the questions might pose and splits at the crossroads of belief in the search of justice and the cold-blooded use of unfounded accusations for your own political goals. This is what builds this entire research and the goal of my dissertation. To be able to answer my research questions I have to delve deeper and answer more questions surrounding the PiS and its leadership with Jarosław Kaczyński at the center. Smolensk lies at the heart of the PiS since 2010 and molds its entire world view. As such it can be directly connected with all the pressing matters in Poland right now, such as the role of history in the formation of Polish identity, the PiS governments battle with its opposition, Poland's overall shift to the right and its concerning outlook on Europe's future.

Understanding this is not a descriptive matter, I expect to construct a theoretical framework out of scholarly literature surrounding the questions of populism and mythology, which will give me the ability to analyze what is happening in Poland. These two theoretical concepts are at the heart of what motivates not only the PiS and Kaczyński, but also Polish citizens and voters. As such a core component of this dissertation will be dedicated to exploring the founding literature and research

surrounding them. This field is vastly contested and gives me the opportunity to dive deep on different concepts of thought and construct a specific framework which I will be applying to the case of Smolensk remembrance in Poland.

Therefore, my main mode of work and method for this dissertation will be the review of literature. Contrary to the theoretical material, my contextual material, meaning the material concerning the PiS and events unfolding around Smolensk, will be far ranging from scientific literature to popular literature, news articles, video material, audio of speeches, as well as personal experiences and observations plus a participatory observation conducted in Warsaw, relevant to the case.

The first time I got in contact with this topic was actually before I even decided to study Political Science. I remember hearing about the events in the morning of April 10th 2010, watching the reports on TV. Over time I covered many topics concerning Poland and have always been aware of what was happening around the Smolensk catastrophe as it remained in the periphery of my interests. I never expected that a moment would come when I would devote this much time and research to the topic. My personal interest was always peeked and makes this dissertation for me very special, because it is not just a topic I worked on for the last year intensely, but adds years of subconscious experience that I gathered by just spending time in Poland.

Understanding what the Smolensk catastrophe means for the PiS and how it moves Polish voters is a multilayered issue combining Politics, History and Culture. It is a case that reverberates though the whole of contemporary Polish society and a vehicle that showcases all the problems and issues that modern day Poland faces. It is at the heart of Polish politics today.

Even though the societal importance of it is recognized, the scientific research is lacking. Aside from popular literature and sources dealing with the day to day aspect of the Smolensk catastrophe's influence on politics, most of the scientific community has yet to catch up and provide proper analysis, although that might also be due to how recent Poland gathered interest around the world. Before the PiS won elections in 2015, the problems existed and boiled under the surface, but to the outside, Poland under Tusk was liberal and progressive, masking the issues. Now with the PiS in power, research activity and interest have spiked.

These factors of personal interest, societal importance and scientific relevancy are the main reasons for me to choose and devote myself to this topic. I hope to live up to the expectations I put on myself.

As this is the end of my short introduction I want to present the structure of my dissertation, by chapters and what I plan to present in those, as well as the order by which they will appear. The

first chapter is dedicated to the State of Research surrounding the issue and will cover authors writing on this subject and give an outlook on what literature exists already, what is lacking and how I decide what literature I will use. I want to use this to explain the ramifications of my topic, how far I will go and where I draw the line. This is crucial to my paper as this topic transcends so many layers of analysis, that I cannot possibly touch on all of them here. This way the first chapter gives me the opportunity to lay them out on the table and present my reasoning on why I did or did not use it. After this I want to make a theoretical excursion to the topic of populism, as I believe it bears the key to understanding the PiS and its world view. For that I plan to present these concepts and their historical understanding first, before building the connections to its contemporary use, specifically in literature regarding politics in Central and Eastern Europe. Afterwards I will look into memory politics and how they function in relation to the above mentioned systems. To finish this up I will combine all presented aspects to assemble a theoretical framework which will be the backbone of this dissertation's core, namely the latter case analysis.

After I have laid bare the theoretical backdrop I will go into a chapter dedicated to the methods that I used in my yearlong research. This chapter is very important as it not only justifies the acquisition of knowledge necessary for this dissertation to happen, for both me and the reader, it also gives an insight on my experiences while researching and being in contact with scholars, experts and even the politicians and people appearing in my analysis.

The Contextual Chapter is aimed to present the Smolensk catastrophe and the surrounding information in detail. My aim is to touch on all the social and historical aspects that are necessary to understand before being able to delve into the analysis. This will be a very broad chapter, as the issue is a multi-layered one, spanning from historical, social and political factors. As such I will open the discussion by going into detail about the accident, the following events that mold its history and the investigations surrounding it. The next part will be dedicated to the PiS, it's key actors, namely the Kaczyński brothers, and historical transformation that influences the style of politics they employ today. At last I will cover all memorial activity surrounding Smolensk catastrophe, which includes memorial events, monuments and art among others.

In the final part of my dissertation I will take what I learned from both the theory and the context of the catastrophe and present the results of my research. By applying the theoretical concepts, I have talked about I will answer my research question with a thorough analysis of what I talked about in the contextual information.

I will end this dissertation with a conclusion that summarizes the results. As this is a very current

subject I want to use this last chapter to present an outlook on today's affairs and the future. This for me is an important part because the relevance of the topic can change it even while it is being written and have an effect on the final result of this dissertation.

State and Rules of Research

In this chapter I want to cover the current literature and materials used surrounding the topic of my dissertation, both around the theoretical part and the contextual information of the case. Furthermore, I want to establish some key words used in the debate which I will use frequently in the rest of my dissertation. Finally, I want to round the chapter out by taking a look at parts of the thematic that I will purposely omit and give a reasoning.

As the case is Poland specific all of the literature used in this dissertation is either English, German or Polish. This is especially important with the quoted news articles, which are naturally in Polish. Direct quotes will either be presented in polish with a translation, or directly translated. Either of the cases will be clearly marked for the reader.

A word from the polish discourse around the catastrophe that I want to introduce before I move on with the subject is the shortening to just *Smolensk* when talking about it. This is very common throughout polish literature, news related material and speech and gives already a slight hint at the importance of the incident, overriding the meaning of the Russian city of Smolensk. This is found in speech patterns of PiS politicians ("*They still keep lying about Smolensk*") and common people alike ("*He cannot stop talking about Smolensk*").

I encountered this word while traveling Poland and talking to both believers and opposition, which makes it a linguistically important part of the research and frankly shortens the constant repeating of the words catastrophe, tragedy and incident.

The literature used in this thesis was chosen through research on the specific fields in question, its level of importance and influence on the science and availability. This means that, the more developed the state of research specific to the field and topic was, the more literature had to be read, such as was the case with the literature on populism or mythology and memory.

In the case of research on populism, I have chosen, through individual preference and relevancy of the topic, to rely more on modern representatives of the current academic positions in this field. Not surprising, I have been using Cas Mudde (2004, 2017a), Jan-Werner Müller (2014, 2016) and Paul Taggart (2000) as the largest influences on my research. Their literature was the outset for my exploration of the topic, with literature by Chantal Mouffe (2002, 2014), Margeret Canovan (2004) and Ivan Krastev (2017), most notably, shaping my understanding of the topic.

For the topic of memory and myth, the field is even larger than the one of populism, offering academic research from a multitude of fields outside my personal research, such as anthropology, philosophy and linguistics. The collections of works edited by Bo Stråth (2000a, 2000c) where my

main source in that regard, looking at the subjects of mythology and memory from the perspective of history and politics. This allowed me to have a central point in this very broad field of research, through which I could use literature outside my specific expertise, such as literature by Roland Barthes (1957), Edward Said (1978) or Rogers Brubaker (2007) by connecting it and looking for interpretational similarities. This definitely helped me further my understanding of the existing debates and how to accurately and efficiently work with them.

To extend that finally into the realm of my case, Poland and the PiS, the pre-existant research laid a broad foundation, connecting Poland to all individual topics and interest. The most notable literature helping me understand myth, populism and identity in Poland came from Ewa Domańska (2000), Rafał Pankowski (2010), Krzysztof Pilawski (et al. 2016) and Reinhold Vetter (2008). When it came to commentary and explanations on issues of politics in Poland, Jarosław Flis (2013, 2014), Janusz A. Majcherek (2011a, 2011b) or Adam Krzemiński (2016a, 2016b) offered the most notable insight forming my knowledge on the topic.

The state of research around the Smolensk catastrophe on the other hand was comparably bleak, with a sever lack of academic literature making it a very precise task to gather all the information necessary to write this thesis. Outside of the scientific and media literature, there are source problems I have faced while researching the more practical elements of the Smolensk catastrophe, such as details surrounding the monthly memorial events of the *Miesięcznica Smoleńska*. Although I did try to find out all that I could about these events, such as attendance figures, programs for each or the content of the speeches at each one, the information regarding it is not officially aggregated. This forced me to use many independent sources, such as the civic movements surrounding the activities. For this I was in contact with both the believers of the Smolensk myth, like the '*Obrońcy Krzyża*' ('Defenders of the Cross'), and the counter-demonstrators from the *Obywatele RP* ('Citizens of Poland')civic movement.

The last connection, between both populism and myth, as well as populism and the Smolensk catastrophe, is missing throughout the literature consulted. Here is where my own research and thesis are aimed at bridging this gap in both the theoretical aspect and the interpretation of the case.

Theory

In this chapter I want to set the basic theoretical framework for further operationalization in this dissertation. Firstly, I want to look at two theoretical concepts and their history, namely populism and myth. With populism my focus lies on the history of the idea and the two central arguments that dominate the academic discourse. For Myth, which is another reoccurring term in this dissertation, due to the inherent research question, I have to take a slightly wider approach, to incorporate the academic debate on memory and identity, in which myth is deeply rooted. Finally, in the last part I want to expand both by introducing 'Othering' as a concept of a process, which can be a connecting factor for populist politics and the use of historical myths. Once I have this framework established I want to take a closer look at the connection between myth and populism and answer the question if the two concepts can even be used together. For this I find a practical connection and an epistemological one, which will both be elaborated at the end of the chapter.

Populism

One of the most frequently used terms when discussing politics today is populism. News channels and political actors use it so much to describe and explain, that the question for its meaning, according to scholars, is almost lost. This is not a new issue, but one that Githa Ionescu and Ernest Gellner have already written about in 1969, describing that no one denies the importance of populism, but no one knows what it really is either. (Ionescu, Gellner 1969: 5) No doubt, populism and its surrounding studies are seeing a renaissance in relevancy, modernizing and evolving it from a study of nineteenth century political movements to covering the biggest challenge which democracies in developed countries face today. The widespread use the concept enjoys nowadays has been criticized and critiqued. In public media it is overused and devoid of a categorical meaning and in scholarly debates it is a focal point of many differing opinions on its meaning and role. Despite that, there leads no way around it. It is undeniably the political word of the last decade, dominating the mainstream debates over different cases, such as Orban's political consolidation in Hungary, Marine LePen's election runs, Donald Trump's victory in the U.S. presidential elections, the Brexit referendum and the Austrian election, just to name a few. (Skenderovic 2017: 41)

Jan-Werner Müller observes similarly: "*populists, as far as the eye can see*" (Müller 2016: 9). The bloom of parties like the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) of the 2000s propelled the word into the

vernacular of politicians, parties and media across the globe. Often it is explained as a tendency of politicians to follow and repeat what a mob-like loud minority desires or creating politics which answer to feelings of fear and social disregard. On the opposite side, parties described as populists, use it to defend themselves, denouncing the term as a battle cry aimed to attack and disavow their legitimate and pure mission. Leading politicians of these right-wing populist parties, like Marine LePen of the French Front National, adopted the term *Populist* as a badge of honor, proving that they are the only true defenders of the forgotten *populus* against the corrupt elites. (Müller 2016: 12)

This debate follows into scholarly circles, although far less heated by any comparison. With the following chapter I want to asses Populism and its underlying frameworks, to be able to use it for my analysis. At first I want to explore the historical dimension of populism research and look for the beginnings of political movements which adopted the term. Although populism's height of academic and political interest peaks in the last decades, its origins in the nineteenth and twentieth century should not be ignored. After a look in the past I want to focus on the current definitions and debates of populism in political science. For this I will take the definitions of the most popular and influential authors and present their approaches, in what I would call two sides of the same argument. To finish off this chapter I want to pit populism as a critical analytical framework against the concept of nationalism and determine why I choose it over other ways to interpret politics in Poland.

The Genesis of Populism

Before populism became the hottest term in studies of contemporary party politics, it's use lay mostly with historians. The focus was set mostly on what Taggart (2000) defines as agrarian populism of the nineteenth century. Two political movements of the second half of the nineteenth century are often cited as populism's origins, namely the American farmers' movement which is more well-known under its party name "*the People's Party*" and the Russian "*Narodniki*" movement (Skenderovic 2017: 45). As Jan-Werner Müller describes it, even in the 1970s and 1980s, with Gellner's and Laclau's books already published, the term Populism still invoked a specific connection with Agriculture (Müller 2016: 37). As Poland, the subject of study in this dissertation, is caught geographically between Western and Eastern Europe and heavily influenced by both, understanding both movements is essential to further look into Poland's populist

tradition, which is a rarely talked about subject in academic debates and was birthed around a similar time as the before mentioned movements.

The *Narodniki* movement in Russia first emerged in early 1870 represented in large by city educated students and intellectuals, who moved out into rural towns and villages with the aim of living with and educating the peasant masses about their revolutionary potential. The *narodniki* perceived the farmers of Russia's countrysides as the representative people, the *"narod".* The revolutionary in it was the idea that the village communities were capable of enforcing a social model based on collective peasant traditions to counter the progressing agrarian and industrial capitalism (Skenderovic 2017: 47). This self-management, which Russian peasants traditionally had, was functional, but the idea that it could translate into a functional system for all of Russia, was the result of a very national-romantic view of the peasant life by city intellectuals. This idea, named *"narodnichestvo"*, was translated into the term *"populism"* (Taggart 2000: 48). Müller (2016) notes that these agrarian revolutionary movements were popping up in Eastern Europe frequently up until the first half of the twentieth century based on a hope that in their industrially less developed countries an educated peasantry could function as a driving force of liberalization and democratization (Müller 2016: 37).

A more popularly discussed movement in Western Europe and North America was the American People's Party which evolved out of the Farmer's Alliance around the late 1870s. Farmers united at that time as they faced the harsh reality of being dependent on bank loans and railways to transport their goods, which were controlled by influential "*wall street rich men*". Party leaders campaigned for a progressive income tax, the nationalization of the railway and the abolition of the national banking system (Skenderovic 2017: 46). This is where the term populist might have originated, aside from the *narodniki* case. Opponents of the People's Party referred to their leaders and voters as "*pops*", "*populites*" and "*populists*", which in spite of its negative connotation at that time, turned into the name they wrote on their flags themselves (Müller 2016: 39). Populism instilled the idea of direct participation, forming of community driven political opinion and socially progressive ideas. But behind the representation of farmer's interests other, uglier sides were showing, such as underlying antisemitism when talking about "*wall street elites*" (Müller 2016: 40).

Poland's agrarian populist moment coincides with the above mentioned two examples. Polish farmers were caught in a precarious political situation, mostly because Poland did not exist at that time. Poland was in a time period known as the third partition, during which there was no sovereign Polish country, but rather it was split among three powers: The Habsburg Empire, the

Prussian Kingdom and the Russian Empire. Poles, and as such Polish farmers, faced different challenges depending on the occupying power. Under the Prussians, the Catholic Poles were subject to discrimination based on religion and later the *"Kulturkampf"*, initiated by Bismarck to root out Rome's influence over Germany. In Russia, the peasants faced harsh military control and slow infrastructural development. Although the Austrians proved to give the Poles the biggest opportunities, being the only ones to give them representation on the level of the central government, education and development on the countryside were very poor in comparison to Western Europe, or rather England, which was the epitome of industrial development copied throughout (Narkiewicz 1976: 24). The political reality of the partitions forced the classical political order in Poland to change. The old aristocratic noblemen lost their power and transitioned into a variety of professions and businesses. As the countryside was immensely poor, the provincial capitals attracted peasants who created a new workforce and lifted the cities. With the aristocrats gone, the peasants and labor forces in the cities lacked representation. With this problem at hand, opportunities for new classes of politicians were created. Olga Narkiewicz (1976) gives a detailed account of populist movements in Poland, and notes that because of the partitions, there was a multitude of them with different goals, depending on the local need. There was catholic populism with priests as leaders, a paternalistic populism spearheaded by intellectuals and, though growing much later, a socialist populism (Narkiewicz 1976: 39).

Although, these old populist movements are not representative of the political party landscape of today, they nonetheless influenced all of Poland enough to leave an imprint which will repeat later on in the analysis. Firstly, it was a time of societal transition on Polish territories, changing the old feudal divide between the gentry, the self-proclaimed 'Sarmatians', and the farmers, also called '*Chamy*', to a more modern society flourishing in the cities, with intellectuals, workers and a middle class. Though the society modernized, images of the past remained and through the Polish Romanticism that was supposed to keep a Polish identity alive while the country disappeared from the maps, the feudal divide between 'Sarmatians' and '*Chamy*' remained in the minds of the people. Everyone aspiring to be a political figurehead saw himself as a 'Sarmatian' (Narkiewicz 1976: 79). Secondly it was these developments and these early, catholic and paternalistic, populist movements that would instill an understanding of a Catholic and Polish-speaking Polish identity in perpetual struggle against the Jewish socialist city elites. Here nationalist politicians, such as Roman Dmowski, would grow to form the right-wing nationalist ideology of National Democracy in 1919. This National Democracy, often referred to as '*Endecja'* or 'the *Endek* Camp', was extremely

anti-Semitic and racist, advocating militarization and forceful homogenization of the Polish nation. This chauvinist and authoritarian movement remained one of the most influential string of political thought in Poland and leaves it mark even in today, most notably in the right-wing of the PiS. Though some t of the sharp and fascist rhetoric remains in the now-far interwar period of Polish history, the core beliefs of how a 'Polish people' should be defined re-appear in the modern populist right of Poland (Poerter 2000: 10).

New Populism

Populists general tendency to create a breeding ground for antisemitic or even fascist ideas is what Müller (2016) describes as a specificity that caught on in academics globally and made the subject of study surrounding populism so widespread. He sees those “founding populisms” as important to study for their history, but to not get shackled in semantics due to their different appearances. Just because they called themselves populists, does not mean that when the term is used today, it has to necessarily be connected with farmers and peasants (Müller 2016: 42).

For this exact purpose Margaret Canovan (2004) and Paul Taggart (2000) introduce the term 'New Populism', a word for stark differentiation between the agrarian movements of the 19th century and the collection of mostly right-wing movements and political parties emerging in established liberal democracies to challenge the political mainstream (Canovan 2004: 242). 'New Populism' is in that way related directly to modern liberal democracies. They, the modern populist movements and parties, claim to speak for the ordinary people, forgotten by the mainstream elite, voted in to represent their interest. Critical of both the media and the political elites, they are most comfortable in opposition. It gives them opportunity to openly distrust the government’s decision by calling for referendums that bring the power of decision-making back to the 'people' it belongs to. The Populists, not the established elites, are the only honest fighters for true democracy, following the goal to reclaim the power that has been taken away from the 'true populace'. (Canovan 2004: 243)

Taggart (2000) differentiates 'New Populism' as a Western European phenomenon starting around the 1980s or 1990s. Following a wave of new left leaning political parties during the 1970s, most notably variants of Green parties popping in different Western European countries, parties on the opposite spectrum managed to achieve notable electoral success. The rise of Right-Wing parties at that time resembled a repeat of the inter-war period and as such lead to the characterization of these parties as neo-fascist. This was not entirely right. The neo-fascist rise was simply coinciding

and merging with a new wave of populism (Taggart 2000: 74).

Similar to the lefts new politics they, were reacting against the heavily bureaucratized welfare state which was personified through the dominant post-war rule by social-democratic and christian-democratic parties. Right-wing populists build their programs to run against the corrupt and collusive established elite, targeting general taxation issues, immigration and nationalism, as well as questions of legitimate representation. The agendas of established parties, political institutions and the modern welfare state with mixed-economy capitalism are rejected in favor of a new way to organize political parties in contrast to the established elite's mass membership party. On one hand they stress direct participation as a key factor of party membership, while on the other presenting a leadership of individuals with a very active and personal character. Being different gives them a distinct voice, separating them from established parties, which is an important factor for their voter base, presenting a clear sign, that they exist outside of the established political party system. This seems to respond disproportionately with young men in cities and urban environments from diverse political backgrounds (Taggart 2000: 76). Although generalizations about these voting habits vary, this fact remains a constant over all cases with multiple researchers (Ivaldi 2017). Many researchers have been describing the phenomenon slightly differently, calling it a “silent counter-revolution” of voters who find themselves on the losing side of modernization, buying into promises of bringing back the older status quo (Havlik et al. 2017). Ignazi (2017), while focusing on the extreme-right populist parties, explains their rise in Western Europe due to two factors: a cultural and a societal one. Culturally, he claims, far-right viewpoints were legitimized by regressing conservative parties, trying to outbid their leftist counterparts, by re-introducing previously banned fascist topics into the public debates. The increased polarization due to this has enabled the populist far-right. On the societal level, the post-materialist reality together with the decline of the classic image of a party has created a mounting distance between the voter and the political system. This distance fostered distrust and with it demands change, especially among topics such as law and order or immigration. He identifies this change as the silent counter-revolution (Ignazi 2017: 329)

What applies for Western Europe, which in this case means all countries west of the Iron Curtain, does not necessarily apply to post-communist countries in Central and Eastern Europe. The ideas of a silent counterrevolution to the 1970s cannot really be applied, as the 1970s looked drastically different there compared to Western Europe. The basis for a rise of right-wing populist parties in former communist countries was lying in different areas. A major factor that plays a role in those

parties to this date is a devout anti-political sentiment and 'anti-partyism', fostered over decades of living under a one party rule in which participation and representation were practically non-existent (Havlik et al. 2017: 185). Additionally, most of the communist parties participated in the dismantling of the single-party rule system, preventing their forceful dismissal by giving up themselves. As much as this benefited those countries at that moment, it also left a mark on the legacy of the new liberal democratic systems, allowing them to appear in elections and the public space long after. This tainted the newly established system, leaving a pragmatic and distrustful public (Pilawski et al. 2016: 91).

Although of different origin, 'New Populism' is very similarly used in both East and West. It describes mostly right-wing populist parties with anti-institutional programs, functioning radically different than the classic party images of social-democratic or conservative parties and favoring direct democratic measures such as referendums to confirm their policy agendas. The most prominent, and frankly most dangerous, string of these 'New Populists' are right-wing parties focusing mostly on either law and order or immigration-critical topics.

Theories of Populism

Understanding the history and base of populist parties is important, but only one side of the coin. According to Müller (2016: 42) it's misleading to analyze the voter base of populist parties, their policy-proposals or how the established parties and media feel about them. One should simply take them literally by their word to find the core elements of what constitutes populism. In this regard, all theories explain that populism sees society divided into two groups:

the 'pure people' versus the 'corrupt elites'.

This description is found among all contemporary scholars working on this subject (Mudde 2004) and it's a clear linking-point for all historical examples of populism, from the historical agrarian populism, through the left populist movements in Latin America and to the now settled right-wing populist parties in Europe.

Rafał Riedel (2017), criticizing the utility of populism, specifically it's multidisciplinary and everyday use, defines 'The good people' and 'the evil elites' as the minimum components of everything populist, stressing that the lack of a precise definition in scholarly use and focus on these two terms is not allowing it to be properly defined, depending on discipline (Riedel 2017: 289). Though Riedel's observations on the debates about the definition of populism are true, I see this not as a

problem, rather an opportunity to explore the two most dominant definitions, that although debated, are not necessarily disproving each other. They are two theoretical explanations that stay the closest to the established populist worldview of 'the people' and 'the elite'.

The first one is Cas Mudde's extremely popular definition of populism, used widely in contemporary literature, since his 2004 article “The Populist Zeitgeist”. This article catapulted Mudde’s theory into the spotlight and spread his definition into practically all of the research conducted on populism, specifically right-wing populism, which is a focal point in Mudde's work. To the question of what populism is, Mudde first establishes concepts that are most often mistaken for populism: opportunism and demagogy. He argues, though prevalent in examples of populist party agendas, they can be flipped by a change of viewpoints, as there is a subjectively moral value to actions that get defined as such. A statement might seem like a lie for one person, and be the ultimate truth for the other, lacking any clarity that needs to be applied to academic pursuit. Rather, Mudde defines populism as “a thin-centered ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elites', and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (Mudde 2004: 543). With 'thin-centered ideology', Mudde means that as an ideology, it lacks consistency and an intellectual refinement usually found in more accomplished ideas, such as socialism or liberalism, and as such is restricted to a narrow range of conceptual integration. The central point of the ideology are 'the people', through which 'the elite', the evil nemesis, is identified and applied to another ideology, be it another thin one or a full one. Examples of such would be nationalism, socialism, neo-fascism or communism (Mudde 2004: 544). Populism thus adds a normative distinction to the relation between 'the people' and 'the elite'. Empirically based explanations are disregarded in favor of a moralistic differentiation of good and evil. Mudde references this often in his works, calling it the Manichean outlook on opponents with different viewpoints, which labels them simply evil, stopping all the possibilities of compromise, because compromising with the evil elite would lead to the corruption of 'the pure people' (Mudde 2017: 5).

The characteristics of New Populists which Canovan (2004) describes, such as reliance on a charismatic leader or the style of communication which populists prefer to distance themselves from the classic image of modern mass parties, are only the facilitators of populism for Mudde, not it's defining characteristics (Mudde 2004: 545).

To be able to define the key characteristic of populism, Mudde relies on a definition of 'the people',

the central and focal point of any populism theory, worked out by Paul Taggart (2000). When populists talk about 'the people', they do not do that because of a deep conviction that the masses have to be sovereign, but because 'the people' are the occupants of what Taggart calls *the heartland.* 'The people' are left vague, specifically because *the heartland*, the imaginary territory of origin from which the virtuous and unified population arises, is a highly subjective invocation of the place that holds all values and positive aspects of everyday life, one's home. Defending the values which represent one's home, is the main political motivator for populists (Taggart 2000: 95).

Much more defined than 'the people' are 'the elites', the nemesis. The populist premise is directly related to the system in which it thrives, the liberal democracy. It is there that anti-party sentiment plays a prominent role and as such defines 'the elite' as the established parties who corrupt the relation of leaders and supporters and foster division, in what is usually a homogeneous people. Populists are but reformists, not strictly opposing the idea of political parties, but their incarnations in the political battleground (Mudde 2004: 546).

Mudde's theory of populism, though widely popular, does harbor concern and criticism, especially relating to his introduction of the “thin-centered ideology”. One argument comes from the very literature Mudde (2004) quotes, namely Taggart (2000). In Taggart's definition of '*the heartland',* the perspective of the ideal community is turned backwards into an imaginative construct that produces it, which is different from any political ideology where the outlook is directed towards future imagined ideal societies that live in the mind. The populist heartland owes its power to the heart, a sentiment that cannot be rationalized with, in a way disqualifying it from an ideology (Taggart 2000: 95).

A broader critique found in literature claims that just calling it “thin-centered ideology” does not relief it from having to match definitions of ideology to be classified as such. Its problem is that even in Mudde's works it is too broadly used, attaching itself to fiscal irresponsibility, neo-liberal extremism and xenophobic stances at different times. Riedel (2017) offers to change the concept to an “empty-hearted ideology” instead (Riedel 2017: 291).

The second widely used definition of populism is actually one of the oldest ones, represented most recently by Jan-Werner Müller with his book “What is Populism?” (2016). In this essay Jan-Werner Müller manages to combine the academically challenging question about populism's definition with an accessible style of writing and plenty of, sometimes very specific, examples. Most importantly though, he manages to set up a theory of populism which inspired debates and lastly provides a corrective to the massive miss-use of the term in popular literature and media. The

basis for this theory is very simple upon reading, but possesses a deep theoretical rooting in academic literature, which I will explain shortly. Before that though, I want to look at how he defines populism and how it differs to the already discussed work of Cas Mudde.

Aside from the already established populist division of society in 'the pure people' and 'the corrupt elites', Müller's definition is based on two core characteristics that lay the basic foundation of this dichotomy: anti-elitism and anti-pluralism. Anti-elitism manifests itself in the much discussed disdain that populists feel towards the established political parties, the system and the media, who are all mediators, putting words into the mouth of the people, by deciding over their heads. This by itself is not enough of a criterion for Müller to declare something populist. For this it needs the added anti-pluralism, which manifests in the populist claim that “we – and only we – represent the true people” (Müller 2016: 26).

This differentiation has a moralistic basis in the same way Mudde (2004) claims it to have. 'The pure people' are hardworking and 'the corrupt elites' are evil thieves. The moralist argument allows all critiques to be branded as illegitimate. Politicians who oppose populist parties are part of the elite and voters who don't support them are excluded from 'the real people'. Thus in populist programs, 'the people' are extracted from the empirical masses and those who don't join, disqualify themselves from any legitimacy (Müller 2016: 52).

This creates an interesting dynamic between the populists and the principle of representation in liberal democracy. In the modern definition of an elected representative, he is elected to apply measures at his judgment. In populist belief the elected representative is only allowed to act on what the people desire. It is why the populist politician is the only legitimate one, he represents the people, not the other corrupt politicians. 'The people's' demands are objective, not subjective. Whereas Mudde sees the demands of 'the people' as the incarnated *volonté général,* Müller dismisses this comparison, stating that for Rousseau the people decided about their will. The populist does not need to ask the people what they want, he already knows their demands and interests and personifies them (Müller 2016: 47).

To recapture everything, Jan-Werner Müller sees populism as a way of perceiving and imagining a political world where morally pure homogeneous people are opposed to the immoral corrupt minorities, such as elites or ethnic minorities who work with 'the elite'. The Manichean divide still exists, but he interprets populism closer to a political logic, than to an ideology. This is exemplified by it not being restricted to the left or right, but rather labeling right and wrong. The true people don't have to be a majority and lost referendums or elections are not setbacks, simply a moral

reassurance that the struggle has to continue. The people are extracted from within the people, which might constitute a loud minority under the flag of the silent majority. Populist always dismiss the empirical in favor of the moral (Müller 2016: 130).

As stated in the beginning of this part, Müller's conception of the political logic is not a first in academic work on populism, but rather shares similar definitions of politics and morality as are presented in the works on radical democracy by post-marxists such as Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau (2005). This roots Müller's work in the discourse theoretical tradition.

In the thin-centered ideology, populism has to encompass beliefs and demands, whereas for Mouffe (2002) and Müller (2016) it defines how beliefs and demands are interpreted and formulated. Mouffe sees the anti-pluralism of populism as a result of wrong activity by parties in the arena of politics. Established elite's lack of antagonism towards their political adversaries emphasizes consensus over disagreements. This in turn creates apathy and a lack of interest towards participation in politics. Democracy needs clashes between left and right, as to allow pluralism. Right-wing populist anti-pluralism is the result of a missing left-wing populism to claim as an adversary (Mouffe 2002: 11).

Here Müller criticizes the conception of a left populism to form a coherent demand out of the citizens' interest, which the state cannot fulfill with administrative capabilities and as such creating the desired antagonism of 'the people' and "the political and economic powers of neo-liberalism" (Müller 2016: 120). This in turn should counter the right-wing populist antagonism of 'the people' and 'the migrants'. 'The elite' of left populism remains vague and not personalized, which according to Müller, is a sign that theorists like Mouffe do not see the danger of populism as such. What is the point of left populism when it delegitimizes opposition and accelerates division the same way right-wing populism does (Müller 2016: 120)? Confrontations in politics are important, but equally important to the acceptance of pluralism. The counter to the moral argument of proponents of populism as a corrective to democracy is the argument of justice, which fights for inclusion of those that populists try to exclude (Müller 2016: 133).

Populism is and will be a challenge for representative democracy, living in its shadow as a specifically modern phenomenon. It's danger to liberal democracy should not be understated and its ability to erode it always respected.

Populism and Nationalism

In this short last chapter, I want to focus on the question why I use the theory of populism for the analysis in this dissertation. It is directly related to the context which will come up in the next chapters, more precisely the subject of analysis, the political party Prawo I Sprawiedliwość**.**

When confronted with the question of what theoretical basis I should apply to my analysis, the amount of options for it was explicitly large. The topic of research put me at a crossroads and demanded that I decide what angle to pursue. The possibilities were comprised of theories on fascism and totalitarianism, nationalism and populism.

In the end, the case of the Smolensk plane crash is a case of a dichotomy, the 'us versus them', which found itself strongly represented in nationalism and populism. Almost symbolically the case subject holds two major aspects in its fundamental use as well, namely an international and a domestic effect. I will prove the domestic effect is the dominant and politically imperative one for the Law and Justice party in Poland. As such populism gives the most fitting framework to be able to construct a precise analysis of the case.

Populism and nationalism have an interesting relationship all things considered. With right-wing parties being the talk in media and politics today, both theoretical concepts appear throughout the literature, oftentimes describing different and similar things at the same time, leading to a perceived connection. Benjamin De Cleen and Yannis Stavrakakis (2017) formulate exactly this distinction problem through discourse theoretical analysis. In a simple explanation, they look at nationalism and populism through their basic dichotomies. Whereas nationalist politics are constructed horizontally, claiming to represent the nation which is distinguished between the people inside 'the nation' and those outside of it, populism is constructed vertically, by distinguishing 'the people' from 'the elite'. Populism and nationalism can be applied together, overlapping the definition of 'the people' and 'the nation', by connecting 'the elite' to the group outside 'the nation', migrants and foreigners. These two concepts can work together but don't necessarily have to (De Cleen, Stavrakakis 2017: 304).

The Myth of Smolensk, and its delegitimizing objective perfectly encapsulate the vertical discourse of populism. Although overlapping factors and nationalistic rhetoric definitely appear in tandem with their populist world view, the PiS-party’s central argument is to define Poland through the exclusion of 'leftists', 'traitors' and 'opposition'.

Myth and Memory

The second theoretical background I need to explore before taking on the actual case is more ambivalent than the chapter above. Populism will build the core of my analysis regarding the actors, subjects and their motivations. The specificity of the case demands a second component, one that will define terms and the specific actions undertaken. As the title already suggests, this chapter shall cover the definitions of the important terms Myth and Memory, their origins and functions in analysis.

The terms Myth and Memory, by comparison to the theory of populism, appear in a much wider academic field, spanning philosophy, cultural studies, anthropology, social sciences and most predominantly history. This very wide use causes these terms to be extremely vague and ambivalent. Not only that, but every discipline seems to present their own definition, use and side terms often connected to it. This creates an incredibly difficult field of academic research to wade through.

As my work is rooted in social sciences, I want to restrict the literature and definitions in use to this field to be able to work with them in the latter stages of this dissertation.

As a result, I will work with literature based around Bo Stråth's two anthologies (2000a, 2000c) dedicated to exploring exactly these topics, as well as supplementary articles and books by different scholars, with a general limitation and a focus on Central- and Eastern Europe. Literature highlighting collective memory, identity and myth in a broader definition or in other geographical regions and disciplines were part of the research to understand this field, but will only be used scarcely, as this dissertation does not have enough space to accommodate a complete overview of the entire academic debate.

The arguments and definitions of all the scholars cited in the next chapter, as well as the ones I adopt, are all either based or heavily influenced by a multitude of constructivist philosophers. Their role in the constructivist and discourse analytical debate, on which most all of the topic is based on, is not uncontested, but among the most significant. Nonetheless I do not want to open the debate on their works and arguments on the science, as important they may be, but offer insight on literature that takes the frameworks they give to apply it to the historiographical debate on myth and memory.

This means in a nutshell, this chapter is dedicated to exploring the definition and role of myth and memory in social sciences.

Questions of Identity

Myth and memory have been present in social sciences since the late 19th century, but gained widespread popular use as theoretical concepts in the 1970s. This rise coincided with emergence of research on the question if identity, more specifically collective and national identity and its role in the establishment of social cohesion, community and most prominently, the nation (Stråth 2000b: 20). Bo Stråth identifies two moments which gave this field of research it's breakthrough.

The first moment connects with the end of the Cold War, which caused a rippling effect in social and cultural understanding and positioning across East and West. How national identity defined itself before, was through the physical danger of a monolithic enemy. This distinction was moral and justified, with Nazi Germany existing in many struggling nation's founding identity as the evil from which they separate themselves. Stråth observes that in the time after 1989, historical traumas suppressed by the communist regimes resurfaced, reopening questions of collaboration and alliances during World War 2, through which general beliefs and truths on nation's role in Europe were challenged. He states that identity becomes a topic, when there is change and crisis, as communities have to figure out who they are and where they stand in a global order of communities. In such times of confusion, national identity and collective memory become the central issues of public debate (Stråth 2000: 21). In Central- and Eastern Europe the collapse of the Soviet Union reopened the Pandora's Box of national and ethnic sentiments kept locked under the ideological and socioeconomical dominance of Moscow-dictated communism since the end of the Second World War. Due to the sudden disappearance of the old paradigm, new states found themselves struggling for an assessment of their position midst massive economic and social problems. The remapping of Europe turned out turbulent for many, with some claiming the transition process has not ended until today (Esbenshade 1995).

The second moment is connected to the emergence of a then new epistemology in history and social sciences which influenced a whole new debate and allowed new concepts into the research under the guise of 'constructivism' and 'post-modernity'. This brought with it new understandings on the conception of terms such as 'truth' and 'reality', which before were handled as unshakeable absolutes. New perspectives in history, social sciences and the humanities opened a broader realm of insight into research, straying into the process of conceptualization of analysis itself. This meant every scholar had to acknowledge his own inherent constraints and biases, them being linguistic,

cultural or ideological. The past started changing with the present (Stråth 2000b: 22).

The constructivist approach, the quasi origin for the following debate on myths and memory, sees the social community, with which we associate ourselves, as constructed and invented, rather than a primordial nature that we simply have to accept (Dragovic-Soso 2010: 31).

Identity as a part of sociological theories comes up in the 1970, where both these moments come together, but is originally in use since much longer. It is a term that social sciences have borrowed from psychoanalysis. It is there that memory and myth appeared as categories that could be taken into account and analyzed. Identity became synonymous with the reflection of a society in individuals, which question themselves who they are and where they stand (Niethammer 2000a: 76).

Brubaker (2007) notes that the broad core of identity that finds itself among academic works defines it as socio-historical values and qualities that compose an individual's connection and differentiation to others and a particular group. He notices two distinct characteristics of this definition.

'Strong' identity has a primordial character that each subject in a group and the group itself is based upon and which appears collectively in all. The identity is something natural and absolute, which cannot be altered and lies above human order (Brubaker 2007: 61).

The 'weak' identity on the other is based in the constructivist theoretical discourse, which means that identity is diverse, multiple, fragmented and constructed. As much as this definition permeates academic research, Brubaker still criticizes that it lacks any deep enough particularity to truly capture what it sets out to do (Brubaker 2007: 62). Yet, though vague in nature, identity and the questions that come with it set the basis for a lot of behavioral analysis on groups, explaining motivations, desires and fears through a constructivist perspective.

Foucault himself, a large figure in the discourse analytical debate which is rooted in constructivist ideas, defines identity further by binding it to the individual as a subject. As such the individual gets the identity from the economical and ideological elite or leadership and their capability to exert structural violence over them. It is this oppression through power and violence that forces an identity over Individuals in their day to day lives and turns them into subjects, dependent on this molded identity (Foucault 2015: 245). The dynamic in question is defined as a top-down process, a theme that remains important in the further debate on the constructivist dominance on the topic.

Luisa Passerini (2000) adds to this top-down dichotomy by claiming that "*it is not the subject who possesses something defined as an identity, but rather it is the subject who is possessed in one way*

or another" (Passerini 2000: 48). This complex inter-subjective relationship equates the terms 'possession' and 'belonging', as in 'belonging to a group'.

Again the described phenomenon is a dynamic instead of being predefined.

That is the debate in which I want to move my case to be able to work with it. It gives me the framework with which to look at how history influences and is influenced by subjects and actors, elites and grassroots movements, scholars and laymen. The vehicles that drive those motions of interpretation are myth and memory.

Understanding the Language of History and Constructivism

Before being able to address those motions and concepts, there is a relevant debate to mention and incorporate. The underlying constructivist character of this entire idea of identity and memory is not simply to be accepted, but begs further examining, as it is not a one-way definition to fit on top of an analysis. It is inherently critical of not only the substance of analysis, but the process of analysis as well.

As such, the question for what identity is, only became a question when society became unsure of its own. Before that, as the general public was sure of its own identity, there existed no practical need to search for it.

When formulating this process of identification as a construction, it was subjected to radical representation in historical contexts, which were constantly transformed and changed. The constructivist approach, with which historical material was introduced, questioned and applied, brought problems with it. The first inconsistency is the split between society and the individual, in constructivist terms 'agents and structures'. The omnipresent social institutions and discourses were emphasized which would minimize the subject's involvement as an agent, but the involvement of the individual subject is necessary for the construction of identity. This puts the whole theory into a problematic position (Stråth 2000b: 23). "*The identity of a subject is linked to the politics involved in the construction of such an identity, and there is a contradiction between what an identity is, and the politics of the subject in the construction of its identity.*" (Stråth 2000b: 23).

Concepts of identity and memory have to be therefore understood by the scientific fundamentals that create that issue, namely as the fundamentals of how history is written. The before mentioned change in the 1970s, especially regarding the epistemology, technology and

organization of the study of history, brought two preconceived notions of how history should be talked about together. The German tradition saw history as a science, like the natural sciences, whereas in the Anglo-Saxon sphere history was a discipline of the humanities, belonging to the faculties of arts. History cannot simply be discovered and as such new issues of narration and interpretation asked for the creation of a new language for history (Stråth 2000b: 25).

It is here that the constructivist concept blooms, freeing history from its binding to the absolute truth. At the same time, before advancing into definitions, problems of a strict constructivist approach have to be highlighted. Hayden White (2000) and Bo Stråth (2000a) have both been criticizing that constructivist approaches, especially inspired by Foucault, lack insight on grassroots possibilities of constructing ability and imply industries behind the process with social engineering and manipulation, boiling down to overly simplistic definitions of elites manipulating masses (White 2000: 49). Leaders and elites have to be understood as subjects of day to day life as well, marking the construction processes with constant compromise and adaptation. Additionally, scholars doing the academic work are subjects themselves (Stråth 2000b: 30).

This shows that the constructivist approach on one hand opens up this topic to even be debatable, but also encompasses flaws and intricacies which have to be kept in mind.

Memory and myth both have a very difficult to specify conceptual content and an ambiguous relationship. This goes so far, according to Ewa Domańska, that in order to work with these terms *"[...], one has to have courage, erudition, a certain naivety, and a drop of desperation."* (Domańska 2000: 249) and Hayden White warns that suggesting their *"[...] use in modern efforts at 'social construction' risks the accusation of atavism or of abandoning civilized thought and reason itself."* (White 2000: 49). Nevertheless, many scholars do concern themselves with their ambiguity and equivocation, finding relevant approaches breaking the stigma of ahistorical tinkering, when talking about myths.

Dealing with myth and memory is basically dealing with a mode of discourse (myth) in a human faculty (memory). More precisely, both are terms that exist in the space of how history is talked about and make, in this way, the use of history, as a part of our everyday culture, a subject of discussion.

Memory

Memory as such should be differentiated from history as it is naturally understood. It is a specific reflection, repeatable in countless configurations of collective, national and subjective character.

This history is history in the most constructed manner available, organized in structures of public and private manner, architecture, monuments, archives, libraries, books, films, biographies, families, rituals and ceremonies. It manifests in how people see, hear, feel and believe history (Kaschuba 2000: 221). Wolfgang Kaschuba (2000) defines it as *"[...] the practice of socialized remembering, [...]"* and *"[...] a culture and a cult of commemorations, in public and private contexts alike."* (Kaschuba 2000: 222).

In common scholarly tradition, coming from philosophers or sociologists such as Halbwachs and Durkheim, as well as Bergson and Freud, an adjective is added to form the widely used 'collective memory'. Maurice Halbwachs defines it as the cultural representation of a group in space, changing with the group's needs, being able to be fused, separated and localized, all while appeasing contradictory meanings connected to a place (Niethammer 2000a: 81). Rahman (2010), for whom collective memory "*[...] is the combined memory of a population that has experienced a common past.*" (Rahman 2010: 61), notices a centralized and decentralized form as such. Centralized versions are authoritative accounts, manifesting in museums, acts of legislation that articulate accounts of the past and 'truth' commissions that seek to solidify many perspectives into a larger narrative. Decentralized versions appear as art or oral history and tales of a communities past. The difficulty in fully grasping the collective character of memory lies in acknowledging that it is a compilation of multiple individual memories by those who experienced a common event. As such when defining the collective memory, feelings can be stirred, especially when formed authoritatively, as power can be one feature separating individual accounts (Rahman 2010: 61).

Other scholars bring up a similar point, in which they connect it specifically to identity, claiming that memory is a path that leads toward a universalistic construction of national identity, pulling its strongest power from traumatic events consisting of master narratives of defeat and humiliation (Giesen 2000: 227).

As much as collective memory is used across the field, critics see it too dependent on a projection of structure with individual consciousness onto that of the collective. Instead they propose the definition of communal memory, which covers the information and accounts of a community's past in two versions. The traditionalized memory covers information stored in lore (fables, folk tales, customs, prejudices, jokes and language), whereas the rationalized memory is the catalogued and archived information processed in written and visualized history (White 2000: 53).

This is but directly connected to definitions of myth, which are outside of the traditional or rationalized category, but lay the foundation and organize principles of the traditional lore. In

reconnecting memory to the functions of historical myths in societies, critics return to the same debate on construction and myth, as other scholars, who base their understanding on the Halbwachian definition of collective memory.

Myth

The baseline of every proper analysis of 'myth' as a definitive term has been that the precise meaning that brings it all together is always 'construction' (Kaschuba 2000: 219). This implies that myth, severed from the negative connotations of atavist, dilettantish use to describe primordial stories, folklore and beliefs, is a part of historians would call reality, caught in interplay of building and destroying. In Stråth's words, "Analyzing *the function of a myth means deconstructing that myth, which, at the same time provokes the question of what new forms of history are being constructed*" (Stråth 2000b: 27). Myth as such provides meaning and is an element of politics that creates social cohesion. This brings it directly in connection with its role in history. Dealing with myth breaks the positivist approach of defining historiography as a science that designates over history as truth, standing above the processes that govern its own being (Stråth 2000b: 26). The study of myth is connected to the study of past and present, the creation of responses to memory as a political question (Rahman 2010: 62). For Ewa Domańska (2000) myths are specific kinds of memories that, understood as modes of discourse, lay the foundation to culture, by preserving specific features, archetypes and understandings which can translate into the creation of cultural reality (Domańska 2000: 250).

Why is this question of the relation between myth and history important? I went into specific detail on this, because it is not usual to do so in political science, where, if the topic is not related to post-structuralist or post-modern debates, the result can be quite dull. As an example, myth can be seen as a way of interpreting history, with some scholars going so far as to describe it over a spectrum. When one sees history as a spectrum, myth is beyond historical consciousness and is found at the other end of objective definition of history. Myth, when it is defined as 'being thick' and emotional, displaying an extreme level of interpretation that sometimes borders on the fictional, is inherently simplistic (Langenbacher 2010: 28). In a different discipline, namely psychology, myth is described as expressions of the mental state of society, not governed or controlled by anyone, providing a depository for culture and heritage (Stråth 2000b: 32). These are simpler definitions that are not inherently wrong, but highlight by contrast what I wanted to achieve with examining the relation of myth and history, as they share an intertwined existence,

that when dealt with offers insight onto its multidisciplinary application. The question of myth is not only a historical or philosophical one, but also a structural and ethical one.

But not to stray too far away, the general connection of all disciplines is that myth is memory, either connected or a part of it, which is recognizably constructed so that it contains a definite function and use. As Stråth puts it, "analyzing *that function of a myth means deconstructing that myth [...]*" (Stråth 2000b: 27). This function is what I will examine next.

One of the most often reoccurring themes of the use of myth lies in the opportunity in time. Because we have already established that myth co-exists with memory and, basing itself in the interpretation of history formed by language and culture, the moment it appears and is evoked is when Identity, the basis of both, is questioned. The most common referenced moment in history is when national, regional, ethnic or religious landscapes are connected to an Identity, forming a belonging to a larger social unit of sharing a common history. Emotion and ideology become aesthetics connecting to a formation of one such group, resulting in the description of such an event as a 'foundation myth' (Kaschuba 2000: 219). For functions of myths, Kaschuba writes:

> "*Myths, and especially foundation myths, tell us legends and narratives of invented collective biographies. These biographies grant charisma and legitimacy to a 'common history', such as that of a nation-state, whose genealogy is then fixed in space and time by these foundation data. But these are data – names, places and meanings – that fuel our imaginations, but offer us no proof. They are sacred, and they are believed, and it is impossible to deny or to criticize them, because they operate as a kind of Gesamtkunstwerk. In other words, foundation myths are tightly woven fabrics of data and ideologies, of semantics and aesthetics, of values and practices. They represent extremely highly condensed cultural codifications that tell us 'quote me, use me, believe me, but don't ask me!', because myths discard their concrete temporal and spatial references and try to assume universal meanings." (Kaschuba 2000: 218)*

Myths as such move into the dimension of being literal reality and constitute truth through language, being contested and contextual entities. The power that legitimizes them is drawn from history, religion or social and economic contexts, formulating a spreadsheet for the member of group that identifies with it, that teaches to interpret right from wrong in the world. Through language, the rhetoric of the community, it lays the moral foundation of a groups laws that

permeate and distill the community's view on its surroundings. It is not an object among a community or identity, but the product of it (Stråth 2000b: 25).

Language itself creates myths as a form of symbolization of the culture of a group. This is a network of structures that outlives far the individual lives of the members that form it. As the members change over time, the experience of the past influences the present and vice versa. Myths become Supra-individual artifacts, which constitute a relative continuity for the space of memory (Niethammer 2000a: 85).

This notion, that connects language as a key vehicle for myths, comes from the works of french philosopher and linguist Roland Barthes, specifically his work “Mythologies” (1957⁄1991). I am not planning to apply his semiotic theory to my analysis, but there are a few points Barthes picks upon that are useful to keep in mind for the further chapters.

One of them is that myths hide nothing. Everything that can be used to analyze and deconstruct a myth is part of its content (Barthes 1954⁄1991: 120).

Another point Barthes makes is that functions of myth are defined by its motivation. There is a goal to everything that is done (Barthes 1954⁄1991: 117).

The last point claims that the character of myth is that it has to be appropriated by someone to work. Myth needs an audience, a group and individuals that it appeals to and that not only understand it's language and rhetoric, but are also ready to accept it as the intention of their behavior (Barthes 2000: 118).

To bring the discussion back to a sociological or political one, a part of myth as speech or language in Barthes' terms, that in my opinion lacks, is the presence of emotions, the basic motivator of human behavior. This connects some of the above points to concepts of memory and remembrance of myth.

The way myths are appropriated as the intention of a groups behavior is through its connection to the feeling of identity. Emotion is the strongest motivator, evoking myth in a community, driving the narratives and making them truths in the face of challenging outside notions.

Most myths, used to create or carve out an identity, rely on a desire or trauma.

The desire manifests in remembering and forgetting, two notions that create and uphold memory. Authors such as Esbenshade (1995) and Domańska (2000) see artists and authors as the driving actors in creating and preserving those. They can defy outside pressures for historical revisionism and carry these sentiments (Esbenshade 1995: 73) or create them with romanticist literature that inflates myth with heroism for significance (Domańska 2000: 255).

With trauma on the other hand, entrepreneurial elites function as the main actors. For them traumas are painful moments of a collectively shared history, anchored in the collective memory. Intellectual elites and political ones alike tend to trauma, caressing it with their language. This is basically producing myth and preserving it. In literature concerning myth in conflict, ethnic or national, trauma is the driving emotion. It is with this trauma that offers either a divisive split in society to remain present or a way of overcoming this traumatic myth by "*coming to terms with the past*" (Dragović -Soso 2010: 35). It is considered not just a method for overcoming conflicting memory, but a way of turning the instability caused by not dealt with societal trauma into positive memory that leads to stability and peace. In the case of post-communist countries, such activities have been undertaken with "Transitional Justice" as the answer, which manifested in three methods: judicial prosecution, truth commissions and lustration (Dragović -Soso 2010: 44).

The examples of emotion in myth, by either romanticized history or societal trauma, reappear thoroughly in this dissertation's case.

To summarize, myth is inherently constructed by actors and structures, relates to memory as in it is formed by it and a part of it and is analyzed by being deconstructed in its function. Myth is language and culture, forming identity and explaining it by delivering understanding, concept and motivation. It lends emotions to simple historical moments and tells legends and narratives of invented collective biographies. To be appropriated by a receiving audience it cannot hide its elements, but distorts them, clinging to emotion as motivation to adopt it.

Othering

This is the last chapter for my theoretical framework, with the aim to elaborate more on the connections between populism and myth, by questioning how these two different theoretical concepts can work together or what elements they could use to unite ideas. This is a new challenge, respectively, when examining the academic research used in this dissertation, as these two concepts have not actively been combined.

Firstly though, I want to expand a specific debate in my work, by introducing the "Othering" concept into the debate. The populist dichotomy of 'the people' and 'the elites' as a form of identity, where it is formed as the 'us' versus 'them' debate, is in general not a new concept. It appears in many academic fields under different descriptions, oftentimes aligned with terms such as 'Otherness' and 'the Other'. Out of these debates I want to introduce the term 'Othering' as the description of a process. Brons (2015) describes it as "*the simultaneous construction of the self or*

in-group and the other or out-group in mutual and unequal opposition through identification of some desirable characteristic that the self/in-group has and the other/out-group lacks [...]" (Brons 2015: 70). This sets up an implicit relationship around superiority of some kind. Lajos Brons observes the root for this notion in the literature of Hegel and then later Simone De Beauvoir, where it is used to describe class identification (Brons 2015: 69). This concept of creating one's own identity on the base of differentiating oneself from the other has been successfully applied in many debates.

In the post-colonial debate, Othering appears most notably in Edward Said's work "Orientalism" (1978), where he describes that Orientalism as a science, is a particularly Western way of looking and decrypting the Orient with regards to scholars of the 19th century. There he criticizes that the images and descriptions of the Orient are gathered without reflection on existing biases through colonialism and western imperialism. Existing research represents the Self or the Occident as it sees the Other or Orient, as the Self is privileged and has the upper hand in defining, describing and reconstructing what the Orient itself means. The West speaks for the Orient about the Orient (Said 1978: 43). With this process of Othering, the colonizing Westerners dehumanize the Oriental, depicting it as the strange Other. The differentiating dichotomy of the "us" and "them" is directly created by the ideological understanding of the people forming the thought. By creating the Other, the "us" strengthens their own identity and defines its difference, and at the same time, its own superiority. For Said, Orientalism helped define the European self-image, putting their own identity, ideas and culture as superior to all the outside ones (Said 1978: 7). The Other has no own position, put always remains in the position in which it only serves to reaffirm one's own understanding of the self.

Philosophers and critics, such as Sartre or Fanon have flipped this process of Othering and the creation of a self-image back onto the colonized. For the purpose of gaining self-determination, they connected anti-colonial violence as a prerequisite in finding and creating the Other, through which the own identity can be constructed. The moment of violent resistance becomes the birth of identity (Le Sueur 2001: 217). The key specificity of the post-colonial iteration of Othering is the already mentioned trauma of repression, genocides and inferiority, which evokes the need for a violent cleansing of all present 'Otherness' (Le Sueur 2001: 229).

Othering also appears in the nation-building debates of Taras Kuzio (2001). Geographically and thematically closer to the Polish case, he describes the need for Othering in the creation of national identity in Ukraine (and by proxy also other post-soviet states), by distancing the 'Self' of

Ukraine from the 'Other', Russia, which, through its history, is a threat to the identity of Ukraine (Kuzio 2001: 345). The key factor of the 'national identity'-Othering is the generally non-violent differentiation through construction of culture and history that emphasizes the dichotomy. The Other has to be more defined than the Self. It has to show a precise image by either language or historical myths that portray the past and let it connect with the present (Kuzio 2001: 347).

The two examples of Othering in theory differ slightly, but keep two common factors: The emphasis on a dichotomy of the 'Self' and the 'Other' and the construction of the dichotomy is the attempt of a creation of identity. In the post-colonial debate this dichotomy was pan-national, with the struggle existing between the 'Self' and the 'Other' representing entire continents. In Kuzio's nation-building it was the dichotomy as a national category, between the newly independent states as the 'Self' and the neighboring countries as the 'Other'.

Following this thought I want to propose the concept of populist Othering, in which we move from a national to a category of community. Populists see the 'Other' in the political system they operate in themselves. The 'Self' are the 'pure people' and the 'Other' are the 'corrupt elites' and their followers, the liars and fools. Populism is not defined by brutality and a tendency to violence yet, though some of the brutal rhetoric employed against the opposing political parties or media does hint at it (Müller 2016: 63). It also is not any other criteria, such as charismatic leadership, specific political programs or a certain understanding of morality and society that create populism. Maybe the key distinguishing factor for the category of populist Othering is this exact ambiguity and lack of singular distinguishment, which reflects in the crisis of identity that contemporary populist parties tap into for their success (Krastev 2017: 100).

Populist Othering should, when used in this research, signify the process of creating an image or myth for the purpose of constructing, which can also be destroying and reworking, an identity, which emphasizes the core belief of all populists, namely that only they represent the 'pure people', the 'Self'. Applying this to the case of Poland should be the test for this dissertation.

Before I can move to that topic though, I need to re-examine my research question and goals of this dissertation, with which I want to extract the underlying theoretical question I pose in this research. As my research question itself deals with the case of the Prawo I Sprawiedliwość in Poland, I want to pose a question, removed from the case. This becomes especially important when the question of the applicability of this research's framework towards other cases in Europe, is asked. This kind of theoretical variant of my research question does not replace my actual central

research, namely the case, but I want to open with the debate for theoretical cohesion in this chapter.

This means, when I ask “Why is the Smolensk Myth so important for the PiS?”, I also aim to question the role of myths in contemporary populist parties.

But after handling theoretical explanations of populism and myth, can these two even be discussed on equal, theoretical, footing? I would argue that next to the practical connection, which I already have to accept as plausible to even ask the research question, there is also an epistemological connection.

The practical connection between the two is centered on a very simple factor, namely identity. This connection of myth and populism appears in many definitions of modern populist movements, as they are calling out to the confused voters that are in search for a new and simpler political identity that conforms with their scared interpretation of politics, representation and the world (Krastev 2017: 95). Taggart (2000) makes this exact connection in his point about the politics of the heartland. When populists invoke 'the people' as a rhetorical device, they rely on an implicit conception of an imaginative heartland, where the unified and virtuous population resides. This heartland is never based, like ideologies, on future Utopian projection, but rather on a constructed ideal society of the past, laden with morals and ethics that are corrupted in the present and should be reverted to those of the romantic past. In a sense it constitutes an idea of a pure identity, bound to being part of 'the people', unified homogeneous residents of the heavily interpreted and imagined times gone by (Taggart 2000: 95). This relates exactly to definitions of myth presented in the preceding chapter, in which names, places and meanings are re-imagined to fit a purpose and function. “*They are sacred, and they are believed, and it is impossible to deny or to criticize them, [...]*” (Kaschuba 2000: 218), is the defining motivation of populist politics' anti-pluralism. Just like foundation myths set the basic parameters for the construction of nation (White 2000: 51), populist can use it to construct their identification group, 'the people'. 'The pure people' are populism's biggest myth, with the purpose being what Müller (2014), describes as “*extracting the people from within the people*”

This also warrants what I want to describe as the epistemological connection. Both the definitions of populism, as well as memory and myth, base their explanations on the constructivist understanding of identity. This is not meant to give a definite classification on theoretical use of both, as both fields of research range far and wide (Patzelt 2007: 493). Again, I want to show that both the debates on populism, myth and memory are rooted in the same surroundings of political

theory. No matter if the specific explanation used is legitimization theory, phenomenology or discourse theory, the always appearing methods of reasoning and interpretation are construction and deconstruction.

Method

After setting my research question and laying the theoretical foundation for this dissertation, this chapter is dedicated to methodology. This is not restricted to a simple explanation of my use of material, but rather a thorough account of how I actively approached the research. Firstly, I want to describe my thought-process behind the choice of methodologies and the preliminary ideas that went into it. The second point I want to address is a thorough look at the method of analysis itself and why my choice stands out over other possible research designs. This is very important as the setup of this dissertation does not lend itself to a straight up empirical analysis or other. I strongly believe that the mixed method I applied and will explain here, gives me the best answer for my research question and grants the greatest value to the academic debate it exists in. Although I firmly believe that, I accept that there can and will be criticism of my decision and as such my goal is to offer the most insight into the methodology as possible, to give the methodological discourse the best possible foundation. In the next part I will present my sources and materials in use for this dissertation, as well as the process of gathering and evaluating them. In the last part I want to write in detail about my experiences in the methodological work, especially in the field in Warsaw.

The probably hardest question surrounding the Smolensk catastrophe is how to properly capture its impact and role in Polish politics today. The word “capture” has two meanings in this question, namely 'to understand' and 'to measure', which exposes the twofold character of the whole challenge. The answer to the first example, namely 'to understand' Smolensk, I already prefaced by introducing the theoretical concepts, that I aim to apply to the contextual story which constitutes the case of Smolensk, in the previous chapters: populism, historical myths and identity. In the other interpretation of the question, the 'to capture' takes on the role of 'to measure', precisely to physically record the role of Smolensk in Polish society. As data collection is not the only part of what constitutes a method, I will re-examine the build and role of the dissertation with the underlying goal of this research, before I go into detail on the data.

The key factor that influenced my decision-making on how to capture all dimensions of Smolensk, is how it constitutes a reality for the PiS, which means it is an event that critically impacts Poland's history and plays the key role in the world view of the currently most powerful political party in Poland. For people outside of Poland, who check in on Polish politics with only a quick glance, the extent to which Smolensk dominates the political discourse, is really hard to understand. This was the broader motivating factor that moved me to cover this topic. I wanted to present and prepare questions which allowed me to properly examine and illustrate the vast extent of Smolensk's

impact on Poland. This made the choice of how to approach this topic very important and difficult, as I wanted to apply the best possible design that reflected my ambition. I was faced with the task of how to construct a question and thesis that has the capability of capturing Smolensk as a Polish reality, permeating all layers of society, but most importantly, Polish politics. As my design changed multiple times, I decided to narrow down my perspective to the most important actor whose success is closely bound to the resonance of the traumatic event, the PIS under Jarosław Kaczyński. I believe that understanding what role Smolensk plays in the Law and Justice party, means grasping the broad reality the catastrophe, and ultimately traumatic history, plays in Poland. Under this conviction I built and designed this dissertation and with it, the choice of methods employed in writing and analysis.

The way I set out to achieve this, is reflected in the design of this dissertation, which is as followed. To answer my research question I present a theory, with which I then create a theoretical framework. This framework is applied to a case, which I present fully through the context (history, actors, etc.) of the case, and a final analysis formed.

Whereas for the Theory, all of the material used is literature and academic research, the context information that builds the case is captured through a multitude of material that was gathered throughout the research. This is what I want to explain in the next part of this chapter by describing how the material was collected and how I work with it.

The first focus of the data used is secondary material. All secondary material is categorized and as such underwent a basic form of document analysis, to create a system that allows me to approach this vast heap of data. These categories incorporate academic and journalistic publications and literature, news articles and media, video recordings, transcripts, sourced reports, party and partisan publications and independent publications. The method of document analysis is probably the most classic way of dealing with material classified as documents in a both quantitative and qualitative way. As this dissertation's research question is not focused on empirical analysis of specific data or documents themselves, but rather uses those documents to describe all aspects of the Smolensk myth in the *Prawo I Sprawiedliwość*, the method itself is not the focal point. Nonetheless I have to describe how I used my data, which I will do, but I just wanted to explain once again that the method of analysis of individual documents or other forms of data is not the center of the research, but rather a vehicle to view and fund observations on Polish society. As such, only minimal forms of categorizing and coding where used on documents, to not only enable easier access and use over the big collection of them, but also to capture the character of each

document. The documents were organized deductively, as the knowledge on what categories of documents I expect are already defined by my own experience of the research and the theoretical framework of what is analyzed (Patzelt 2007: 149). Obviously I approached newspaper articles and, for example, video material, which includes independent and anonymous recordings of either TV, online media or actual live footage of speeches and events, differently. For newspaper and media one of the more important categories of analysis is obviously the source analysis, as finding and interpreting the source outlet's political and societal foundation in Poland has a huge impact on the coverage. This holds especially true to the tightly controlled state media. For videos I mainly use footage of speeches and TV coverage for which surely the source is important, but rather it gives me the opportunity to focus specifically on what certain actors and subjects of my research say. A video recording of, for example, Kaczyński from an event gives me the opportunity to see and hear him, without traveling to Warsaw on a monthly basis. All of the data is ultimately used in combination to enhance and add to the academic literature used as the target of what I aim to answer in this dissertation does not exist in this form in any singular document category, but rather in little bits and pieces in all of them.

Besides the aggregation and evaluation of documents, the second method employed was an open participatory observation in Warsaw between the 9th and 11th of November 2017, where I observed and documented the monthly memorial event of Smolensk (pol.: *Miesięcznica Smoleńska*), organized by the Law and Justice party and a diverse group of politically aligned civil organizations, such as the "*Kluby Gazety Polskiej*" (Clubs of *Gazeta Polska*). My goal going into it was to experience and document the event, not only to gain more detailed information about it, but also to involve myself, meet the people attending it and to further understand the role of the PiS in the entire procedure of the event. The design for this was very straightforward and followed two simple principles. The first one is that the observations where open or overt. I did not disguise myself as a participant, but rather openly admitted to being a researcher. The second principle I followed was that it was participatory, which means I partook, as much as I could, in the activities of the observed event. In this kind of observation of a memorial event the line between strictly participatory and strictly non-participatory cannot properly be defined, as not too many activities exist in such a march or manifestation that demand active participation or give the possibility to not interact and sit on the sidelines. As such, and because I moved around the premises with a distinct camera with a large microphone attached, my choice to actively move around, talk to people and answer questions and concerns that some might have towards me, made it have

characteristics of both participatory and non-participatory. What tips the balance in my method to participatory is that I chose to engage in the few distinct activities that were possible, such as lighting candles in the church, donating 10 Złoty to the "Public Committee for the Construction of Monuments dedicated to President Lech Kaczyński as well as the Victims of the Smolensk Tragedy in 2010" (*Komitet Społeczny Budowy Pomników: śp. Prezydenta RP Lecha Kaczyńskiego oraz Ofiar Tragedii Smoleńskiej 2010 roku*) and marching with the group of participants of the manifestation, which was cordoned off by fences and the police from regular people walking the streets, tourists and counter-demonstrators. These activities might seem very meaningless in the scope of how far participation can go, but these trivial actions soothed my integration into the crowd of participants, giving me opportunities to engage in dialogue and ask questions, as well as give me a more detailed perspective of what it entails to truly believe and care for Smolensk in the way the people partaking there on a monthly basis do. Additionally the only further things I could have done to participate more was laying down flowers, singing the polish anthem and different marching songs, as well as the chanting of different insults (at demonstrators), demands (such as putting Tusk into prison) and collective appreciations ("Thank You"s to Kaczyński), which were not mandatory, not undertaken by all participants and scenes that I chose not to be a part of. The video material was sighted by me and I cut it into a short video which is uploaded to Youtube and accessible to everyone (Ksiazek 2018). This video contains all important and quoted scenes from the observation on the 9th and 10th of November 2017. For the 11th of November 2017, the day of the right-wing march of independence, I have published a separate video (Ksiazek 2017) as covering the march was not part of this exact research. After each day of observation, I have written down all of my observations very broadly in a small field report.

The Smolensk Connection

Before an analysis can be conducted, the contextual information for the topic at hand has to be presented. This chapter is dedicated to all of the necessary information to be able to thoroughly understand the case of the Smolensk catastrophe and the PiS party in Poland. Here I want to talk about the recent history of Polish democracy after 1989 and all aspects that can and do influence the analysis.

I want to start by capturing the story of the plane crash near Smolensk on April 10th 2010. This includes information predating it, accounts and reports of the day of the accident itself and the events that followed the crash nationally and internationally. This examination is focused on the reception of the incident over time in media, politics and the public debate.

After examining the case, I want to present the actors that appear throughout and whose viewpoints matter. This means I will elaborate on the history of the Law and Justice party with a focus on the Kaczyński brothers and the most notorious party members. As the Law and Justice party is not the only organization involved in the debate, I will examine the positions of other important actors in Poland and in relation to this event specifically other political parties and figures, the church and activist groups, like the far-right in Poland, NGOs and individual demonstrators to name a few.

In the final part before the analysis I want to examine the construction surrounding the active memory of Smolensk, including institutions, memorial events and all forms of monuments constructed in Poland and around the world. In relation to the memorial events I want to take a close look at the chronology of the now almost hundred monthly memorials that have been conducted since 2010.

The goal of this chapter is to present the case example of this dissertation and set the, frankly very deep and layered, context for analysis. It is this chapter that builds the second foundation, next to the theory, for the entire research conducted here.

The Course of the Catastrophe

But what exactly happened during this fatal and historic tragedy to turn it so highly political? This first look at the exact chronology of the crash and its reception is aimed to answer that and present a picture from multiple angles, as far is it possible to do so, because at many points the accounts of the accident vary and, as time progressed, drifted more and more apart. Here I will not try to paint

truth against supposed lie, but rather try to examine what individual steps led this event to twist itself so much. My central line of argument will be that mistakes, incompetence and political motivations at many stages of coming to terms with the events, made it possible for something, which is very much able to be investigated, to leave reality and transcend into the realm of, now almost ancient, historical mythology.

When the Presidential Polish Air Force One, a Tupolew Tu-154M aircraft, left the Frederic-Chopin Airport in Warsaw on the cold morning of April the 10th, 2010 to fly to Smolensk, nobody foresaw the tragic event that would occur. To reconstruct the history of the flight, I will mainly use the two official investigation reports, one Polish and one Russian, and include local times, as used in news media and local reports, and the UTC time from the investigations to have a comparable measure between the time-zones. Warsaw is +2 hours UTC and Moscow +4 hours UTC. Before president Lech Kaczyński and his wife Maria boarded the plane, the flight crew arrived, was briefed and gathered to await passengers at 6:21 local time (4:21 UTC). A couple of hours before on the same day, the Tu-154M was maintained and cleared for use. The scheduled time for takeoff was 7:00 local time (5:00 UTC), but Kaczyński and his wife, the last passengers to board the flight, arrived later and as such the lift off occurred at 7:27. On board of the plane were 96 passengers total, of which 8 were flight attendants and crew (KBWLLP 2011: 12). The crew was experienced, especially the thirty-six-year-old pilot, Arkadiusz Protasiuk, who had 2937 active flying hours with the Tupolew and was speaking Russian very well. The president's suite, in which Lech and Maria Kaczyński sat in, was right behind the cockpit (Roth 2015: 11). The presidential Tu-154M was accompanied by a Yakovlev Yak-40 passenger jet, also owned by the government, which carried additional personnel and journalists. The Yak-40 took off an hour before the Tu-154M and reached Smolensk North Airport while the weather was becoming increasingly worse. Meanwhile the Tu-154M passed Minsk and was informed for the first time about the bad weather conditions in Smolensk, there being thick fog of 400-meter visibility. When it reached Russian Airspace it got in contact with a control tower in Moscow and later Smolensk North directly, who both repeated the announcement on the heavy fog and advised not to attempt landing. The commander of the Tu-154M asked for permission to attempt landing anyways and it was granted (KBWLLP 2011: 12). The Tupolew, now on course to land in Smolensk North, was contacted by the Captain of the Yak-40. It was informed that the fog, now getting thicker, had only 200-meter visibility and the cloud base was far below 50 meters, meaning the fog would not clear through the whole landing process. Further the captain of the Yak reported about a Illuszyn-76 commercial plane which attempted to

land on Smolensk North after the Yak and, after two attempts, had to change course to a landing strip in Moscow (KBWLLP 2011: 13, MAK 2011: 18). This information was relayed to the flight commander, diplomatic protocol director and president on board, who should make a decision on further proceedings (KBWLLP 2011: 15). At about 10:30 (6:30 UTC) a decision on landing was made. This is the first highly debated point in the reconstruction of the accident and one vehemently fought by both conspiracy theorists and others, because no report finds out, from where the directive to land comes. While the Russian MAK report does not concern itself with any information about the inside of the plane, the Polish KBWLLP report makes it seem that someone actively made the decision to attempt to land, by claiming that there were passengers inside the captain's cockpit at that time (KBWLLP 2011: 15). Both reports though agree on the course of the crash. The Tupolew missed the landing strip due to low visibility, leaving it about 1400 meters away from the runway and about 70 meters below the required glide path to reach it. In simpler terms, the plane tried to land too early. When it reached the ground and the treetops from the forest nearby came into the view, a last attempt to lift the plane was made by the pilot, activating the auto-pilot for lift off. The military airport Smolensk North did not have an autopilot system which the pilot noticed after a couple of seconds and tried to gain height manually. This caused the plane to fly at treetop level with a speed of 260km/h. The branches and tree trunks proved too much of an obstacle, ripping off a third of the left wing. This caused the Tu-154M to overturn and crash into the ground 700 meters from the runway at 10:41 (6:41 UTC) (KBWLLP 2011, MAK 2011).

> *“In the aftermath of the crash, all persons on board the aircraft lost their lives on the spot.” - KBWLLP 2011: 15*

The accident's timing proves even more tragic. The delegation from Poland that lost their lives in this flight was on their way to Smolensk to visit a historical commemoration. April 2010 marked the 70th anniversary of the Katyń massacre, an event highly significant to Polish history of the 20th century. In April 1940, by order of Stalin, the Soviet Security Apparatus killed 4.500 Polish officers, who were captured after the invasion of East-Polish territories in 1939, in the forests near Katyń. This was part of a large scale operation by the Soviet Politburo to eliminate Polish elites in the occupied territories, which included today's Belarus and Ukraine. After German forces invaded the Soviet Union and captured the territories surrounding Smolensk, which entails Katyń, they uncovered the mass-graves in 1943 and identified the victims. In a campaign to shift the focus from their own genocidal activities, they published their horrifying discovery. The Soviet Union denied

the atrocity and blamed Nazi-Germany instead, claiming to know the Germans murdered the Polish officers in 1941, but the evidence published by the Germans left little room to relief the Soviet Elite from the blame (Przewoźnik 2010: 24). This was only strengthened when in the Nuremberg Processes in 1945/1946 the Soviet prosecutors included the Katyń massacre in the indictment of the Nazi-Elite, but was silently left out in the verdict. Additionally, the ranger that the Soviet forces later suspected to have alerted the Germans about the mass graves was sentenced to internment for 25 years. Poland experienced the massacre as a traumatic experience, as the allies silently ignored the incident and followed the Soviet narrative during the war as to not endanger the Anti-Hitler-Alliance. After the war, Katyń remained a strain on Polish-Soviet relations as the People's Republic of Poland had to accept the Soviet narrative, although it was widely known in Poland to be a lie (Pilawski et al. 2016: 103). This schizophrenic situation was only partially relieved when between 1987 and 1990 Wojciech Jaruzelski, first head of state and later president of Poland, and Mikhail Gorbatschev slowly worked together on clearing stains from the shared history. This way Jaruzelski slowly forced Gorbatschev to finally in 1990 admit Soviet guilt, though the blame was mostly shifted on Stalinism and a shared victimhood of Poles and Russians shaped the narrative presented in official statements. In the next years the full scope of the Soviet murders would surface, amounting fully to 22.500 Polish victims, mostly soldiers and officers mobilized in 1939, buried in many mass graves around western Russia, Belarus and Ukraine (Pilawski et al. 2016: 104).

April 2010 would not only mark the 70th anniversary, but also the first time Polish and Russian authorities would commemorate the massacre together. For this purpose, Donald Tusk, the then Prime Minister of Poland and chairman of the Civic Platform (Platforma Obywatelska, PO), traveled to Katyń to meet with Vladimir Putin, at that time Prime Minster of the Russian Federation, and held a speech on April the 7th 2010, at the site of the mass graves in the forests (Borowska et al. 2010). It was there that the infamous pictures of Donald Tusk and Vladimir Putin shaking hands, smiling and having one on one conversations by themselves were taken, which later accompanied all conspiracy theories as proof of plotting the crash. On the 10th of April a larger commemoration with Lech Kaczński was planned where he would first commemorate all victims of the NKVD at the Russian memorial site and later hold a speech at the Polish War Cemetery, which was built and financed by the representatives of the Katyn Families, an organization representing relatives of Polish victims. It was this organization, together with Russian local authorities, that invited

Kaczyński to this specific commemoration (prezydent.pl 2010a). The event on the 7th of April was the one of Putin and Tusk, but the 10th belonged to Kaczyński and would give him the opportunity to speak at an important diplomatic event, although Tusk, Putin and Medvedev would not be attending it. Without reading too much into the situation, Donald Tusk and lech Kaczyński acting separately was nothing new or uncommon, as the political rivalry was heated after the 2007 elections. Kaczyński's speech would have used much of the same soothing diplomatic tone that Tusk offered 3 days earlier, which is known from a later publication of the pre-written speech. Under the title “Freedom and Truth” Lech Kaczyński was going to speak about the atrocities of communism and Poland's tragic and heroic history from 1920 onward, which are rather typical for these events with the focus on the lies and evil that was communism under Stalin and Beria. The one detail standing out is that he was also going to speak about Russian, Ukrainian and Belorussian victims in and around Katyn in the same sentence as the Polish, similar to what Tusk said days earlier, which shows the general tendency in Poland and Europe at that time to have a friendly and diplomatic approach to Russia (Kaczyński 2010a). But as we know, this speech was never held and the delegation that was supposed to be in Katyn never reached its attempted destination.

The crash was first noticed by the radio tower operators in Smolensk who, after hearing the crash and asking for the callsign (an answer from the Tupolev) multiple times, relayed the information that something happened to the authorities at the airport. It is then that the first response units made their way from the airport off of Runway 26 in search of the plane. At the same time news of complications in landing, yet unconfirmed, reached the diplomatic attaché, Polish security officers and news reporters at the airport who inform the minister of foreign affairs in Warsaw, Radosław Sikorski and the different news channels (wiadomosci.wp.pl 2010a). According to phone recordings of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, published in 2012 after PiS allegations that Sikorski knew of the crash before it happened, the certain death of Lech Kaczyński and all the passengers of the flight was confirmed by the diplomatic attaché on the crash site to Radosław Sikorski over the phone through the operational center of the MSZ (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) at 9:10 Polish time (7:10 UTC) (tvn24.pl 2010a). At the same time the firefighting operations were still ongoing. TV news channels and radio stations in Poland all interrupted their broadcasts around 9:30 (7:30 UTC) to break the news of Lech Kaczyński's plane crash, but could not confirm the death of anyone as journalists were not allowed to get close to the crash site. This was the first instance of broad public confusion surrounding this case, as all different TV and radio stations were broadcasting

every rumor that reached them and which had to be corrected later. For example, the state run TVP Info broadcast assumed that the passengers of the Tupolev must be alive, because they thought their reporter, who told them about the complications, was also a passenger of the Tupolev. Another rumor spreading around TV Stations was that both Kaczyński brothers were on the same plane (Studio TVP Info 2010). Around 10:30 (8:30 UTC) Polish TV channels changed the headline they were broadcasting to '*Prezydent nie żyje*' ('The president is dead') and confirmed to the public the death of Lech Kaczyński and the other 95 passengers of the Tupolev Tu-154M. At the same time people started gathering at the presidential palace in Warsaw, laying down flowers and lighting candles (wiadomosci.wp.pl 2010b). A 9-day mourning period was announced and Donald Tusk immediately traveled to Smolensk (landing at a different airport) to meet Vladimir Putin at the crash site. It is here that the emotional pictures of Putin and Tusk laying down flowers and hugging each other were taken. This reflected the general mood during the first days after the catastrophe: Poles and Russians united in mourning. Many political analysts saw it as a uniting opportunity for the chilly political division in Poland and between Poland and Russia (PISM 2010: 17). Dimitri Medvedev officially addressed the Polish people, offering heartfelt sympathy and announcing national mourning in Russia, something usually unheard of for foreign dignitaries. Additional gestures of sympathy towards Poland included giving up official Soviet documents on the Katyn massacre and showing the historical drama Film "Katyń" by Andrzej Wajda, which was previously restricted in distribution, on Russian state television (Ćwiek-Karpowicz 2011: 32).

In the evening after Putin and Tusk left the scene of the crash, the Russian investigation team consisting of military and civilian aviation experts of the Interstate Aviation Committee (In Russian: Межгосударственный авиационный комитет, Short: MAK) opened an investigation into the cause of the accident. The 'State Commission of the MAK', as it is referred to in official documents, was announced in the late evening of April 10th 2010 under the chairmanship of the president of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, who vowed that the state commission will cooperate with Polish officials during the investigation. The classification of the crash was agreed upon by Donald Tusk and Vladimir Putin as a civilian flight accident, putting it under the jurisdiction of Russian investigators and the MAK. This was at that time not broadly questioned and internationally also accepted. In the near future, this decision would be challenged, as the presidential plane was flying under Polish military code, but for the time being did not cause any significant uproar. Military classification would alert international attention and draw in a thorough international commission, but would also put Russian investigators at a discomfort, giving them the possibility to block and

drag the investigation out and definitely cause international friction. The decision to make it a civilian case for Russia, under the guarantee that Polish investigators had a right to join, was welcomed by both sides as a fast and cooperative solution (Imielski 2010).

The days of national mourning in Poland were symbolized by crowds of people gathering around places like the Presidential Palace in Warsaw and churches and laying down flowers or lighting candles. Collective mourning of the victims of the crash created a seemingly conciliatory atmosphere that united the Polish population. Dorota Szeligowska, analyzing the public debate in the days after the catastrophe, calls it a "*time of silent reflection and commemoration*" (Szeligowska 2014: 489). In all of Poland cultural events were cancelled and cinemas and theaters closed, netting some places a financial loss during that time. TV Stations of all political leanings devoted a large share of the broadcast discussing the catastrophe. The theme's explored on TV were analysis of information regarding the travel details of Lech Kaczyński and the Tu-154M, the trickling news on the causes of the crash and eulogies of the victims. The narrative in the media changed drastically from the days before the crash, as the reporting highlighted Lech Kaczyński much more positively than before. Szeligowska compares this period of national mourning to a Reality TV Show, consuming the minds of every Polish citizen (Szeligowska 2014: 490). Cameras from the entire world were pointed at the grieving faces of Poles in the streets. TV presenters almost cried on air, guests would walk out mid-program in sorrow. (Serbanescu 2010: 248)

The crowds laying down the seas of candles and flowers, to stand vigil to the deceased as an impervious symbol of unity in grief, went as pictures around the world (Murawski 2011: 5). Political commentators and politicians in Poland unilaterally interpreted these crowds as a manifestation of a unified '*naród*', for which the closest translation in English would be 'the people', but would not exclude uses for nation, a more ethnic definition, and society, a more civic one. What they meant specifically differed though, depending on their political view. Conservative interpretations of the crowds in front of the presidential palace ran along the lines of a formation of a mourning Polish nation and as a moment which could finally break the communist heritage oftentimes attributed to the Third Republic. This argument is a common narrative argued in the *Prawo I Sprawiedliwość* (Szeligowska 2014: 492). The liberal interpretation, mostly echoed in left leaning newspapers such as the Gazeta Wyborcza, saw it as a proof of stronger civil and democratic societies in Poland, which can turn the usually passive citizen into a participant of the public (Szeligowska 2014: 491).

This unity did not last long though and soon enough multiple public crises would emerge, polarizing Polish society and creating the atmosphere that is so emblematic of Poland's internal

issues today.

Three days after the crash, on April the 13th, Cardinal Stanisław Dziwisz announced publicly that he, in talks with Jarosław Kaczyński, had taken the decision to bury Lech Kaczyński and his wife Maria in the Wawel Castle in Cracow. This would mean that Lech Kaczyński would be granted the highest honor, buried as a hero of Poland next to Polish kings, such as Stefan Batory, Zygmunt III Waza or Jan III Sobieski, and national heroes, such as Tadeusz Kościuszko, Józef Piłsudski or Władysław Sikorski. Sikorski himself was echoed as being close to Lech Kaczyński as he died in the Gibraltar plane tragedy of 1943, which would later be viewed with a similar mystery as the Smolensk crash. Cardinal Dziwisz hoped to preserve this atmosphere of unity with his decision, but rather achieved the extreme opposite (Szeligowska 2014: 492). When the decision to bury Lech Kaczyński in the Wawel crypt reached the public, it immediately brought about a storm of protest in front of the Cardinals residence in Cracow and the Wawel castle. The opposition to the burial argued that Lech Kaczyński never achieved anything in his career that would give him the right to the buried with heroes and leaders of Poland. Left-wing media criticized the overly quick decision to bury the remnants of Kaczyński without a public debate on a proper reasoning (Szeligowska 2014: 493). Another argument, which would prove very true in the future, formulated the fear that burying Kaczyński beside national figures that stood out due to their historical achievements, would not only elevate his very average, with some arguing less than average, term as president, but also elevate the persona of Lech Kaczyński himself to the level of national hero (tygodnikprzeglad.pl 2010). Before Cardinal Dziwisz broke with his announcement the Chancellery of the President signaled that the family of Lech Kaczyński wanted them to be buried at the Powązki cemetery in Warsaw, where many other accomplished Poles were buried. Other possible places were the crypt in Warsaw's Arch-cathedral, buried next to other accomplished Poles such as Gabriel Narutowicz, the first democratically elected president (Uhlig 2010). Criticism of the Wawel burial in liberal-left media such as the *Gazeta Wyborcza*, *Krytyka Polityczna* or *Przegląd*, to name a few, led to a rebuttal and opposition from conservative media, such as the newspapers *Rzeczpospolita*, *Gość niedzielny* and *Wprost.* This is the first event after the tragic accident that displayed the disastrous division in Polish society that seems to have no ability to unite, but rather only seeks to exclude. As such this was also the first moment where around a political figure such as Lech Kaczyński a part of the population, namely the one protesting the burial at the Wawel crypt, was called unpatriotic and treasonous. For the conservative representatives defending the burial elevated the church above the state administration, as during the whole debate, from start

to finish, an eerie absence of political officials was observed. Rather the church and conservative media outlets stepped up as decision-makers and guardians over the coffin of the deceased president. Conservatives implied that whoever was challenging the decision of the burial, or just criticized the former president, was immediately excluded from the community. Any form of criticism was hit by the "mourning blackmail" to force to mourn the president, because when a person is being mourned they cannot be criticized (Szeligowska 2014: 495).

The burial became a nationwide event, going on for two days, the 17th and 18th of April. It started in Warsaw on the first day with the casket driving through the city, a goodbye at the military cemetery and a final prayer before it was flown to Cracow late at night. The next day, the 18th, the ceremony was repeated in Cracow, before they were brought to the Wawel Castle crypt and buried, with Cardinal Dziwisz leading the proceedings. According to news sources over one hundred thousand people gathered at and around the castle to join in the ceremonies. Notable guests included Dimitrii Medvedev, Sergej Lavrov, Wiktor Yanukovich, Wiktor Yushchenko, Julia Timoshenko, Viktor Orban, Vaclav Klaus, Michail Saakashvili, Horst Köhler and Guido Westerwelle, as well as plenty other heads and representatives of countries. The list of invitees included practically every head of nation in the world, but most guests could not arrive at the burial, because the eruption of Icelandic volcano Eyjafjöll released a gigantic cloud of volcanic ash which paralyzed international aviation (Borowska et al. 2010). Criticism after the burial did not stop, as public opinion through polls shifted from 49% approving the event in the first days after the burial (se.pl 2010a), to more than 2⁄3rd of the questioned thinking it was a mistake a year later and onward (Saba 2012). In August 2010 PiS officials in Cracow called upon a boycott of the Polish brewing group Kompania Piwowarska S.A. in connection to the Wawel crypt and the buried Lech and Maria Kaczyński. Across the Vistula River, on the opposite side of the Wawel Castle, the Brewing Group put up a gigantic advertisement for their Brand of 'Lech' Beer existing since 1992, which stated "Thirsty for Emotions? Cold Lech" *("Spragniony Wrażeń? Zimny Lech."*), on an empty Hotel serving as a billboard. Ryszard Czarnecki, European MP for the PiS, and Marek Migalski, also of the PiS, both initiated the boycott and called for protest, claiming the company put up the commercial in bad will and brazen greed. Reluctantly, after weeks of media coverage of the dispute, the company took down the billboard advertisement claiming the campaign cycle for the advertisement has ended. It replaced the old billboard with a new one advertising Powerade Energy Drinks with the slogan "Rise and Relive" ("Powstań I ożyj"), which only evoked mild protest (tvn24.pl 2010b).

The second public event to display a major split in the Polish society actually turned violent, dominated political and public discourse much longer, specifically half a year, and was dubbed by media “the battle for the cross” (tvn24.pl 2010c) and “the war of the cross” (wpolityce.pl 2010a).
During the 8-day national mourning period, on the 15th of April 2010, a youth scout organization erected, among the sea of flowers and candles, a wooden cross in front of the Presidential Palace in Warsaw's Krakowskie Przedmieście. Nailed to the cross was a plea from the youth scouts to the government and the public to erect a monument commemorating the 96 victims of the Smolensk catastrophe at this very position. A month after the catastrophe, on May the 10th a group consisting of PiS-politicians and parliamentarians of different fractions, as well as members of the Chancellary of the president came to lay down flowers and light candles in front of the Presidential Palace and the cross (se.pl 2010b). A dispute over the cross started after the presidential elections ended in the beginning of July 2010. Bronisław Komorowski, the newly elected Polish president from the liberal-conservative Platforma Obywatelska (PO – Civic Platform), confirmed in an interview what has already been asked for by parts of the Warsaw public, namely to move the cross. Komorowski argued in the Gazeta Wyborcza, that “*the cross, as far as understood, was put up in the emotion of mourning, but that period has ended and this case has to be corrected. The cross is a religious symbol and as such will be, in cooperation with the governing bodies of the church, transported to a different, better suited place*.” (Komorowski 2010). This answer was discussed heavily in the next days among church and public authorities, who came out with different propositions, such as transporting the cross to the Powązki cemetery or St. John's Arch-cathedral in Warsaw's Old Town. PiS officials such as Zbigniew Ziobro, Member of the European Parliament, or Jarosław Kaczyński have condemned Komorowski's decision and stated that this only shows on which side of Polish history he stands, implying that he is a cowardly traitor (se.pl 2010b). In the catholic church this dispute is continued between the local Archdiocese in Warsaw, trying to help relocate the cross, and Father Rydzyk of the catholic ultraconservative Radio Maryja, a beneficiary of Jarosław Kaczyński, arguing for the cross to be kept there (wpolitce.pl 2010a). Father Rydzyk at that time is also responsible for the mobilization of crowds of followers, who are starting to dub themselves ‘Guardians of the Cross’ (‘*Obrońcy Krzyża*’). This ultra-catholic group of mostly pensioners, following Rydzyk's call, would hold vigils and light candles next to the cross, staying most day and night at the Krakowskie Przedmieście in Front of the cross (se.pl 2010c). End of June an agreement was settled between the Archdiocese, the presidential office and the youth scouts to relocate the cross to St.Anne's Church approximately 300 meters away from the

presidential palace, still on the Krakowskie Przedmieście. The date for the relocation was set to August 3rd and the presidential office tried to turn it into a commemorative event of carrying the cross by a national guard of honor. This plan was quickly condemned by the '*Obrońcy Krzyża*', PiS members and the Rydzyk side of the catholic church. The night before the 3rd of August, the police set up barricades around the cross to block off the defenders in the morning. At sunset a small group of defenders got to the cross through the barricades and refused to be moved when police arrived. As the day progressed hundreds of 'Guardians' arrived at the barricades. A massive police and military presence had to be summoned to keep them from breaking the barricades. In the early afternoon scouts and pastors from the Archdiocese of Warsaw arrived to ceremonially move the cross to St. Anne's Church, but were stopped in front of it by the 20 or so people defending it, surrounded by police. On the opposite side, behind the barricades, hundreds of people demanding the cross be kept there, mostly organized through the '*Radio Maryja'* community of father Rydzyk, were trying to push through the police to get to the cross. Upon seeing the priests and scouts, the defenders behind the barricades started hurling insults and cursing at them, with some praying for their 'misguided souls'. As the situation grew direr, the priests had to withdraw, before the line of policemen was broken and some people got into scuffles with the police. The youth scouts, praised until the day before for putting up the cross, were attacked and labeled traitors. Police forces had to resort to tear gas to control the utmost aggressive parts of the crowd. The presidential office overseeing the relocation of the cross and the surrounding ceremony canceled the event to prevent further violent actions. The '*Obrońcy Krzyża*' compared the action to a modern day Katyn massacre, the police forces and the presidential office to the NKVD and called the Archdiocese of Warsaw, as well as the youth scouts terrorists and traitors. The barriers, as well as 200 policemen, would remain for the next few days as from now on the defenders would stay there day and night to prevent the cross to be relocated at night. The representative of the presidential office overseeing the planned relocation called it a defeat and was sorry that the peacefully plan in coordination with the Archdiocese and the youth scouts did not succeed (tvn24.pl 2010c). A day later the barricades were switched with metal fences to permanently restrict the defenders from reaching the cross.

On August the 5th crowds of counter-protesters started gathering and demonstrating against the political abuse of the situation by the PiS and mocking the defenders of the cross with signs, such as ones saying "*Demolish the Presidential Palace – Its blocking the view to the cross*", singing children's rhymes over the pious chants of the defenders and putting up fake crosses made out of

beer cans of the aforementioned brand “Lech” (Beylin 2010). Due to police presence only minor scuffles between the two groups occurred. Different to the defenders, the “*Akcja Krzyż*” counter demonstrators were loosely organized, mostly through social media, and overwhelmingly young adults. *Radio Maryja* and Kaczyński would later falsely claim “*Akcja Krzyż*” was organized by the PO, the liberal private TV Network *TVN* and the newspaper *Gazeta Wyborcza* (se.pl 2010c).

On the 10th of August, PiS members and followers of Kaczyński, together with some defenders attended the mass at St. John's cathedral in the city center and afterwards marched in front of the presidential palace to lay down flowers and light candles at the cross, still cordoned off from most other defenders through the metal fences. The most notable attendees were Jarosław Kaczyński and Antoni Macierewicz. This ceremony would from now on be repeated every month (in different variations) and be known as the central activity in commemoration and political display of the Smolensk catastrophe in the next 8 years, the “*Miesięcznica Smoleńska*” (Monthly Smolensk Commemoration (wyborcza.pl 2010a). During the rest of August in 2010 many representatives of the Polish church, such as priests, bishops and administrative officials demanded an end to the abuse of the cross as a symbol and physical hostage in a political dispute. Their comments were vague enough to be interpreted by both sides as a criticism of their opposition. August also constituted the month of the highest number of recorded acts of violence, vandalism and disruption of public life during the ‘war for the cross”. Aside from the usual clashes between defenders, counter-protesters and police, incidents included also a man throwing jars filled with feces on the commemorative plaque and the crowd (Reszka 2010), a man threatening to suicide attack the crowds armed with a grenade and a man calling in multiple bomb threats in front of the cross (se.pl 2010b). On the 10th of September, the PiS in cooperation with the ‘*Obrońcy Krzyża*’ and *Radio Maryja* organized a ‘memory march’ (‘*Marsz Pamięci*’), a continuation of the ‘Miesięcznica’ commemoration which started the month before. Approximately two thousand people attended the event march with Jarosław Kaczyński at the head of the procession. The march with the crowds was compared to the manifestations of workers around *Solidarność* in the 1980s and the 1968 student demonstrations by Kaczyński, trying to invoke the idea that the fight for the cross is also a struggle for freedom against the PO and Tusk. This point was picked up by the crowds who, in their chants and signs, compared the Tusk government and president Komorowski to communists and dictators (se.pl 2010b). Six days later the crisis found a swift end. In an unannounced operation without the participation of the church and the scouts, the presidential office together with the Government Protection Bureau (*Biuro Ochrony Rządu*, BOR) relocated the cross from the square in

front of the presidential palace to its chapel. This operation was followed by further protests by the defenders, though they would from now on appear in much smaller numbers in front of the presidential palace. Jarosław Kaczyński criticized the BOR for collaborating with the presidential office for this action, delegitimizing it as a para-police unit and a secret police servant of the government (newsweek.pl 2010a). A week later during one of the last cross related visits of Jarosław Kaczyński together with the now much smaller group of defenders, who would not camp out through the night anymore, they laid out a candles in the shape of a cross. This would become a common sight at the later '*Miesięcznice'* monthly events. He also spoke out in favor of relocating the cross to St. Anne's Cathedral, as was the plan by Komorowski's office, the Archdiocese of Warsaw and the youth scouts (newsweek.pl 2010b). After Kaczyński's decision to support the relocation, the Warsaw authorities removed the metal fences from the Krakowskie Przedmieście. Over these weeks in September, as the cross was moved to the chapel in the presidential palace, the families of the victims have announced plans to organize a pilgrimage to Smolensk. With it came suggestion to take the cross with them. This created a major division between the families of the deceased, as about an equal amount of them was for and against taking the cross to Smolensk. This event was, as the events surrounding this topic, covered in media extensively. In the end, a day before the pilgrimage, a slight majority decided against it. The division in media was easily characterized along the lines of political division. Conservative media wanted the cross to join the pilgrimage and liberal media wanted the cross in St. Anne's Cathedral. The division in the organizations of the families of the deceased, '*Stowarzyzszenie Katyń 2010*' ('Organization Katyn 2010'), was harder to categorize as the attitude towards the wooden cross from the palace differed in both conservative families (families of PiS related victims) and moderate ones (families of the other victims and crew). The decision to not bring the cross with them won over, as the '*Stowarzyzszenie Katyń 2010*' brought their own wooden cross with them, which they would put up at the crash site. According to an interview PiS-related families of victims gave, "the cross from the presidential palace did not belong to them and his rightful place is in front of the presidential palace." (Walusiak 2010: 28). In total 165 family members of deceased victims participated in the pilgrimage and were joined by the wife of the Polish president, Anna Komorowska, as well as other representatives of the government. The pilgrimages planned goal, to create unison between the split public and the "Smolensk families" was not a success, as the whole event was already highly politicized in media for a month and the trenches between the two sides were deep. Some PiS-related families boycotted the pilgrimage and complained that the entire event was a ploy to move

the PO-related victims into the spotlight (Czupryn 2010). During the time of the pilgrimage, a second story relating to the cross captured the attention of the media. Jan Klusik, a pensioner from Opole, has died of a heart attack. Two months before that, he was present at the *Krakowskie Przedmieście* as part of the "Guardians of the Cross", were he was involved in one of the scuffles with counter-protesters. There a young man apparently kicked him in the chest. PiS-related conservative media, such as '*Nasz Dziennik*' and '*Gazeta Polska'* claimed that Klusik's heart attack was a direct result of the scuffle in front of the cross, elevating him to the level of martyr. This was echoed by high ranking PiS-officials, such as Jarosław Kaczyński, who demanded an investigation. Although his family proved that Kluski had a chronic heart-rhythm disorder, Kaczyński and the PiS managed to push the issue so far as that the body of Kluski had to be exhumed for an autopsy. The claims of the '*Gazeta Polska'*, '*Nasz Dziennik*' and Kaczyński, that young adult counter-protesters had caused the death of Kluski were disproved by the autopsy. Jan Kluski was the first in a later growing list of decedents exhumed on demand by the PiS (wyborcza.pl 2010b). On November 10th, seven months after the catastrophe, the cross was finally relocated to its destined location, as following the agreement between presidential office, the Archdiocese of Warsaw and the youth scouts. While most state officials, families of the '*Stowarzyzszenie Katyń 2010*' and PiS officials were at the Powązki cemetery, joining the inauguration of a monument commemorating all victims of the Smolensk catastrophe, BOR operatives in cooperation with the presidential office transported the cross away to St. Anne's cathedral. Once the news broke, PiS officials and the PiS related families of the deceased were in uproar, comparing the governmental actions to the behavior of secret services and arguing that they should have been invited. The incredible distrust from the "Guardians of the Cross" and other persons close to the PiS was subsequently evident in their public comments. Conspiracies started arising, claiming the cross in the Loretan Chapel in St. Anne's cathedral, where the cross was located, was a fake cross and led the state authorities to temporary close the chapel in fear of vandalism. Ryszard Czarnecki of the *Prawo I Sprawiedliwość* commented that all the events surrounding the disputes over the cross "*will stay in the minds of the people for a very long time*" (tvp.info.pl 2010). This ended the 'War for the Cross' and its dominant grip over media coverage. In the subsequent years it rarely ever returned to the news, without a specific reason other than that media from December 2010 on had a new story to cover relating to Smolensk, namely the results of the official investigations into the crash, which I will examine in the next chapter.

The Wawel Burial and “War for the Cross” constitute the two largest and most important public events in the direct aftermath of the catastrophe. They not only display the rather fast decay of the uniting atmosphere between Poles after the crash, but also stand as the two instrumental cases to study on how the public discourse surrounding the catastrophe deteriorated over some mere months to the deeply divided atmosphere one can observe today. The Wawel Burial as the first example shows how specific decision exposed a divided Poland along very deep lying lines and understandings. It also showed that national mourning has no single united definition. Both events became physical manifestations of very deep and old questions of what it means to be Polish and what it means to be a patriot. The Smolensk catastrophe, as a national trauma shared by the entire Polish society, reflected these century old questions and brought them back into the spotlight. This was not a simple dispute between conservatives and liberals, but rather a clash of two mutually exclusive world views, for which unity is simply impossible. In the world view represented by Jarosław Kaczyński and the PiS in these two events, patriotism has a narrow definition and who does not fit that definition has to be the opposite of a patriot, namely a traitor. Criticizing Lech Kaczyński’s tenure as president, a politician’s performance in office, and later saluting his coffin, paying respect to the patriotic role he embodied as president of a free democratic Poland, cannot be patriotic.

Investigating the Crash

The public clash over the Smolensk case obviously entailed more than just the raw emotion over the catastrophe, but also encompassed the political divide in Poland. It did not exist on that public level alone though. The death of 96 people on board of that plane drew tons of official, legal and amateur interest, allowing through a turbulent row of mishaps, errors and false claims to grow into a hubris swallowing the political interest of Poland's elites. Truth, though by most proclaimed to be the driving force of investigations of all sorts, became an actor on the sidelines to ideological motivations. Smolensk as such was not just a tragedy mourned in public, but a case with a rich history of factual and conspiratory information sculpting its image. In this chapter, I want to cover the investigations and legal battles surrounding the crash. Presenting each single legal action taken by the PiS in connection to the crash, as well as all the details surrounding official and amateur investigations would be a mammoth project, more than what this dissertation allows. As such, I want to limit myself to the most essential investigations, namely the Russian MAK investigation, the Polish KBWLLP investigation and the dubious investigations of the parliamentary committee, also known as the Macierewicz commission. Furthermore, I want to take a look at the forms of

legal actions the PiS has been taking towards the opposition and other people in connection with the catastrophe and pick out exemplary cases by which I want to assess their goals and measure the success. While looking at the investigations and legal battles I plan to highlight the specifics of the PiS' strategies and tactics in opposition (2010-2015) and in power (2015-). Whereas the chapter before established the power with which the tragedy impacted the society, this chapter will look at the relationship between the catastrophe as a truth and the catastrophe as a tool.

In the evening after Putin and Tusk left the scene of the crash, the Russian investigation team consisting of military and civilian aviation experts of the Interstate Aviation Committee (In Russian: Межгосударственный авиационный комитет, Short: MAK) opened an investigation into the cause of the accident. The State Commission of the MAK, as it is referred to in official documents, was announced in the late evening of April 10th 2010 under the chairmanship of the president of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, who vowed that the state commission will cooperate with Polish officials during the investigation. The classification of the crash was agreed upon by Donald Tusk and Vladimir Putin as a civilian flight accident, putting it under the jurisdiction of Russian investigators and the MAK. This was at that time not broadly questioned and internationally also accepted. In the near future, this decision would be challenged, as the presidential plane was flying under Polish military code, but for the time being did not cause any significant uproar. Military classification would alert international attention and draw in a thorough international commission, but would also put Russian investigators at a discomfort, giving them the possibility to block and drag the investigation out and definitely cause international friction. The decision to make it a civilian case for Russia, under the guarantee that Polish investigators had a right to join, was welcomed by both sides as a fast and cooperative solution (Imielski 2010).

Nonetheless, mostly out of automatic proceedings in crisis situations, an official Polish investigation was started as well under the *Komisja Badania Wypadków Lotniczych Lotnictwa Państwowego* (Committee for Investigation of National Aviation Accidents, KBWLLP) with Minister for Interior, Jerzy Miller, heading the commission for the Smolensk case. This investigation had, aside from clearing up the cause of the incident, as a goal to investigate internal Polish safety regulations surrounding the organization of VIP plane flights and present improvements to existing processes.

In the months of the election campaign, from April to June 2010, the investigations were met with little outside pressure, even from the PiS and Jarosław Kaczyński, whose campaign ran on unity and

trust in the investigators. This did not however prevent conspiracy theories from starting to brew up in his party. The first mention of a possibility that the plane crash was an assassination on Lech Kaczyński appeared on April the 12th, two days after the crash, in the right-wing catholic newspaper '*Nasz Dziennik*', belonging to infamous father Tadeusz Rydzyk of *Radio Maryja*. There an interview with PiS MP Artur Górski was published which was conducted just hours after the crash in the train back from Katyn to Warsaw. Passenger of that train reported to other newspapers that before Górski came out with the claim that a bomb killed Lech Kaczyński, he was seen locked in a private train compartment together with Antoni Macierewicz, another prominent PiS figure that was defending the assassination theory from its early days (Piekarz 2010). Górski was an infamous PiS MP, known for his radical opinions and conspiratory tendencies, for example claiming the end of white civilization after Barrack Obama became president of the United States of America in 2008. After his death due to Leukemia in 2016, followers of his and propagators of conspiracy theories like him claimed that the Leukemia was caused by Russian plutonium poisoning. No evidence for this has ever been found (Piechowicz et al. 2016).

After Kaczyński lost the election, he and other more prominent members of the PiS started to call for the investigations to start taking the assassination claims seriously and to specifically look for evidence that could point to such an explanation.

These accusations and an overall chaos over the facts surrounding the Smolensk catastrophe that persists until today, started with the conclusion of the Russian MAK investigation and publishing of the concluding report in January 2011. The central argument of the Russian report was that the crash occurred due to pilot errors. This was a great point of discussion in Poland and drew lots of criticism from both the PiS and the Miller investigation, who would accuse the MAK report of covering for Russian mistakes (rmf24.pl 2011a). In July 2011, the results of the Miller investigation were published, which attributed the crash to not only pilot errors resulting from pressure through commanding staff on board of the plane, but also faulty judgment of the Russian control tower staff at Smolensk Airport North, who not only misjudged the landing path and did not correct the plane when it lost the correct path, but also missed to inform the crew of shortcomings of the military airport, like the specific topography of the environment surrounding the landing strip and the lack of an autopilot landing system. Similar to the MAK report though, the 'Miller report', how it was often called in media, did not find evidence of any intentional factor causing the crash and as such concluded that it was an accident (KBWLLP 2011: 318). The release of both reports was surrounded by multiple controversies that dominate the discourse of the PiS to this day. Chief

among the issues talked about are the problems of individual Polish and Russian investigators to cooperate over the wreckage and the recovered bodies of the deceased passengers and crew.

The third investigation is the 'Parliamentary Team for the Investigation of the Causes of the TU-154 M Disaster of April 10, 2010' (*Zespół Parlamentarny ds. Zbadania Przyczyn Katastrofy TU-154 M z 10 kwietnia 2010 roku*), more commonly known as the Macierewicz commission (*Komisja Macierewicza*). The commission's official goal established in their rules of procedure is to support and further the investigations of the plane crash, support the families and any efforts to remember the victims (sejm.gov.pl 2011a). Though this may sound fairly timid initially, the Macierewicz commission, consisting almost entirely of PiS-members, has worked since then on the single goal to disprove all prior investigations by MAK and KWBLLP and find evidence of third party involvement in the crash, proving an assassination. In his words, to fight the government investigators who "[…] betrayed the victims, the people." (newsweek.pl 2011a). Contrary to their own depiction and wrong documentation online and by the media, the Parliamentary Team was established in November 2011 and not July 2010. The commission commonly refers to the earlier date to prove that they worked on uncovering the truth since the beginning, but the official documents recording it prove the first official meeting to have taken place in December 2011 (smolenskzespol.sejm.gov.pl 2011). Earlier to that, a couple of PiS members around Macierewicz worked on publishing a "white book" that would definitely prove, that the fault of the crash lies with the Russian Federation. In it, the first resemblances of the later dominant conspiracy theories are starting to be formed over about 160 pages. According to him, the Russians never wanted to protect the Polish president and commonly referred to any misinformation or mistake as a 'Russian game' (newsweek.pl 2011a). Following the formation of the official Parliamentary Team, conspiracy theories gained more and more popularity among the PiS members and core voters. When Antoni Macierewicz became Minister of Defense in 2015, he opened a Smolensk Sub-commission in his ministry, which from early 2016 would officially work on disproving both the Russian and Polish reports published in 2011. This way, the conspiracy theory narrative took over the official government's stance and transformed the accident officially into an assassination (mon.gov.pl 2018a). Once this narrative was adopted throughout the government, the commission and Macierewicz centered their attention on finally presenting evidence and proof of their claims. But what exactly did the commission work on and did they find anything?

There is not one conspiracy theory that was tested and proven through evidence, but rather a collection of individual claims, false reports and mysteries that altogether are used to create a

grand picture of investigations, both Russian and Polish, that were a sham and full of lies from the beginning. The Macierewicz reports play a role in that, personifying an official source that contradicts the other "fake" ones, uniting many suspicions under one banner. The results of these present multiple different observations. Firstly, they focus on confirming public and partisan suspicions when it comes to both technical details of the plane crash, as well as suspicions of intrigue and conspiracy. As a second goal, this much more effectively, the reports try to disprove the official investigations by clinging to every mistake and inconsistency they can find and expose. But as their biggest use they offer a possibility to constantly keep the topic alive. With the ever repeating mantra that "eventually, they will find the truth", Macierewicz, the PiS and Kaczyński have a tool at their disposal that can take unconfirmed theories and hear-say to attack opposition figures, outside political actors and justify policy choices. The commission and its reports are there to keep the trauma and pain of the catastrophe alive so that its divisive power can be used in political action. For that a brief overview of conspiracy theories and their public image is needed to understand their uses and effects.

The conspiracy theories interpreting the crash started, as already discussed, very early. First they appeared in conservative and right-wing media and shortly the lost elections they were picked up by Kaczyński and the PiS. Analyzing the broad spectrum of all conspiracy theories is a very difficult task but my goal with depicting them in this chapter is not to present them individually, to show their essence that connects them all together and makes them viable. With this in mind every theory, published independently or through the commission, can be separated into two broad thematic topics, namely the suspicions on the crash, or shorter "explosion theories" and the theories of conspiracy between shadow actors and public figures, most prominently Donald Tusk and Vladimir Putin.

The "explosion theories" are a collection of wild assumptions and claims about the technical details of the plane crash in 2010, which are the main topic of discussion for conspiracy theorists and hobby investigators unhappy with the official investigations results, which claim errors by pilots and control personnel at the airport are at fault for the catastrophe. For them the crash has to have been orchestrated by Russia and Tusk and, as such, ways have to be found to explain how the plane ended up crashing. Many different such assumptions and theories have been published even before Macierewicz's commission adopted them, though they were much more abstruse and diverse. Among those early theories, for example, is the claim that the fog at the Smolensk airport in the morning was artificially created (newsweek.pl 2010c). This artificial fog theory, has been

courted by Macierewicz and his commission on multiple occasions. In a recording of 2011, which got quoted much more often in later years for its absurdity, he said "[…] and suddenly the fog appeared – witnesses say – we don't know where from, as there was no weather report warning us of this, when suddenly the view got blocked" (tvn24.pl 2016a). The investigations by the Parliamentary Team of Macierewicz gained a fair amount of popularity among PiS believers in the early days, because contrary to the official Miller investigations, they gave credit and legitimacy to all the extravagant theories floating around the internet and ultra-conservative circles by claiming that they are equally important to prove and disprove as the saner explanations. As such the 2013 reports cover the claims of, for example, helium released around the airport to change the carrying capacity of the air, a super magnet installed to drag the plane down from the sky, poison released inside the plane by agents on board who later climbed out of the wreckage and that the wreckage found in Smolensk is actually a plane double (Piechowicz et al. 2016). But aside from these theories, which were generally considered laughable at most, the reports and conferences of the "doubters" would try to disprove official investigations at every corner possible when it came to minuscule details about how the wing broke off from crashing with a birch tree, which is often referred to as the "iron birch" by conspiracy theorists (Wierzchołowski 2014), or specific mechanical details of possible engine and turbine faults, as well as alternative collision models created by members of the Macierewicz team (ZP ds. BPK 2013: 91). This manifests itself in the only theoretical explanation that Macierewicz and his team agree on and hold as a focal point throughout all of their reconstructions of the 2010 crash, namely that there had to be an explosion while the plane was in the air. The explosion theory by Macierewicz and his team is the cornerstone on which they build their entire purpose of existing and is the only claim he has been defending publicly since 2011. They often base this on apparent witness testimonies that they heard two and sometimes three loud bangs and a crash. Though none of these witnesses have seen the actual crash, due to the fog and the geography of the airport in Smolensk, PiS-sources and right-wing media often call them "eye-witnesses", explicitly stressing the "eye" in the term (Kania 2013). One of Macierewicz's experts, Dr. Grzegorz Szuladziński has backed up this claim, by publishing an analysis in which the bomb theory is proven (Wierzchołowski 2012). This was supported by a colleague of his, Dr. Andrzej Ziółkowski, who added proof with pictures of over-boiled sausages, which burst along an elongated crack, similar to the pictures of the wreckage in Smolensk. Another expert, Prof. Jan Obrębski, used a similarly awkward comparison in proving the explosion theory, when he used a picture of a slammed Red Bull can as an example of how a

normal metal tube-like object looked when crashing into the ground with force. As the plane broke into thousands of pieces, there had to be a different force at work, namely an explosion (wprost.pl 2013). These claims of an inside explosion weirdly enough stood in conflict with a different, more prominent claim by an expert of Macierewicz's investigative team, Prof. Wiesław Binienda, whose computer simulations and publications have been proposing that the explosion must have happened on the outside of the plane, more precisely first at the wing, which would be the first explosion heard, and later on more to the front of the plane, explaining the second bang heard by "eye-witnesses" and the detachment of the cockpit in the wreckage (ZP ds. BPK 2013: 91).

Though the details of the theories presented, such as the ones from Dr. Szuladziński and Prof. Binienda, stand in conflict with each other, they are nonetheless united under their central idea, which is the second and more important part of the commission's job: blaming the PO government of 2010 and Donald Tusk for the catastrophe. Here the narratives and approaches twist, as to present themselves believable. While conspiracy theories claim a direct involvement of the PO government of 2010 and Donald Tusk in the catastrophe, they do not represent the official approach the PiS sets towards their enemies. The official narrative is much more geared towards an explanation that the catastrophe was a consequence of Donald Tusk and the PO governments negligence to protect the president. This manifests in the actual judicial attacks they have used towards the opposition, such as claiming that Tusk let the Russians take control of the investigation, that his chancellery did not want to plan the flight together and the security on the airport was their responsibility. The most prominent of those attacks is the claim that Tusk is responsible for illegal collaboration with the Russian FSB. Taken out of context from a NATO summit agreement, right-wing media and the PiS prominently reported on an illegal collaboration agreement between Polish Military Counterintelligence and the Russian FSB in 2010. By their narrative it was connected to the Smolensk catastrophe and used to hide the truth about the events (Rachoń 2017), while in reality, which is proven by official documents from both sides, the cooperation covered the withdrawal of Polish troops from Afghanistan through Russian territory back to Poland (fakt.pl 2017). In the end, the commission and Macierewicz do not care for what they can ultimately accuse Tusk. What matter is, that he and other members of the PO can be dragged in front of a court and put down, stripped of their claim to legitimacy as dreaded traitorous elites. This is their purpose, similar to the CBA (Anti-Corruption Bureau) in 2005, which was hunting for all the corrupt post-communists, to today hunt for the perpetrators of the Smolensk treason.

As much as dirt is being dug up on the PO and Tusk, the commission was not yet able to actually drag someone close to Tusk in front of a judge, both while the PiS was in opposition and in the first years of their reign in Poland, but has managed to win a single court case, namely against fmr. Brig. Gen. Paweł Bielawny of the Governmental Protection Bureau. The accusations were brought to the state prosecutor in 2014, but the case gained traction in 2016, after the take-over of the PiS. Paweł Bielawny ended up as a scapegoat, but as the BOR's fault was proven innocent at that time and other revelations made it more difficult to pursue the case further, the verdict ended up being guilty. Due to the aforementioned complications in argumentation and Bielawny's silence towards both media and courts, the sentences came out mild enough for him to avoid prison (tvn24.pl 2016).

Aside from bogus annual reports and threats of judicial repercussions, the commission mainly made a name for itself through the publicly unpopular measures of exhumations. In their research about the third party involvement in the catastrophe. The first round of exhumations that captured Polish media was organized 2012 and was mainly conducted after Małgorzata Wassermann, daughter of deceased PiS member Zbigniew Wassermann, has publicly doubted the correctness of the autopsy conducted by Russian coroners. This prompted a public struggle about the families right to exhume and rebury their deceased members and resulted in months-long media coverage and 9 exhumations. Ultimately, it was a back and forth of accusations and proof of misconduct. At first, throughout some of the exhumed bodies, parts of wrong bodies were found spread through multiple coffins and in some cases families did not find their loved ones' corpses in them. After initial uproar it turned out most of those mix-ups were simply overreactions by the families after the difficulty of recognizing the bodies (tvn24.pl 2012).

After the chaos of the 2012 exhumations, the PO government kept the desire of the PiS and the Smolensk families for further exhumations in check. As such, the second round of exhumations started in 2016, followed by another one in 2017 and a plan to do a fourth one in 2018. The reasoning and narrative for these exhumations after 2015 was drastically different from the first ones in 2012. While in 2012 the families of the victims were the ones demanding them and the government trying to keep them sealed, the entire situation flipped the other way around for the next few. This time around most of the families tried to fight against the exhumations, saying that they have already come to terms with the past and did not want their loved ones to be used for political agendas. Although they campaigned towards President Duda, the Constitutional Court and the catholic church to stop them, there were no responses of either. The reactions of Duda and the

Constitutional Court did not surprise, but the lack of reaction from the catholic church proved that in Poland, yet another time after the 'War of the Cross', the Polish catholic hierarchy has subordinated itself under the Smolensk myth for political gain (Kublik et al. 2016). In these exhumations under PiS control even the coffins of Lech and Maria Kaczyńska were opened, and, to no surprise, there as well misplaced body parts were found. Still, aside from a reappearance of old accusations, no further steps after the exhumations were taken to prosecute anyone, other than the state for organizing the already unpopular undertaking, and as such the entire operation has to be classified as yet another measure that kept the wound left after the catastrophe open and the trauma of the event alive (tvn24.pl 2017a).

The last point I want to talk about, which relates to both the conspiracy theories and Macierewicz and his commissions is the point of the post-Smolensk media networks in Poland growing. The effect of how large an audience the Smolensk catastrophe moved in the Polish society is most notably seen in the boom of right-wing media outlets, ranging from ultra-nationalist to ultra-catholic. The two largest ones are the nationalist and PiS loyal '*Gazeta Polska*' network and the '*Radio Maryja*' empire of father Tadeusz Rydzyk.

Father Rydzyk's *Radio Maryja* broadcast group is a massive media conglomerate in Poland, with a broad array of channels to propagate their catholic nationalist message to a wide, mostly countryside, audience. The most popular of his media channels are the TV channel *Telewizja Trwam,* the radio channel *Radio Maryja* and multiple newspapers and weekly magazines, such as *Nasz Dziennik*. Rydzyk, a Redemptorist, established the media outlet in Toruń in 1991 and was granted a nation-wide broadcast license, which brought it to a multi-million audience among the devout Catholics. In the early 2000s it boasted a reach of about 4 percent of all Poles, mostly pensioners on the countryside. Officially owned by the Redemptorist Order and the bishop of Toruń, it is effectively fully in control of Father Rydzyk and all attempts by the Polish church and the Vatican to control it have never succeeded. Aside from the diverse Medias, Rydzyk also controls multiple right-wing institutes and thinktanks, where the contemporary and future right-wing intelligentsia meets. The most prominent among them is the *Instytut Edukacji Narodowej* (National Education Institute, IEN) which is a common point of origin for right-wing intellectuals in Poland (Pankowski 2010: 96). *Radio Maryja* has successfully kept the majority of its funding operations undisclosed, though most of it comes from donations solicited from the viewers/listeners/readers, as well as prominent nationalist diaspora figures from America, Canada and South America. Aside from the deeply fundamentalist religious messages, *Radio Maryja*'s broadcasts have been openly

anti-Semitic, racist, stereo-typing and nationalist, have featured far-right figures and peddled abstruse conspiracy theories (Pankowski 2010: 97). Topics openly discussed and documented included Jews being responsible for communist-era repression and Soviet atrocities, Jews using the Holocaust as leverage against Poland, outright Holocaust denial and more modern interpretations of these stories including New World Order theories and verbal attacks against George Soros (nwzonline.de 2017).

This last section mirrors in the '*Gazeta Polska*' network of Tomasz Sakiewicz, which also enjoys propagating conspiracy theories with anti-Semitic undertones. Contrary to '*Radio Maryja*', the '*Gazeta Polska*' has no real TV and radio presence, but boasts a larger presence online and in print, with both the '*Gazeta Polska*' weekly and the '*Gazeta Polska Codziennie'* daily newspaper. Additionally, Sakiewicz owns the popular conspiracy theory website *'niezależna.pl'*, as well as the accompanying blog sites and forums. Most interestingly though the '*Gazeta Polska*' holds a similar political power in mobilization as father Rydzyk has, through the organization of almost 330 regional Clubs, the '*Kluby Gazety Polskiej'*. Those are especially interesting and reappear in my studies as they are the central organizers of the monthly Miesięcznica Smoleńska memorial event. Politically Sakiewicz still does not hold the same power though as father Rydzyk. While the latter is seen as an equal to Kaczyński who directly provides political power for him, Sakiewicz is dependent on Kaczyński's mercy, as his entire business is built around providing off of Smolensk and the politics of the PiS (Głuchowski et al. 2014).

The History of the Kaczynskis

As much as the details surrounding the catastrophe of Smolensk define Jarosław Kaczyński's worldview and shape his political party *Prawo I Sprawiedliwość*, the history of both is older. In this chapter I want to look at how the Kaczński brothers rose from fringe political figures hovering around Wałesa and the *Solidarność* movement, to a mainstream political force of the Third Republic. For this, it is necessary to analyze not only the history of the PiS, but also the origin story of the Kaczyński brothers, by creating a portrait of their political career, their motives and ideologies, additionally incorporating the historical and societal surroundings that influenced their thinking and shaped the PiS. This entails elaborating not only the important history of Polish conservative nationalism in which the Kaczyński brothers have settled to find their large political success but also look at actors outside of the PiS that have a large influence on their ideology and politics. The goal of this chapter is to map the PiS transformation over the periods of power and opposition and give an overview of what actions and motivations drove the twins Lech and Jarosław in the defining moments of their careers.

Origins in *Solidarność's* Shadow

For a long time, the history of the Kaczyński brothers is one of shared success and a very loyal and united political activity. Even after Lech died in 2010, one does not lose the feeling that everything Jarosław does or where he appears, his brother is with him. Michał Krzymowski, a journalist and biographer of Jarosław Kaczyński, claims that Lech, or Leszek as his brother calls him, never really left the side of Jarosław and stays as a moral compass and a reminder of his political duty, by which he measures his allies and condemns his opposition (Krzymowski 2018). To examine the relationship between the two twin brothers more deeply and see how it built the most influential political family of post-communist Poland it is best to start at the beginning.

Jarosław and Lech Kaczyński were born in the *Żoliborz* district of Warsaw in 1949 to Jadwiga Jasiewicz and Rajmund Kaczyński. Both of their parents were part of the *Armia Krajowa*, the Polish Home Army, during World War 2 and had a history of resisting the Wehrmacht and Gestapo during that time. As such the two twins grew up in a catholic and patriotic household, where stories of the Polish struggle for freedom dominated the family's history. These stories are specifically prevalent in many a Polish families' origin story, defining the meaning of the events as Polish patriotic struggle against a more powerful occupying force, such as the Wehrmacht and the Germans, but

also as a last-ditch attempt to prevent the inevitable Soviet influential takeover in liberated Poland. Naturally under the Stalinist influence in the 1950s and the communist regimes proceeding it, this rendition of the struggle was not to be uttered publicly (Vetter 2008: 14). *Żoliborz*, where the two young brothers grew up, was a bustling neighborhood in the 1960s and 1970s, being historically recognized as Warsaw's borough for Poland's progressive Intelligentsia long before World War 2. As such the brothers did grow up under progressive influence, staying in *Żoliborz* their entire young adult life. In the small glimpses that the two have offered over the years, the district they grew up in remains as an anchor and a symbol of which tradition they come from. This is often repeated during their active Solidarity years and until the formation of the PiS (Pankowski 2010: 152). For example: during a conference in Michigan on the Round Table Talks in 1999, where Lech participated together with Adam Michnik and the President of Poland, Aleksander Kwasniewski, Kaczyński would often be called, in a friendly manner, a *Żoliborz* academic (Kietlinska 1999). Although the family's background was catholic and patriotic towards a non-communist Poland, they kept it inside the family, not noticeable to the communist authorities. Actually they were more than just quiet, giving in to the dominant mainstream of communist role on more than one occasion. The mother, Jadwiga, wrote about the writer Leon Kruczkowski, who had a Stalinist background, with full enthusiasm during her work at the Polish Academy of Sciences, though his beliefs and writings were the total opposite of what the Kaczyńskis in reality stood for. This dichotomy of historical and societal interpretations encountered in communist Poland has accompanied the Kaczyński twins all their life and can to this day be seen as a motivation for their obsession on historical politics (Vetter 2008: 14). Very little is known about both of their childhoods and school life and so their story starts picking up after they both study Law at the University of Warsaw, where Jarosław finishes his doctoral studies first, in 1976, with a dissertation on the 'activities of school governing bodies in the inter-war period and from 1944 until 1968', praising the communist policies. Lech finished his doctoral studies four years later, in 1980, at the University of Gdańsk, after graduating from the University of Warsaw (Vetter 2008: 15). In their time during their final studies they started their political involvement with the opposition, albeit slowly and partly separate.

Jarosław was working in the Workers' Defense Committee (*Komitet Obrony Robotników*, KOR), together with people like Adam Michnik, Jacek Kuroń and Antoni Macierewicz, providing judicial advice to incarcerated and endangered workers from the Radom and Ursus factory protests from 1976. Aside from that he wrote articles for the conservative oppositional newspaper *Głos* (The

Voice), where he got in contact with Antoni Macierewicz, the publisher. *Głos* would over the years become more and more radicalized with mostly radically anti-communist messages and sometimes even anti-Semitic ones. During the crackdown on Solidarity and other unions during 1981 he managed to evade the security forces and did not get incarcerated, which he used to distance himself from political activity for the time being. He rejoined his brother in the mid-1980s to join the upper echelons of *Solidarność* (Vetter 2008: 16).

Lech on the other hand was in Gdańsk and was a legal adviser and assistant of underground workers' movements and provided historical and political lectures for workers at the Lenin shipyard. He was a close collaborator of Bogdan Borusewicz, the main organizer of the Lenin shipyard strikes in August 1980 which brought about the formation of *Solidarność*. After being interned when martial law was declared in 1981 by Jaruzelski, he was freed a couple of months later and continued his engagement in the underground, before being called up into the presidium of *Solidarność* (Vetter 2008: 15).

As advisers to Lech Wałesa, both of the Kaczyńskis have reached the political mainstream by 1989 and Lech participated at the round table talks in Magdalenka as a representative of the opposition, joining representatives of the communist regime at the table, under the observation of the catholic church. Both were active in negotiating the system transition in Poland, specifically Lech was negotiating legal details on unions in Magdalenka and Jarosław participated in the general discussion in the plenary afterwards. In the Sejm elections that followed the round table talks in June 1989, the twins competed for the opposition, for which Lech Wałesa was the stand-out candidate. In the opposition grouping itself, they were part of a group of hardliners, who wanted to end the influence of all communist elites on Poland, together with Adam Michnik, Jacek Kuroń and Bronisław Geremek. Climbing the ladder in the opposition, Jarosław represented Wałesa in the 1989 post-election talks with the communist political actors, which managed to pave the way for the Sejm majority leading to the formation of the Mazowiecki government (Pilawski et al. 2016: 98). The relationship of the two towards the Round Table Talks has, early on, been a very ambivalent one. After the 1989 electoral success of the opposition, Jarosław managed to get into the senate, the newly formed second chamber of parliament. There he was known to be a vocal proponent of a hardline approach to transition, by excluding all former communist elites from the process of government. Although supportive of the Mazowiecki government, both brothers established themselves at this time as critics of the soft approach towards the communists. After 2001, when they founded their most successful political party *Prawo I Sprawiedliwość*, they

radicalized their opinions, especially Jarosław, claiming that there were secret agreements and arrangements between the communist and opposition elites. This was, after 2010, driven to an even more radical level, where prominent PiS figures, such as Antoni Macierewicz and Jarosław himself, would insinuate that Wałesa, Michnik and others were part of the communist secret service, using the Round Table Talks as a coup to take over Poland. This conspiracy theory was repeated whenever the PiS felt threatened by the remnants of the left leaning liberal wing of the *Solidarność* (Pankowski 2010: 162). This radicalization was not apparent in the years preceding the formation of the PiS. During the talks where Jarosław represented Wałesa he was not known to be harsher towards the communists than the latter. Both twins seemed to follow the general chain of events of the transition and multiple times deemed them necessary to keep up. Sometimes they noted that this was due to fear from Soviet retaliation or a brutal confrontation, if the talks were to fall through. In the above mentioned conference at the University of Michigan in 1999, Lech Kaczyński described a danger emanating from radical elements of the *Solidarność* and the state security apparatus. Equally, on the question of secret agreements at the Round Table Talks in Magdalenka he said:

> *"..., this has nothing to do with creating myths that have absolutely nothing in common with reality. A few moments ago Mr. Wierzynski said that I participated in all the meetings in Magdalenka. Yes, I did. Well, I don't know ... perhaps during breaks in Magdalenka ...*(laughter). *But there was absolutely no secret pact in Magdalenka. There were, however, tough negotiations taking place about all those issues that have been mentioned. They were mostly issues of the economy, the senate, the shape of future elections to the senate, about the office of the president, and then the question of youth. I don't know why the coalition side fought so hard, and I think was successful in that fight, for things like the scouting movement and Independent Students' Association, which were finally legalized, but it took a while and there was a strong resistance against that, and a few other things that maybe don't come to my mind right now. But there was no treason of whatever kind.*
>
> – *Lech Kaczyński (Kietlinska 1999)*

By 1990 Lech Kaczyński was the deputy chairman of the Solidarity Trade Union and Jarosław formed a conservative post-*Solidarność* political party that supported Lech Wałesa's presidential aspirations, the *Porozumienie Centrum* (Centre Alliance, PC). After his victory, Wałesa elevated

both into offices in his chancellery, with Lech becoming Minister of Security in the Presidential Chancellery and Jarosław becoming Head of the Presidential Chancellery. This unity did not last long, as they had a falling out with Wałesa in the following two years over the topic of lustration, the cleanup of Polish politics from post-communist remnants. For the twins, Wałesa was major hindrance in dealing with the former communists that moved around the Polish political establishment in the early 1990s and accused Wałesa of employing former members of the security apparatus in his office. By 1992 both were fired from their offices. Lech became the President of the Supreme Chamber of Control (*Najwyższa Izba Kontroli*, NIK) and Jarosław was concentrating his efforts on the PC (Pilawski et al. 2016: 100). In the following elections that formed the national-conservative Jan Olszewski government, the PC played an instrumental role with their 8.7 percent vote success. As this government fell apart and elections were repeated in 1993, the PC failed to pass the necessary threshold to move into the Sejm. This marked the beginning of the political lowpoint for the twins. Outside of the Sejm and everyday politics, they were shunned and ignored by most of the political elites and intelligentsia in the country. With the PC deeply marginalized, Jarosław kept himself in the news by marching on the presidential palace and being the largest opponent of Wałesa, publicly accusing him of cooperation with the communist security apparatus (both in the 1970s and 1995) (Pankowski 2010: 151). The return to political relevancy was slow. In 1997 Jarosław's PC became a part of the *Akcja Wyborcza Solidarność* (Solidarność Electoral Action, AWS) under Marian Krzaklewski, where both brothers saw little significance. This was the time where they developed a refreshed rhetoric to reverse their unpopular opinion among the wider public. Their discourse centered around strict law and order positions and entailed discussions on the death penalty and lustration. This change in appearance was not a large success immediately, but opened the way for a new persona for the twins. During a government reshuffle under Jerzy Buzek of the AWS in 2000, Lech Kaczyński surprisingly became Minister of Justice. There he made a name for himself as a 'tough-on-crime' anticommunist criticizing judges and their mild verdicts and pressuring the prosecution to act faster and harsher, which made him especially remembered, after being dismissed from the position only one year later. His image was that of an outsider fighting corrupt and lazy elites. This new populist persona of Lech brought him renewed popularity among the public and was swiftly used by both brothers to establish a new party in 2001, *Prawo I Sprawiedliwość* (Law and Justice, PiS) (Vetter 2008: 20).

Prawo I Sprawiedliwość: Establishment, Ideology and first successes

Prawo I Sprawiedliwość was established in June 2001 by the Kaczyński brothers and the leftover members of the *Porozumienie Centrum*, with Lech becoming the first chairman. Aside from the PC, multiple other smaller, marginalized parties from the national patriotic wing participated in the formation of the PiS, among them the *Zjednoczenie Chrześciańsko Narodowe* (United Christian Nationals, ZChN), the *Stronnictwo Konserwatywno Narodowe* (Conservative-Nationals, SKN), the *Ruch Odbudowy Polski* (Movement for the Reconstruction of Poland, ROP) and right-wing members from the AWS that decided to follow the newly popular Lech Kaczyński (Vetter 2008: 20). With the incorporation of these parties that situated themselves to the right of the PC, the PiS started with a stronger right-wing approach than the Kaczyńskis' earlier projects. The PiS, although not the only right-wing force in Poland, was diverse from the beginning, catering to a wide definition of conservatism, which brought them moderate success in the 2001 Sejm elections (9,4%). The PiS was set with a popular agenda for next 4 years of opposition. In 2005 the feeling among the Polish voters was strongly right leaning. People were fed up with the vices of the *Sojusz Lewicy Demokracyjnej* (Democratic Left Alliance, SLD) government of Leszek Miller and the rhetoric of the Kaczyński bothers tapped into that. The PiS' Law and Order program voiced the major dissatisfaction of the voters towards the different corruption cases and scandals surrounding the Miller government. Radical clean-up and anti-corruption measures were the central election promises of Jarosław Kaczyński and became the most prominent features of the PiS Ideology, which had a much broader exegesis than simply what the Kaczyński twins represented (Vetter 2010: 2). Though the Kaczyński brothers remained politically in the statist patriotic Piłsudskite tradition with a strong catholic influence, surprisingly among their allies in the party the nationalist *Endek* camp from the Dmowski tradition gained more influence with time. This diverseness of right-wing thought would become a hallmark of the PiS for years to come and one of the most intriguing strategic aspects of the party's development, specifically under Jarosław's leadership. In 2002 Lech Kaczyński won the elections for mayor of Warsaw and his brother took over the chairmanship of the PiS. In the following years until the 2005 elections, Jarosław would move closer to the Dmowski *Endek* camp (Pankowski 2010: 155). But it was not the purely National Democratic politicians inside his party that gained the most influence over Jarosław in the first years of the PiS. The largest concessions by Kaczyński were made towards the Christian National priest Tadeusz Rydzyk.

Rydzyk, the man behind the *Radio Maryja* broadcast group, started supporting the Kaczyński

brothers after he had a falling out with the nationalist politicians of the *Liga Polskich Rodzin* (League of Polish Families, LPR) in 2005. The airtime, public support and electoral mobilization by *Radio Maryja* is seen as a major factor for the electoral success of the PiS and the Kaczyński brothers in their respective elections. In the 2005 Sejm elections the PiS gained 27% of the votes, putting them ahead of the liberal-conservative *Platforma Obywatelska* (Civic Platform, PO) of Donald Tusk. Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz, a physicist and former *Solidarność* activist was to become the prime minister of Poland for the PiS. After negotiations with the PO failed in October 2005, Kaczyński decided to form a minority government in coalition with the right wing nationalist LPR of Roman Giertych and populist-nationalist *Samoobrona* of Andrzej Lepper. In the same month Lech won the presidential election and became President of Poland. As such, Lech and Jarosław thanked Rydzyk extensively after their victories and apologized for their previously negative attitude towards the media outlets (Pankowski 2010: 156).

Jarosław Kaczyński explained this cooperation as a pragmatic one in the beginning of his tenure in 2006, when he said that although *Żoliborz* remains his world, "*You have to shoot with the guns that are available. (…) First, I have to win elections. For this reason, I move to the right as much as I can, not as far as Orban in Hungary, (…). You cannot win elections without Radio Maryja*." (Pankowski 2010: 156). For that support, Kaczyński fulfilled his due and brought through a law offering tax exemption for a new category, the '*social broadcaster*', which weirdly only affected *Radio Maryja*. He even continued the support when Rydzyk called Lech a cheat and his wife Maria a witch (Pankowski 2010: 175). But it seemed to be more than pragmatism from Jarosław that motivated this symbiotic relation, because, in his own words, he came to like *Radio Maryja*, what it stands for and what it did to bring the right in Poland together and strengthen it (Pankowski 2010: 157).

After the success of the 2005 elections, the PiS grew, swallowing smaller right-wing parties who landed outside of the electoral minimum, such as the *Ruch Patriotyczny* (Patriotic Movement, RP) with Antoni Macierewicz, who would turn out to be one of the most prominent representatives of the PiS in later years. In 2006, after Jarosław dismissed Marcinkiewicz and took over the office of prime minister himself, the two brothers finally reached their destination and, with both of them holding the reigns to power in their hands, could effectively push for long established goals. The complete power in both twins' hands prompted the PiS to turn into a centralist party with a strict autocratic structure, especially in regards to Jarosław's leadership style. There was only one acceptable line in the party and that was whatever Jarosław said. By 2006, he eliminated everyone who would not do his bidding (Vetter 2008: 48). Many of the removed members would publicly

expose the almost feudal situation inside the party, such as Paweł Zaleski, Antoni Mężydło und Marian Piłka. The Kaczyńskis tolerated no dissent inside the party and in public (Pankowski 2010: 164). The first of the active goals they pursued in the two years in power was a strong judicial lustration, were they tried to eliminate left wing judges and prosecutors by connecting them to former communists. At the same time, they opened up the archives of the communist security apparatus through the *Instytut Pamięci Narodowej* (Institute of National Remembrance, IPN), which became a hub for historians researching the formerly sealed documents. At the same time, it became a haven for headhunters and PiS-related academics, who would research names and create dossiers on political opponents and unruly administrators, connecting them to communist elites and security services in any way possible. This was especially fueled by the extension of the lustration law by the Kaczyńskis, where not only higher officials could be investigated. Practically every state employee, or public person, became a possible target of these revelations. This witch-hunt was quickly put to a halt, when the *Trybunał Konstytucyjny* (Constitutional Court) deemed the law, affecting close to 700 000 people now, unconstitutional and reverted it in May 2007 (Vetter 2008: 76). This was not the only run in with the *Trybunał Konstytucyjny* by the PiS in that year. The constitutional court created issues for the PiS because of the quality of the laws they would bring through, with some of them not even getting a single hearing in the Sejm before passing. Further investigations affected the PiS on the issue of separation of church and state. These problems caused by the courts created a deep disdain towards them by Jarosław, which would reflect in their relationship in later years (Vetter 2008: 79). The PiS also showed its true populist colors at that time, removing public officials who disagreed with them and implementing their own subordinates on the only merit that they were loyal. This was apparent in media as well, when the higher levels of the *Krajowa Rada Radiofonii I Telewizji* (National Broadcasting Council, KRRiT) were replaced with Kaczyński loyals. Further organizations and media affected included the *Polska Agencja Prasowa* (Polish Press Agency, PAP), the newspaper *Rzeczpospolita* and the daily newspaper *Dziennik*, all of whom were owned proportionally by the state. Some of the editorial staff distanced themselves from the PiS over time, as was the case with *Rzeczpospolita*. Private broadcasters were exempt from this take-over, but oftentimes pressured through the KRRiT. The private TV channel *Polsat* for example had to drop the investigative journalist Tomasz Lis, after PiS officials started digging in the communist past of the *Polsat* owner Zygmunt Solarz-Żak (Vetter 2008: 82).

All this did not help in the end, as the minority government grew more and more ineffective and the relationship between the PiS and the coalition partners worsened drastically. This was

especially apparent in the relationship between Jarosław Kaczyński and Andrzej Lepper, the Minister of Agriculture, of the *Samoobrona*. Kaczyński was actively sabotaging the parties to the right of him, hoping to gain the support of their followers. Lepper was the subject of rumors and probes, suggesting he was corrupt and cooperated with former communists. Similar treatment awaited other members of coalition parties. In the end both Kaczyński and his quasi partners capitulated in the Sejm and declared the coalition as effectively over. After different solutions to the question of what happens next started swirling around the political sphere in Poland, Tusk and other oppositional figures managed to convince Lech Kaczyński, the president, that early elections were the only proper solution. Jarosław had no choice but to follow suit. It was not that his brother and others pressured him to take that route, but rather his own conviction that the damage he has done to his direct opponents on the right would net him their voter bases (Vetter 2008: 118). He was not entirely wrong. After a short, but brutal, campaign, voting booths opened on the morning of October 21st, 2007. The PiS increased their share of votes to 32,1%, but the PO reached 41,5%. *Samoobrona* and the LPR did not even reach the 3% threshold. The mayhem and chaos that the PiS left in both the Sejm and beyond prompted a response, but not the one Jarosław expected. The topics that convinced the electorate to support the PO were growing concerns for the international isolation under the PiS, a more stable and open approach to internal politics and blocking Jarosław by voting for Tusk. Over the two years of PiS chaos a broad anti-authoritative and liberal movement arose away from the political sphere and flourished in civic society. Jarosław Kaczyński's strategy of complete control and elimination of every dissident voice scared the population, made him extremely unpopular and cemented his image as anti-social, power hungry and authoritative (Pankowski 2010: 188). The voter turnout for the 2007 election was the highest since 1989 at 53,7%, with the PO dominating regions resembling the formerly Prussian and German territories (West and North Poland), as well as central metropolises. The PiS won majorly in regions that were under Russian rule during the partitions (South-East Poland). The rest of Poland was balanced between the two or dominated by parties with strong local structures, such as the social democratic SLD in parts of former Galicia. The explanation to why the PiS lost in these regions is the often cited good experience with the West and the EU there, so that the fear-mongering campaign against German interests and other instrumentalizations of history did not reflect the experience of the voters (Majcherek 2007: 3).

When Donald Tusk formed his government in November 2007 together with the *Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe* (Polish Peasant's Party, PSL), it marked the beginning of a period of decline for

the PiS. In a re-positioning move Jarosław tried to copy an aggressive oppositional approach from Tusk that he experienced himself. Lech commented on that in an interview himself, claiming the PiS should be as uncomfortable for the PO as the latter was to them in 2005-2007 (Majcherek 2007: 14). It did not go as planned for the PiS though, as Jarosław Kaczyński tried to retain total control of the PiS' members, but missing the scepter of Polish politics in his hands, he lacked authority. After he dismissed any dissident voices at the post-election party convention in December 2007, figureheads of the PiS left the party, dismissed by Kaczyński under thunderous applause of the convention. This included Ludwik Dorn, Paweł Zalewski, Kazimierz Ujazdowski and Jarosław Sellin who, when they left, symbolized a party that was dropping the conservative intelligentsia of the big cities and moving towards a national traditionalist worldview centered around Catholicism. This was only strengthened when leading conservative intellectuals who supported and advised Lech Kaczyński, Marek Cichocki and Zdzisław Krasnodębski started distancing themselves from the PiS (Vetter 2008: 168). Krasnodębski has since returned to the PiS as a Member of the European Parliament in 2014 while Cichocki enjoys the respect of Jarosław through his relationship with his brother from a distance. Most prominent government figures of 2005 moved into different offices still available, where they could place themselves to pressure the new PO-PSL government, like in the NIK, the National Security Council or Lech Kaczyński's chancellery. There they still enjoyed "*a warm place for the upcoming political winter*" (Vetter 2008: 169).

Lech's Presidency and Legacy

The PiS managed to remain second strongest force in Poland after the PO, but had to accept that their position looked more and more grim as their oppositional strategy was not bearing fruit. Their already bad position after the *Wybory Samorządowe* (Communal Elections) in 2006 and the Parliamentary Elections in 2007 was worsened after a devastating loss in the Elections for the EU Parliament in 2009 (Polen Analysen 2009/54: 11). The PiS came into 2010, after 3 long years of no achievement or milestone that was noteworthy, with only one goal, the reelection of Lech Kaczyński as president of Poland. The prognosis did not look good though, with both the PiS' right wing profilization in the last three years in opposition, the legacy of chaos from 2005-2007 and Jarosław's general unpopularity weighing heavily against them in the public eye. In a large research paper published by the *Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej* (Centre for Public Opinion Research, CBOS) shortly after the Smolensk crash, opinion polls of all kinds centered around Lech Kaczyński's

presidential term from 2005-2010 have been released, showing a picture of continual decline in public opinion. Whereas in early 2006 most respondents judged the work of Lech positively, this changed rapidly and by the end of the year more than half of them judged his work negatively. This only worsened over the years, with a record high being reached in summer 2009, where 68% of the respondents thought he did a bad job as president. By March 2010, the negative opinion was at 65% (CBOS 2010: 3). Lech Kaczyński's weakness was that he was seen as a president immensely reliant on the PiS, rather than being a neutral president and his actions where guided in his own political interest. The probably hardest judgement was that more than half of respondents thought he did not care about the general public in early 2010 (CBOS 2010: 9).

This changed drastically after his death in April 2010, when opinions flipped dramatically. Looking at the CBOS polling in May 2010, all questions on his performance suddenly became positives. Now suddenly 57% of respondents said he did care about the public and its well-being. In February 56% said his actions where guided selfishly out of his own political interest, this changed to 52% saying his actions had the goal of bettering the country in May. 49% thought he was an honest person before the crash, which rose to 72% after the crash, with only 7% daring to say he was dishonest from the earlier 19% (CBOS 2010: 9). In total the judgment on his presidency flipped entirely from 65% saying he was a bad president, to 62% saying he was a great president after the crash (CBOS 2010: 3).

The presidency of Lech Kaczyński has to be analyzed with more detail than just statistics. His presidential term can be divided into two general periods, the first one from 2005-2007 where he dominated Polish politics together with his brother Jarosław and the period from 2007-2010, when the government was organized by Prime Minister Donald Tusk of the *Platforma Obywatelska*.

When he got into power in 2005, Poland was a country that had just joined the EU and started reaping the rewards of European Economic Integration, leading to a stable rise of the GDP. In his role as president he assisted his brother in keeping the volatile government going, both in coalition and minority, being able to speed up legislative and other political processes. His support for the PiS went beyond just assisting the government, but rather forming a powerful alliance together with his brother's government and acting as one. This caused problems with the natural democratic order of separated institutions. He supported the lustration program pushed by his brother, but was not as zealous as Jarosław when it came to chasing and hunting for communists. This was shown when he defused the lustration laws put in by his brother, when they were found to be unconstitutional, and generally supported ideas of pardons for non-instrumental figures in

the communist regime. In foreign policy he represented many of the PiS' ideals by judging international relations by historical pasts. For example, his relations to Germany and Russia were centered around impressions and crimes during the Second World War, putting contemporary German and Russian actions and interests in immediate relation to Nazi Germany and Soviet atrocities in World War 2. In relation with the United States he was critically overestimating Poland's importance globally, oftentimes demanding U.S. focus in Eastern Europe (Vetter 2010: 6). Although he did not like to present himself in the great salon of international politics, he was very much at times an active diplomat. This showed during the South Ossetian crisis between Georgia and Russia, where he flew to Tbilisi and was one of the most vocal foreign dignitaries to stand with Georgia (prezydent.pl 2008).

Lech Kaczyński was a shy president, enjoying personal meetings more than glamorous TV appearances. He was also a devout catholic, not only appreciating the spiritual assistance of the church, but also its assistance while he was in the democratic opposition from 1976. In the democratic movement that brought the communist regime to fall in 1989 he was not in a heroic position like Kuroń or Mazowiecki, but did his part for bringing on change. As aggressive as most PiS politicians appear, he lacked that radical and contentious character that Jarosław has. He was loyal to his brother, assisting him in his political work and representing the PiS and its vision wherever he went to, even if he did not fully agree with the party's matters. In this sense he was also loyal to the country he represented dutifully, but through the lens of the PiS' party politics. Finally, he was not a reformer, but a politician that sought to protect and preserve a country that became too modern and open for his liking in the years after joining the EU (Vetter 2010: 9). Still, his legacy was defined by his last action in life. His death transformed 'Lech, the preserver of values' into 'Lech, the martyr', tainting his entire career with folklore and myth. How he really was and how everyone felt about him remains only in documents, statistics and opinion polls, which his brother wants to drown in a romantic tale of a modern day Polish hero.

The PiS in opposition

After the death of Lech Kaczyński there was little time for Jarosław to mourn his brother’s death in full length silently. The presidential elections scheduled for Autumn 2010 were to happen in June instead. 10 candidates managed to reach the necessary signatures to be eligible for election, with the two strongest candidates being Jarosław Kaczyński of the PiS and Bronisław Komorowski of the PO. As Marshal of the Sejm, Komorowski filled the role of interim President between the

catastrophe and the results of the election. In the first cycle of the election Komorowski and Kaczyński reached the most votes, moving into the second run-off between just the two (Polen-Analysen 2010/73: 18). The PiS had reshuffled since the 2007 elections and appeared much more moderate, but retained the aggressiveness it always showed towards its opponents. The factual topics discussed were not the vocal point of the election, but played second fiddle to the emotional reflection of the chaos that transpired in all public spheres in Poland after the crash. Kaczyński argued that the election was a battle between the Patriotic and the unpatriotic one, while Komorowski and the PO argued they were the civilized Poland standing against the uncivilized one. The PO quickly started to focus their talking points around how Kaczyński abuses the memory of his brother for political gain. The division kept growing and national mourning turned into a political battlefield. Jarosław Kaczyński's early friendly, united attitude of the first election cycle turned more aggressive and radical, as he realized that being moderate did not make him more likable among the public (Flis 2012: 5). It was not enough, as Komorowski won by a slight margin of 53% against the 47% of Kaczyński (Polen-Analysen 2010/73: 18). There was a lot of discussion about the PiS program and how the party should position itself, closer to the center or more radically right. With the 2011 parliamentary elections on the horizon, the PiS remained on an aggressive radical course, calling the government criminal and starting plots about the Smolensk catastrophe and the PO's role in it. While the more prominent members would attack the PO and Tusk on grounds that they were responsible for not providing enough measure to prevent the death of Lech Kaczyński, more radical elements insinuated Tusk was involved in scheming the accident together with Vladimir Putin (Flis 2012: 6). In a research paper published in 2014, sociologist Mikołaj Cześnik found out through the analysis of quantitative data, that the Smolensk catastrophe had no significant influence on the voter decision, but only reinforced already existing voter decisions and behavior. The segment it had a clear mobilization effect was the conservative voter segment already leaning towards the PiS, while it also had a smaller mobilizing effect in the opposing segment, voting to prevent the PiS. The dividing power of the topic made voting behavior more predictable in the classicly volatile voter behavior. What it did show further, was that it left an imprint in a large part of the respondents, making Cześnik believe that the collective national trauma of the catastrophe might still come into play at a later date (Cześnik 2014: 537).

Before the Sejm elections in 2011, the PiS had to go through the *Wybory Samorządowe* (communal elections). The setup was pretty disastrous, as the loss at the presidential elections in the same year prompted a reshuffle inside the PiS. Jarosław Kaczyński, unhappy with the effectiveness of the

election campaign and moderate program got rid of 15 prominent members directly involved in the direction previously taken. This had as a result that not only Sejm members left, but also Members of the European Parliament, weakening the PIS as a result right before the elections in December 2010. This is the first election were blaming Tusk and the PO for his brother's death became a fully operational electoral strategy and replaced the call for lustration (Waszak, Zbieranek 2011: 3). The elections were a sweeping win for the PO, who took 13 of the 16 vojvodships, leaving only two to the PiS and one to the SLD. (Polen-Analysen 2011⁄82: 9).

The Sejm elections in October 2011 brought the campaigns into second gear again, with all the attention being on the PO. Following different prognosis, it was the strongest force coming into the election, presenting the best program for the large and still growing middle class in Poland. Still, the PO was battling internal struggle over the last year and through their approach stood in direct battle over similar voter segments as the SLD and the new *Ruch Palikota,* which split from them. The PiS with Jarosław Kaczyński focused on moderate topics known from the 2010 election, but did not manage to hide the more radical elements of its current members (Majcherek 2011a: 5). With the moderate wing leaving the PiS, more radical members, such as Antoni Macierewicz and Piotr Gliński, started surrounding Kaczyński. Smolensk remained a central subject in the election campaign. As per usual the topic was interpreted to be able to blame Tusk and the PO for the incident and the presidential pair of Lech and Maria Kaczyński were used in TV commercials with slogans, such as "*Oni czekają na prawdę"* ("They wait for the truth") (PiS 2011). Aside from Smolensk, history politics also played a major part in the PiS campaign, with a book by Jarosław Kaczyński being released shortly before the elections. There he talked about Angela Merkel, Chancellor of Germany, and her secretive connections to powerful people, as well as a hidden agenda to subdue Poland once again under Germany's will. These radical outbursts overshadowed his rather fair criticism of the PO government and together with the strong catholic message that catered to the base of Father Rydzyk's *Radio Maryja*, the majority progressive leaning public did not follow his message (Majcherek 2011b: 4). The PiS lost out again and the PO became the first party in post-1989 Poland to be re-elected into office. Kaczyński only managed to garner 29% against the 39% of the PO, with the protest party *Ruch Palikota* becoming the third strongest force in the Sejm with 10% of the votes. Tusk secured another four years in government, condemning Kaczyński to another legislative period as leader of opposition (Polen-Analysen 2011⁄97: 8). The results were a serious blowback for Jarosław Kaczyński, with more prominent members, such as Zbigniew Ziobro, leaving the party out of internal differences. It became clear that aside from

Jarosław struggling to effectively combine the moderate and radical wing of the PiS, it is his own persona and lack of popularity among the electorate, that seems to be the largest roadblock to power. In the words of Jarosław Flis (2012): "*[...]-without him the PiS cannot survive and with him they cannot succeed*." (Flis 2012: 6)

As bad as the election results seemed for the PiS, losing almost 900.000 voters compared to 2007, Kaczyński moved to stabilize the party surrounding himself with the most radically illiberal and right-wing conservative members, like Macierewicz and Gliński, who were all ready to defend the myth of Smolensk publicly and in the Sejm (Pilawski et al. 2016: 13).

The PiS stayed keen, presenting a broad oppositional front against the Tusk government, waiting for a moment where they could come back into the mainstream discussion. That moment opened itself in 2012, when the PO faced multiple smaller crisis. First it brute forced two unpopular pieces of legislature. The first one, setting new guidelines for the *Narodowy Fundusz Zdrowia* (National Health Service, NFZ) in giving out medicine for patients sparked protest by pharmacists and doctors and, when the law was pushed through, created chaos in pharmacies around the country as well as problems for patients in getting their medicine. In the second case the PO pushed for raising the retirement age by a month every 4 months, reaching the new goal of 67 years for men in 2020 and for women in 2040. This resulted in nationwide protest by worker's unions, causing problems with the PSL coalition and the general public, who was strongly against it (Gałązka et al. 2012: 4). In both cases the PiS positioned itself on the side of the doctors and the worker's unions, convincing the public through populist rhetoric that they, not the left elites in government, represented the interest of the common citizen (Pilawski et al. 2016: 14). Additionally, outside factors such as the ACTA disputes of 2012 in all of the EU, the disappointing infrastructural investments surrounding the EURO 2012 football tournament organized in Poland and Ukraine (Gałązka et al. 2012: 4) and a power struggle inside the PO were dominating media coverage for the entire year (Flis 2013: 2). The conflict inside the PO had to do with a lot of the same factors that encouraged a steady rise in PiS popularity, as well as also directly helping the PiS. In 2013 and early 2014, these problems for the PO only grew. From all of the EU a general skepticism and discontent swept into Poland following the public tiredness with the Eurozone Crisis that even engulfed Poland which was outside of it. Poland's economic growth was hampered, but not stopped, yet all the problems emanating from the EU were largely not addressed in Polish politics and in similar vain to other countries in the EU, national topics dominated the run up to the 2014 European Parliamentary Elections. Media and politicians were preoccupied talking about the general discontent towards

the Tusk government's perceived inactivity, the first victories in polls for the PiS, the power struggle inside the PO and, as always, the Smolensk catastrophe (Vetter 2013: 4).

With the general mood shifting against the liberal-conservative PO in Poland the PiS moved quickly back to being an equal in the grand scheme of Poland's politics. In the elections for the European Parliament in May 2014, the PiS reached the same amount of seats as the PO, precisely 19. This first success in a long time weighed heavily as similar right wing parties of former PiS members managed to become the third strongest force in Poland. In July 2014 the right-wing conservative parties signed an agreement to stand in the upcoming elections as a united block under the PiS. With this agreement, Zbigniew Ziobro of the *Solidarna Polska* (United Poland, SP) and Jarosław Gowin, formerly a conservative member of the PO, indirectly joined the PiS (Pilawski et al. 2016: 14). The next elections ahead were the *Wybory Samorządowe* (communal elections) of November 2014. In the short few months another heap of events would tip the scale further towards the PiS. First, the Ukraine conflict sparked a discussion about the EU's collective and Poland's individual responsibility and reaction. The Russian involvement scared the Polish public, with opinion polls indicating roughly two thirds of the respondents believing that Poland itself was at risk of becoming a target for Russian imperialist engagement and only about 20% feeling safe (Polen-Analysen 2014⁄146: 10). Poland's public and media observed the events in Crimea very closely, with politicians of both camps demanding stronger EU engagement in the crisis (Buras 2014: 2). The public actually indicated through polling, that it too thought the responsibility to act belonged much more to the EU than the NATO. The initial trust was there, but the disappointment prevailed after the EU's inability to act. Throughout this crisis Jarosław Kaczyński left no moment and possibility untouched to remind the public of his everlasting distrustful stance against Russia. After the Malaysia Airline Flight 17 was shot down over Ukraine, killing 283 passengers, parallels to Smolensk were drawn, giving the public an easy narrative to follow, in which Russia again is responsible for the crash of both planes and Donald Tusk, who sided with the EU and was involved in the Smolensk crash, again did not act against Russia (Buras 2014: 7). The harsh public and political reception that Donald Tusk faced during the summer of the crisis prompted a response from both him and the EU in support. In August 2014 it became clear, after a vote, that Donald Tusk would succeed Herman Van Rompuy as President of the European Council, leaving the already roughed up PO to elect a new prime minister. For the critics Tusk was fleeing Polish politics a midst a popularity crisis and an upcoming scandal among the PO, which dominated the media coverage since the end of summer 2014. Strategically, it might have been an attempt to take one of the last

still popular liberal figures of Poland and through him connect Poland, it's public, closer to the EU, to prevent an incoming illiberal turn towards Kaczyński (Flis 2014: 2). With the surveillance scandal weighing heavily over the PO, led by newly appointed Ewa Kopacz, the communal elections seemed as a chance for Jarosław Kaczyński to deliver a heavy blow to the PO continuity. The PiS came out of the elections swinging, winning back the vojvodships it lost, but the PO managed to retain the one's they controlled since 2006. The PiS success was also limited to the countryside, as it won only 10 of the 106 cities, in which the city president is voted directly. It was an important election for the PiS, regaining control in the countryside and banishing the PO to the large cities (Jarosz 2014: 3). The bridgeheads and plans were ready and the stage set. Kaczyński and his PiS were ready for a sincere challenge of power in the large election year of 2015.

Total Victory

2015 was the year of large elections in Poland, with the presidential five-year term and the four-year term of the PO government ending in the same year. Presidential elections were set for May and Sejm elections set for October. This setup favored the PO according to media and analysts as the current president Komorwski, who was preparing for his second election campaign, was a popular man and sure candidate, whose victory could carry momentum into the later Sejm elections. When the campaigns for the presidential election started, opinion polls pitted Bronisław Komorowski against Jarosław Kaczyński, with the then president winning in all categories. In early polls 80% of respondents trusted Komorowski, while only 33% showed that same trust to Kaczyński. Only 9% were strictly against the PO candidate, while 47% opposed the idea of Kaczyński as president. The initial polls and the experience from the last three major elections, where he put himself up for the highest office and lost out, made Jarosław decide for a new course of action, ruling himself out of candidacy very early on (Pilawski et al. 2016: 15). The choice for candidate was, in the eyes of Kaczyński, dominated by one big factor: Loyalty. This ruled out conservative academics outside of the PiS. The experience of inter-party power struggles Kaczyński had with endemic heavyweights, such as Gliński when he gained popularity, ruled them out as well, leaving only the option of a surprise candidate. This strategy manifested in the presentation of Andrzej Duda as presidential candidate in early 2015. Dr. jur. Andrzej Duda was at that time a fairly unknown PiS politician, having started his career in the chancellery of Lech Kaczyński when he was president and from 2014 onward as a member of the European parliament for the PiS. Over the next months he quickly established himself as the perfect PiS candidate for both the public and

Jarosław Kaczyński, as he not only proved to be a refreshing young and new face for the party, but through his history as a student of Lech Kaczyński also a loyal candidate, who Jarosław could trust (Majcherek 2015: 3). The election itself proved to be dominated by young voters, who in the first cycle gave their votes for the protest candidate Paweł Kukiz, who promised radical change to the stale power structures of all established parties in Poland and came third. Komorowski, starting his campaign very sluggishly and late, was not present throughout most of the campaign, relying on his early polling results putting him far ahead of the other candidates. This proved to be a decisive error, with Duda winning the first cycle by one percentage point and the second run-off by a two percent difference. The surprise candidate fulfilled his plan, convincing the crucial young voter group that an equally young politician, untainted by decades of party politics, would be able to bring about a radical change and fulfill the plethora of promises he made during the campaign (Majcherek 2015: 4). His intents to be a president uninfluenced by party politics were crushed soon after his victory, when he pardoned the PiS member Mariusz Kamiński, former head of the *Centralne Biuro Antykorpucyjne* (Central Anti-Corruption Bureau, CBA), who was sentenced to three years in prison for abuse of power. Kamiński is considered one of the most loyal and radical confidants of Jarosław Kaczyński and would by the end of the year head not only the CBA again, but also the Secret Service (tvn24.pl 2015a).

The success of the presidential election put the PiS ahead of the PO in the run-up to the Sejm elections. The PiS found a surprising new voter spectrum for itself, young Poles, disillusioned by the growing precariousness of a global and local labor market. A high percentage of university graduates in Poland are facing lacking job opportunities and high dependency on bank loans to enter the housing market. The second generation after 1990 is, comparably to the one before, looking at stagnating opportunities for future success, in spite of liberal politicians claiming something different. Disillusioned, they sway to the illiberal national conservative promises of the PiS that a strong right will reverse this injustice done to them by the liberal governments (Pilawski et al. 2016: 48). Looking towards October 2015, the PiS saw little incentive to change the approach that brought them the surprise victory. In spite of analysts thinking that even Kaczyński himself could ride the wave of popularity to a victory in the Sejm elections, he decided against it, instead putting the campaign manager of Duda, Beata Szydło, up for the race. Szydło, representing the PiS in the Sejm since 2005, was deemed to not only be a serious opponent against the incumbent Ewa Kopacz, but also being a good representative for the PiS, all the while not being seen too close to Kaczyński and his radical inner circle (Flis 2015: 6). The mismatch between the two politicians going

head to head exemplified in all public appearances. While Szydło effectively presented herself as a small-town woman with a fighting spirit, Ewa Kopacz seemed lost throughout the election, being busy with PO infighting rather than her own campaign. PiS members where never tired repeating the same promises with which Duda managed to gather so many votes, pointing to a large folder with already written legislative initiatives to immediately get to work if they win (Pilawski et al. 2016: 19). A detail about the entire PiS campaign in 2015 was the extremely noteworthy lack of Kaczyński, the Smolensk catastrophe and its surrounding stern face of Antoni Macierewicz in the public. Instead the campaign focused on the job market for young people, the family funding program '500+' and the migrant crisis (Markowski 2015: 3). While the job market talk was a repeat of the Duda promises, the '500+' program presented to the public was a highly popular topic. The program outlined 500 Złoty (ca. 160 Euros) monthly for every Polish family with more than one child (under 18 years). Critics deemed it a bribe for low income families across Poland's cities and effectively a different form of redistribution of tax income. Over the course of the election '500+' became the major campaign promise for the PiS (Druciarek 2016: 2). The topic that not only grasped Poland, but dominated the entire EU in the summer of 2015 was the migrant crisis. Though Poland was not really affected by it in any way, the general public quickly swayed against taking in refugees, after the PiS took over a hard stance against it and media coverage was dominated by dramatic scenes of the south eastern transit countries (Vetter 2015a: 3). The PiS positioned itself along its ideology, declaring it is a national party, protecting Polish traditions and the Polish territory. With this in mind, preventing the take-in of war refugees of Muslim belief became a patriotic duty. This interpretation became more popular, as other right-wing parties, such as the protest movement Kukiz and the radical and chauvinist Janusz Korwin-Mikke, started propagating similar stances (Pilawski et al. 2016: 53). The anti-migrant narrative had multiple factors that made it attractive for the PiS to embrace. For one, they had a crisis with which they could attack not only the EU, but the PO opposition with, discrediting both Tusk in Brussels and Ewa Kopacz in Warsaw. The other side of the sword was that it was easy to embed in historical romantic narratives of defending not just Poland from the Muslims (or Ottomans) but also Christian (and White) Europe, like Jan Sobieski III. In Vienna, when he stormed from Kahlenberg upon the forces of Kara Mustafa. This use of history politics fit the portfolio of Kaczyński's tricks perfectly, mobilizing not only the far-right for him, by catering to conspiracy theories on the death of white Europe, but also moderate voters, concerned through the abundant coverage of terrorist attacks in France, Belgium and Germany by mass media (Bertram, Wigura 2016: 5).

The results on October 25th, 2015, surprised almost no one, but shocked nonetheless. The PiS swept away its opposition, to achieve something no one has achieved in Poland after 1989: the absolute majority in the Sejm with 235 of 460 seats. The results are put in perspective when the voter turnout of 50,9% for the elections is taken into account, meaning that effectively only 19,5% of eligible voters in Poland voted for the PiS. Jarosław Kaczyński, at the celebrations of his victory, invoked his brother by repeating the phrase back to him in memory, with which he reported to him after becoming president in 2005:

"*Panie prezydencie, melduję wykonanie zadania*"

("Mr. President, mission accomplished")

– Jarosław Kaczyński (TVP Info 2015)

–

The PiS and Jarosław Kaczyński

Almost immediately after the victory, the PiS switched from campaign mode to governing mode, trying to push the promises that got them elected through the Sejm. With it, Jarosław Kaczyński returned to the forefront of the PiS without making a great secret of it. To no surprise, he picked the cabinet members for Beata Szydło, planting well known hardliners and loyalists among the ministries and offices. Among them are Adam Lipiński (Secretary of State), Mariusz Błaszczak (Ministry of Interior), Zbigniew Ziobro (again Minister of Justice), Antoni Macierewicz (Minister of Defense) and finally, the just pardoned, Mariusz Kamiński (Chief of Secret Service and again the CBA). Ministries relating to social, cultural, infrastructural, financial and economic issues were filled with more moderate, renowned experts, rather than loyalists. The only office that was filled as the result of a compromise between the rural-christian wing of Szydło and Kaczyński was the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Witold Waszczykowski. With this move, Kaczyński retained most of the power over the government and, with so many hardliners in power, the presented image of the PiS returned to its more radical appearance. Smolensk returned as a central topic of discussion together with nationalist-christian rhetoric and Father Rydzyk in tow. In the days and months after the electoral victory, the PiS would start passing bills through the Sejm at night or on holidays, when other Sejm members were not there, that had only one clear mastermind behind them, Jarosław Kaczyński. To not repeat the mistakes of the last attempts of governing in 2005 and later, the PiS adopted an authoritative approach to fixing what in their eyes were problems with the state (Vetter 2015b: 3).

For their role in hindering the effectiveness of the 2005 government, they started firing against the constitutional courts, passing bills through the Sejm that would make the constitutional judges more dependent on the president and limit their terms, allowing faster turnover. The goal is a general attack on the constitution and the Polish Third Republic in general, which the PiS sees as flawed from the start in 1989. The prosecutor General, a historically independent role in the Polish justice system, was moved under the Minister of Justice, like it was under the communist party to restart trials and investigations left open after the loss of power, most popular among them, investigations of the Smolensk catastrophe under Macierewicz and different legal proceedings against the Tusk government at that time. With Kamiński back in the CBA and the secret service there was also a man who would not shy away from forging documents to charge opponents together with Zbigniew Ziobro, whose understanding of justice oftentimes aligns with personal vendettas (Vetter 2015b: 5). The media was not spared again, after being determined, by Kaczyński, to be one of the main factors that lost the PiS the 2007 elections. Together with the old PiS-hardliner Gliński the role of public service broadcasting, with TV channels such as TVP, was changed to become national television under stronger state control with a clean-up of unruly journalists. Effectively in a short time the channels *TVP*, *TVP Radio* and others were transformed into blatant state propaganda broadcasters, with a lot of renowned journalists leaving for the privately owned *TVN* and *Polsat*. Additionally, a program for the advancement of national history was set, which included funding for art, research and museums with a goal of strengthening the national pride of Poland and the Polish with a redefinition of patriotic history politics (Schmid 2016: 146). These are the largest outlined plans of 2015 and over the last years that the PiS is in power, they have been meticulously carried out. Cracks have been showing though, with the PiS not being able to fix the situation of young Poles for now and internal struggles erupting about who can enter Kaczyński's inner circle. The illusive man himself remains tactically in control of all the moves his party makes. Until late 2017, courting the right-wing conservatives and *Endecja* proved to be a solid strategy, culminating in the *Marsz Niepodległości* 2017 where estimated 60.000 right-wing hooligans marched in Warsaw without Police present. Once this became too much to handle and international pressure from partners in the EU became too much to bear, the party shifted, preparing a switch in government.

The PiS went through many transformations in the years since 2001, changing to be the picture perfect image of one man. At the point of its journey in 2017, the party is classified as national-conservative with a Catholic value system at its core. The themes it always covered most

extensively have been religious, patriotic, nationalist, centered around security and against corruption, with the fight against post-communist elites and for a new Fourth Republic of Poland forming the early 'law and order' Ideology of the party. This obsession with post-communists was the result of the disdain Jarosław had for the Round Table Talks, an event in history he views as the gravest injustice done to Poland. A moment were the largest criminals got away. Some commentators also assume a more personal motive of Jarosław, for not being invited to Magdalenka and later disregarded politically and intellectually by Wałesa or the AWS (Pankowski 2010: 154).

This chain of thought radicalized over the years and with the trauma of losing his brother in 2010 changed not only the worldview of Jarosław Kaczyński, but also the PiS as a whole. Sławomir Sierakowski, editor in-chief of Krytyka Polityczna summarized it well when he said in an interview:" The Smolensk religion replaced the religion of lustration for the catholic right." (wyborcza.pl 2012). It created a populist world view through which not only political actors, but also the public could be divided into the good and the treacherous. To sell this worldview and make it a political achievement, the person propagating it, steering the ship is the most important actor in the story.

It is extremely interesting to study Jarosław Kaczyński's political career, as every milestone I have described so far, every victory he celebrated, every defeat he had to swallow, were all lectures he endured and learned from. There is no secret adviser that whispers to him, he is a single player, making decision on past experiences and an inner moral and ethical compass. Everything he did, does and will do can be traced back to a moment in his career, an experience and lesson he learned. This is what I want to show with that chapter. I drew out all the lessons he has learned and were he corrected his former mistakes or built upon earlier successes. As such I can paint a very clear picture of Jarosław Kaczyński. He is pragmatic in his own words, leaning as far to the right as he has to, to win elections, working together with far-right fascist, anti-Semites and religious fanatics if he has to. He will not lean to the left though, as liberal politics and leftist thought are outside of his national conservative world view. 2005 has woken in him a disdain for the constitutional court and the constitution in general. The control of media and opinion-makers as a key to power is a lesson he learned from Michnik and Rydzyk and holds it as one of his highest laws for ruling. He embraces the use of historical myths, ideology and emotion as instruments of mobilization. These are not revelations or new aspects of power for anyone who studies politics, but, different to a lot of politicians, he embraces all that and empowers his effective populist political style. But he has his own vices, moments of weakness, where behind all the cold political

tactics, his impulsiveness shines through. Jarosław Kaczyński is first and foremost, to a Machiavellian level, hungry for absolute power and does not care if he has to drop some of his most trusted people to retain it. He is motivated by the plaguing feeling of having experienced injustice and driven by his populist worldview to defy his opponents. He knows he is not popular and accepts that fact, hiding gladly in the shadows and commanding from the rear. He is calm and collected in his public appearances, but exposes his inner emotions in the rare moments when he loses his calm. In a Sejm dispute in 2017, when an opposition politician quoted Lech Kaczyński, Jarosław stormed to the Sejm-microphone after him and unleashed a tirade: "*[...] I know that you fear the truth, but do not wipe your treacherous mouths with my late brother's name. You destroyed him, you murdered him. You are scumbags.*" (Kaczyński 2017). This event, the loss of his brother, was the moment of his political career that defined his world view, with his ultimate mission being the to do him justice and defend his memory. For Kaczyński his brother and Smolensk became a populist prism, through which he divides Poland into friends and foes, delegitimizes opposition and creates the moral argument which gives him, and only him, the right to shape Poland's future.

Remembering Smolensk

Smolensk, as already explained in the earlier chapters, is an extremely emotional event that exists as a form of collective trauma in the Polish society. In this burden, Poland is not alone, as such historical trauma are plenty to see wherever humans live. Remembering a traumatizing event as such takes many forms. They can range from erecting monuments in the name of such an event to dedicating festivities to the memory. In this chapter I want to look at the types of remembrance relating to Smolensk, as well as the facts and discussion behind the initiatives. This includes memorials, designated festivities and the dedication of public space, such as streets or squares to the catastrophe.

Monuments

There is no single official register or count-number for monuments dedicated to Smolensk to go off, but there is independent data collection on that matter. One such list and count is offered publicly by the BIQ Data Team of the Gazeta Wyborcza, who with a research team and public reporting of readers, all together count 462 monuments by April 2018 of different kinds dedicated to the Smolensk catastrophe (Chyż 2018). Most prominent among those are commemorative

plaques made of bronze or iron, which are either put up by themselves or added to existing Katyn monuments, as they and commemorative stones only cost approximately 10 thousand Zloty to put up. Other types of monuments include obelisks, commemorative trees, actual monuments, art installations, crosses, tombstones and other forms of physical remembrance in public spaces.

A majority of those were built in the first year that followed the crash in 2010, with about 100 different monuments erected in April 2011, for the one-year anniversary. In the following years until 2015 the unveiling of new monuments slowed down, except for April each year. The yearly commemorations would always spark a rise in numbers. From 2016 and further, since the PiS is in power, more monuments were unveiled together than in the 3 years prior, with more monuments popping up besides the usual April boom, but never matching the first year record of about 200 monuments until April 2011 (Chyż 2018).

An interesting detail to examine among all of the memorials is what they actually do commemorate and what qualifies as a Smolensk memorial. These two little questions are especially relevant because over the hundreds of memorials to be built and unveiled after 2010, two major themes dominate all of the plaques and monuments, namely a focus either on the tragedy itself as a whole or Lech Kaczyński. This manifests itself in how both the memorial's design, as well as what the accompanying inscriptions are referencing. Memorials that in their design reference the tragedy often depict the plane or a wreckage in physical form and mention the victims fairly equally, with Lech Kaczyński and his wife often appearing as the most notable deceased. The other group of memorials counted into that number are dedicated to singular victims, with Lech Kaczyński being the most notable one. All memorials, streets and other places dedicated to Lech Kaczyński can be found loosely aggregated on a website dedicated to his Foundation (lechkaczynski.pl 2018). These memorials oftentimes are busts, statues or plaques with the likeness of Lech Kaczyński and usually reference his death, as well as his achievements in the inscription. As such the criteria for what classifies a Smolensk memorial would be that it would have to either directly, through its entire meaning, or just partly, through the inscription or design, have to reference the Smolensk catastrophe. As almost every Lech Kaczyński memorial references the circumstances of his death, it makes them qualify for this criteria. It does so also for other deceased passengers, who have their own memorials that are dedicated to them, such as the Commander of the Polish Air Force Andrzej Błasik whose memorial stands in Poznań and the memorial of historian and former president of the IPN, Janusz Kurtyka, in front of the IPN's main office (Chyż 2017).

Thematically there is no inscription known to directly minister conspiracy theories about the crash, but there do appear interesting variations on how the crash is portrayed and valued. This is perfectly exemplified by the often appearing connection with the Katyn massacre of 1940 on commemorative inscriptions. One example of this would be the relief unveiled 2015 in the Kraków Łagiewniki which bears, besides Mary, mother of God, the inscription "Katyń 1940 Smoleńsk 2010" (wpolityce.pl 2015). This can be seen as a nod towards the theories of Russian conspiracies to murder Kaczyński, by painting the crash as another Soviet Russian murder on the Polish elite. This gets amplified slightly when the inscription adds underlying meaning, like the memorial on '*Skwer Pamięci*' (Memory Square) in Warsaw, which bears a similar inscription to the formerly mentioned relief, but adds a hyphen to make it *'Katyń 1940 – Smoleńsk 2010'* (wpolityce 2012). This makes it connected not only through the punctuation but also by meaning, like an ongoing event starting one date, ending the other. Visually the memorial on '*Skwer Pamięci*' is also aided by the surrounding memorials dedicated to the victims of the Wołyn massacre and the Warsaw uprising (dorzeczy.pl 2018). Another form of memorial potentially servicing these ideas of assassination are the planted commemorative trees, which to a large part are Oak trees, the same type of tree, through which the Presidential Tupolev lost its wing and ultimately crashed fatally (Chyż 2018). Obviously these examples are not always meant to be understood as confirmatory of the murder thesis, but they do entail the potential to symbolize exactly that for the people that seek in them the confirmation of these ideas, especially when they are present in the public sphere of all Polish citizens alike. Even if someone simply views it as a tragedy, it keeps the trauma center stage and allows for individuals to grow larger than their deeds. This is what memorials to Lech Kaczyński finally achieve, glorifying him just as his brother always wanted to after 2010. This is also seen in memorials outside of Poland. While there is no definite number on those, there are two trends seen, the first shortly after the crash where diaspora and church communities would place memorials, such as the two memorials, a plaque in the Polish Academy of Science and a statue at the Polish Catholic Mission, in Vienna (wirtualnapolonia.pl 2011). The second wave of memorials outside of Poland was brought about by the political alliances with the PiS. Here for example Viktor Orban unveiled the monument "*Memento Smoleńsk*" in Budapest in April 2018, together with Jarosław Kaczyński and Tadeusz Morawiecki (wprost.pl 2018).

All existing memorials were funded through three possible ways: Either through local or municipal tax money, public donations or through a private organizational initiative. None were funded directly by the PiS.

An example of a memorial built on taxpayer money is the Smolensk catastrophe memorial in Rzeszów. In 2015, the city council decided, not without controversy, to honor the 96 victims in front of the municipal marshal's office on al. Cieplińskiego. The memorial reportedly cost 50 thousand Złoty and was funded through the city council budget. The look for the memorial was chosen in a contest, with the winning project coming from Prof. Karol Badyna of the Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków (rzeszow-news.pl 2015).

A memorial built through public donations would be the, as of writing unfinished, Lech Kaczyński statue, planned to stand next to Piłsudski square, not far away from the Smolensk catastrophe monument in Warsaw. It is funded through the public donations gathered by the *'Public Committee for the Construction of Monuments dedicated to President Lech Kaczyński as well as the Victims of the Smolensk Tragedy in 2010*' with a place for it to be unveiled presented by the city council of Warsaw. The chairman of this committee is the PiS MP Marek Suski, responsible for plenty of other memorials around Poland (komitetspolecznybudowypomnikow.pl 2018).

Privately funded memorials would for example include almost any commemorative plaque in churches or private buildings. Especially memorials on grounds of church institutions close to Father Rydzyk and *Radio Maryja* are usually funded by either the church itself, Father Rydzyk and *Radio Maryja* or private donors close to the organizations. One extreme example of such a church investment would be the three different memorials on monastery grounds in Kałków-Godów, with the often spurned Tupolew replica being the most famous one. In 2012, local church authorities built, together with an unnamed artist, a 1:2,5 sized concrete replica of the presidential plane, with little panel windows through which photographs of the victims veered at the visitors. During its unveiling it not only gathered criticism from the Polish public, but also from members of the PiS, often describing it as comical, ugly and distasteful, especially when parts of the monument's window panels were actual wreckage parts and inside there is an urn with earth from the crash-site in Smolensk (Albin 2016).

While the Tupolew of Kałków-Godów was criticized for its bad taste, some other memorials faced criticism for slightly different reasons. One such is of a more artistic and qualitative reasoning, such as was the case with the unveiling of the art installation in Byszów or the sculpture of Przemysław Gosiewski, a PiS MP who was also on board the Tupolew, in Dąbki. Gosiewski's memorial sculpture was planned to depict him sitting on a bench, but the artist so many liberties in modeling the statue, that not even the mother of Gosiewski could not recognize her son in it and forced the artist to cut off the head and remake it (se.pl 2018)

But not only the quality and taste of some memorials was in question at times. Some memorials evoked actual protest and conflict among local populations. This was famously the case during the unveiling of the Lech Kaczyński and Smolensk memorial in Dębica. Locals demonstrated not only against the spending of taxpayer money on a public memorial they did not want, but also against the political usage of the catastrophe to plant depictions of Lech Kaczyński and the PiS on a public square actually dedicated to Poles deported to Siberian Work-camps by the Soviets and against connecting the Smolensk catastrophe with the Katyn massacre (rzeszow.onet.pl 2014).

All cases shown in this chapter have to be seen as singular as there is no known grand initiative by the PiS or anyone else that centrally orchestrates these memorials, hence why they differ in quality, financing and meaning. All this effort across Poland by individual groups, church congregations and communities to remember Smolensk shows a monumental kind of importance that is conveyed to the person viewing the memorials, be it one that lives in the public space the monument occupies or one that only passes through. Smolensk, through all the little memorials discussed, becomes an event elevated into a grand national trauma that lives on, a catastrophe that every person that lives or visits Poland needs to see and feel the weight of the tragedy that occurred. That behind the initial purpose to remember the catastrophe, lies a creeping desire to, with it, raise the memory of Lech Kaczyński onto the plane of a national martyr and hero. This becomes an important element for the PiS and Jarosław Kaczyński in consolidating their world view and ideology, namely that they are the only political force of Poland actually having the patriotic right to decide what is best for Poland and its citizens. No memorial shows this fact better than the Monument dedicated to the victims of the Smolensk catastrophe in Warsaw's central Piłsudski square unveiled in April 2018, the eight anniversary of the Smolensk catastrophe. The project to get a proper large monument commemorating the catastrophe has been a long and grueling process. The first year after the crash the public debate was heavily dominated by the Wawel Burial and the Cross in front of the Presidential Palace. The euphoria and later discord among the population surrounding both these remembrance events and places had the effect that the PO would keep all initiatives to create any large monument at bay, though the desire to place one was there for the PiS and its followers since the beginning. This changed when the PiS got into power in 2015 with Jarosław Kaczyński leading the campaign with a promise to finally build the memorial (tvn24.pl 2016). It took almost three years, but in April 2018 it was unveiled. By itself, the monument was long due, but the position on Piłsudski square was criticized. Overall though, there were mixed voices by opposition politicians and media being either indifferent or angered with the

monument itself, but most blaming the PO's reluctance to build one official memorial early for the rise of the PiS' popularity, giving them a steadfast example of 'outsider politics' (Sienkiewicz 2018). The visual design of the monument is a dark obelisk with the form of stairs leading up somewhere, presumably a plane or heaven. On the black obelisk an inscription honors the victims of the catastrophe and 96 lights built into the ground, the same amount as persons died due to the crash, keep the entire monument lit during the night (wspolczesna 2018). Though the monument seems pretty tame at first it will have two additions extending it, which have a clear political motivation. Firstly, the cross that in 2010 stood in front of the Presidential Palace and caused violence and protest will be moved from its current position in St.Anne's Chapel to the black obelisk and stand in front of it (wiadomosci.wp.pl 2018a). Furthermore, the planned Lech Kaczyński statue just outside Piłsudski square will face the obelisk and be connected to it through a red granite walkway, symbolizing Lech Kaczyński walking towards the stairs into heaven or the Tupolew (kultura.onet.pl 2018). This would again, as in most memorials in the PiS-era, display what I have talked about before: a memorial not to the catastrophe but to Lech Kaczyński's martyrium and ultimately, the ideology and world view of Jarosław Kaczyński.

Now this analysis of memorials is just one part of remembrance in Poland, but it is a highly interesting one, that offers the possibility to go even further into detail and research. Specific questions that lack are a better quantitative and qualitative analysis, which would give all interested a more exact picture to work with.

The Arts of Smolensk

Not quite a memorial, but created as one, was the film "Smoleńsk" by director Antoni Krauze, which premiered in September 2016. Conceptualized as a drama-thriller and "para-documentary" (newsweek.pl 2016), intercutting filmed fictional sequences with real news and other footage, the film follows the story of Nina, a journalist, who writes on the catastrophe. Initially she investigates along the official results of the Miller investigation, but the deeper she digs, the more she is convinced by facts and mysteries of a conspiracy to murder Lech Kaczyński. The plot is a story of conversion. The deceived citizen uncovers the lies of the elites through their own investigation and the factually sound arguments of the dissenters, aided by visual depictions of the quasi true events of the assassination. The movie does not try to display any contrasting depiction of the investigations, but rather resorts to radically and thoughtlessly disenfranchise the official investigations and, at the same time, presents the actually improbable theory of an assassination

with explosives, effectively using as many conspiracy theories and their tropes as possible (Schmid 2016:139). In the movie, Nina gets the first hint of a conspiracy, when she finds out that the first polish cameraman at the scene of the crash disappears and is found to have mysteriously committed suicide. This, though, is false but fits a common conspiracy narrative about mysterious deaths of all who had anything to do with the catastrophe. The first cameraman on the scene was TVP's Sławomir Wiśniewski, who later was arrested by Russian authorities but lives and continues to work as a cameraman. Confronted with the story of the film he criticized Krauze for not even telling him he would be dead in the movie (se.pl 2016). Aside from the artificial fog narrative, the explosion narrative is being presented on multiple occasions. In the beginning of the film, after a sudden appearance of fog above the landing strip, the plane engines are being heard through it before two distinct detonations and a crash are being heard. In the final reveal of the film the explosions are not just hinted through the audio, but also visually presented in a CGI shot of the plane, with 2 explosions blowing the wing off and one explosion blowing the body of the plane with the passengers to shreds (Schmid 2016: 140). The last narrative to appear in the movie is, at the same time, the most interesting one. In one scene the viewer is given a little insight into the private room on board the plane where Lech and his wife Maria are sitting and watching news television. On the screen real footage of Tusk and Putin meeting on the Sopot Molo in 2009 is being shown. The two political leaders are speaking with each other but the viewer does not hear what they are speaking about. In the film, Lech asks Maria: "I *wonder what language they are speaking in?",* to which Maria answers: *"In German maybe? But about what?"* (Krauze 2016: 54:36). The film borrows a common conspiracy narrative, claiming Tusk and Putin plotted the assassination of Lech Kaczyński on that day in Sopot 2009 in front of the world's cameras. The first lady's guess about the language being German aims at Putin's past as a KGB agent, a distrusted spy and natural plotter, and Tusk's heritage as a Kashubian, which is a Polish minority that over the years was assimilated both in Poland and Germany. Thus Tusk is implicitly made into a traitor and Other, far from the Polishness exemplified by Lech. Schmid (2016) argues that this treason of Tusk has a double dimension: plotting with the Russian enemy by using the German enemy's language (Schmid 2007: 140).

In the last scene of the film the viewer gets a glimpse of the, visually black and white, heaven, the forest of Smolensk with a giant ditch and thousands of Katyn victims standing around it, awaiting honorably the victims of the 2010 catastrophe, who walk towards them from the fog. The symbolism of this scene, Smoleńsk as the Second Katyń and another murder of Polish elite by

Russians, is at this point undeniable (Krauze 2016: 106:55min). The project faced criticism already during its inception and did not manage to get financial backing by the *Polski Instytut Sztuki Filmowej* (Film Commission Poland PISF) in 2012 over fears of spreading conspiracy theories. Oversight over the assessment was in the hands of Jerzy Stuhr and Daniel Olbrychski, two highly accredited Polish actors and directors, who both criticized the project as spreading a cult of personality which is dangerous for Poland (Nizinkiewicz 2012). Financial backing was found in, similar to monuments, a foundation created solely for this purpose creatively titled '*Smoleńsk 2010*'. This foundation together with generous donations of wealthy PiS friends and members managed to put up the estimated budget of 10 million Złoty. The premiere was held on 9th September 2016. By this time the film's advertisements were appearing in every major city in Poland with the endorsement of President Duda and were eagerly awaited by both PiS supporters and critics. The critiques for the movie were shattering by both the mainstream media, film critics and population, as well as its core target audience, PiS voters and devoted supporters of the Kaczyński brothers, though the buzz around it did give it an initial boost at the box office. Right-wing media uttered the only praise, commenting positively on the brave narrative told, yet they joined in with practically every other outlet in critiquing the artistic value of the film. The shame went so far that shortly after the premiere multiple actors playing in the film showed public discomfort about the cinematographic quality, with even Antoni Krauze excusing his greater involvement in the film and pushing away responsibility for the outcome (Bartkiewicz 2016). Redbad Klijnstra, playing the evil editor-in-chief aiding the cover up, wrote on Twitter: "I just saw Smoleńsk. I understand it turned out as it did, but it is regrettable that it did." (Klijnstra 2016). The film currently has a rating of 1,3/10 on imdb (imdb.com 2018), 14% on the portal rotten tomatoes (rottentomatoes.com 2018) and 2,5/10 on filmweb, as well as having won 16 prizes nationally and internationally in negative and mocking categories, such as "worst film" and "most embarrassing scene" (filmweb.pl 2018). PiS officials did see this differently, praising the movie all around, with the Minister of Education, Anna Zalewska, commenting about the necessity for the film to be included in the school curriculum. This opened a large debate about if schools should watch the movie and how the Smolensk catastrophe should be remembered in school. Later Zalewska and the MEN (Ministry of Education) back-paddled on earlier comments, leaving the decision to see the movie and talk about the catastrophe in history classes in the hands of the teachers and rectors (Suchecka 2016).

Miesięcznice Smoleńskie

Aside from monuments and art, the arguably most important aspect of remembrance of the Smolensk catastrophe are the monthly memorial events '*Miesięcznice Smoleńskie'*, which have been happening on every 10th of every month since August 2010. When talking about the *Miesięcznica* (which roughly translates to "The Monthly"), media and politicians usually refer to the largest one in Warsaw. While the one in Warsaw is seen as the official and most important event, as it usually connects all important PiS politicians, MPs and government officials, there are also other smaller Miesięcznica events throughout Polish cities and villages, with the only other noteworthy one happening in Cracow. In this part of the dissertation I will focus on the Warsaw *Miesięcznica*.

The '*Miesięcznice Smoleńskie'*, as a political and societal phenomenon have undergone a change in their perception over the eight years of the events existence. The coverage and awareness have actually, over time, risen drastically, from an event that was barely covered by local newspapers, to monthly televised events, drawing media coverage not only on the day of the event, but even days before and afterwards. To explain this, I want to distinguish between three phases of time that encompass this change. The first phase ranges from 2010 to roughly 2015, when the PiS was in opposition, and the second one from 2015 until 2018, being exemplified by the PiS winning in both the presidential and Sejm elections. After 2018, in the time this dissertation is being written, the '*Miesięcznice Smoleńskie'* are transforming and moving into a third phase, which was announced by Kaczyński in early 2018. Roughly speaking the divide simply describes the perceived importance of the event over those time periods. While the PiS was in opposition, the event received little to no attention from the media nor anyone else really. The only time the events gathered interest before 2015 was when speakers, such as Kaczyński or fellow PiS members made themselves aware of through provocative speeches. As such, documentation of the *Miesięcznica* before 2015 does not really exist apart from individual articles on far-right websites and newspapers. In 2015 and after the electoral victories of the PiS the event started to garner major media attention in the country and abroad, turning the monthly reoccurring event into spectacles of high political importance.

The *Miesięcznica* is a day-long event characterized by masses in churches and speeches in the morning and in the evening, with the rest of the day passing by uneventfully. Every 10th of a month

starts the same with an 8:00 mass at the Carmelite Church (*Kościół Wniebowzięcia NMP i św. Józefa Oblubieńca*) at *Krakowskie Przedmieście 52/54* in Warsaw, right next to the Presidential Palace. The mass in the morning is fairly exclusive, with no cameras and, usually, no journalists allowed inside. The attendance is fairly elite as well, with some 200-300 people, mostly PiS politicians, Smolensk activists and family members of crash victims, attending the mass. After the mass is finished, the attendees participate in a small procession towards the front of the presidential palace, where short commemorative speeches are given. After this, the morning program is officially over. Journalists, demonstrators and generally people that do not belong to the inner circle of the PiS, even supporters, are not welcome to participate in both the mass and the following morning procession. With growing interest and attendance by these unwanted elements, barricades and security were heightened dramatically over the years. In the evening a second mass at St. John's Archcathedral (*Archikatedra św. Jana*) in Warsaw's *Stare Miasto* (Old Town) is organized for a wider audience and public. This mass is the more widely known and televised event of the *Miesięcznica*. The mass is followed by a procession, called *Marsz Pamięci* (Memory March), through the Old Town Square over to the Presidential Palace, were in front of it, in the same place as in the morning, speeches are given. The procession is the part of the *Miesięcznica* most often seen in photographs of the event. Crowds of people, Polish flags and banners with provocative texts blaming the PO, Tusk and the Russians paint the normal picture seen there. Leading PiS politicians and family members of deceased victims usually lead the processions and patriotic songs are played over loudspeakers by a truck in the center of the crowd until the Presidential Palace is reached. Over the years these speeches have been a very important platform for the PiS and Jarosław Kaczyński to present politicians and partners to his most loyal audience. Prominent reoccurring guests since 2010 include later president Andrzej Duda, prime minister from 2015-2018 Beata Szydło and later Minister of Defense and head chaplain of the Smolensk conspiracy theories, Antoni Macierewicz. Often participating are also most leading PiS politicians such as Mateusz Morawiecki (Prime Minister of Poland since 2018), Mariusz Błaszczak (vice-chairman of the PiS and Minister of Defence since 2018) or Mariusz Kamiński (former head of the Anticorruption Bureau, CBA, and now head of the Polish Secret Services). To cut the list short, any person that wants to reach any position of importance inside the PiS, and keep it, attends the *Miesięcznica*. A person being allowed to speak at this memorial event is a sign that they are trusted by Jarosław Kaczyński and as such, the opportunity to do so is highly desired.

This is the usual procedure of a *Miesięcznica*, which only deviates more on two occasions per

calendar year. The first special event is the April *Miesięcznica*, which is the anniversary event of its specific year. The anniversary events can sometimes have additional speeches and prolonged masses the day before and after and include longer processions to graves and memorials at the Powązki Graveyard. Jarosław Kaczyński and other PiS politicians also often attend the anniversary *Miesięcznica* in Cracow, visiting the Wawel crypt. The other special *Miesięcznica* happens every November of a calendar year, as it is followed by the Polish Independence Day celebrations on November 11th. After the speeches in front of the Presidential Palace, the procession keeps on going until the Piłsudski statue at Józef Piłsudski Square. There another speech is given and the anthem sung, connecting the commemorative character of the procession to the patriotic celebrations of the following day.

The '*Miesięcznice Smoleńskie'* started, as already described in the chapter about the events of the crash, in August 2010 and have since then been usually referred to by their number. As such, in going through their evolution over the years I will also employ the number system to describe specific *Miesięcznica* events. When looking at the almost eight-year long history of this event, its historic timeline can be divided up into two eras, the oppositional era, from 2010 until October 2015 and the post-victory era, from November 2015 until today. These two periods are drastically different form each other, not in their thematic buildup, but much rather in their organization, their political value and public significance. Before recounting those though, I want to briefly touch on the difficulties of getting to the information presented in the next part of this chapter. There is no official way to find data, such as attendance numbers, or TV recordings of speeches, through the channels of right-wing television and radio. There is no aggregated research of the *Miesięcznica* with which I could build the basis of my arguments, but rather a plethora of spread out individual recordings and accounts by mostly the '*Obrońcy Krzyża*'. As such, when talking about attendance, it is a roughly estimated number that I will use, based on the videos and accounts that I have.

The early *Miesięcznice* of late 2010 and early 2011 were surprisingly not very prominent in the public media, although they were a new cyclical event in Warsaw and Cracow and garnered wider public attention through the appearances of PiS politicians after the presidential elections in summer 2010 and before the parliamentary elections in October 2011. The event was still fairly new, but proved to be important for the PiS, as it reflected as another campaign event and an internal ideological echo chamber. The first anniversary in April 2011, spawned two official commemorative events. President Bronisław Komorowski headed the state-organized

commemoration on the Powązki cemetary and Jarosław Kaczyński spoke at the *Miesięcznica* in front of the Presidential Palace (tvn24.pl 2011). After the lost elections in 2011, almost all media attention died down and it barely featured on mainstream TV and newspapers as well as having slimmer attendances throughout the year. The few times the events were talked about, was when they were reported on through daily news sections. Through their own documentation on internet portals, such as the 'blogpress.pl' archive (blogpress.pl 2018) or videos on the internet, this lack of information can be bridged to see how the events actually looked like in the oppositional years. Another large spike of attendance was the second anniversary, in which Marta Kaczyńska, the daughter of Lech and Maria, was the central prominent figure present. A film about her and her relation to her parents, titled '*Córka'* ('Daughter'), was shown on a big screen (blogpress.pl 2012a). Speeches at that time take on the classic narratives they would continue to use for the years to come. In an exemplary speech in June 2012, speaking to a full square in front of the presidential palace, Kaczyński's speech would reference repeating themes, such as the struggle to find the truth, that there is a fog surrounding Smolensk, figuratively and literally, and his signature phrase of "*[...] a month ago we were further away from the truth than we are today. We are getting closer to the truth*" (Kaczyński 2012). Early participants, as per usual, included Antoni Macierewicz, Jacek Sasin (PiS MP and prominent Smolensk theoretician) or Mariusz Błaszczak (Minister of Interior since 2015) (blogpress.pl 2011). These politicians would become much more prominent in 2015, but until then, they would organize in these commemorative processions on the *Miesięcznica, where* relatively little attention was given to them, understandably, as over the years the PiS was moving into politically difficult years in 2013 and 2014. There is little to say about singular '*Miesięcznice Smoleńskie'* in these years, as nothing particularly exciting happens, with neither the speakers nor their speeches really showing any changing motif. Important factors to note though in this oppositional era of the event is that, comparably to the post-victory I will come to, attendance remains sizable, reaching large peaks during the anniversaries. Only on those peaks did one see the presence of police and barriers to guide the crowd, as well as singular counter-demonstrators (blogpress.pl 2014a). The exact scale and size of the *Miesięcznica* is hidden, as the necessary information has never been published by the police, the only authority that has that data. What can be seen though through video footage recorded of the events in these less significant months, such as February 2013 or July 2014, is that they were very uneventful. The crowds would disperse fast and not hinder non-participants passing through. Shortly after the talks, one could see little groups of people remaining, talking and pedestrians strolling through the street with barely any

police or security present (blogpress.pl 2014b). This remains true until the end of the opposition era in September 2015. New information, gathered through a parliamentary inquiry on police budget for the *Miesięcznica* by MP Cezary Tomczyk of the PO, opens crucial information on the organization and transformation of the *Miesięcznica* Smoleńska in Warsaw. Through this inquiry, data on how many policemen were ordered to secure the event from 2015 until 2017 and how big the spending for it would be through taxpayer money, was published. The data confirms personal observations throughout the end of the oppositional era, precisely, that on all the events roughly 100 policemen were needed to secure the entire ordeal, except for the anniversary *Miesięcznica* in April, which would need 1000 policemen (fakt.pl 2018). The biggest event of the year 2015 though, was the *Miesięcznica* in October 2015, for which the reason was that it was in the same month as the Sejm elections. This marked the beginning of the post-victory era of the event, in which the number of police forces used to secure it would keep on rising dramatically. The entire organization started reaching scandalous numbers in April 2016, where the number of policemen was doubled to close to 1900 policemen used to secure the anniversary *Miesięcznica*, and even rose in the less eventful months of the commemoration. From April 2016 onward, the number of policemen rose steadily. By September 2016, 433 policemen were deployed, whereas in the same month a year ago only 89 were deemed necessary to secure it, even though attendance numbers were roughly the same (fakt.pl 2018). This steady rise would reach record numbers of police activity in July 2017, when about 2000 *Miesięcznica* attendants and 2500 counter-demonstrators, required, by demand of Jarosław Kaczyński, 2300 policemen on duty that day (tokfm.pl 2017). Additionally, more and more metal barricades have been built up for the *Miesięcznica* since about May 2017 and have at those times reached peak lengths of 4 to 5 kilometers. Additionally, police and the *BOR*, the Government Protection Bureau, have employed water cannons, paddy wagons, LRAD Trucks (Long Range Acoustic Devices against crowds) and armed snipers (Mikołajewska 2017).

An answer to what might have provoked such an overreaction by the government, are the counter-demonstrations, known as the '*Kontr-Miesięcznice*', organized the informal civic movement '*Obywatele RP'* ('Citizens of Poland'), which is led by Paweł Kasprzak. The movement originated from a small four-man protest against President Duda in front of the Presidential Palace in February 2016, strictly positioning themselves against the lies propagated by Duda and the PiS. The small protest and the reaction of security at the event drew national attention and through it the '*Obywatele RP'* quickly became a movement with a strong capacity to gather crowds of protestors. The *'Obywatele RP'* specifically have a declaration, by which they guide their protest against the

lawless actions of the PiS, their attacks on the constitution and the democracy of the Polish 3rd Republic by defending human rights, freedom of speech and the democratic order (obywatelerp.org 2018a). Though they organize many different protests, loosely aligning themselves with the KOD (*Komitet Obrony Demokracji*, Comitte for the Defence of Democracy) and other civic rights movements, such as the OSA (*Obywatele Solidarnie w Akcji*, Citizens in Solidary Action), they are most well-known for organizing the '*Kontr-Miesięcznice*'. As a means to get as close to the center of power in Poland, they recognized that the best way to get as close to Jarosław Kaczyński was to protest at the *Miesięcznica*. After months of fighting for their right to protest and receiving abuse by the participants of the PiS-led procession, their growth in numbers allowed them to massively disturb the *Miesięcznica* of June 2016 and since then they have been a regular target of verbal abuse by Jarosław Kaczyński, the PiS and the participants, as well as physical abuse by the police. After Jarosław Kaczyński and the *'Obywatele RP'* verbally collided in a shouting match in August 2016, which looked like it would escalate, the police were motivated to close down the counter-demonstration. This prompted an ultimatum and a frail truce, which would stand for the next couple of months. The *'Obywatele RP'* would be allowed to keep protesting at the National Gallery opposite of the 'Smolensk altar' where Kaczyński would usually hold his speeches, without majorly disturbing them and both sides would observe their part of the truce precisely (obywatelerp.org 2018b). In December of 2016 this truce ended dramatically. When the Obywatele RP decided to aggressively pursue their protests, by using the constitutional right to public assembly to register the entire place in front of the presidential palace before the *Miesięcznica* organizers could, Kaczyński used all his power to grind this into a halt. In early December the PiS aggressively pushed through an amendment of the law for public assembly, by abusing presidential rights to prevent legislative revision and their newly planted judges of the Constitutional Court to effectively bring a piece of legislation into the rule of law which would not stand the tests and trials of a usual legislative processes. This amendment allowed the PiS to put much tighter restrictions on unwanted demonstrations and protests, by not only making the process of registration more difficult, but also putting limitations on what and how they are allowed to protest. Most prominently though, they allowed a new category of cyclical public assemblies to stand above all others, which promptly elevated the '*Miesięcznice Smoleńskie' publicly registered events*. This allowed them to delegate massive amounts of police to the security of the event and block and disperse counter-demonstrations. This was the first large scale

disregard of the Polish Constitution, which happened in public in front of the eyes of all Poles and it directly related to the Smolensk catastrophe (Skarżyński 2017). The counter-demonstrations organized by the Obywatele RP would have to seize and wait, until for the first time in May 2017 they qualified for protection like the *Miesięcznica* did. Their return was not seen lightly by Jarosław Kaczyński who, in response to their protest by holding a white rose towards him, said: "*These white roses, which you can see there, are a symbol of hatred and stupidity - extreme stupidity and extreme hatred*" (Kośmiński 2017). Although not wanted by the organizers of the *Miesięcznica* and an organized effort to use the state apparatus, the rule of law and the executive to silence them, the '*Obywatele RP*' have since their early appearances in June 2016 become an integral part of the event's larger picture and, through all their troubles, will most likely remain in there in the foreseeable future.

The police documents proving all the 5 million Złoty government spending published through the inquiry of MP Cezary Tomczyk in late 2017 and early 2018, the violence and arrests against counter-demonstrators and the constitutionally questionable amendment of the law of public assembly have been major stories throughout all Polish media and a shock to the Polish public. Their effect on the public acceptance of the event might finally turn in 2018 and already in December 2017 prompted a more defensive reaction from Jarosław Kaczyński, who announced the events might end after April 2018 (Mikołajewska 2018).

Experiencing the *Miesięcznica* of November 2017

In this last chapter I want to, as previously mentioned in my explanation of the methodology, present my collected experiences of my attendance of the '*Miesięcznica Smoleńska*' on the 10th of November 2017. With this I hope to be able to present a personal account of how this memorial event looks like from within and how the observations mythology and populism feel, experienced individually inside the processions and masses.

The aim of my travel and participatory observation was born out of personal curiosity at first. Having conducted plenty of research beforehand, I felt like there was no way I could legitimately and honestly write about the topic of the Smolensk catastrophe without experiencing the entire day-long event once. This was never meant to be a central method guiding my thesis, nor were the results and observations conducted there meant to stand by themselves for my research. Rather, I expected to learn more details surrounding the event, capture the feeling of participating and meet and talk to the people that make the entire thing happen in the first place. To be able to

include this information, that no academic publication could give me, I had to make the observation process a method of research, although the results restrict themselves to simply be additional information to a much larger topic.

Before I can give an account of my observation, I want to briefly touch upon the preparations for my field trip to the Warsaw *Miesięcznica.* For the purpose of documentation, I decided to use a camera with a shotgun microphone to be able to record both video and audio of the event in a good enough quality as to be definitely able to review and relisten to my recordings. After every event, when I would get back to my hotel, I would then review the recorded material and write additional information out of my memory in a field report. To be able to attend the event to the best of my abilities, knowing how restricted some parts of the event have become in 2017, I contacted the '*Kluby Gazety Polskiej'*, the chief organizers of the *Miesięcznica* in Warsaw. I got a brief response from the office of Tomasz Sakiewicz, the owner of the newspaper, delegating me to Adam Borowski, local leader of the Warsaw GP Clubs (klubygp.pl 2018). After that I did not get a response any more until I reached Warsaw, both through E-Mails and telephone contact alike. The plan for the three-day trip was to use the first day to locate and contact people involved in the *Miesięcznica* and to find out where and how I could meet them. Additionally, I wanted to visit the places of next-day's event, like the churches, squares, and monuments. The second day, the day of the *Miesięcznica,* was dedicated entirely to the event. Even in case of every person that I have contacted ignoring me, I would try to get as close to the event as possible. On the third day, my goal was to keep this day open for possible follow-up interviews and a visit to the Independence March happening that day.

I arrived in Warsaw on Thursday, November 9th, and decided to try to contact Mr. Borowski. After no answer I managed to contact Paweł Kasprzak of the *Obywatele RP*, who gladly invited me to see the *Miesięcznica* with him and help me around the busy event. We scheduled a meeting shortly after 8:00 in the morning on November 10th in front of the Carmelite Church next to the Presidential Palace. He additionally said that this *Miesięcznica* would be quieter from the perspective of the counter-demonstrations, as the *Obywatele RP* decided to only hold a silent vigil in the evening out of respect for Piotr Szczęsny, who died of self-immolation in protest against the PiS just days ago. The rest of the day was spent preparing for the next day, recording the most important places of the event before the actual marches.

On the morning of November 10th, I met Paweł Kasprzak in front of the Carmelite Church. Already on arrival I was shocked by the drastic change of the Krakowskie Przedmieście and the Old Town

from the day before. Metal barricades cordoned off the usually busy street from any possible pedestrians and traffic, with an incredible amount of police personnel standing guard. I had to walk for multiple hundred meters until an opening in the barricade and some friendly policemen let me through. Arriving at the Carmelite Church, I noticed the large number of journalists and camera-men waiting in the parking lot of the church, surrounded by metal barricades. Outside of another row of barricades I met single counter-demonstrators with cameras and supporters of Kaczyński waiting, outnumbered by police easily 3 to 1. The atmosphere was peaceful. I decided to try to enter the church, but was stopped, identified and searched by agents of the BOR, before the politely denied the possibility to enter the church. I was sent off the church premises and joined the other observers and Mr. Kasprzak outside the barricades, before a camera team of the largest private television network in Poland, TVN, joined us after the being sent away by the BOR as well. Until the end of the mass I talked with the observers, journalists, counter-demonstrators and supporters at the barricades and listened to their stories and opinions on the *Miesięcznica* and Kaczyński. Though the surrounding area, the blocked off streets and pathways were quiet, a common sight around were people going to work mindlessly, bumping into the barricades, asking the policemen questions of how to get around the metal obstacles in their way. The atmosphere between he supporters and counter-demonstrators was peaceful throughout the morning. I realized that this handful of people in the morning were there every *Miesięcznica* and knew each other by name. The mass ended quietly and the roughly 200 people, consisting mostly of PiS-politicians, families of Smolensk victims and '*Obrońcy Krzyża*', Defenders of the Cross. The attendees went past a corridor, some briefly speaking to journalists, that felt like it was specifically placed as far away from our place behind the two barricade rows as possible and attended a last short speech in front of the presidential palace. After that, the families and politicians went onto busses awaiting them that drove to the Powązki cemetery, while most of the '*Obrońcy Krzyża*' joined us in the second row of barricades. This was the best chance to speak to some of them and I used it to my fullest, talking to them about their motivations, beliefs and opinions. They invited me to join them in the evening mass at St. John's Archcathedral in the Old Town.

The afternoon mass was heavily attended, but contrary to the morning mass I was allowed to film whatever I wanted. Towards the end of the rather uneventful mass, which celebrated the memory of Lech and Maria Kaczyński and the other victims, I had the first run in with the elderly women of the '*Obrońcy Krzyża*', who are infamous for being especially aggressive towards mainstream journalists and people they deemed to be against them. They are most commonly referred to as

'*moherowe berety*' ('Mohair Berets'), in reference to the typical headgear they wear in colder months. While I was busy setting up my camera, one of those 'mohers' grabbed me by my jacket, opened it without asking and tried to grip something underneath it, all the while mumbling to other 'moher grandmothers' that she could not find any accreditation. After explaining that I was a foreign researcher she happily let me go and wished me luck. This exact incident would occur three more times this evening, all with different elderly women. The procession from the church progressed slowly under rain towards the Presidential Palace, with different chants and patriotic songs accompanying the large crowd. The protest of the *Obywatele RP* remained silent as promised, with the counter-demonstrators lining up along the barricades and holding up pictures of Piotr Szczęsny. Jarosław Kaczyński held two speeches, one in front of the Presidential Palace and one in front of the Piłsudski memorial nearby, attesting in both that he will soon find the truth and that Poland has to be a beacon of hope, order and Christianity for the rest of Europe in these difficult and dark times. Both speeches were met with loud applause and the always present "*Dziękujemy*" ("Thank You") chants. After a last information about the Smolensk monument being built on Piłsudski square, the crowd was peacefully resolved by security forces and police. This ended the *Miesięcznica* peacefully and surprisingly quietly, aside from the sad and melancholic music playing from the loudspeakers.

While I spent the entire day on this event, nothing actually drastic happened to me and the entire process went by peacefully, yet I could not shake the eerie feeling that I was in the wrong crowd. Although I did not try to hide the fact that I was here for research purposes, I thought I would not seem so out of place that I would be searched and questioned by someone, leaving me scared to what reaction would await me if I answered incorrectly. As expect, the feeling in the procession throughout was very melancholic and aggressive at the same time. Whenever names of opposition politicians fell, loud 'Boos' would return from the crowd and the power with which Jarosław Kaczyński would stir the emotions of the attendees was scary. But the largest impression that remains with me, was the way the event was surrounded, with the large metal barricades and overwhelming police presence very much dominating the landscape of the beautiful Old Town. Though this observation is not quintessential to the topic discussed, it did give me a specific closeness to the *Miesięcznica* and allowed me to feel the gravity the Smolensk catastrophe has for the PiS, Jarosław Kaczyński and the 'real patriotic Poles'.

The Smolensk Myth

The group '*Obywatele Solidarnie w Akcji*' (Citizens in Solidary Action, OSA) writes on one of their pamphlets, which advertises their protests against the *Miesięcznice*, that they "*stand against the lie of Smolensk, held high and turned into the plane of a new state religion*" (OSA 2016). As an appeal, the above statement fulfills its role, but for a proper explanation it would be insufficient. After displaying the details and background of what the entire scope of Smolensk really is and encompasses, this part of the dissertation is dedicated to the combination of the earlier discussed topics and analysis of not only what the Smolensk Network entails, but why it functions and what its core really consists of. Only through this evaluation can I fulfill the goals set out at the beginning of this dissertation, in explaining Smolensk and making the analysis applicable and understandable to a wide variety of similar political phenomena. This chapter is the explanation of what Smolensk in actuality is, the usage of a quasi-historical myth, based on re-occurring national trauma which is not just a direct persona of the PiS' populist politics, but a consequence of a populist understanding of society and man, drenched in a cult of personality dictated by a monolithic and authoritative political party leader in Jarosław Kaczyński.

But does it really all hang on Kaczyński, or is there something else that makes Smolensk as a national tragedy politically so potent? In this part of the dissertation, I want to combine the above mentioned factors, investigations, theories, monuments and celebrations into one Smolensk Myth by explaining why it actually even functions and on what basis it attracts a following. My argument will be that, although political and ideological factors do play a role in creating the base that follows the PiS, Kaczyński and Macierewicz, there is an underlying narrative in the Smolensk Myth which speaks to a very primordial identity of Poland, a specific Polishness of sorts.

Ewa Domańska (2000) tackles that question of Polish identity by looking at what time periods are the root of Poles' collective understanding of their own history and what shapes their deepest convictions about themselves, their country and their sense of meaningful existence (Domańska 2000: 255). The two time-periods referenced are the 'polish Baroque', or the Polish Golden Age in the 16th and 17th century, and the period of 'Polish Romanticism' in the 19th century.

The mythological Golden Age of Poland is defined by the unique and exceptional role of representation given to Polish nobility, which exemplifies the height of the primordial definition of Polish identity. The origin of the Polish nobility is hereby found in ancient Sarmatia and traced back to a continuation of the Roman Empire in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. This does not mean a direct continuation of the Holy Roman Empire into Poland, but rather that Poland got its

mission to be the *antemurale christianitatis* (Bulwark of Christendom) passed on by the Holy Roman Empire. Poland as such saw itself as the chosen nation, burdened with the mission to defend Europe from the hordes of pagans, heretics and barbarians, as well as itself. For that, Roman-Catholicism was the ruling religion in Poland among the Nobility, culminating in a cult of worship towards Holy Mary Mother of God, who was crowned Queen of Poland. This, paired with the unique political system of a noblemen democracy, where the nobility was headed by an elected king, gave way to the definition that a true or real Pole had to be noble and of Roman-Catholic faith (Domańska 2000: 254). This is again based on interpretations of catholic history, elevated into national myths. The Sarmatians, of which the Polish nobility claimed to have originated from, have been understood to be the descendants of Japheth, son of Noah. Peasants on the other hand were descendants of Cham, damned and cursed by Noah, patriarch of men. This mythological origin allowed the nobility to interpret their role as legitimate Pole and the role of the peasants as '*Chamy*', created by god to be the servants of the nobility. Since the 16th and 17th century, Cham has been a word used for peasants and remains in use today, used mostly to demean a person as uncouth, uneducated and limited (Pilawski et al. 2016: 59).

The second period influencing Polish identity is the Polish Romanticism of the 19th century, reviving ideas of Polish struggles for independence and myths of messianism, victimhood and martyrium. They were the result of a period of political decline of Poland and the beginning of the partitions at the end of the 18th century. The 19th century is marked by a deep rooted belief in what can be considered a Polish consciousness, that each generation of Polish men have to martyr themselves in a struggle for independence and that such a blood-toll is the only sacrifice that can restore a Polish independence. The struggles of 1831 (November Uprising), 1848 (People's Spring) and 1863 (January Uprising) marked the largest struggles in the partitioned lands and inspired authors, or Polish national prophets, such as Adam Mickiewicz, Juliusz Słowiński and Zygmunt Krasiński. Their literature in turn shaped the Polish Romanticism, inspiring current political struggle and shape environment which fostered the myth of perpetual Polish victimhood (Domańska 2000: 256).

It reflects most prominently today in artists, such as J. Rymkiewicz, who most notably influenced and supported the Polish right after 2010 (Michalski 2017: 6).

This Polish victimhood, related down from the historical events shaping it, connects Polishness, the concept that constructs the Polish identity, to categories of martyrdom that can traditionally be easily compared to the Christ of the Passion. Although this Christian connection of Christ's sacrifice can be attributed to religion, it can also take on the deeper dimension of emotion and trauma that

lingers deep in the Polish collective consciousness, keeping alive through the examples brought about in the chapter on theories of myth, which are: culture, language, religion, art and tradition.
All of these tropes, though Poland today is a much different nation and country, re-appear as the most important foundational myths of Polish identity, creating the prism through which Poles learn and understand their recent history, from the 20th century onwards. Not only that, but they also influenced the creation of this history itself, the inspiration and motivation for the greatest of Polish historical epics, such as the Silesian and Polish Uprisings, the Polish-Soviet War, all Polish struggle in the Second World War, Katyń (the Katyn massacre) and Wołyń (the Volhynian massacre). Poles become the stuff of legends, the ever tragic heroes. They are betrayed, cheated and fated to stumble, driven into the existential enigma out of which only death and failure in the patriotic struggle await them, but always motivate the next generation to follow their example. In memory, traditional and modern, Poles relive this pathos in monuments, street names, art and commemorative events (Domańska 2000: 257).
After the transition away from communism in Poland, these myths constituting Polish identity surged back into the public sphere and collective memory, taking over the post-communist struggle for a renewed understanding of one self as an individual in Poland and together as a Polish society. For better or worse, the resurgence of these myths of martyrdom, Polish messianism and a cult of heroes with the re-appearing popular mantra '*Cześć i Chwała Bohaterom'* ('Hail and Glory to the Heroes'), won over any further and more critical interpretation of contemporary and recent Polish history. All evil and danger had to come from outside of Poland, never from within, with Nazi crimes and communism being the anti-thesis to polish heroism. No Pole could have partaken in those crimes. There was no proper coming to terms with the past and history (Shore 2017: 106). Not only the PiS and other nationalists are responsible for embracing this mythology of Polishness unreflected. Wałesa himself, stylized into a hero of the working class and champion of freedom and democracy by western media, who left a village without electricity in the 1960s to move into the big city and motivate the masses, claimed in an interview, confronted with that title that he is in fact not a member of the proletariat, because he is the descendent of a Sarmat himself, a certain nobleman Mateusz Wałesa of the village Popowo, who was a true to god noble man and fair ruler to his peasant subjects (Pilawski et al. 2016: 55). Jarosław Kaczyński himself said, in a parliamentary debate in February 2017, relating to oppositional parties, that the PiS are the party of the 'Sirs', the civil nobility, and that the others aren't, insinuating that only the PiS are proper Poles (Kaczyński 2017b: 4:18).

In this manner all political parties in power in Poland after 1989 participated in a renewed re-honoring of the cult of victimhood. As an example, the liberal-conservative PO paid 40 million Złoty out of the national treasury for the catholic temple project "*Świątynia Opatrzności Bożej"* (Temple of Divine Providence) in Warsaw, built to honor Poland's regained independence and let Independence Day celebrations officially incorporate the Independence march, organized by far-right organizations, such as the ONR or RN, without larger interference or repercussion for anti-Semitic and far-right banners and speeches (Pawłowski 2016: 165). This was as normal as it got for Polish conditions of patriotism. The PiS upped this expectedly in both their terms to a new level, favoring stronger far-right interpretations of the Polish martyriological mythology. This caused on multiple occasions friction, both nationally and internationally. Following the 'Polish Death Camps' controversy in 2012, the PiS enacted a law in 2018 which criminalized the expression in Poland. This was understood as an attempt to violently suppress any dialogue about Polish antisemitism and caused an international uproar, especially in Israel and America. Though this was later changed and amended with Israeli participation, it fit the approach the PiS favored towards the subject (bbc.com 2018). Museums and Institutions were pressured and publicly ridiculed by PiS affiliates for discussing controversial historical issues such as the re-settlement of Poles into formerly Jewish homes after the occupation and Polish collaboration (Krzemiński 2016a: 103). In a similar vein, the PiS reintroduced a cult of heroism around the '*Żołnierze Wyklęci'* (Cursed Soldiers), a splinter-group of the *Armia Krajowa* and the Polish underground state, who fought the new communist government of Poland in a partisan war for nearly 20 years after the end of the Second World War. For the PiS and other nationalists, their violent struggle is a beacon of patriotism after the Soviet take-over and stands in a stark contrast to the other political movements who were, in their eyes, compromised by the communists, collaborators and traitors. Their heroic struggle as such is the only worthwhile continuity to the struggle against the Nazis and Soviets and therefore only they represent true Polish patriotism. This is highly controversial though, as the '*Żołnierze Wyklęci'* are responsible for terrorist acts and significant massacres on the civilian population, both Polish and Jewish, Ukrainian and Belorussian (Jurszo 2017). In this narrative the myth of Smolensk is embedded to appear as a continuation of Polish struggle, emphasizing the inherent story martyrdom and the archetypical story of Polish victimhood in relation to outside actors and forces.

All the prior elements that I have discussed in the preceding chapters were aimed to present the large scope of the myth of Smolensk and only altogether, seen through the lens of not only the PiS'

definition of Polish identity, but also the pre-existing burdened Poles' understanding of their own existence, does the big picture of a how and why the myth functions, come together. The conspiracy theories surrounding the tragic accident of Smolensk do not need to factually prove on paper, that there was definite meddling by Russians or by the PO, or anyone else. They function solely as the backdrop to enable the myth to truly be difficult to grasp and deny all possible ways of coming to terms with what happened. The infinite investigation into the causes and the search for the specific, non-descriptive 'truths' proclaimed by Macierewicz and Kaczyński are there to keep the trauma, the wound in the national identity and the distrust it engulfs the population in, alive for as long as it fits the purpose it serves, namely for a point of division to remain and to separate the Polish society (Michalski 2017: 5). To equate Smolensk with the likes of Katyń, Wołyń, the Gibraltar crash or the '*Żołnierze Wyklęci*', the memorial events, statues and art commemorating those moments in history, are purposefully controlled by the ruling PiS, to ensure that the viewpoints presented to the population remain to divide and not to unite. When the narrative of unity was used, the PiS immediately lost the election that followed. Kaczyński would not repeat this mistake and as such all the previously described commemorations are carefully crafted and portrayed as to capture the desired message and to convey it as similarly as possible (Schmid 2016: 137). This also reflects in the language used when talking about Smolensk. For example, when Maria and Lech Kaczyński are mentioned in the *Miesięcznica*, or elsewhere, a common description found in relation to the crash is that the pair 'fell' and got 'murdered', invoking the characteristic of Polish Romanticism, as if they had died on a battlefield, by an enemy's hand, while defending the Polish nation against a monumental threat (Krzemiński 2016b: 122). Another example of language directly connecting Smolensk to tragic moments of the first half of the 20th century was being made when Macierewicz and other members of the PiS described the Smolensk catastrophe as a 'Second Katyń' or 'Katyń 2'. The connection created is not even that farfetched, as Kaczyński was traveling to the 70th anniversary commemorations of the Katyn massacre and that both constituted an 'exodus of the Polish elite' as well as 'truthful versions of both being repressed after the events happened' (wyborcza.pl 2014b).

The Smolensk Myth, ultimately, is a constructed mythologization of the Smolensk plane crash accident, as to be able to fit into a grand underlying nationalistic narrative of Polish victimhood and martyrdom. By using language, commemorative events, political division and accusations of conspiracy, it is being connected to former traumatic moments in Polish history that to this day have an emotional effect on Polish identity and self-understanding. Equating the accidental crash

in Smolensk to atrocities committed by foreign and 'Other' elements that happened before it, it divides the Polish society into patriotic and catholic Poles that believe in the myth and defend it and the treacherous and brainwashed ones, that want to destroy Poland. Aligning with the inherent worldview that the PiS and Jarosław Kaczyński hold, it on one hand manifests itself as the prism, through which the Polish right sees and defines their political goals, and on the other hand serves as an instrument, that separates Poland and enforces a populist baseline onto Polish politics.

Traitors and Collaborators

When in March 2017 Donald Tusk stood for re-election as president of the European Council, the beforehand only nationally shown fury of Jarosław Kaczyński gained international notoriety. When for other countries Tusk seemed a good candidate, the PiS government surprisingly announced that they will block the re-election of Tusk and in reaction put forth their own candidate, the little-known Polish Member of the European Parliament Jacek Saryusz-Wolski. Saryusz-Wolski was representing the *Platforma Obywatelska* in the EP, but after announcing he would run against Tusk he was removed from the party and loosely aligned himself with the PiS. Their argument against Tusk was that, although his role as president of the EP demanded neutrality, Tusk was actively involving himself in Polish domestic politics against the governing PiS. In a mere couple of days, the entire Propaganda apparatus of the PiS was mobilized in a massive attack against Tusk on all possible fronts (oko.press 2017). Internationally Beata-Szydło, prime minister of Poland, campaigned for Saryusz-Wolski as a better and more suitable president and Polish representative, unhappy with the performance of Tusk as president of the EP. Speaking in front of the EU, she claimed to not stand alone in this opinion, hoping on the assistance of allied Hungary to prevent the unanimous election (Rankin 2017). Inside Poland a much rougher tone was taken. In an interview before the elections in March 2017, Antoni Macierewicz referred to Tusk as a "*[…] person, that works to the detriment of a member country and not only connects itself to the opposition, but to anti-national elements working in this country, […]*". Jarosław Kaczyński and other PiS members have openly called Tusk a German agent and that his victory will not be a victory for Poland, but for Angela Merkel (Skórzyński 2017). In a tweet before the election, PiS member Zdzisław Krasnodębski suggested that for clarity's sake Tusk should get a German citizenship, which is a common attack on his Kashub minority background (tvn24.pl 2017b). After Tusks victory, this rhetoric only got more aggressive. Angered by the outcome of 27 votes for Tusk and 1 against, the PiS government announced they were furthering investigations against Tusk in relation to the Smolensk catastrophe, which should finally confirm the long lasting accusations of treason against Tusk. Macierewicz came out publicly claiming that new information gained by his commission should strip down Tusk of his office and get him back to Poland so he could be put to trial. This reinforced the common argument about Tusk's escape from Polish jurisdiction by functioning as president of the EC (Szczepański 2017). In another interview in late March 2017 he called Tusk a criminal and a traitor, who undoubtedly should be punished for his role in the Smolensk catastrophe (Kublik et al. 2017). Jarosław Kaczyński burst out in anger in the Sejm about

Tusks victory, unleashing another tirade confirming his views on all political opposition: "*[…] DeGaulle used this expression Outer Party. He spoke of people who were intoxicated by a crazy and criminal idea, but they believed in something, and you do not believe in nothing, outside of your interests and shady businesses. You are today's Outer Party, you are compromising Poland, you are against Poland, you always were and you always will be.*" (tvn24.pl 2017c). As the judicial prosecutions of Smolensk traitors have led to only one verdict and no arrest so far, they remain a unknown threat, but the actions themselves and the language used in this little exemplary struggle show how Smolensk is reflecting in many aspects of the PiS' and Jarosław Kaczyński's politics.

The above mentioned story about Tusks re-election displays a typical use of the Smolensk Myth as an instrument, a tool, of populist politics. It does not work on the international stage, affecting international players and subjects, but rather works as a national plot and an internal reasoning for an audacious attack on an oppositional figure. This is what all the above described details, from monuments to memorial events, from investigations to conspiracy theories, from plenary speeches to aggressive rhetoric in media, provide, a dogmatic basis and method to approach the Polish political landscape. In the simplest terms: The Smolensk Myth of Tusk's and the PO's fault in Lech Kaczyński's death provides a prism through which not only the PiS' political choices and actions can be understood, but rather their entire world view explained.

The PiS has been, since its inception, a populist party, using the myth of the treason of Magdalenka and the hunt for corrupt communists as a populist proxy story to divide between good, true and honest Poles and the corrupt and shady elites. After 2007 and their failed elections, this did not have the same effect anymore and after the experiences of the 2010 and 2011 elections was replaced by the Smolensk myth which fills the same role of an instrument and world view at the same time (Michalski 2017: 6). It provides a simple explanation about who the honest Polish people are and who the corrupt, shady and traitorous elites are. Among the first, one man stands out: Jarosław Kaczyński, the only legitimate decision-maker for Poland. Kaczyński is Poland's paramount populist, with a defined and thorough vision on where faults lie and why only he can redeem them. This idea is the only thread connecting all his political pivots and turns throughout the years and is best envisioned in his language. Adam Krzemiński (2016b) presents the example of the newly appearing word '*lewactwo'*, translated 'leftist'. In the language of the PiS it is the anti-thesis to the 'us', the good PiS member, devout catholic, true Pole, patriot and pious citizen. '*Lewactwo*' is the evil and the vile, the academics who stand rank and file together with the post-communists and the PO with the goal to destroy Poland. When Krystyna Pawłowicz, PiS member

and vigorous defender of Jarosław Kaczyński, was confronted with critique over the grammar and language in an aggressive comment she has made, she responded that all this critique is leftist. For Adam Krzemiński this is a perfect example that this populist dichotomy and partition of Poland into 'us' and 'them', is through and through personifying the world view of the PiS, where basically everything, even a comment on grammar, can be deemed '*lewactwo*' or Other if coming from the outside (Krzemiński 2016b: 121). When it comes to Kaczyński himself, there is no doubt that he has ingrained this populist dichotomy in his worldview. In a TV appearance on *TV Republika*, a PiS affiliated right-wing television station, Jarosław Kaczyński said in December 2015: "*[...] in Poland there is this fatal tradition of national treason. […] that is in the genes of some people, these worst sort of Poles, and this worst sort of them is the most active right now, because they feel threatened.*" (Kaczyński 2015: 1:28). For Kaczyński this differentiation is strongly moral, echoing the definitions of Jan-Werner Müller which emphasize morality in populist politics. The true homogeneous people are the moral ones, the corrupt and treasonous elites are immoral, and any favorable factual argument can be dismissed in favor of moral reasoning. Legitimate opposition cannot exist (Müller 2016: 130). Ludwik Dorn, one of the early leading PiS members, who left the party in 2011 over disputes with Jarosław Kaczyński, echoed these sentiments in an interview that shed light on the inner workings of the PiS in 2010. According to Dorn, Kaczyński fancied the saying: "*[...] if you don't agree with me politically, then morally you are a pig*", and apparently confronted him and other long-lasting party fellows with the warning: "*[…] in dire times I need easy people to work with*", after which Dorn knew that his time in the party leadership was up (Kublik 2010). This division, not only in his dichotomous worldview, but also through the effect that his politics, first with the hunt for post-communists, and later with the hunt for traitors after Smolensk, had on Poland, benefited Kaczyński in laying out his definite rule. This populist worldview gives him the inner legitimacy with which he can drain advantages out of a divided Poland. For once he can present himself as the representative of the majority of the nation and enact the will of the people, although he only has a parliamentary majority at his hand and was effectively elected by not even 20% of the eligible voters (Vetter 2015b: 6). On the other hand, he presents himself as the representative of the disenfranchised and losers of the transformation, promising redemption and immediately signaling who is at fault and the enemy in the country. Finally, his aggressive and violent rhetoric takes effect, giving the illusion of a permanent struggle under heavy emotions and giving the voter a choice: are you with us or against us? If you do not support us, then you are in immoral traitor, a bandit siding with the corrupt elites and the lying

leftist media. In Kaczyński's eyes there are worse and better Poles, which takes the populist dichotomy one step further and extends the term of the corrupt and traitorous elite onto a big chunk of the population. Newly introduced language with words such as '*lewactwo'* ('leftism', 'leftists') or 'resortowe dzieci' ('children of the old firm', describing post-communist politicians) puts instantly delegitimizing labels at the disposal of the angry public. With the statement that some Poles are of a 'worse sort', the most powerful man in Poland declares a part of the population as citizens of a lower status, opening the way for discrimination, which in the last three years since the PiS came to power, rose in the form of rising xenophobia and hate-speech in public spheres in Poland (Krzemiński 2016b: 123).

There are things to learn though from observing this phenomenon, specifically regarding the question of the relation of myth, identity and populism. In the earlier parts of this dissertation I have discussed the relation of mythology and memory to identity and connected it with the populism debate. The difficulty, or rather the reasoning, of connecting these two domains of political and sociological theory with each other was that there was a lack of definition for a process or method. This was the exact reason I introduced the concept of Othering as a method into my dissertation. While theories on populism talk about populist dichotomy of the ‘us’ and ‘them’ and the implications of this logic on democracy, the concept of 'Populist Othering' introduced in this dissertation tackles the question of how one can re-define and re-shape identity and basically create this dichotomy as a worldview in which one can set the rules themselves. The Smolensk Myth, its language, symbols and presence are the method of Populist Othering by the PiS. I have plentifully used the word world-view to describe how the PiS uses myth, history and trauma to see and interpret the world, but I want to re-iterate that this world view, this prism that breaks the light of the inner workings of the contemporary Polish society into its individual colors and details, is a populist instrument, a method of Othering to equate the ‘Self’ with the ‘good and honest people’ and the ‘Other’ with the opposition, the 'Lewactwo', the traitors and 'Poles of a lesser sort'. It is ultimately used to sow division, to devolve the democratic debate centered around consensus to outright antagonism, a situation in which democratic legitimation through electoral victory allows the de-legitimization of the loser. Victory equates with domination and the electoral struggle becomes a struggle for life and death, survival and extinction. The Smolensk myth offers hereby the most modern example of Populist Othering and by examining the overlap of theory and reality, explains it and offer a method of study to maybe apply to other cases.

The antagonist ‘Other’ of the Smolensk Myth is fundamentally constructed and fueled by the way

that the PiS, both in opposition and in power, prevented the Polish society to engage in a process of coming to terms with the catastrophe. The goal was and always has been to keep the trauma of the event alive and use it to divide the populace. It ultimately enables the process of Othering to take place naturally, as the dividing narrative defines the 'us' and the 'them', which willfully inserts itself into the populist agenda of the PiS. This is achieved by creating a present and publicly available environment that not only prevents healing of the collective identity, but rather rips the wounds of national trauma open to enable hostility and antagonism. This is where the monthly *Miesięcznica* events, the Macierewicz commissions and investigations, the court cases and other previously described realities of the Smolensk Myth come in and offer the breeding ground for the myth to exit the realm of memory and enter reality of day to day politics. This is where theoretically Bernhard Giesen (2000: 227) comes in again, claiming that memory in relation to the construction of an identity, a common group and a 'us', pulls its strongest power from traumatic events in the collective historical memory of that group. The 'cult of commemorations', as Kaschuba (2000: 222) describes it, takes on the physical form of memory and that specific trauma.

The PiS itself shows throughout its history of political engagement in Poland that it has a peculiar interest in this method of Othering through physical incarnations of commemoration. In their first ruling period from 2005 until 2007 the narrative most often associated with their claim to political legitimacy was their quest for justice against the post-communist firm that apparently had Poland in an iron grip at the time. The use of the Institute of National Remembrance (IPN) and the Central Anti-Corruption Bureau (CBA) as legitimate institutions with which to hunt the dreaded 'children of the firm', devolved the reconciling political dialogue after 1989 into a series of witch-hunts and audacious attacks with black-mailing or document forging against any and every opposition. This is the same pattern as we see it today with Smolensk, the commissions and investigations of Antoni Macierewicz and the quest for the ultimate truth about what happened on that faithful Saturday morning in April 2010. Similar to the CBA investigations in 2005, the Smolensk lie serves as an instrument to delegitimize political and ideological opposition, to the degree that it even poses a significant physical and judiciary threat to anyone standing in the way of Jarosław Kaczyński's ultimate grip on power in Poland. These are the repeating patterns of populist instrumentalization of collective traumatic experiences in national memory that allow me to pick them out and describe them. This is what describing these processes and methods as populist Othering allows oneself, to grasp that myth, which does not hide itself, and pick it apart to analyze it. There can be no substantial arguments against labeling the PiS as a populist party, and with it, the Smolensk

myth's use in its politics. To other cases, such as attacks on media and the judiciary, all the above applies as well. These attacks stem from the populist argument that they – and only they – represent the true people.

Here, after going through all the aspects of Polish contemporary politics in which Smolensk appears and is used, I can finally in summarize an answer to the question set at the beginning of this dissertation. The Smolensk myth is a constructed trauma in the Polish collective memory which is instrumentalized in a populist context by the PiS and Jarosław Kaczyński to de-legitimize and attack oppositional figures, as well as divide the countries voterbase and society to further legitimize its own claim to power in Poland.

Conclusion

The topic of the Smolensk catastrophe and its reverberations in Polish politics until today, is a complex one, as seen in this thesis throughout close to one hundred pages. By looking at it from the outside, the fact that it impacted Poland as a country and Poles as individuals seems fairly obvious. When pictures of mourning people, standing in front of black and white pictures of the deceased Lech and Maria Kaczyński, or marching and praying in ceremonial processions for the victims even eight years later, are shown, the translated emotion hides its equivocal nature. When tales of conspiracy, supported with bogus charts, demolished soda cans and weirdly futuristic computer simulations, are repeated on national television, one might even chuckle at the absurdity of this faux reality. But once one peels back the layers and clears the noise surrounding it, this complexity finally shines through. The Smolensk myth is not just a conspiracy theory, but rather a tool to exploit by the PiS to further their populist agendas. It allows, as described above, to de-legitimize their fiercest political opposition, mainly the Platforma Obywatelska and its popular and charismatic leader Donald Tusk, and remove them from the political discourse, by branding them as traitors and foreign collaborators. This would move them down to, using the words of Jarosław Kaczyński himself, 'Poles of a lesser sort', who cannot possibly ever represent real Poles. With this big target group, the Smolensk Myth is the perfect tool to create division among Poles and allows Jarosław Kaczyński to claim to represent a silent majority, rather than the loud minority it represents in reality. When before 2010 oppositional elites were all corrupt and greedy post-communists, the reality of post 2010 re-brands the classic populist dichotomy of 'honest Poles against corrupt elites' into 'patriotic catholic Poles against traitorous anti-national elites', a form of division that can clearly be classified as populist. The myth inserts itself functionally into the similarly charged Polish history, relying on national collective trauma, which the catastrophe evoked, and constructed similarities to Polish national mythologies of martyrdom and external threat from an Other that repeat in the stylized life story of Lech Kaczyński. This historical narrative, that connects Smolensk to the Katyn massacre, the Gibraltar plane crash and the Warsaw uprising, turns the plane catastrophe into the most important event in Poland's post-2000 history. The examined story of the PiS explains why this is possible, that the experiences of political victory and defeat have not only fostered an ideological basis inside the PiS, in which this importance to patriotic nationalism and catholic values prevails, but also shown that the leadership surrounding Jarosław Kaczyński has a specific calculated talent for navigating the Polish political stage and ruthless conviction that enables them to instrumentalize this myth to maintain power by breaking

down Polish politics. Constructing the myth and keeping it alive is only possible through the sheer amount of ways it appears in Polish public and private spaces. In this thesis I have covered all possible forms of how the Smolensk myth can and does do this, from the monthly *Miesięcznica* processions, to monuments and even films. This is one of the first areas of this thesis that I propose can be researched further, as I have not covered design questions thoroughly, such as catholic and communist influences on art. This could prove as a very interesting subject of research, connecting political strategies of the PiS to the ones of the Polish United Worker's Party, but ultimately was not necessary to explore for the questions tackled in this thesis.

Another aspect that has been mentioned in this thesis plentifully, but still has potential for further examination, is the role of Catholicism and the Church in the construction and instrumentalization of myth in Poland. I have mentioned it in relation to Polish national mythology and interpretation of history as well as displayed its importance in the national-conservative ideology of the PiS. Furthermore I have examined its appearance in the symbolism of monuments and the *Miesięcznica*, but not attributed it as the central argument of this thesis. In my thorough preparation for this dissertation, the idea to replace instrumentalization with sacralization of the Smolensk catastrophe has appeared many times in both discussions with peers and my own reflection, but ultimately lost out to the ability of analysis that the theoretical background of populism offered me. Nonetheless there is a big topic to be explored and studied here, as it offers an immense depth, but requires an academic theological skill-set that I simply do not have at my disposal.

The last elephant in the room that I have to name is the dilemma of actuality I have faced while writing this dissertation, as it is both extremely important and has been a major difficulty in the progression of this thesis. Most of the research that came into this work was conducted before December 2017 and that proved to be a rather interesting problem. The indirect burden of the topic picked, is that it is a very current topic, evolving not just while materials were gathered and texts read, but also drastically moving forward while this thesis was being written. There are aspects in this thesis that I have, at a later date, chosen to include and extended the date of new material influencing the writing, to appear until March and April 2018, at which point a red line for new information was drawn. Nonetheless, as of writing this, I want to take the last part of this conclusion to address newer developments under the mantel of topics worthy of further research. 2018 as a year was and will be one of the more important years, in which the network surrounding Smolensk has changed significantly. In late 2017, Jarosław Kaczyński has decided on yet another

pivot inside the PiS, which effectively ended in a rochade among the ranks of the government. Instead of Beata Szydło, Mateusz Morawiecki stepped up from being Minister of Finance to also lead the government as Prime Minister (tvn24.pl 2017c). In January 2018, to similar effect, but as a much more surprising action, Antoni Macierewicz has, upon party internal order, stepped down from his position as Minister of National Defense. This move was more surprising than the reshuffle in the entire other governmental positions (Kondzińska 2018). Similarly, the rhetoric moving closer to the eight anniversary of the catastrophe changed among Kaczyński and other prominent believers, with suggestions that the truth they were looking for, might not ever be able to be found. It was soon announced that the last official *Miesięcznica* should be in April 2018 and that from then on, the mass and its following procession should remain for the willing, but no more official speeches should be held after it and the entire scope of it should be dialed down (wyborcza.pl 2018a). Jarosław Kaczyński argued in favor of this by changing the narrative of the last 96 Miesięcznicas in one speech, claiming that the processions were always organized to march for a commemorative monument in the center of Warsaw, one which the PO government has always denied them. With the unveiling of the monument on Piłsudski square, which Kaczyński did not even attend, as he was joining the Wawel procession in Cracow, this goal was finally reached (Figurski 2018). This means a drastic change away from the classic narrative and a new era of the *Miesięcznica*, which can be be dubbed the post-Macierewicz era. Still, the network surrounding the Smolensk myth keeps on functioning as an effective tool for the PiS. The court process against Tomasz Arabski, former Head of the Chancellery of Donald Tusk, still continues and is used by the PiS to be able to drag Donald Tusk in front of the court, even if just as a witness (newsweek.pl 2018). And even though Antoni Macierewicz has stepped down from his office, he remains head of the Smolensk commission inside the Ministry of National Defence (MON) and continues to publish reports, such as the last one in April 2018, which disappointed even hardliners with the lack of new information (tvn24.pl 2018). Although other political problems, such as the constitutional crisis in Poland and its re-occuring bouts with the European Union keep dominating the international headlines, looking at all these factors above and the list of presumed attendees for the mass on 1oth of May 2018, which includes many high-profile figures and politicians from the Morawiecki government, there can be no doubt that the Smolensk Myth remains relevant for Poland’s future (wyborcza.pl 2018b). Exactly for this purpose, this thesis, its discussed themes and observations, but especially the presented framework of analysis regarding myth, memory and populism, is not a final and definite answer to the questions of the Smolensk catastrophe's influence on Poland.

Though the specific focus of the Smolensk catastrophe makes it very relevant for Poland, I believe there is a way to apply all the above to cases of historical myths and populist politics interconnecting in other countries, as in our turbulent times of democratic crisis in Europe and elsewhere in the world, these traumas once thought to have been dealt with, will keep reappearing. Disregarding their danger, or even underestimating it, will prove a grave mistake, but recognizing them, and maybe even using the frameworks presented here, offers a chance to understand their causes and effects and stand against their destructive potential.

Bibliography

- **Albin, Mateusz (2016):** Pamiętacie pomnik Tupolewa w Kałkowie? Tak po 4 latach wygląda to, co z niego zostało; In: (natemat.pl); <http://natemat.pl/186783,pamietacie-pomnik-tupolewa-w-kalkowie-tak-po-4-latach-wyglada-to-co-z-niego-zostalo> accessed 27.09.2019;
- **Bartkiewicz, Artur (2016):** Jak zachwyca, jeśli nie zachwyca. Opinie o filmie "Smoleńsk"; In: Rzeczpospolita (rp.pl); <http://www.rp.pl/Film/160919037-Jak-zachwyca-jesli-nie-zachwyca-Opinie-o-filmie-Smolensk.html> accessed 23.07.2018;
- **Bertram, Łukasz; Wigura, Karolina (2016)**: Die Radikalisierung der polnischen Debatte zur europäischen Flüchtlingskrise; In: Polen-Analysen; 2016/178; p.2-8
- **Beylin, Marek (2010):** Dość o tym krzyżu; In: Gazeta Wyborcza (wyborcza.pl); <http://www.rp.pl/artykul/463659-Ostatnia-droga-prezydenta.html> accessed 14.05.2018;
- **Borowska, Katarzyna; Bielecki, Jedrzej; Olszewska, Kinga; Stróżyk, Jarosław (2010)**: Ostatnia droga prezydenta; In: Rzeczpospolita (rp.pl); <http://www.rp.pl/artykul/463659-Ostatnia-droga-prezydenta.html> accessed 29.07.2018;
- **Brons, Lajos (2015)**: Othering. An Analysis; In: Transcience, Vol.6/1; p.69-90
- **Brubaker, Rogers (2007)**: Ethnizität ohne Gruppen; Hamburger Edition HIS Verlagsges. MbH, Hamburg (Orig.: Brubaker, Rogers (2004): Ethnicity without Groups; Harvard University Press, Camebridge)
- **Buras, Piotr (2014)**: Die ukrainische Krise, die polnische Außenpolitik und die polnisch-deutschen Beziehungen; In: Polen-Analysen; 2014/146; p.2-8
- **Canovan, Margaret (2004):** Populism for political theorists?; In: Journal of Political Ideologies, 9:3; p.241-252
- **CBOS, Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej (2010):** Ocena Prezydenta lecha Kaczyńskiego; BS/82/2010; Czerwiec 2010; <https://cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2010/K_082_10.PDF> accessed 12.10.2018;
- **Chyż, Bartosz (2017):** Pomniki i tablice smoleńskie. Czy ich twórcom się udało; In: Gazeta Wyborcza (wyborcza.pl); <http://biqdata.wyborcza.pl/biqdata/7,159116,22141632,pomniki-i-tablice-smolenskie-czy-ich-tworcom-sie-udalo.html> accessed 29.08.2018;
- **Chyż, Bartosz (2018):** Aktualizujemy mapę pomników smoleńskich. Jest ich już ponad 460; In: Gazeta Wyborcza (wyborcza.pl);

<http://biqdata.wyborcza.pl/biqdata/7,159116,22175622,aktualizujemy-mape-pomnikow-smolenskich-jest-ich-juz-ponad.html> accessed 29.08.2018;

- **Ćwiek-Karpowicz (2011):** Smoleńsk – konsekwencje dla stosunków polsko-rosyjskich; In: Rocznik Polskiej Polityki Zagranicznej; vol. 1; p. 27-40
- **Cześnik, Mikołaj (2014):** „In the Shadow of the Smolensk Catastrophe – The 2010 Presidential Election in Poland" In: East European Politics and Societies and Cultures; Vol.28:3, 518-539.
- **Czupryn, Anita (2010):** Pielgrzymka do Smoleńska pogłębia podział między bliskimi ofiar tragedii; In: Polska Times (polskatimes.pl); <http://www.polskatimes.pl/artykul/314041,pielgrzymka-do-smolenska-poglebia-podzial-miedzy-bliskimi-ofiar-tragedii,id,t.html> accessed 14.08.2018;
- **De Cleen, Benjamin; Stavrakakis, Yannis (2017)**: Distinctions and Articulations. A Discourse Theoretical Framework for the Study of Populism and Nationalism; In: Javnost – The Public, 24:4; p. 301-319
- **Dragovic-Soso, Jasna (2010):** „Conflict, Memory, Accountability: What Does Coming to Term with the Past Mean?" In: Conflict and Memory: Bridging Past and Future in (South East) Europe, hrsg. von Vedran Dzihic und Wolfgang Petritsch. Baden-Baden, Nomos, 29-46.
- **Druciarek, Małgorzata (2016)**: "Familie 500 plus" - für Frauen ein Minus; Polen-Analysen; 2016/186; p.2-6
- **Domańska, Ewa (2000):** (Re)creative Myths and Constructed History. The Case of Poland; In: Myth and Memory in the Construction of Community. Historical Patterns in Europe and Beyond (ed. Bo **Stråth)**. Bruxelles; P:I:E: Lang, p. 249-262
- **Esbenshade, R.S. (1995):** Remembering to Forget. Memory, History, National Identity in Postwar East-Central Europe.; In: Representations, 49 (Winter), p.72-96.
- **Figurski, Paweł (2018):** Prezes Kaczyński utknął w korkach, opóźniona msza w rocznicę pogrzebu pary prezydenckiej; In: Gazeta Wyborcza (wyborcza.pl); <http://krakow.wyborcza.pl/krakow/7,44425,23289195,prezes-kaczynski-utknal-w-korkach-opozniona-msza-w-rocznice.html> accessed 17.09.2018;
- **Flis, Jarosław (2012)**: Recht und Gerechtigkeit (PiS) – unkoordinierter Flügelschlag; In: Polen Analysen; 2012/117; p.2-6
- **Flis, Jarosław (2013)**: Die Bürgerplattform (PO) in der Krise; In: Polen-Anaysen; 2013/129;

p.2-6

- **Flis, Jarosław (2014)**: Die innenpolitische Situation nach Tusks Wechsel nach Brüssel: alte Lager, neue Lage; In: Polen Analysen; 2014/150; p.2-6
- **Flis, Jarosław (2015)**: PiS – überraschender Erfolg, erwarteter Erfolg; In: Polen-Analysen; 2015/165; p.2-6
- **Gałązka, Marta; Solon-Lipiński, Marek; Zbieranek, Jarosław (2012)**: Am Staatssteuer – die Herausforderungen für die Bürgerplattform in der zweiten Amtszeit von Donald Tusk; In: Polen-Analysen 2012/113; p.2-7
- **Gellner, Ernest (1997)**: Nationalism; London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson
- **Giesen, Bernhard (2000)**: National Identity as Trauma. The German Case; In: Myth and Memory in the Construction of Community. Historical Patterns in Europe and Beyond (ed. Bo Stråth). Bruxelles; P:I:E: Lang, p. 227-247
- **Głuchowski, Piotr; Hołub, Jacek (2014)**: Poszerzenie pola walki. Posmoleńskie dzieci (cz. 3); In: Gazeta Wyborcza (wyborcza.pl); <http://wyborcza.pl/1,87648,15725260,Poszerzenie_pola_walki__Posmolenskie_dzieci__cz__3_.html> accessed 13.09.2018;
- **Havlik, Vlastmil; Mareš, Miroslav (2017):** Sociocultural Legacies in Post-Transition Societes in Central and Eastern Europe and the Relationship to the Resurgence of Right-Wing Extremism and Populism in The Region; In: Political Populism. A Handbook (eds. Reinhard C. Heinisch, Christina Holtz-Bacha, Oscar Mazzoleni); Baden-Baden, Nomos Verlag; p.181-191
- **Ignazi, Piero (2017):** The Silent Counter-Revolution: Hypothesis on the Emergence of Extreme-Right Parties in Europe; In: The Populist Radical Right. A Reader (ed. Cas Mudde); London & New York, Routledge; p.313-337
- **Imileski, Roman (2010):** Z Rosjanami trzeba rozmawiać; In: Gazeta Wyborcza (wyborcza.pl); <http://wyborcza.pl/1,76842,8206955,Z_Rosjanami_trzeba_rozmawiac.html> accessed 13.09.2018;
- **Ionescu, Ghita; Gellner, Ernest (1969)**: Introduction; In: Populism. Its Meanings and Characteristics (eds. Ghita Ionescu and Ernest Gellner); London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson
- **Ivaldi, Gilles (2017)**: Electoral Basis of Populist Parties; In: Political Populism. A Handbook (eds. Reinhard C. Heinisch, Christina Holtz-Bacha, Oscar Mazzoleni); Baden-Baden, Nomos

Verlag; p.157-168

- **Jarosz, Adam (2014)**: Die Wahlen zur kommunalen Selbstverwaltung 2014 im Schatten eines Skandals; In: Polen-Analysen; 2014/155; p.2-7
- **Jurszo, Robert (2017):** „Żołnierzy wyklętych" wymyślono w 1993 r. OKO.press przedstawia historię politycznego mitu; In: oko.press; <https://oko.press/zolnierzy-wykletych-wymyslono-1993-r-oko-press-przedstawia-historie-politycznego-mitu/> accessed 13.08.2018;
- **Kaczyński, Jarosław (2012)**: Przemówienie przed Pałacem Prezydenckim, Lipiec 2012;In: blogspot.pl „Mgła smoleńska coraz bardziej się rozwiewa - Ten marsz musi trwać„ [http://blogpress.pl/node/13254]
- **Kania, Dorota (2013):** SMOLEŃSK/ Świadkowie słyszeli eksplozję; In: Niezalezna (niezalezna.pl); <http://niezalezna.pl/42180-smolensk-swiadkowie-slyszeli-eksplozje> accessed 18.07.2018;
- **KBWLLP (2011)**: RAPORT KOŃCOWY z badania zdarzenia lotniczego nr 192/2010/11 samolotu Tu-154M nr 101 zaistniałego dnia 10 kwietnia 2010 r. w rejonie lotniska SMOLEŃSK PÓŁNOCNY; 2011; <https://doc.rmf.pl/rmf_fm/store/rkm.pdf> accessed 21.09.2018;
- **Kietlinska, Kasia (1999)**: Communism's Negotiated Collapse: The Polish Round Table Talks of 1989, Ten Years Later; Conference at the University of Michigan, April 1999; English Language Transcript of the Proceedings; <http://webapps.lsa.umich.edu/ii/polishroundtable/rtsession5.html> accessed 20.05.2018
- **Klijnstra (2016):** Twitter <https://twitter.com/Klyn_Komar/status/774375216621445121> accessed 17.09.2018;
- **Komorowski, Bronisław (2010)**: Nie chodzi o to, żeby ludzi bolało; In: Gazeta Wyborcza (wyborcza.pl); <http://wyborcza.pl/1,76842,8123320,Komorowski__Nie_chodzi_o_to__zeby_ludzi_bolalo.html> accessed 14.07.2018;
- **Kondzińska, Agata (2018):** Rekonstrukcja w samo południe. Rząd bez Macierewicza - ma go zastąpić Błaszczak, choć tego nie chciał; In: Gazeta Wyborcza (wyborcza.pl);

<http://wyborcza.pl/7,75398,22871110,rekonstrukcja-w-samo-poludnie-macierewicz-broni-sie-jeszcze.html> accessed 16.09.2018;

- **Kośmiński, Paweł (2017):** Miesięcznica smoleńska. Kaczyński: Przyjdzie wielka klęska tych, którzy nienawidzą Polski; <http://wyborcza.pl/7,75398,21793053,miesiecznica-smolenska-kaczynski-przyjdzie-wielka-kleska-tych.html> accessed 20.05.2018;
- **Krastev, Ivan (2017)**: Europadämmerung. Ein Essay; 2.Ausgabe; Berlin; edition Suhrkamp;
- **Krzemiński, Adam (2016a):** Polens Flucht in den Autoritarismus; In: Europäische Rundschau, 44 Jg., 2016/3; p. 99-107
- **Krzemiński, Adam (2016b):** Lingua tertii rei publicae. Die Sprache und das Weltbild der PiS; In: Osteuropa; 66:1-2; p.119-129
- **Krzymowski, Michał (2018)**: Jarosława Kaczyńskiego Życie w Cieniu Brata; In: Newsweek Polska (newsweek.pl) <http://www.newsweek.pl/polska/polityka/jak-zyje-jaroslaw-kaczynski-po-smierci-brata,artykuly,425815,1.html> accessed 20.05.2018
- **Kublik, Agnieszka (2010):** Zapomniał Dorn, jak w PiS-ie był; In: Gazeta Wyborcza (wyborcza.pl); <http://wyborcza.pl/1,76842,8786453,Zapomnial_Dorn__jak_w_PiS_ie_byl.html> accessed 23.08.2018;
- **Kublik, Agnieszka; Czuchnowski, Wojciech (2016):** Rodziny ofiar smoleńskich, które nie godzą się na ekshumacje zaskarżą decyzje prokuratury do sądu; In: Gazeta Wyborcza (wyborcza.pl); <http://wyborcza.pl/7,75398,20898176,rpo-radzi-rodzinom-ofiar-katastrofy-smolenskiej-zaskarzcie.html> accessed 17.06.2018;
- **Kublik, Agnieszka; Czuchnowski, Wojciech (2017):** Macierewicz donosi do prokuratury: Donald Tusk to zdrajca; In: Gazeta Wyborcza (wyborcza.pl); <http://wyborcza.pl/7,75398,21526418,macierewicz-donosi-do-prokuratury-donald-tusk-to-zdrajca.html> accessed 13.07.2018;
- **Kuzio, Taras (2001):** Identity and nation-building in Ukraine: Defining the „Other; In: Ethnicities; 1:3; p. 343-365
- **Laclau, Ernesto (2005)**: On Populist Reason; London, Verso
- **Langenbacher, Eric (2010)**: Collective Memory as a Factor in Political Culture and International Relations; In: Power and the Past. Collective Memory and International Relations (ed. Eric Langebacher, Yossi Shain); Georgetown University Press: Georgetown

- **Le Sueur, James D. (2001)**: Uncivil War. Intellectuals and Identity Politics during the decolonization of Algeria; University of Pennsylvania Press: Philadelphia
- **Majcherek, Janusz A. (2007)**: Die polnischen Parlamentswahlen. Eine Analyse des Ergebnisses.; In: Polen-Analysen; 2007⁄23; p.2-5
- **Majcherek, Janusz A. (2011a)**: Die Bürgerplattform (PO) vor den Parlamentswahlen; In: Polen-Analysen; 2011⁄91; p.2-7
- **Majcherek, Janusz A. (2011b)**: Polen nach den Parlamentswahlen 2011; In: Polen-Analysen; 2011⁄97; p.2-6
- **Majcherek, Janusz A. (2015)**: Polen nach den Präsidentenwahlen 2015; In: Polen-Analysen; 2015⁄164; p.2-6
- **MAK (2010):** Interstate Aviation Committee Air Accident Investigation Commission – Final Report on 10 April 2010; <http://www.smolenskcrashnews.com/reports/russian/russian_final_report.pdf> accessed 2.11.2018;
- **Markowski, Radosław (2015)**: Wie viel >Budapest< liegt in Warschau; In: Polen-Analysen; 2015⁄171; p.2-6
- **Michalski, Cezary (2017)**: Der Mythos in der polnischen Politik nach 1989; In: Polen Analysen; 2017⁄210; p.2-7
- **Mikołajewska, Bianka (2017):** Snajperzy, armatki wodne, więźniarki, gigantofony. Czyli comiesięczny stan nadzwyczajny; In: oko.press; <https://oko.press/snajperzy-armatki-wodne-wiezniarki-gigantofony-czyli-comiesieczny-stan-nadzwyczajny/> accessed 18.10.2018;
- **Mikołajewska, Bianka (2018):** Policja kłamie i zaniża koszty ochrony miesięcznic. Kiedyś podawała, że w 2 lata kosztowały 5,1 mln zł. Dziś KGP twierdzi, że przez 2,5 roku wydano około 800 tys. Zł.; In: oko.press; <https://oko.press/policja-klamie-i-zaniza-koszty-ochrony-miesiecznic-kiedys-podawala-ze-w-2-lata-kosztowaly-51-mln-zl-dzis-kgp-twierdzi-ze-przez-25-roku-wydano-okolo-800-tys-zl/> accessed 19.10.2018;
- **Mouffe, Chantal (2002)**: Politics and passions. The stakes of democracy; London, Centre for the Study of Democracy
- **Mudde, Cas (2004)**: The Populist Zeitgeist; In: Government and Opposition; 39⁄4; p.541-563
- **Mudde, Cas (ed.) (2017a)**: The Populist Radical Right. A Reader; London & New York,

Routledge

- **Mudde, Cas (2017b)**: Introduction to the populist radical right; In: The Populist Radical Right. A Reader (ed. Cas Mudde); London & New York, Routledge; p.1-13
- **Müller, Jan-Werner (2014)**: "The people must be extracted from within the people": Reflections on Populism; Princeton University; princeton.edu <https://www.princeton.edu/~jmueller/Constellations-Populism-JWMueller-March2014-pdf.pdf> accessed 23.03.2018
- **Müller, Jan-Werner (2016)**: Was ist Populismus? Ein Essay; Berlin, Suhrkamp Verlag
- **Narkiewicz, Olga A. (1976)**: The Green Flag. Polish Populist Politics 1867-1970; London, Croom Helm Ltd.
- **Niethammer, Lutz (2000a)**: Maurice Halbwachs. Memory and the Feeling of Identity; In: Myth and Memory in the Construction of Community. Historical Patterns in Europe and Beyond (ed. Bo **Stråth)**. Bruxelles; P:I:E: Lang, p. 75-94
- **Niethammer, Lutz (2000b)**: A European Identity?; In: Europe and the Other and Europe as the Other (ed. Bo Stråth); Bruxelles, Bern, Berlin, Frankfurt/M., Oxford, New York, Wien; P:I:E: Lang, p.87-111
- **Nizinkiewicz, Jacek (2012):** Stuhr: pomysł filmu o Smoleńsku wydaje mi się jakąś hucpą; In: Onet.pl (kultura.onet.pl) <https://kultura.onet.pl/film/wiadomosci/stuhr-pomysl-filmu-o-smolensku-wydaje-mi-sie-jakas-hucpa/ekfg04b> accessed 25.09.2018;
- **Pankowski, Rafał (2010)**: The Populist Radical Right in Poland, The patriots; Oxon, New York; Routledge
- **Passerini, Luisa (2000)**: The Last Identification. Why Some of Us Would Like to Call Ourselves Europeans and What We Mean by This; In: Europe and the Other and Europe as the Other (ed. Bo **Stråth); Bruxelles, Bern, Berlin, Frankfurt/M., Oxford, New York, Wien;** P:I:E: Lang, p. 45-65
- **Patzelt, Werner J. (2007)**: Einführung in die Politikwissenschaft. Grundriß des Faches und studiumbegleitende Orientierung; 6th Edition; Passau; Wissenschaftsverlag
- **Pawłowski, Roman (2016)**: Kulturkampf. Rechter Marsch durch die Institutionen; In: Osteuropa, 66; Jg. 1-2 (2016); p.161-170
- **Piechowicz, Zuzanna; Pacewicz, Piotr (2016):** Katastrofa smoleńska. 24 teorie spiskowe; In: oko.press; <https://oko.press/katastrofa-smolenska-24-teorie-spiskowe/> accessed

21.05.2018;

- **Piekarz, Tomasz (2010)**: Zamach na rozum; In: Wprost (wprost.pl); <https://www.wprost.pl/211928/Zamach-na-rozum> accessed 17.08.2018;
- **Pilawski, Krzysztof; Politt, Holger (2016)**: Polens Rolle rückwärts. Der Aufstieg der Nationalkonservativen und die Perspektiven der Linken; Hamburg; VSA Verlag.
- **PISM (2010):** Żałoba po tragedii w Smoleńsku połączyła Polaków i Rosjan. Komentarz Redakcji; In: Biuletyn PISM; Nr. 56(664) p. 2193
- **Polen-Analysen (2009/54)**: Parteienfinanzierung; Deutsches Polen-Institut Darmstadt, Forschungsstelle Osteuropa an der Universität Bremen
- **Polen-Analysen (2010/73)**: Die polnisch-russischen Beziehungen; Deutsches Polen-Institut Darmstadt, Forschungsstelle Osteuropa an der Universität Bremen
- **Polen-Analysen (2010/82)**: Selbstverwaltungswahlen 2010; Deutsches Polen-Institut Darmstadt, Forschungsstelle Osteuropa an der Universität Bremen
- **Polen-Analysen (2011/97)**: Nach den Parlamentswahlen 2011; Deutsches Polen-Institut Darmstadt, Forschungsstelle Osteuropa an der Universität Bremen
- **Przewoźnik, Andrzej (2010):** Wokół Katynia. Działania w latach 1989-2009 na rzecz upamiętnienia ofiar zbrodni katyńskiej; In: Polski Przegląd Dyplomatyczny, 2(54), p.23-72
- **Rachoń, Michał (2017):** Tylko nie pytać o zdradę Tuska; In: Niezalezna (niezalezna.pl); <https://niezalezna.pl/98338-tylko-nie-pytac-o-zdrade-tuska> accessed 09.09.2018;
- **Rahman, Smita A. (2010)**: The presence of the past: Negotiating the politics of collective memory; In: Contemporary Political Theory, 9:1; p. 59-76
- **Rankin, Jennifer (2017):** Poland reacts with fury to re-election of Donald Tusk; In: The Guardian (theguardian.com); <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/09/donald-tusk-re-elected-as-european-council-president-despite-polish-opposition> accessed 11.08.2018;
- **Reszka, Paweł (2010):** Ten, który oblał tablicę fekaliami. Rencista spod Kraśnika; In: Gazeta Wyborcza (wyborcza.pl); <http://lublin.wyborcza.pl/lublin/1,48724,8268248,Ten__ktory_oblal_tablice_fekaliami__Rencista_spod.html> accessed 12.07.2018;
- **Riedel, Rafał (2017):** Populism and Its Democratic, Non-Democratic, and Anti-Democratic Potential; In: Polish Sociological Review, 3:199; p.287-298

- **Saba, Elżbieta (2012)**: Wykopać Kaczyńskiego z Wawelu?; In: Wprost (wprost.pl); <https://www.wprost.pl/326831/Wykopac-Kaczynskiego-z-Wawelu> accessed 13.05.2018;
- **Shore, Marci (2017)**: Die Zerbrechlichkeit des Liberalismus. Oder Das Ende vom „Ende der Geschichte“; In: Transit, 50; p.101-110
- **Sienkiewicz, Karol (2018)**: Pomnik smoleński: banalna bryła w przypadkowym otoczeniu. Dlaczego rzeźbiarz Jerzy Kalina poniósł porażkę?; In: Gazeta Wyborcza (wyborcza.pl); <http://wyborcza.pl/7,112588,23246016,pomnik-smolenski-banalna-bryla-w-przypadkowym-otoczeniu.html> accessed 09.09.2018;
- **Skarżyński, Stanisław (2017):** Państwo prawa według PiS. Ustawa o zgromadzeniach, wniosek do Trybunału i wyrok to buble prawne; In: oko.press; <https://oko.press/panstwo-prawa-wedlug-pis-ustawa-o-zgromadzeniach-wniosek-trybunalu-wyrok-buble-prawne/> accessed 25.10.2018;
- **Skenderovic, Damir (2017)**: Populism. A History of the Concept; In: Political Populism. A Handbook (eds. Reinhard C. Heinisch, Christina Holtz-Bacha, Oscar Mazzoleni); Baden-Baden, Nomos Verlag; p.41-57
- **Skórzyński, Jan (2017):** Saryusz-Wolski kontra Tusk, Europa – PiS 27 : 1. Kronika Skórzyńskiego (4-10 marca 2017); In: (oko.press); <https://oko.press/tusk-ogral-pis-dwadziescia-siedem-zera-kronika-czasow-dobrej-zmiany-4-12-marca-2017r/> accessed 09.07.2018;
- **Stråth, Bo (ed.) (2000a)**: Myth and Memory in the Construction of Community. Historical Patterns in Europe and Beyond; Bruxelles, P:I:E: Lang
- **Stråth, Bo (2000b)**: Introduction. Myth, memory and History in the Construction of Community; In: Myth and Memory in the Construction of Community. Historical Patterns in Europe and Beyond (ed. Bo Stråth). Bruxelles, P:I:E: Lang, p. 19-48
- **Stråth, Bo (ed.) (2000c)**: Europe and the Other and Europe as the Other; Bruxelles, Bern, Berlin, Frankfurt/M., Oxford, New York, Wien; P:I:E: Lang
- **Suchecka, Justyna (2016):** Szefowa MEN uważa, że uczniowie powinni obejrzeć "Smoleńsk". Obowiązkowo? Mamy odpowiedź resortu; In: Gazeta Wyborcza (wyborcza.pl); <http://wyborcza.pl/1,75398,20651045,szefowa-men-uwaza-ze-uczniowie-powinni-obejrzec-smolensk.html> accessed 04.09.2018;
- **Szczepański, Włodzimierz (2017):** "Tusk przed sąd". Macierewicz ujawnia, że prokuratura

ma już doniesienie na byłego premiera, chodzi o "rosyjski trop"; In: natemat.pl; <https://natemat.pl/204135,nie-mogli-zatopic-tuska-w-brukseli-siegaja-po-rosyjski-trop-do-prokuratury-trafilo-doniesienie-na-bylego-premiera>; accessed 13.09.2018;

- **Taggart, Paul (2000)**: Populism. Concepts in the Social Sciences; Philadelphia, Open University Press
- **Uhlig, Dominik (2010):** Dlaczego Wawel, a nie Powązki?; In: Gazeta Wyborcza (wyborcza.pl);<http://wyborcza.pl/1,105742,7768819,Dlaczego_Wawel__a_nie_Powazki_.html?disableRedirects=true> accessed 11.05.2018;
- **Vetter, Reinhold (2008)**: Wohin steuert Polen? Das schwierige Erbe der Kaczyńskis; Berlin; Ch. Links Verlag
- **Vetter, Reinhold (2010)**: Der Vergangenheit näher als der Zukunft; In: Polen-Analysen; 2010/69; p.2-9
- **Vetter, Reinhold (2013):** Polen und der (fehlende) EU-Diskurs; In: Polen-Analysen; 2013/130; p.2-7
- **Vetter, Reinhold (2015a):** Flüchtlingskrise und Wahlkampf. Tiefe Gräben in Gesellschaft, Politik und Kirche; In: Polen-Analysen; 2015/169; p.2-6
- **Vetter, Reinhold (2015b):** Von Kaczyńskis Gnaden. Die neue nationalkonservative Regierung; In: Polen-Analysen; 2015/173; p.2-8
- **Waszak, Marcin; Zbieranek, Jarosław (2011)**: Die polnischen Selbstverwaltungswahlen 2010. Bedingungen, Verlauf und Ergebnisse; In: Polen-Analysen; 2011/82; p.2-6
- **White, Hayden (2000)**: Catastrophe, Communal Memory and Mythic Discourse. The Uses of Myth in the Reconstruction of Society; In: Myth and Memory in the Construction of Community. Historical Patterns in Europe and Beyond (ed. Bo Stråth). Bruxelles, P:I:E: Lang, p. 49-74
- **Wierzchołowski, Grzegorz; Misiak, Leszek (2012):** Eksplozja nastąpiła wewnątrz Tu-154; In: Niezalezna (niezalezna.pl); <http://niezalezna.pl/28194-eksplozja-nastapila-wewnatrz-tu-154> accessed 05.07.2018;
- **Wierzchołowski, Grzegorz (2014):** „Gazeta Polska" ujawnia zatajoną ekspertyzę: Tu-154 przeleciał nad brzozą; In: Niezalezna (niezalezna.pl); <http://niezalezna.pl/59740-gazeta-polska-ujawnia-zatajona-ekspertyze-tu-154-przelecial-nad-brzoza> accessed 20.07.2018;

Internet Sources

- **(bbc.com 2018):** Israel criticises Poland over proposed Holocaust law; <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-42848842> accessed 28.07.2018;
- **(blogpress.pl 2011):** Msza za ofiary katastrofy smoleńskiej i złożenie wieńców pod Pałacem Prezydenckim i na Powązkach Wojskowych – 10.02.2011 rano; <http://blogpress.pl/node/7572> accessed 28.07.2018;
- **(blogpress.pl 2012):** Niezwykły dzień na Krakowskim Przedmieściu; <http://blogpress.pl/node/12442> accessed 27.10.2018;
- **(blogpress.pl 2014a):** Obchody IV rocznicy tragedii smoleńskiej cz. 3 (Archikatedra Warszawska, Marsz Pamięci); <http://blogpress.pl/node/18944> accessed 27.10.2018;
- **(blogpress.pl 2014b):** Pamięć nie zna granic czasu - dlatego jesteśmy tutaj i będziemy; <http://blogpress.pl/node/19993> accessed 27.10.2018;
- **(blogpress.pl 2018):** Historia miesięcznic smoleńskich; <http://blogpress.pl/node/24852> accessed 27.10.2018;
- **(dorzeczy.pl 2018):** Skwer Pamięci Ofiar OUN-UPA w Stalowej Woli. Radni zdecydowali; <https://dorzeczy.pl/68107/Skwer-Pamieci-Ofiar-OUN-UPA-w-Stalowej-Woli-Radni-zdecydowali.html> accessed 15.08.2018;
- **(fakt.pl 2017):** Tusk podjął decyzję ws. współpracy służb Polski i Rosji. Generał tak to tłumaczy; <http://www.fakt.pl/wydarzenia/polityka/tusk-po-smolensku-podjal-decyzje-ws-wspolpracy-sluzb-polski-i-rosji/1j30mk8> accessed 20.09.2018;
- **(fakt.pl 2018):** Gdzie się podziały pieniądze za miesięcznice? Dziwne dane policji; <https://www.fakt.pl/wydarzenia/polityka/gdzie-sie-podzialy-pieniadze-za-miesiecznice-dziwne-dane-policji/93qsp9c#slajd-1> accessed 20.09.2018;
- **(filmweb.pl 2018):** Smolensk recenzja; <https://www.filmweb.pl/film/Smole%C5%84sk-2016-650957> accessed 17.09.2018
- **(imdb.com 2018):** Smolensk; <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt6038600/> accessed 17.09.2018;
- **(klubygp.pl 2018):** Kluby Gazety Polskiej Warszawa; <http://www.klubygp.pl/kategoria/kluby/warszawa/> accessed 20.05.2018;
- **(komitetspolecznybudowypomnikow.pl 2018):** KOMITET SPOŁECZNY BUDOWY POMNIKÓW: ŚP. PREZYDENTA RP LECHA KACZYŃSKIEGO ORAZ OFIAR TRAGEDII

SMOLEŃSKIEJ; <http://www.komitetspolecznybudowypomnikow.pl/> accessed 26.09.2018;

- **(kultura.onet.pl 2018):** Pomniki ofiar katastrofy smoleńskiej i Lecha Kaczyńskiego zostaną połączone; <https://kultura.onet.pl/wiadomosci/pomniki-ofiar-katastrofy-smolenskiej-i-lecha-kaczynskiego-zostana-polaczone/4h1y8p6> accessed 29.09.2018;
- **(lechkaczynski.pl 2018):** RUCH SPOŁECZNY IMIENIA PREZYDENTA RP LECHA KACZYŃSKIEGO; <http://lechkaczynski.pl/pamietamy/> accessed 20.10.2018;
- **(mon.gov.pl 2018a):** Komisja Smoleńska - ostatnie artykuły; <http://www.mon.gov.pl/aktualnosci/artykuly/lista-komisja-smolenska/> accessed 20.09.2018;
- **(newsweek.pl 2010a):** [!]Krzyż spod Pałacu Prezydenckiego zniknął; <http://www.newsweek.pl/polska/---krzyz-spod-palacu-prezydenckiego-zniknal,64696,1,1.html> accessed 16.05.2018;
- **(newsweek.pl 2010b):** Wiec przed Pałacem Prezydenckim: Przedstawiciele PiS złożyli wieniec; <http://www.newsweek.pl/polska/wiec-przed-palacem-prezydenckim--przedstawiciele-pis-zlozyli-wieniec,66027,1,1.html> accessed 13.04.2018;
- **(newsweek.pl 2010c):** Czy pod Smoleńskiem była sztuczna mgła? Prokuratura prosi Amerykanów o pomoc; <http://www.newsweek.pl/polska/czy-pod-smolenskiem-byla-sztuczna-mgla--prokuratura-prosi-amerykanow-o-pomoc,61583,1,1.html> accessed 15.04.2018;
- **(newsweek.pl 2011a):** "Fałsz i niszczenie dowodów" - Macierewicz prezentuje białą księgę; <http://www.newsweek.pl/polska/falsz-i-niszczenie-dowodow---macierewicz-prezentuje-biala-ksiege,78800,1,1.html> accessed 15.05.2018;
- **(newsweek.pl 2016):** Ile prawdy jest w filmie Smoleńsk?; <http://www.newsweek.pl/polska/ile-prawdy-jest-w-filmie-smolensk-widzielismy-film,film,396764.html> accessed 10.08.2018;
- **(newsweek.pls 2018):** Tusk wezwany przed sąd w sprawie Smoleńska; <https://www.newsweek.pl/polska/polityka/tusk-wezwany-przed-sad-w-sprawie-smolenska/26l82np> accessed 07.06.2018;
- **(nwzonline.de 2017):** Der unerwünschte Milliardär; <https://www.nwzonline.de/wirtschaft/der-unerwuenschte-milliardaer_a_31,2,4264139709.html> accessed 04.05.2018;

- **(obywatelerp.org 2018a):** Deklaracja Obywatelska; <https://obywatelerp.org/deklaracja-obywatelska/> accessed 07.10.2018;
- **(obywatelerp.org 2018b):** Historia akcji przeciw smoleńskiej sekcie; <https://obywatelerp.org/nie-dla-smolenskiej-sekty/historia-akcji-przeciw-smolenskiej-sekcie/> accessed 07.10.2018;
- **(prezydent.pl 2008):** TVP, 9 sierpnia 2008; <http://www.prezydent.pl/archiwum-lecha-kaczynskiego/wypowiedzi-prezydenta/wywiady-krajowe/rok-2008/tvp-9-sierpnia-2008-r-/> accessed 06.06.2018;
- **(rmf24.pl 2011a):** Świat śledzi kontrowersje wokół raportu MAK; <http://www.rmf24.pl/raporty/raport-lech-kaczynski-nie-zyje-2/fakty/news-swiat-sledzi-kontrowersje-wokol-raportu-mak,nId,319081> accessed 03.07.2018;
- **(rottentomatoes.com 2018):** Smolensk; <https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/smolensk/> accessed 28.09.2018;
- **(rzeszow-news.pl 2015):** Zgoda na budowę w Rzeszowie pomnika ofiar katastrofy smoleńskiej; <http://rzeszow-news.pl/zgoda-na-budowe-w-rzeszowie-pomnika-ofiar-katastrofy-smolenskiej/> accessed 18.09.2018;
- **(rzeszow.onet.pl 2014):** Gwizdy i protest podczas odsłonięcia pomnika Lecha Kaczyńskiego w Dębicy; <https://rzeszow.onet.pl/gwizdy-i-protest-podczas-odsloniecia-pomnika-lecha-kaczynskiego-w-debicy/38ylw#slajd-9> accessed 17.09.2018;
- **(se.pl 2010a):** Sondaż "SE": Lech Kaczyński zasłużył na Wawel; <http://www.se.pl/wiadomosci/polska/lech-kaczynski-zasuzy-na-wawel_136942.html> accessed 16.05.2018;
- **(se.pl 2010b):** Historia krzyża przed Pałacem Prezydenckim. Od 15 kwietnia do 16 września 2010 ZDJĘCIA; <http://www.se.pl/wiadomosci/polska/kalendarium-wojny-o-krzyz-od-15-kwietnia-2010-do-d_153627.html> accessed 16.05.2018;
- **(se.pl 2010c):** Akcja Krzyż - demonstracja przeciwników krzyża na Krakowskim Przedmieściu; <http://www.se.pl/wiadomosci/polska/warszawa/akcja-krzyz-demonstracja-przeciwnikow-krzyza-na-kr_149553.html> accessed 19.06.2018;
- **(se.pl 2016):** Był pierwszy na miejscu katastrofy. UŚMIERCILI go w "Smoleńsku"; <https://www.se.pl/wiadomosci/polityka/byl-pierwszy-na-miejscu-katastrofy-usmiercili-go-w-smolensku-aa-f6un-cpfb-yTM4.html> accessed 14.07.2018;

- **(se.pl 2018):** Pomnik Gosiewskiego do zmiany! Chce tego matka zmarłego; <https://www.se.pl/wiadomosci/polityka/pomnik-gosiewskiego-do-zmiany-chce-tego-matka-zmarlego-aa-sBfz-bYVp-hE2h.html> accessed 15.07.2018;
- **(Sejm.gov.pl 2011a):** Regulamin Parlamentarny; <http://orka.sejm.gov.pl/opinie7.nsf/nazwa/zesp_tu154/$file/zesp_tu154.pdf> accessed 04.09.2018;
- **(smolenskzespol.sejm.gov.pl 2011):** O Zespole Parlamentarnym; <http://www.smolenskzespol.sejm.gov.pl/> accessed 04.09.2018;
- **(tvn24.pl 2010a):** "Co wiemy? Jezus Maria!" MSZ publikuje rozmowy Sikorskiego; <https://www.tvn24.pl/wiadomosci-z-kraju,3/co-wiemy-jezus-maria-msz-publikuje-rozmowy-sikorskiego,214245.html> accessed 13.05.2018;
- **(tvn24.pl 2010b):** Reklama "Zimny Lech" znika nie tylko z Krakowa; <https://www.tvn24.pl/wiadomosci-z-kraju,3/reklama-zimny-lech-znika-nie-tylko-z-krakowa,141777.html> accessed 13.05.2018;
- **(tvn24.pl 2010c):** Wyzwiska, pięści, gaz - tak wyglądała bitwa o krzyż; <https://www.tvn24.pl/wiadomosci-z-kraju,3/wyzwiska-piesci-gaz-tak-wygladala-bitwa-o-krzyz,212343.html> accessed 14.05.2018;
- **(tvn24.pl 2011):** 1. rocznica katastrofy smoleńskiej - kalendarium obchodów; <https://www.tvn24.pl/1-rocznica-katastrofy-smolenskiej-kalendarium-obchodow,213241,s.html> accessed 05.08.2018;
- **(tvn24.pl 2012):** Seremet: Dwie rodziny źle rozpoznały ciała ofiar; <https://www.tvn24.pl/wiadomosci-z-kraju,3/seremet-dwie-rodziny-zle-rozpoznaly-ciala-ofiar,279373.html> accessed 24.08.2018;
- **(tvn24.pl 2015a):** Prezydent Duda ułaskawił Mariusza Kamińskiego; <https://www.tvn24.pl/wiadomosci-z-kraju,3/prezydent-duda-ulaskawil-mariusza-kaminskiego,595299.html> accessed 15.08.2018;
- **tvn24.pl 2016b):** Kaczyński: pomników smoleńskich będzie wiele, w całym kraju; <https://www.tvn24.pl/wiadomosci-z-kraju,3/kaczynski-pomniki-smolenskie-beda-w-calej-polsce,660015.html> accessed 09.09.2018;
- **(tvn24.pl 2016a):** Wszystkie teorie Macierewicza. Sześć lat ustaleń komisji; <https://www.tvn24.pl/wiadomosci-z-kraju,3/wszystkie-teorie-macierewicza-6-lat-ustalen-

komisji,634849.html> accessed 13.06.2018;

- **(tvn24.pl 2016c):** Prokurator chce kary więzienia dla byłego wiceszefa BOR. Za loty do Smoleńska; <https://www.tvn24.pl/wiadomosci-z-kraju,3/gen-pawel-bielawny-byly-wiceszef-bor-przed-sadem-za-smolensk,653234.html> accessed 20.07.2018;
- **(tvn24.pl 2017a):** Boni: Kaczyński widział ciało brata, nie było żadnych sugestii; <https://www.tvn24.pl/wiadomosci-z-kraju,3/boni-o-ekshumacjach-ofiar-katastrofy-smolenskiej,745360.html> accessed 16.08.2018;
- **(tvn24.pl 2017b):** PiS vs Tusk Europoseł PiS: Tusk powinien przyjąć niemieckie obywatelstwo; <https://www.tvn24.pl/wiadomosci-z-kraju,3/europosel-pis-o-tusku-powinien-przyjac-niemieckie-obywatelstwo,720918.html> accessed 30.08.2018;
- **(tvn24.pl 2017c):** Awantura w Sejmie o Tuska. Kaczyński do PO: jesteście dzisiaj partią zewnętrzną; <https://www.tvn24.pl/wiadomosci-z-kraju,3/kaczynski-do-po-jestescie-partia-zewnetrzna-kompromitujecie-polske,722113.html> accessed 24.09.2018;
- **(tvn24.pl 2017c):** Dymisja Beaty Szydło przyjęta. Prezydent desygnował nowego premiera; <https://www.tvn24.pl/wiadomosci-z-kraju,3/dymisja-beaty-szydlo-mateusz-morawiecki-desygnowany-na-premiera,796988.html> accessed 23.09.2018;
- **(tvn 24.pl 2018):** Macierewicz: na temat zamachu się nie wypowiadałem; <https://www.tvn24.pl/wiadomosci-z-kraju,3/macierewicz-zaprezentowal-raport-techniczny-ws-katastrofy-w-smolensku,828778.html> accessed 18.09.2018;
- **(tvp.info.pl 2010):** Krzyż przeniesiony do kościoła św. Anny; <http://www.tvp.info/3284404/krzyz-przeniesiony-do-kosciola-sw-anny> accessed 09.09.2018;
- **(wiadomosci.wp.pl 2010a):** Lech Kaczyński nie żyje. Katastrofa samolotu - 96 ofiar; <https://wiadomosci.wp.pl/lech-kaczynski-nie-zyje-katastrofa-samolotu-96-ofiar-6037566880612993a> accessed 05.06.2018;
- **(wiadomosci.wp.pl 2010b):** Cała Polska oddaje hołd ofiarom tragedii pod Smoleńskiem; <https://wiadomosci.wp.pl/cala-polska-oddaje-hold-ofiarom-tragedii-pod-smolenskiem-6037117579850369a> accessed 05.06.2018;
- **(wiadomosci.wp.pl 2018a):** Przeniosą krzyż, który stał sprzed Pałacem Prezydenckim. Trafi na plac Piłsudskiego; <https://wiadomosci.wp.pl/przeniosa-krzyz-ktory-stal-sprzed-palacem-prezydenckim-trafi-na-plac-pilsudskiego-6239673791841921a> accessed

06.06.2018;

- **(wirtualnapolonia.pl 2011):** Polonia wiedeńska pamięta o ofiarach Katynia I Smoleńska; <https://wirtualnapolonia.com/2011/05/09/polonia-wiedenska-pamieta-o-ofiarach-katynia-i-smolenska/> accessed 10.09.2018;
- **(wprost 2013):** Parówka dowodem na... eksplozję na pokładzie Tu-154M?; <https://www.wprost.pl/421911/Parowka-dowodem-na-eksplozje-napokladzie-Tu-154M> accessed 13.07.2018;
- **(wprost.pl 2018):** Odsłonięto pomnik „Memento Smoleńsk" w Budapeszcie. Przemawiali Morawiecki, Kaczyński I Orban; <https://www.wprost.pl/kraj/10115918/odslonieto-pomnik-memento-smolensk-w-budapeszcie-przemawiali-morawiecki-kaczynski-i-orban.html> accessed 29.08.2018;
- **(wpolityce.pl 2010a):** Wojna o krzyż; <https://wpolityce.pl/polityka/104245-wojna-o-krzyz> accessed 14.06.2018;
- **(wpolityce 2012):** 9 kwietnia odsłonięcie pomnika "Katyń 1940 - Smoleńsk 2010" w Pułtusku; <https://wpolityce.pl/polityka/129584-9-kwietnia-odsloniecie-pomnika-katyn-1940-smolensk-2010-w-pultusku> accessed 09.06.2018;
- **(wpolityce 2018):** "Pieta Smoleńska" w Łagiewnikach. Odsłonięto płaskorzeźbę poświęconą pamięci ofiar Katynia i Smoleńska. ZDJĘCIA; <https://wpolityce.pl/smolensk/271797-pieta-smolenska-w-lagiewnikach-odslonieto-plaskorzezbe-poswiecona-pamieci-ofiar-katynia-i-smolenska-zdjecia> accessed 25.09.2018;
- **(wspolczesna 2018):** POMNIK SMOLEŃSKI W WARSZAWIE 2018 tak wygląda! - monument stoi na placu Piłsudskiego.; <http://www.wspolczesna.pl/polska-i-swiat/a/pomnik-smolenski-w-warszawie-2018-tak-wyglada-monument-stoi-na-placu-pilsudskiego-zobacz-zdjecia-foto,13087728/> accessed 23.09.2018;
- **(wyborcza.pl 2010a):** Ranek pod krzyżem: jest wieniec, prezes i grupka osób; <http://warszawa.wyborcza.pl/warszawa/1,54420,8233874,Ranek_pod_krzyzem__jest_wieniec__prezes_i_grupka_osob.html> accessed 12.07.2018;
- **(wyborcza.pl 2010b):** "Obrońca krzyża" nie został pobity; <http://opole.wyborcza.pl/opole/1,35086,8573482,_Obronca_krzyza__nie_zostal_pobity.html> accessed 12.05.2018;
- **(wyborcza.pl 2012):** Sierakowski: Religia smoleńska zastąpiła religię lustracyjną;

<http://wyborcza.pl/1,76842,11505785,Sierakowski__Religia_smolenska_zastapila_religie_lustracyjna.html> accessed 12.09.2018;

- **(wyborcza.pl 2014b):** Macierewicz: Smoleńsk to drugi Katyń. Ci, którzy dążą do prawdy, są represjonowani; <http://wyborcza.pl/1,76842,15734307,Macierewicz__Smolensk_to_drugi_Katyn__Ci__ktorzy_daza.html?disableRedirects=true> accessed 24.07.2018;
- **(wyborcza.pl 2018a):** 95. miesięcznica smoleńska na Krakowskim Przedmieściu. Czy to przedostatnia w tej formie?; <http://wyborcza.pl/7,154385,23126907,95-miesiecznica-smolenska-na-krakowskim-przedmiesciu-czy-to.html> accessed 17.09.2018;
- **(wyborcza.pl 2018b):** 97. miesięcznica smoleńska bez Kaczyńskiego, oficjalnych obchodów i barierek. Ale Krakowskim i tak przeszedł pochód; <http://warszawa.wyborcza.pl/warszawa/7,54420,23383640,97-miesiecznica-smolenska-bez-kaczynskiego-oficjalnych-obchodow.html> accessed 17.09.2018;

Video Sources

- **(Studio TVP Info 2010):** Studio TVP Info [TV]. TVP Historia. 10.04.2011 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6fyI6dB89F4> accessed 27.06.2018;
- **(PiS 2011):** PiS *"Oni czekają na prawde"* commercial [youtube.com]. Gazeta.pl 29.07.2011 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EyOX7VB7aVM> accessed 10.08.2018;
- **(TVP Info 2015):** Jarosław Kaczyński [youtube.com]. Broadcast, 26.10.2015 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nxHSk8Wt0pE> accessed 10.08.2018;
- **(Kaczyński 2010):** Jarosław Kaczyński do Rosjan [youtube.com]. TV commercial <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rjfUm6mbBv4> accessed 03.09.2018;
- **(Kaczyński 2015):** Kaczyński krytykuje donosicieli. Gorszy sort Polaków [youtube.com]. Broadcast TV Republika. Lucjan Lukowski, 16.12.2015 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SKFgVD2KGXw> accessed 13.10.2018;
- **(Kaczyński 2017a):** Kaczyński nie wytrzymał [youtube.com]. Sejm Broadcast, 18.07.2017 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0pXR66xk58o> accessed 20.09.2018;
- **(Kaczyński 2017b):** Kaczyński: "tak, jesteśmy ludzkimi panami" – 22.02.2017 [youtube.com]. Wybierzpolske, 23.02.2017 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LiE4UcaUNco> accessed 25.05.2018;
- **(Ksiazek 2017):** Marsz Niepodległości 2017 [NO COMMENT version] [youtube.com].

Recording, 11.11.2017 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V9wXIbVHqn4> accessed 24.06.2018;

- **(Ksiazek 2018):** Miesięcznica Smoleńska Listopad 2017 [youtube.com]. Recording, 10.11.2017 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rdxF5RPbUkI> accessed 24.06.2018;
- **(Krauze 2016):** A Tragedy that moved Poland, Directed by Antoni Krauze. Warsaw – Kino Świat, 2016. DVD

Abstract (english)

On the morning of April 10th, 2010 grave news arrived in Warsaw, announcing the tragic death of 96 high ranking Polish politicians and military officers, most prominently among them Lech Kaczyński, president of Poland, after the plane carrying them accidentally crashed before landing in Smolensk. The following short period of unity in grief ended right when the burial of the president was announced. No other topic divides Poland as much as the Smolensk tragedy ever since. Through the ups and downs of the *Prawo I Sprawiedliwość* under the leadership of Lech's brother Jarosław Kaczyński, the catastrophe is mystified, mixed with conspiracy theories and Polish historical narratives of martyrdom. This thesis analyses the use of political and historical myth created around the Smolensk tragedy, through theories of populism and memory politics. The Smolensk myth is a constructed trauma in the Polish collective memory which is instrumentalized in a populist context by the PiS and Jarosław Kaczyński to de-legitimize and attack oppositional figures, as well as divide the Polish society to further legitimize its own claim to power. Aligning with the inherent worldview of the governing PiS, it on one hand manifests itself as the prism, through which the Polish right sees and defines their political goals, and on the other hand serves as an instrument, that separates the society into 'patriotic and catholic Poles' standing in struggle against the 'traitorous elites'.

Abstract (Deutsch)

Am Morgen des 10.April 2010 erreichte die erschütternde Nachricht Warschau, dass das Flugzeug, welches 96 hochrangige politische und militärische Persönlichkeiten nach Smolensk flog, unter ihnen den polnischen Präsidenten Lech Kaczyński, kurz vor der Landung, ohne Überlebende zu hinterlassen, abstürzte. Die darauffolgende kruze Periode der Einigkeit in Trauer endete schnell als das Thema der Beerdigung des Präsidenten anfiel. Seither spaltet kein anderes Thema die polnische Gesellschaft wie das jene der Smolensk Tragödie. In guten wie in schlechten Zeiten der *Prawo I Sprawiedliwość,* unter der Führung von Lechs Bruder Jarosław Kaczyński, wurde die Katastrophe von Smolensk stets mystifiziert, gemischt mit Verschwörungstheorien und polnisch-historischen Märtyrer-Narrativen. Diese Forschungsarbeit analysiert den Gebrauch von politischen und historischen Mythen, geschaffen aus der Smolensk Tragödie, durch die theoretischen Grundlagen zu Populismus und Erinnerungspolitik. Der Smolensk Mythos ist ein konstruiertes Trauma im kollektiven polnischen Gedächtnis, welcher im Kontext der populisticshen Politik der PiS und Jarosław Kaczyński instrumentalisiert wird um oppositionelle Persönlichkeiten anzugreifen und zu de-legitimisieren, sowie die polnsiche Gesellschaft zu teilen und dadurch weiter den eigenen Machtanspruch zu legitimisieren. Der Smolensk Mythos stimmt mit der ideologischen Weltsicht der PiS überein und manifestiert sich auf der einen Seite als ein Prisma, durch welches die polnischen Rechten ihre politischen Ziele definieren und interpretieren, und auf der anderen Seite als Instrument, welches die Gesellschaft in ‚patriotische und katholische Polen' teilt, welche im kampf gegen die ‚verräterische Elite' stehen.