



# Weekly Briefing

**Poland Political briefing:**  
**Poland Domestic Political Development**  
**Dominik Mierzejewski**

## China-CEE Institute

Kiadó: Kína-KKE Intézet Nonprofit Kft.

Szerkesztésért felelős személy: Chen Xin

Kiadásért felelős személy: Huang Ping



1052 Budapest Petőfi Sándor utca 11.



+36 1 5858 690



office@china-cee.eu



china-cee.eu

The latest political development in Poland is mainly driven by the new amendment to the Act on the Institute of National Remembrance. The briefing discussed the domestic and international dimension of the new amendments, as well as comments on the future leadership and the transition of power in the two biggest political parties in Poland: the Law and Justice and the Civic Platform.

The Senate (upper house of the Polish Parliament) voted to change the controversial law on the Institute of National Remembrance. In the Senate 78 senators took part in the vote, 76 voted for "in favor", one senator was against, and one abstained. The earlier changes were also voted by the Sejm. The amendment repeals articles: 55a, which threatens fines and imprisonment for attributing responsibility to the Polish nation and state and article 55b, which states that criminal provisions are to apply to the Polish citizens and the foreigners. Immediately the new amendments were signed by the President of Poland Andrzej Duda. Moreover, at the joint press conference of Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki and Prime Minister of Israel Benjamin Netanyahu, the declaration of Poland and Israel was signed and read out. As was said by the leader of the Law and Justice Jarosław Kaczyński *It was time to cut through all the unfavorable discussions about the Institute of National Remembrance law for Poland. It has just been done. Thanks to the agreement, we get more than we would be able to achieve thanks to the provisions of the amendment to the Institute of National Remembrance.* The joint declaration between Poland and Israel is perceived as the sign of the goodwill and understanding the attitude of the state of Israel, and as mentioned by Jaroslaw Kaczyński the authorities in Israel understand that we are extremely unfairly placed in one line with those with whom as the general population. The same positive opinion was expressed by Premier Minister Morawiecki who sees the positive effects of the Act on the Institute of National Remembrance was to start an international discussion on Polish history and the role of Poles in the World War II and the truth of Poles who saved Jews. The easing of the previously passed law was also due to the

fact that it creates tensions with Israel and the United States. As some media report the American administration refused to arrange the meeting between President Trump and President Duda. This happened before the July NATO Summit and planned the visit of President Duda in Washington D.C. in November later this year. During the May visit of President Duda in the US, the meeting with Trump did not take place, although at that time the President of the United States received, for example, the President of Uzbekistan, Szawkat Mirzijojew. This was a very clear signal of Poland's marginalization.

The international dimension of the latest amendment, however, should not be perceived as the most important. Regulations adopted by the Polish Parliament in January this year of preparation by the Ministry of Justice in the intention of combating the wording "Polish death camps". The latest amendments were accepted in the Polish parliament at such a rapid pace, without debate and consultation. Even in the morning, the deputies who came to the Polish Parliament did not know anything about the new schedule for the session. What is more important even the governing body of the Institute of National Remembrance and the President of the Institute Dr. Jarosław Szarek did not know about the government's urgent project. The President learned on the situation from the media. Moreover, the work on this project was the best-kept secret of the last days. The project has bypassed the Council of Ministers and was sent to the government members on Tuesday evening, to be accepted in circulation. What was mainly said in the media the head of the government, Mateusz Morawiecki, and his allies were afraid of opposition in the government and the Law and Justice as well. This is especially a faction of Zbigniew Ziobro, the Minister of Justice was sponsored the previous amendments to Act on the Institute of National Remembrance. Moreover, politicians such as Jarosław Gowin or Jadwiga Emilewicz feared opposition in the government and the Law and Justice. The important issue is that the amendments from January this year was created by the Ministry of Justice and led in fact to a slump in relations with Israel and the USA. According to the media, the Minister of Justice Zbigniew

Ziobro learned at the end, when on Tuesday evening only a few sentence project was delivered to the Minister of Justice. The castration of the Institute of National Remembrance law from paragraphs threatening prison for those who are asking the Polish nation for responsibility for the crimes of the Third German Reich became the most important changes in the new amendments. In this particular case, the entire government and parliamentary machine worked for Morawiecki. Not only the Parliament meets to directly annul the bill, but also the Senate was also ready to support the changes in the previous law.

At the same time, Morawiecki tried to shine in the parliament. He spoke skilfully, considering that he was presenting an operation which should be perceived as the evidence of the Law and Justice defeat. The image of the carefully directed performance is complemented by the joint simultaneous conference in Warsaw and Tel Aviv with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who attacked at the beginning of the year. *Looking at this game from the point of view of the situation in the power camp, it is clearly visible that this is another story showing the strengthening of Morawiecki as reported by media.*

### **Conclusions**

The problem of the future leadership in Law and Justice was further discussed by the former Prime Minister Jan Olszewski. According to his opinion without Kaczyński, the Law and Justice party may break up. As we know from the mid-1990s that were Jan Olszewski who promoted Jarosław Kaczyński and allowed him to start as the candidate to the Polish Parliament from the list of his party the Polish Reconstruction Movement. Olszewski referred also to the time of his cooperation with the Law and Justice leader. He reminded that when in the mid-1990s he agreed on Kaczyński to the candidate to the Polish Parliament Kaczyński was the head of the Center's Arrangement (political party) and one of the six from the list of the Polish Reconstruction Movement who got into the Parliament. *I believed then that Kaczyński is a political future in Poland and a*

*great, important political individuality. He hoped to play a great role in Poland's future. And this is the role it plays until today - says Jan Olszewski.*

The latest political dynamic, however, implied that Jaroslaw Kaczynski is slowly looking for his successor and the Prime Minister Morawiecki might be the person he sees in this position. The amendments voted by the Parliament shows the strength of the Prime Minister, who with the support of Jaroslaw Kaczynski, skilfully maneuver and finally win his position vis a vis the Minister of Justice. The transition of power in the party, however, as we can learn from the media reports, might not be the issues of the decision of one person. Having changes at the top of the Law and Justice should be delivered by consensus and compromise. The process will be longer and more complex than of those discussed by media.

The problem of the future leaders in the Polish political parties is also visible on the opposition side. The leader of Civic Platform Grzegorz Schetyna faces the dilemma of how to nominate the future leader of his party. The critical for the future of the party will the local elections later this year. If the Civic Platform will not gain the public support and will not win at least in ten provinces this will signal that the new leadership is needed. Even at the moment, only 2 percent perceived Grzegorz Schetyna as the leader of the opposition list to the Parliament. Following this public opinion perception, 49% of respondents hope that Donald Tusk will come back and take the leading role in the opposition movement. From this perspective, Donald Tusk might challenge Grzegorz Schetyna position. As discussed in the latest media report Tusk might support the alternative list in the parliamentary elections and elections to the European Parliament (May 2019) or even start the new political project. The list will be the list of the wider pro-European coalition with Civic Platform, Nowoczesna and Polish People's Party members.

From the above-mentioned perspective, both parties face the dilemma of how to produce the model of the power transition in the party. In both cases, the current leader points the future leaders and tries to have the impact on the

decision taken by the leaders. The candidates are elected by the parties' assembly, however, before they are nominated by the previous leader. If the situation is the according to the above-mentioned model, like in Nowoczesna the leader who lost the competition leaves the party.