



Weekly Briefing

**Poland Political briefing:
Polish government will be reshuffled
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Summary

“In the mid November the Polish government will be reshuffled” – said vice marshal of the Parliament R. Terlecki (Law and Justice) in his interview in Radio. Earlier PM Beata Szydlo “cuts the speculation” by saying that the new faces will appeared in the governments. As opposition media expects the weakest ministers are of Foreign Affairs and Infrastructure. The meeting between coalition parties is expected to be on Nov. 15th. According to the latest news Polish government will be reshuffled later this year. As was said by Mrs. Beata Mazurek - spokesperson of Law and Justice party the structure of the whole government will be changed. As mentioned in media the Ministry of Infrastructure will be embodied into Ministry of Finance and Economy (kind of super ministry).

In the shadow of this political context all decisions and actions taken by the ministers in the Law and Justice government should be understood as the move for saving their position in the cabinet. The first step was taken by Vice Prime Minister Jaroslaw Gowin to open the new political party "Agreement". The political party was mainly based on the previous Gowin's party "Poland Together". The republicans, liberty movements and self-government people joined the initiative. As was mentioned by Gowin in the opening speech due the united right parties Poles feel better and feel that their voice is taken by the government as important. In other word people trusts policy makers and the voters believe in democracy. As mentioned by the leader the new party will be liberal when it comes to economy, and conservative when it comes to social life.

By shaping new political body Gowin and his party has tried to differ from more populist political party. Gowin perceives himself as intellectual, literati or even sage. The "Agreement" party placed free economy, and self-governance as

a pillar of its activities. Although Kaczyński the leader of Law and Justice was absent, Law and Justice supports the new initiative.

The second move was taken by MFA Witold Waszczykowski when he announced his visit Ukraine (Lviv, Polish name Lwow). Poland plans to bar Ukrainians with “anti-Polish views”, emphasizing the nationalist credentials of his ruling party that often talks of the “historic wrongs” inflicted on Poles by their neighbours. Waszczykowski said Ukrainians who express anti-Polish sentiments or make it difficult to maintain ageing Polish symbols in Ukraine would be refused visas. He did not say how the policy would be applied in practice. In the interview for “Law Newspaper Daily” he added that Ukrainian side is not interested with the strategic partnership with Poland. During the visit in Lviv Polish MFA met with Polish community as well as visited places of Polish memory in the former Polish town. Historical problem between Poland and Ukraine has their domestic root. **Kaczynski as is known, is not "proUkrainian" and hopes to strengthen historical narratives as a part of wining its electorate.** As one said in Kiev during the meeting with Ukrainian President he expressed his thinking as: "With Bandera on its banners Ukraine will never ever join Europe". Waszczykowski is afraid of losing his position as minister of foreign affairs and visited Ukraine, used very hard language in order to win support from Law and Justice policy makers. What is worth noticing the spokesperson of Law and Justice party Beata Mazurek was present during MFA visit to Lviv.

The second important event that allowed ministers to justify their position was the tension with Germany. Ursula von der Leyen minister of defence of Germany criticized Poland and Hungary for being obstructive and not obey EU's roles and principles. As she said in ZDF programme: *"We (German government) needs to strengthen and support healthy democratic movement of young people in Poland. Our duty is to keep democratic narrative alive in Poland and quarel with Poland and Hungary."* **Polish MFA Waszczykowski answered that this statement is considered provocative and other EU members should respect**

Poland sovereignty. Moreover he admitted that Poland is in favour of "non-interference" principles (*bu ganshe neizheng*). The German Embassy explained that EU should be based on inclusiveness (means not on the nation state) and secure, supports European principles and values (liberal democracy). Minister of Defence Maciarewicz called German Military Attache for further explanations and discussions on the above-mentioned issue.

In the above mentioned context Minister of Digitalization is in a very difficult position. In the interview for "Rzeczpospolita" Minister of Digitalization Strzezynska discussed the current situation in the government. Mrs. Strzezynska placed herself as an expert not affiliated for any political party. As she said this was agreed with Jaroslaw Kaczynski leader of Law and Justice party Mrs. Strzezynska mentioned that Jaroslaw Gowin, vice prime minister and Minister of Higher Education asked her to joined his political party "Aggrement" but she was not interested in joining any political party and hopes to be professional and independent minister. The Ministry of Digitalization is responsible for building e-government platform for central and local level.

After two years since the Law and Justice won the election the cabinet reshuffled is needed. According to public opinion pool for "Rzeczpospolita" newspaper 50% of respondents answered the Minister of Defence should leave his post, then 40% that Minister of Environment Jan Szyszko, and 35% that Minister of Foreign Affairs Witold Waszczykowski, Minister of Health Kontanty Radziwill and Minister of Justice Zbigniew Ziobro. What should be noticed 37% of respondent decided that PM Szydlo should resign from her post.

The second important pillar of domestic discussions are the reform of judiciary system. After weeks of protests organized by Defence Democracy Committee, Civic Platform and Nowoczesna President Andrzej Duda vetoed the proposal presented by Law and Justice in July 2017. In September Presidential Office issued new amendments. The most important is so-called "reserve

procedure" for the selection of members of the National Court Register by the Sejm. They refer to a situation in which the Sejm fails to select 15 National Council of the Judiciary judges by a 3/5 majority. The leader of Law and Justice did not agree in this point on the proposal of the president "one member of parliament - one vote". Moreover, the President did not agree on the issue that the two laws would have forced the resignation of all supreme court justices and allowed their replacements to be selected by the justice minister, and would have would given government-appointed members of the National Council of the Judiciary – which selects judicial candidates – a power of veto. As admitted by the Presidential Office in Supreme Court of Poland "a large part of this fifteen - at least 6 people - will be those who will support the opposition clubs." Giving this possibility the President places himself as "mediator" between the opposition and ruling party. to the certain extant President Duda stop one party politicisation of the judiciary system.

The IBRiS survey for the "Super Express" shows that 46 percent of the Poles surveyed, supporting the president's vision of changes in the National Judicial Council and the Supreme Court. The changes proposed by the Minister of Justice are supported by 10.8 percent of the respondents, and 24.3 percent of respondents did not know who to vote for, and the remaining 18.9 percent would not vote for any of them.

Conclusions

The core political problem is the reshuffling the cabinet. What is visible, especially in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Worth noticing is the visit in Ukraine in Lviv when MFA Waszczykowski raised the question of historical policy taken by the Ukrainian government. This visit looks like he tried to win the support of Jaroslaw Kaczynki, leader of Law and Justice party. But the core tension is the further reform of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. If the new regulation will be passed more 3000 MFA officers will be under investigations

related to their public life and work during pre1989 period. Most of them, probably, will be asked to leave their posts in the current administration. From the institutional point of view it should be perceived as having negative impact. The second important political move was taken by vice prime minister Gowin who start the new political party "Agreement". This should be understood as the "step forward" in order to secure its position inside the government on the one hand but on the other to differ itself from Law and Justice mainstream.

In the current stage of events all actions taken by the government are driven by the threat coming from the next step taken by Law and Justice leaders that will change the structure of the government.

The constitutional conflict between President and the government is mainly driven by personal animosity between President Duda and Minister of Justice Ziobro. The concept of having "super power" in one hands of Minister of Justice is not supported by the broaden public opinion. The question is what are the gains and benefit of the President Duda. As one says after the consensus for the next steps in judiciary the President might obtain more decisive power in foreign policy affairs.