

**The Influence of the National Political Scene on
the Behavior of Local Politicians and Voters in
Polish Local Elections in 2018**

Political Preferences
2019, vol. 23: 5-21
journals.us.edu.pl/index.php/PP
Submitted: 10/06/2019
Accepted: 04/07/2019

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Abstract:

Polish local elections in 2018, many months before their commencement, became one of the main elements of the political discourse. Due to the specificity of the electoral calendar, for the first time since the parliamentary and presidential elections in 2015, voters had to assess the actions taken by the Law and Justice (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, PiS) in the electoral act. Of course, this could only happen indirectly, precisely through local elections, which due to their specificity, are not able to fully reflect the balance of powers that operates on the national arena. However, also in this way voters could refer to national events. Expressing support for them by voting on PiS, or by showing negations of their actions by voting for groups remaining in opposition. The aim of the paper is to check whether, in the perception of voters, events on the national political arena determine the behavior of two types of participants in local elections: local politicians and voters.

Keywords: local elections, national arena, local arena, voters

Introduction

Many political scientists and sociologists are reflecting on what influenced the electoral decisions of voters in selected elections. We can distinguish a few main and traditional approaches to electoral behavior. Sociological models make the electoral decision dependent on the place the voter occupies in the social structure. According to this approach, social status and related affiliation to specific groups influence attitudes, opinions and beliefs of people. Among the psychological models, the party identification model became particularly popular. The central concept of this approach is the concept of identification with the party, understood as affective

attitude towards important objects on the political scene. There are also economic models, at the base of which lies the model of a rational voter. It is construed on the assumption that the voter decision is the result of the calculation of economic profits and losses. Of course, the so-called issue voting model also appears here (Żerkowska-Balas et al. 2016: 71-73). However, voters themselves do not approach their behavior in a theoretical way. Many voters know remarkably little about politics, including even basic facts about their own surroundings. They don't analyze everything that surrounds them and what may affect their electoral behavior. However, there is a question whether voters are aware of whether certain aspects of political life (in this case national policy) affect their decisions in local elections.

Local elections, as an example of the so-called democracy in action (Mazur 2008: 139, Putnam 1995), can be considered as the closest to the citizens, mainly by dealing with the basic public issues and having a direct impact on the functioning of local communities. Involvement of a whole range of entities (political parties, social organizations, associations and independent candidates) changes the rules of the political game, known to political parties from the national scene, but also definitely influences voters' preferences. However, elections to regional assemblies (and due to their specificity to other local authorities) in particular, may arouse interest of national political parties for several reasons. First of all, winning votes in such elections gives them a possibility of shaping regional policy (e.g. by deciding on the redistribution of EU funds). Secondly, sejmik wojewódzki (regional assembly) is a "personnel base" for political parties before the elections to other bodies (e.g. parliamentary elections). Winning regional elections can also be a question of prestige (Cichosz 2013: 313). This prestige was particularly important for PiS in 2018. Jarosław Kaczyński's party wanted to show social acceptance for its actions.

The local elections in 2018, many months before the start of the official election campaign, aroused great interest among Poles and politicians, especially those operating on the national scene. In September 2018, the elections to local authorities have been attracting noticeably higher interest than all previous ones (CBOS 126/2018). According to the electoral calendar, these were the first elections since the victory of Law and Justice (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, PiS) in 2015, but also the first in the new election cycle having started in 2018. The largest Polish parties treated this election as the first test before the parliamentary elections that were planned for autumn 2019. The intensity of the political conflict at the national level

drew the attention of the public to the local elections, and at the same time made the largest political parties, both governmental and opposition, to concentrate their efforts on them. Local government has not been such an important element of the public dispute over power, the vision of Poland and the condition of Polish democracy for a long time.

Poles consider local elections to be the most important of all elections held in the country, assigning them the highest marks on a 10-point scale of importance. Local elections (average result 7.63) are slightly ahead of presidential elections (7.24) and parliamentary elections (7.20), and much more clearly, elections to the European Parliament (6.12) (CBOS 23/2018)¹. During elections in 2018, the fact of the importance of local elections can be also seen in the high turnout². It amounted to 54.9% of persons entitled to vote. This is the highest turnout in local government elections since 1990. It was also higher than the turnout in the 2015 elections to the Sejm (50,9%) and in the first round of the presidential election in the same year (48,9%). Apart from the highly-rated rank of local elections, the turnout could undoubtedly be influenced by the very high intensity of political emotions among Poles. Also, starting from 2015, the number of people who declared their participation in the strike or demonstration has significantly increased, in 2017 it was 7% of adult Poles, and this is the highest percentage since 1989. Residents of large cities, with higher education, people not participating in religious practices and identifying themselves with the left, protested more often than average (CBOS 17/2018). A series of street protests and political demonstrations, that took place in the years preceding this election, may lead to the conclusion that in recent time many Poles are more and more interested in political life. In 2018, Poles were mostly interested in the actions of the central authorities - parliamentarians, the government and the president (87% of respondents declared their interest). To a slightly lesser extent, there was also a visible interest in decisions of gmina (commune) authorities (78%). The decision of the powiat (poviat) authorities and regional assembly aroused the least interest. Comparing the data from 2014 and 2018, there is a noticeable increase in the interest in the policy, both nationwide and local level (CBOS 23/2018).

It is worth emphasizing that just after the local elections, half of Poles recognized that the main goal of those elections was only what is believed to be the primary goal of local elections,

¹ This seems to strongly contradict the approach of Karlheinz Reif and Hermann Schmitt (1980) that local elections belong to the so-called second order elections, as less important for voters, political parties or the media than the parliamentary or presidential elections, so-called first-order elections.

² As per Polish standards.

i.e. the selection of the best candidates for local authorities. However, what seems to be more important, more than 40% of Poles believed that the local elections in 2018 were not only of local significance, but to a greater or lesser extent were also a consequence of the situation on the national political scene and constituted an opportunity for voters to express their opinions to changes taking place in Poland (CBOS 17/2018). A month before the elections, in September 2018, voters, in determining the hierarchy of the most desirable features of a candidate for a councilor, considered that the most important is knowledge of the local problems of inhabitants (it was important for 97% of persons entitled to vote) and experience in working in local government (78%). On the other hand, for the majority of adult Poles, the party support for the candidate for a councilor was less important (63% of indications considered this feature irrelevant). The party recommendation was only valid for one-third of those entitled to vote (33%). Over 60% of the respondents declared that while voting in local elections they would prefer to vote for independent candidates, unrelated to any political group (CBOS 139/2018).

As we can see, Poles appreciate the importance of local elections, considering them as the most important in the entire election cycle, putting them above the elections to the central offices. In addition, voters consider party membership of local politicians as irrelevant or even undesirable. It can therefore be assumed that the events taking place on the national scene will not affect the behavior of local politicians or the voters themselves. However, at the same time, the research indicates that Poles are first of all interested in the achievements of the central authorities, and a significant part of them saw in the local elections (2018) something more than the ability to choose local authorities, i.e. a chance for them to express their opinions on changes taking place in Poland after 2015. So, there may be a transfer of conflict and struggle between supporters and opponents of government actions from the national to the local level.

At the same time, it is worth noting that the local government was, not only historically, a form of struggle with the central authority (Antoszewski 2008: 45). So maybe a similar situation takes place today. The thesis then arises, whether during the local elections in 2018, the behavior of local politicians and the voters themselves were determined by what was happening on the national scene. Was this what happened on the national scene, for example conflicts, protests, changes of law, a determinant for local politicians' behavior? As they preferred to run from small local committees, not committees with a party logo.

Do political views matter?

In this article, the influence of domestic events on the behavior of politicians and voters during the election campaign in local elections in 2018 will be explained on the basis of the quantitative and percentage distribution of answers to two theses: 1) *Events on the national political scene influenced the behavior of local politicians during the election campaign*, 2) *Events on the national political scene influenced my choice during local elections*. The basic unit of analysis is the political party (electoral committee) and the political views of the voters. To expand the possibilities of analysis, additional factors have also been added, namely: religiousness, place of residence, level of education. The nationwide sample was selected in Poland in a quota-layered manner (970 people). The disjointed layers were voivodeships (N = 16), while the amount controlled variables were sex, age and place of residence (city-village). The research was carried out using the questionnaire method.

The purpose of the paper was to verify two main hypotheses. In the voters' perception, in a situation of the large social polarization³, in 2018:

- 1) domestic events influenced the behavior of local politicians and voters,
- 2) voters of opposition parties believe in much higher influence of these events.

In the case of voters of opposition parties, they assume that the conflict from the national scene must be moved to the local scene, as this may initiate the beginning of the end of the Law and Justice rule. In particular, when, after 2015, only local authorities were not, to a lesser or greater extent, under the influence of PiS.

³ According to the research, 84% of Poles believe that there are major differences in Polish society, and 63% pointed to differences in political views as the reason (Ipsos MORI 2018).

Table 1. The quantitative and percentage distribution of responses to the thesis "Events on the national political scene influenced the behavior of local politicians during the election campaign" in individual party electorates and among voters who did not participate in elections to sejmiki wojewódzkie (regional assemblies) in 2018

In the elections to the sejmiki wojewódzkie in 2018, I voted for:		Definitely not	Probably not	Hard to say	Probably yes	Definitely yes	The sum of the answers
Bezpartyjni Samorządowcy	Q	1	6	12	20	10	49
Nonpartisan Local Government Activists	%	2,04	12,24	24,49	40,82	20,41	100,00
Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe	Q	2	10	26	19	8	65
	%	3,08	15,38	40,00	29,23	12,31	100,00
Platforma Obywatelska/ Koalicja Obywatelska	Q	3	12	51	95	69	230
	%	1,30	5,22	22,17	41,30	30,00	100,00
Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej/ Lewica Razem	Q	2	2	9	22	6	41
	%	4,88	4,88	21,95	53,66	14,63	100,00
Kukiz 15	Q	1	6	8	9	10	34
	%	2,94	17,65	23,53	26,47	29,41	100,00
Prawo i Sprawiedliwość	Q	5	24	87	78	32	226
	%	2,21	10,62	38,50	34,51	14,16	100,00
Komitet regionalny (Regional Committee)	Q	0	5	9	23	13	50
	%	0	10,00	18,00	46,00	26,00	100,00
Other party	Q	4	6	11	32	12	65
	%	6,15	9,23	16,92	49,23	18,46	100,00
I did not vote	Q	5	8	70	47	16	146
	%	3,42	5,48	47,95	32,19	10,96	100,00
I do not remember	Q	1	1	33	20	5	60
	%	1,67	1,67	55,00	33,33	8,33	100,00

Q = Quantity

Source: own research as a part of the project „Preferencje polityczne. Postawy-Identyfikacje-Zachowania”.

Table 2. The quantitative and percentagedistribution of responses to the thesis "Events on the national political scene influenced my choice during local elections "in individual party electorates and among voters who did not participate in elections to sejmiki wojewódzkie (regional assemblies) in 2018

In the elections to the sejmiki wojewódzkie in 2018, I voted for:		Definitely not	Probably not	Hard to say	Probably yes	Definitely yes	The sum of the answers
Bezpartyjni Samorządowcy	Q	8	11	7	14	10	50
Nonpartisan Local Government Activists	%	16,00	22,00	14,00	28,00	20,00	100,00
Polskie Stronictwo Ludowe	Q	6	17	10	16	16	65
	%	9,23	26,15	15,38	24,62	24,62	100,00
Platforma Obywatelska/ Koalicja Obywatelska	Q	23	41	33	74	59	230
	%	10,00	17,83	14,35	32,17	25,65	100,00
Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej/ Lewica Razem	Q	2	10	6	12	11	41
	%	4,88	24,39	14,63	29,27	26,83	100,00
Kukiz 15	Q	1	10	6	10	7	34
	%	2,94	29,41	17,65	29,41	20,59	100,00
Prawo i Sprawiedliwość	Q	26	53	52	68	25	224
	%	11,61	23,66	23,21	30,36	11,16	100,00
Komitet regionalny (Regional Committee)	Q	8	15	3	13	10	49
	%	16,33	30,61	6,12	26,53	20,41	100,00
Other party	Q	13	15	9	15	12	64
	%	20,31	23,44	14,06	23,44	18,75	100,00
I did not vote	Q	30	27	48	26	15	146
	%	20,55	18,49	32,88	17,81	10,27	100,00
I do not remember	Q	4	9	25	15	8	61
	%	6,56	14,75	40,98	24,59	13,11	100,00

Q = Quantity

Source: own research as a part of the project „Preferencje polityczne. Postawy-Identyfikacje-Zachowania”.

The data presented in Table 1 show how the supporters of individual parties and groups perceived the impact of domestic events on the behavior of local politicians. On the basis of the data mentioned following conclusions can be formulated. First of all, the percentage of respondents who admit that such influence existed (answers: presumably yes and definitely yes)

is very high, around 60%⁴, i.e. almost two thirds of voters saw a clear relation between what was happening on the national scene and the local scene. Much more interesting, however, is the distribution of opinions on this subject among the electorate of individual parties. Definitely, the greatest influence was noticed by the voters of local committees (72%), Citizens' Platform/Citizens' Coalition (Platforma Obywatelska/Koalicja Obywatelska, PO/KO) (71.3%), Democratic Left Alliance/Left Together (Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej/Lewica Razem, SLD Lewica Razem) (68.29%) and the so-called other, smaller parties not shown in the study (67.69%). Thus, the highest indications were noted among voters of opposition groups who more or less disagree with the actions taken by the government of the Law and Justice. Therefore, they were transferring the national conflict to the local scene. It is worth emphasizing the very high rates of influence among voters of local committees. Their vote can be interpreted just as an opposition to national policy, as a whole, which for them may be too far from the needs of voters. The smallest influence was recorded among the voters of PiS (48.67%) but above all the Polish Peasants' Party (Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe, PSL) (only 41.54%). The indication of the PSL voters, whose leaders were definitely against the actions of the government, is definitely surprising. The voters of this party, perhaps due to the lower interest in domestic politics, and to a greater extent to local policy (especially during local elections) downplayed this influence. This can be related to a large membership base, an extensive field structure and strong rooting in local government units. PSL voters are loyal to their party and they choose candidates from their immediate environment (Peszyński 2011: 248). PSL voters focus on their own representatives, whom they have been choosing for years and their actions seem to be quite stable. The results of PiS voters are not surprising, they accept government policy and, consequently, political and social changes. National conflict seems to be much less important for them.

Table 2 shows individual electoral preferences, in the context of the discussed issue. The data confirm previous results. It is worth noting, however, that in the case of this thesis, the respondents much less frequently admitted to the fact of determining their electoral preferences on the basis of events on the national scene (average 49%). So the voters, in their opinion, considered themselves less wavering in political decisions and behavior than local politicians, who have to take into account a wider spectrum of issues and have to adapt to the new political situation. This tendency is also repeated in the further part of the research. Also in the case of individual preferences, the highest indicators of influence were shown by PO/KO voters (57.82%) and SLD Lewica Razem (56.1%), while the lowest by electorate of PiS (41.52%). It is

⁴ The average result for all voters, except those who answered: *I did not vote* and *I do not remember*.

worth noting, however, that there is a change in the preferences of the PSL supporters. In this case, the voters were significantly affected by the impact of the domestic situation (49.24% of the respondents indicated answers yes and definitely yes⁵). This is one of the few cases in the whole study, when the voters admitted that national events affect their behavior more than the behavior of local politicians. This may also suggest that voters of this party are more susceptible to changing electoral behavior than local politicians, especially PSL.

Tables 3 and 4 show the distribution of responses to both theses, in the context of declared political views. The results seem to uphold the data from the first two tables, and perhaps also partially explain the phenomenon of PSL voters. People with left-wing views noticed a great influence on local politicians (74.64% - the highest percentage of indications in the entire study) but also on themselves (59.02% - again the highest percentage of responses only in answer to thesis no. 2). Leftist voters, who after 2015 had not had their representatives in central authorities, stress the importance of national events much more, they express their negation by taking part in protests and demonstrations. People with centrist views, and, above all, right-wing views (including, among others, PSL voters) do not attach so much importance to national events. In the case of the latter, there were 57% of indications in the first thesis and 44.58% in the second thesis.

Table 3. The quantitative and percentage distribution of answers to the thesis "Events on the national political scene influenced the behavior of local politicians during the election campaign" in the context of declared political views

Declared political views		Definitely not	Probably not	Hard to say	Probably yes	Definitely yes	The sum of the answers
Left	Q	6	13	33	94	59	205
	%	2,93	6,34	16,10	45,85	28,78	100,00
Center	Q	4	15	58	64	45	186
	%	2,15	8,06	31,18	34,41	24,19	100,00
Right	Q	10	29	99	130	56	324
	%	3,09	8,95	30,56	40,12	17,28	100,00
I do not know, I cannot determine	Q	4	23	125	77	21	250
	%	1,60	9,20	50,00	30,80	8,40	100,00

Q = Quantity

Source: own research as a part of the project „Preferencje polityczne. Postawy-Identyfikacje-Zachowania”.

⁵ In the questionnaire, voters had a choice of five types of answers: definitely not, probably not, hard to say, probably yes, definitely yes. The last two answers meant that such an influence existed. For the purpose of the analysis, this answers were added together.

Table 4. The quantitative and percentage distribution of answers to the thesis "Events on the national political scene influenced my choice during local elections" in the context of declared political views

Declared political views		Definitely not	Probably not	Hard to say	Probably yes	Definitely yes	The sum of the answers
Left	Q	18	42	24	53	68	205
	%	8,78	20,49	11,71	25,85	33,17	100,00
Center	Q	23	36	33	58	35	185
	%	12,43	19,46	17,84	31,35	18,92	100,00
Right	Q	42	73	64	96	48	323
	%	13,00	22,60	19,81	29,72	14,86	100,00
I do not know, I cannot determine	Q	38	57	77	56	22	250
	%	15,20	22,80	30,80	22,40	8,80	100,00

Q = Quantity

Source: own research as a part of the project „Preferencje polityczne. Postawy-Identyfikacje-Zachowania”.

Do education, religiousness and place of residence matter?

In Tables 5 and 6, we find voters’ answers correlated with their declared level of religiousness. According to official data provided by the Central Statistical Office (Główny Urząd Statystyczny) in 2018, nearly 94% of Polish citizens aged 16 and more have a religious denomination. Almost 81% describe themselves as believers and 3% as non-believers (GUS 2018). These values are much higher than those observed in the analyzed studies, where more than 17% of respondents defined themselves as non-practicing or non-believing. This difference may, of course, arise from the fact that some people who declare belonging to a religion may not at the same time practice their religion. According to the survey results, people representing the category: non-practicing/non-believers noticed a significantly higher impact of domestic politics on the behavior of local politicians (67.76%) and themselves (52.98%). And people who declared any religious activity (all other categories together) see its limited influence. In the whole category of believers, the values are as follows: in thesis no.1 53.85%, in thesis no.2 43.26%. The results of religious people, and the PiS and PSL supporters definitely belong to them, coincide with previous analyses.

Table 5. The quantitative and percentage distribution of answers to the thesis "Events on the national political scene influenced the behavior of local politicians during the election campaign" in the context of the declared level of religiousness

Declared religiousness		Definitely not	Probably not	Hard to say	Probably yes	Definitely yes	The sum of the answers
Non-practicing (including non-believers)	Q	4	9	36	61	42	152
	%	2,63	5,92	23,68	40,13	27,63	100,00
Practicing only occasionally	Q	5	17	79	94	40	235
	%	2,13	7,23	33,62	40,00	17,02	100,00
Practicing irregularly	Q	4	28	69	82	36	219
	%	1,83	12,79	31,51	37,44	16,44	100,00
Practicing often	Q	5	22	91	89	40	247
	%	2,02	8,91	36,84	36,03	16,19	100,00
Practicing very often	Q	6	4	42	36	21	109
	%	5,50	3,67	38,53	33,03	19,27	100,00

Q = Quantity

Source: own research as a part of the project „Preferencje polityczne. Postawy-Identyfikacje-Zachowania”.

Table 6. The quantitative and percentage distribution of answers to the thesis "Events on the national political scene influenced my choice during local elections" in the context of the declared level of religiousness

Declared religiousness		Definitely not	Probably not	Hard to say	Probably yes	Definitely yes	The sum of the answers
Non-practicing (including non-believers)	Q	16,00	28,00	27,00	38,00	42,00	151,00
	%	10,60	18,54	17,88	25,17	27,81	100,00
Practicing only occasionally	Q	33,00	46,00	49,00	64,00	44,00	236,00
	%	13,98	19,49	20,76	27,12	18,64	100,00
Practicing irregularly	Q	26,00	55,00	47,00	59,00	32,00	219,00
	%	11,87	25,11	21,46	26,94	14,61	100,00
Practicing often	Q	26,00	58,00	55,00	77,00	29,00	245,00
	%	10,61	23,67	22,45	31,43	11,84	100,00
Practicing very often	Q	20,00	21,00	21,00	25,00	22,00	109,00
	%	18,35	19,27	19,27	22,94	20,18	100,00

Q = Quantity

Source: own research as a part of the project „Preferencje polityczne. Postawy-Identyfikacje-Zachowania”.

The data in tables 7 and 8 present the scope of the answers to both theses, compared to the next variable, which is the place of residence. In this case voters were divided into three categories: inhabitants of villages, cities up to 100,000 inhabitants and cities with a population of over 100,000. Before presenting the results of the research, it is worth quoting the results of exit poll surveys from the day of local elections (Ipsos 2018). In these studies, there were five categories of residence (a village, a city of up to 50,000 residents, cities with a population of 51,000-200,000, 201,000-500,000 and a city of over 500,000 inhabitants). Two extreme categories seem particularly interesting, where differences in the support given to the winning parties could be seen clear. In the countryside elections were definitely won by PiS (39.9%). The next results were obtained by PSL (20.9%) and PO/KO (15.5%). In large cities (over 500,000 inhabitants) the results were very different. PO/KO won (47.3%) over PiS (23.1%) and SLD Lewica Razem (6.6%). To make the situation even more clear, one can mention the PiS's defeat in the elections for the posts of presidents of Polish cities. In 107 analyzed cases PiS won only in 5 but PO/KO in 28. It is easy to observe that the electoral decisions in both cases were definitely different. Is it in this case, that the situation will be repeated and voters of the opposition parties (except the PSL), living rather in large cities than villages, will notice the greater impact of domestic events. As it can be seen from the answers to both theses, rural residents assessed this impact as definitely lower. In the case of thesis no. 1, only 49.19% of the respondents confirmed the existence of influence, while in the case of the second thesis it was 40%. The situation is different in larger cities (in the study, defined as cities with a population of over 100,000). Here voters noticed a much greater correlation between the events of the national scene and the local scene. In the case of the influence on local politicians it was confirmed by 62.57% respondents, while the influence on voters was determined by 49.84%. To sum up, the inhabitants of villages, who are, to a large extent, voters of PiS and PSL (about 60% of all voters) noticed a much smaller impact than residents of larger cities, especially cities over 500,000 inhabitants, where over 55% of voters are voters of PO/KO and SLD Lewica Razem.

Table 7. The quantitative and percentage distribution of answers to the thesis "Events on the national political scene influenced the behavior of local politicians during the election campaign" in the context of a place of permanent residence

Permanent place of residence		Definitely not	Probably not	Hard to say	Probably yes	Definitely yes	The sum of the answers
Village	Q	9	37	140	135	45	366
	%	2,46	10,11	38,25	36,89	12,30	100,00
City to 100,000 inhabitants	Q	9	27	77	105	57	275
	%	3,27	9,82	28,00	38,18	20,73	100,00
City over 100,000 inhabitants	Q	6	16	100	125	79	326
	%	1,84	4,91	30,67	38,34	24,23	100,00

Q = Quantity

Source: own research as a part of the project „Preferencje polityczne. Postawy-Identyfikacje-Zachowania”.

Table 8. The quantitative and percentage distribution of answers to the thesis "Events on the national political scene influenced my choice in the local elections" in the context of a place of permanent residence

Permanent place of residence		Definitely not	Probably not	Hard to say	Probably yes	Definitely yes	The sum of the answers
Village	Q	37,00	83,00	99,00	96,00	50,00	365,00
	%	10,14	22,74	27,12	26,30	13,70	100,00
City to 100,000 inhabitants	Q	43,00	58,00	44,00	83,00	45,00	273,00
	%	15,75	21,25	16,12	30,40	16,48	100,00
City over 100,000 inhabitants	Q	41,00	67,00	56,00	85,00	78,00	327,00
	%	12,54	20,49	17,13	25,99	23,85	100,00

Q = Quantity

Source: own research as a part of the project „Preferencje polityczne. Postawy-Identyfikacje-Zachowania”.

The last set of data, presented in Tables 9 and 10, shows the answers to the theses in correlation with the level of education of the respondents. As in the previous case, it can be compared to the results of the exit poll survey (Ipsos 2018). The largest number of PiS voters is found among people with primary and junior high education. Almost half of this group (45.7%) voted for the party of Jarosław Kaczyński. In the same group, PO/KO voters constituted only

15.2%. Along with the increase in the level of education, the percentage of PiS voters falls, while the number of PO/KO voters increases. Among people with the highest level of education (bachelor and above), their number is 35.7%, and in the case of PiS voters it is only 23.7%. Certain tendency can be also seen in answers to analyzed theses. Voters, along with the increase in their level of education, notice an increase in the impact of events from the national scene. People with primary and junior high education, in answer to the first thesis gave only 35.71% of responses: probably yes and definitely yes. The same answers were given by 62.72% of people with higher education. A clear difference can be noticed. The impact of education on the perception of influence can be clearly seen, but this should not come as a surprise since the socio-political activity of Poles increases with the level of education (CBOS 16/2016). In the case of the answer to the thesis no. 2, the difference is not so large and amounts only to 4.5 percentage points.

Table 9. The percentage distribution of answers to the thesis "Events on the national political scene influenced the behavior of local politicians during the election campaign" in the context of the level of education

Education		Definitely not	Probably not	Hard to say	Probably yes	Definitely yes	The sum of the answers
Without education	Q	3	0	1	2	1	7
	%	42,86	0	14,29	28,57	14,29	100,00
Primary/junior high education	Q	3	8	16	12	3	42
	%	7,14	19,05	38,10	28,57	7,14	100,00
Basic vocational education	Q	4	9	51	45	23	132
	%	3,03	6,82	38,64	34,09	17,42	100,00
Secondary/post-secondary education	Q	7	35	130	144	66	382
	%	1,83	9,16	34,03	37,70	17,28	100,00
Higher education	Q	7	27	114	162	87	397
	%	1,76	6,80	28,72	40,81	21,91	100,00

Q = Quantity

Source: own research as a part of the project „Preferencje polityczne. Postawy-Identyfikacje-Zachowania”.

Table 10. The percentage distribution of answers to the thesis "Events on the national political scene influenced my choice in the local elections" in the context of the level of education

Education		Definitely not	Probably not	Hard to say	Probably yes	Definitely yes	The sum of the answers
Without education	Q	1	0	2	4	0	7
	%	14,29	0	28,57	57,14	0	100,00
Primary/junior high education	Q	7	9	7	15	4	42
	%	16,67	21,43	16,67	35,71	9,52	100,00
Basic vocational education	Q	15	14	41	38	23	131
	%	11,45	10,69	31,30	29,01	17,56	100,00
Secondary/post-secondary education	Q	47	94	89	97	57	384
	%	12,24	24,48	23,18	25,26	14,84	100,00
Higher education	Q	50	89	59	109	87	394
	%	12,69	22,59	14,97	27,66	22,08	100,00

Q = Quantity

Source: own research as a part of the project „Preferencje polityczne. Postawy-Identyfikacje-Zachowania”.

Conclusions

According to the examined thesis, the events of the domestic scene had an impact on the behavior in local elections, but it is worth stressing that the electoral calendar also significantly raised the importance of local elections to the politicians at the national level. The local elections in 2018 definitely played a significant role in the shaping of the national policy. Large parties, primarily PiS and PO/KO decided relatively quickly that the campaign should be launched. PO together with Modern (Nowoczesna, .N) initiated it in August 2018 with a wide outdoor campaign, which was quickly answered by the campaign of the ruling party. Both PiS and PO/KO spent large sums on campaigns (PiS - PLN 34.5 million zloty, and PO/KO 25.1 million zloty). Such a situation could not remain without influence on voters. As can be seen in the presented analysis, the impact of actions taken on the national stage can be considered very important. Over 60% of respondents in the study noticed it in the context of local politicians' activities, and almost 50% of them admitted that it also had an impact on themselves. The difference in the answers to theses 1 and 2, i.e. lower impact assessments on voters, should not

come as a surprise. Voters will rarely admit that their individual preferences were affected with something else than purely substantive issues and concerning only this subject. Of course, it needs to be added that local politicians, especially those belonging to relevant parties in the national arena, in the strategies of their actions must also take into account the recommendations and guidelines of the party authorities. None of the analyzed groups of the electorate eliminated the existence of such influence, and more importantly, except for one group (persons with primary and junior high education), it always exceeded 40% of the answers. It should be emphasized that voters of opposition groups or regional committees see much greater influence. Perhaps this is due to the fact that domestic events, PiS decisions determining a number of areas of life, especially those quite controversial, such as changes in the judicial system, are more noticeable and more important for their opponents than supporters. People with leftist views, educated, from large cities more often protested against them than any other social group. And it was these people who most often indicated the impact of domestic events on the actions of local politicians or voters themselves. The only exception seems to be the PSL voters, who, in their opinions, are definitely closer to the electorate of Law and Justice. In the case of sociodemographic factors they are quite closely related to each other. Although the PSL remains in opposition, the views of their electorate are in large part in line with the views of supporters of the party of Jaroslaw Kaczynski.

You cannot tear the local scene away from the national one. The proportion of information provided by the media concerning both these levels also has a significant impact on it. At the same time, local government elections are not and will never be just a tool for choosing local authorities. In addition to other functions, they are also a testing ground for political parties for subsequent elections.

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