The parliamentary debate on the introduction of a state of emergency on the border with Belarus in the perspective of functional analysis of political discourse and analysis of thematic frameworks

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to examine whether the parliamentary debate over the Polish President’s decree imposing a state of emergency on the border with Belarus is part of the deep polarization of the political scene in Poland at the beginning of the third decade of the 21st century. The following research methods were used: functional analysis of political discourse, developed by William Benoit, thematic framework analysis by Shanto Iyengar, and, helpfully, John Rupert Firth’s findings on the relationship between language and context. The research sample was purposive in nature. The unit of analysis was a sequence – i.e., the utterance of one politician in a specific thematic frame, through which a selected function of political discourse was realized. The analysis was quantitative and qualitative in nature. The research material was the transcript of the 36th session of the Sejm of September 6, 2021. Results and conclusions: in the analyzed parliamentary debate, the majority of statements by politicians of the United Right expressed praise, in the case of opposition politicians, the majority of statements presented an attack. The research sample included statements by government and opposition representatives classified into an episodic or thematic frame. The analysis found no dominance of either frame. The most significant contextual frame in the statements of politicians, both government and opposition, was the personal frame. Originality and cognitive value: the article expands knowledge in the area of political communication of parliamentarians of the Ninth Sejm.
The pronounced polarization of the Polish political scene after 2015 manifests itself in the rivalry between the United Right camp and its opponents. The difference in the positions of the government coalition and the opposition concerns fundamental indicators of the state of Polish democracy: the independence of the courts, the constitutional court, freedom of the media (Wyrzykowski, 2019, pp. 417-422). The post-2015 rule by PiS politicians has clearly called into question the ideals of liberal democracy (Moder, 2019, pp. 13, 17-21; Guzek & Grzesiok-Horosz, 2021, pp. 4-5).

Subsequent elections of the second decade of the 21st century – i.e., parliamentary elections in 2015 and 2019, and presidential elections in 2015 and 2020 – prove that the axis of political division runs along the line of contention between the two largest political parties: Law and Justice and Civic Platform (Tworzecki, 2019).

Taking into account the peculiarities of the permanent campaign (Domalewska, 2018; Zaręba, 2016), it was assumed that important issues of the political agenda, not fitting into the election campaign, also became an opportunity to flesh out the lines of political division in Poland. At the same time, the unified position of the government coalition and the opposition, expressed on fundamental issues, such as those related to national security, can be treated as justified by a higher good that unites the two opposing camps (Majer, 2012, p. 12). According to political scientists, the migrant crisis on the Polish-Belarusian border is part of a hybrid operation conducted by Belarusian services since 2021 (Devi, 2021; Bejan & Nabi, 2021). The attitude of the Lukashenko regime, together with the reaction of the Polish authorities, sets the context for the analysis of the parliamentary debate undertaken. The research material is the stenographic report of the 36th Sejm session of September 6, 2021, found on the website of the Ninth Sejm (“Stenographic Report…”, 2021).

The purpose of this article is to verify whether the parliamentary debate over the decree of the President of the Republic of Poland on the introduction of a state of emergency on the border with Belarus is part of the deep polarization of the political scene in Poland at the beginning of the third decade of the 21st century. For, as Teun van Dijk (2003) aptly notes, political discourse is subordinated to the achievement of specific political goals. Taking into account the features of parliamentary debate (Benenowska, 2015, pp. 241-242), the parliamentary discussion on the introduction of a state of emergency on the border with Belarus, firstly, gave the government and the opposition an opportunity to present their positions and rationale. Secondly, it became...

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1 It is worth noting that the 2014 National Security Strategy of the Republic of Poland stipulates that national security interests derive from Article 5 of the Polish Constitution. These include “having an effective national security capability that ensures readiness and ability to prevent threats, including deterrence, defense and protection against them, and elimination of their consequences; [...] individual and collective protection of citizens from threats to their life and health, and from violation, loss or degradation of assets (tangible and intangible) that are important to them; ensuring the freedom of citizens to exercise their freedoms and rights without harming the security of others and the security of the state, and ensuring national identity and cultural heritage” (pp. 10-11).

2 More extensively, the political background of the migration crisis on the border between Belarus and the European Union is discussed by the author in “Linguistic Forum” (in print).
an element of competition, since, as Małgorzata Kita (2003) notes, the primary motivation of participants in such debates is to defeat the opponent. And finally, it has become part of the permanent campaign of two opposing camps: United Right and the opposition (Leśniczak, 2021, pp. 307-311).

The author attempts to specify the communication strategy used by government and opposition politicians in the context of the 2021 migration crisis, using political discourse analysis. The article, which is a linguistic discourse analysis, expands knowledge in the area of political communication of parliamentarians of the Ninth Sejm.

**Research methodology**

This article assumes a contesting position of opposition parties on the presidential decree of September 2, 2021 on the introduction of a state of emergency in the area of part of the Podlaskie Voivodeship and part of the Lubelskie Voivodeship (Journal of Laws of 2021, item 1612), which was included in the agenda of the 36th session of the Ninth Sejm. An attempt was made to prove that the Sejm debate on this regulation was part of the deep polarization of the political scene in Poland at the beginning of the third decade of the 21st century. In assessing the different positions of the government and the opposition expressed in the parliamentary discussion, reference was made to the method of functional analysis of political discourse developed by William Benoit (2007; 2014; 1999; Benoit, Blaney, & Pier, 1998), as well as the analysis of thematic frameworks in terms of Shanto Iyengar (1990; 1994; 1996; Maćkiewicz, 2020, p. 622), while ancillary consideration was given to John Rupert Firth’s (1934; 1950) findings on the relationship between language and situational context – the so-called situational context theory, also known more generally as contextual theory of meaning (Thomas, 2011)³.

In the Polish scientific literature, a few media studies refer to W. Benoit’s method in the analysis of political discourse (Mazur & Konieczny, 2012; Konieczny, 2013; Franczak, 2017). In contrast, Sh. Iyengar’s method has not yet been used in empirical research from the field of political communication in Poland.

William Benoit notes that statements made by participants in political discourse carry out one of three basic functions: praise (acclaims), attack (attacks) and defense (defences) (Benoit, Blaney, & Pier, 1998; Benoit & Harthcock, 1999). The acclaim function is expressed in statements emphasizing the virtues of a politician, which may refer to his character or political principals. The function of attack manifests itself in criticizing a political opponent, highlighting his undesirable attributes or mistakes made, with the aim of reducing his attractiveness to the public, especially voters. The momentousness of the third function is due to the possibility of preventing political losses caused by the attack and regaining, in part or in whole, the lost support of voters (Benoit, 2007, pp. 36-37; Benoit, 2014, pp. 13-39).

³ According to Robert Henry Robins (1961, p. 194), Firth’s theory demonstrates a refusal to separate language from its relationship to other spheres of human life and culture. Thus, for Firth, the analysis of meaning was the center of the study of language as a meaningful activity. Firth is among the forerunners of the functional approach, who opposed the vision of language as “a tool for the pure transmission of information, ignoring such aspects of the process as the intentions and reactions of interlocutors” (Kruk-Junger, 2013, p. 31). Moreover, he was “an antimentalist, rejecting the langue – parole distinction, because language was not an autonomous entity for him. Hence, it should not be studied as a mental system. For the British linguist, language was a set of utterance events created by speakers, a style of action, a way of doing things […] Utterances appearing in real contexts are indivisibly connected with physical objects that are present in the process of communication” (Przybyszewski, 2009, p. 80).
Shanto Iyengar, in the theory of frames he developed, identifies two basic types of them: episodic frames and thematic frames. An episodic news frame takes the form of a case study or report focused on an event and presents public issues through specific examples. A thematic news frame, on the other hand, places particular issues in a more general or abstract context (Iyengar, 1994, p. 14; same, 1996, pp. 61-62).

The research sample was purposive in nature. The unit of analysis was the statement of one politician in a specific thematic frame, through which the selected function of political discourse was realized. In the analysis of the parliamentary debate, one dominant thematic frame – program-related, personal or axiological – was assigned to each unit of analysis. The above frameworks emerged from the analysis. The evaluation of the argumentation took into account how the politician’s statements were contextualized.

The article can be seen as an attempt to answer the question about the communication strategy adopted by government and opposition politicians (realization of the praise, attack or defense function), about the framework used (according to Shanto Iyengar’s classification – episodic or thematic), about the validity of taking into account the most relevant contextual determinants of political communication (program-related, personal, axiological framework). The analysis is quantitative and qualitative.

The following research hypotheses were adopted:

- The majority of statements by United Right politicians fulfilled the function of praise, while statements by opposition politicians were dominated by attack (H1);
- the statements of representatives of both the government and the opposition do not note the dominance of any of the distinguished frames (episodic over thematic frame or thematic over episodic frame) (H2);
- the most significant contextual determinant in the statements of politicians, both ruling and opposition, was the personnel frame (H3).

Given the highly polarized political scene, statements by individual United Right politicians were treated as the government’s position.

4 The assumption was that the government coalition would applaud the President’s decree to impose a state of emergency, while the opposition would point out its unjustifiability.
5 Jolanta Maćkiewicz’s (2020) assumption about the consequences of Iyengar’s dichotomous classification was adopted: “exposing the episodic format leads audiences to blame the cause of the trouble on the victims themselves; choosing a thematic format, with social or structural conditions being pointed out, usually involves shifting responsibility to the organization” (p. 622). It was assumed that the “victims” were illegal migrants who were prevented from crossing the EU’s external border by presidential decree. The reference to the episodic frame in the parliamentary debate by the United Right camp signifies an attempt to justify measures to protect Polish citizens from possible threats to their health or life, as well as the state’s obligation to conduct a certain security policy. Theoretically, the episodic frame can also be used by opposition politicians, proving the Morawiecki government’s unfounded fears of migrants from the Middle East, although this is unlikely due to the concordance of opinions among political scientists regarding the crisis under analysis and the actions of the Lukashenko regime. It seems more likely that representatives of the opposition will put other issues not directly related to the EU border crisis on the political agenda, falling within the thematic frame. Factors contextualizing political events can be presented as a reason, justified or unjustified, for imposing a state of emergency, depending on whether they are used by government coalition or opposition politicians.
6 It was assumed that personalization processes, as important factors of information value, play a key role in political debate (Piontek, 2015), while program-related issues are secondary in it (Modrzejewska, 2012, p. 75). Thus, the personal frame was treated as a frame in which the person of the politician, mentioned by name, is highlighted, regardless of his nationality (Polish politicians and foreign politicians).
In order to verify the adopted research hypotheses, a categorization key was constructed, within which the individual characteristics under study allow assessment of the veracity of hypotheses H1-H3.

I. Trait studied: speech functions of government coalition/opposition politicians
Definition of the feature: this is the dominant feature in the unit of analysis, which is a statement by a representative of the United Right/opposition camp, according to the theoretical foundations of functional analysis of political discourse in terms of William Benoit.

Categories within the feature and their definitions:
1. praise – the dominant function in the unit of analysis is to praise the actions of the President of the Republic of Poland and the United Right in connection with the introduction of the state of emergency (e.g., recognition/approval of the President’s decree on the introduction of the state of emergency (hereinafter: the President’s decree), approval of the political actions of the government or uniformed services regarding restrictions in the border area);
2. attack – the dominant function in the unit of analysis is to criticize the actions of the President of the Republic of Poland and the United Right in connection with the imposition of a state of emergency (e.g., criticism of a presidential decree, criticism of the political actions of the government or the uniformed services regarding restrictions in the border area);
3. defense – the predominant function in the unit of analysis is to defend the actions of the President of the Republic and the United Right in connection with challenges to their legitimacy by the opposition (e.g., defense/justification of a presidential decree, defense/justification of political actions by the government or uniformed services regarding restrictions in the border area);
4. other – the unit of analysis is not assigned to any of the above categories, i.e. it does not state praise, criticism or defense of the actions of the President of Poland and the United Right.

II. Trait studied: framing
Feature definition: this is the dominant frame assigned to the unit of analysis, which is a statement by a representative of the United Right or the opposition, according to Shanto Iyengar’s frame theory.

Categories of frameworks and their definitions:
1. supportive episodic – the unit of analysis shows the politician’s use of the episodic frame to express approval of the presidential decree;
2. episodic contesting – the unit of analysis shows the politician’s use of the episodic frame to express criticism of the presidential decree;
3. thematic supportive – the unit of analysis shows the politician’s use of the thematic frame to express approval of the presidential decree;
4. thematic contesting – the unit of analysis shows the politician’s use of the thematic frame to express criticism of the presidential decree;
5. other – it is difficult to identify one dominant frame in the analyzed unit.
III. Feature studied: context
Feature definition: the dominant contextual conditions of political communication present in the unit of analysis (in the statements of either government coalition politicians or opposition representatives).

Categories of frameworks and their definitions:
1. program-related – the dominant context is the description of the presidential decree and its consequences;
2. personal – the unit of analysis is dominated by references to specific politicians, having to do with the introduction of the state of emergency;
3. axiological – the unit of analysis is dominated by the ethical evaluation of the actions of the government and the President of Poland in connection with the imposition of a state of emergency;
4. other – it is difficult to identify one dominant context in the unit of analysis.

Results of quantitative analysis
A total of 93 units of analysis were extracted from the research material: 25 statements by representatives of the government coalition and 68 statements by representatives of the opposition.

Table 1. Speech functions (in terms of W. Benoit) of government coalition and opposition politicians – number of units of analysis assigned to each category.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>feature/category under study</th>
<th>praise</th>
<th>attack</th>
<th>defense</th>
<th>other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>speech functions in government coalition politicians</td>
<td>11 (11,83)</td>
<td>3 (3,23)</td>
<td>10 (10,75)</td>
<td>1 (1,07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>speech functions in opposition politicians</td>
<td>7 (7,53)</td>
<td>54 (58,06)</td>
<td>1 (1,07)</td>
<td>6 (6,46)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>18 (19,36)</td>
<td>57 (61,29)</td>
<td>11 (11,82)</td>
<td>7 (7,53)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: own study.

Table 2. Framing (in Sh. Iyengar terms) in the statements of politicians of the government coalition and the opposition – the number of units of analysis assigned to a category.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>feature/category under study</th>
<th>episodic supportive</th>
<th>episodic contesting</th>
<th>thematic supporting</th>
<th>thematic contesting</th>
<th>other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>framework at the government coalition politicians</td>
<td>9 (9,67)</td>
<td>0 (0,0)</td>
<td>15 (16,12)</td>
<td>0 (0,0)</td>
<td>1 (1,07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>framework in opposition politicians</td>
<td>5 (5,38)</td>
<td>30 (32,26)</td>
<td>3 (3,23)</td>
<td>25 (26,89)</td>
<td>5 (5,38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>14 (15,05)</td>
<td>30 (32,26)</td>
<td>18 (19,35)</td>
<td>25 (26,89)</td>
<td>6 (6,45)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: own study.

7 The percentage, indicated in parentheses and expressed in percentage points, of analysis units assigned to each category in the studied trait was obtained by dividing the number of such units by the total number of analysis units (N=93). The result thus obtained was multiplied by 100. The results in Tables 2 and 3 were obtained by analogous means.
The results of the quantitative analysis prove the truth of the first hypothesis. The highest number of units of analysis fulfilling the function of praise was recorded in the statements of politicians of the United Right (11), while the function of attack dominated in the statements of opposition politicians (54 units).

As for the second characteristic studied, the number of units of analysis was similar for the episodic (44) and thematic (43) categories, with statements by government coalition politicians being almost exclusively supportive, and statements by opposition politicians being almost exclusively contesting. Thus, the veracity of hypothesis two was proven.

The analysis also proved the truth of the third hypothesis – the personal frame was the most significant contextual determinant in the statements of politicians, both ruling and opposition.

Results of qualitative analysis
The statements of right-wing politicians were aimed at legitimizing the President of Poland’s decision to impose a state of emergency. The arguments of the government coalition politicians can be read, on the one hand, as a form of praise-approval of Andrzej Duda’s initiative; on the other hand, as an attempt to highlight, in the form of defense, the unreasonableness of the opposition’s arguments.

The most important and frequent statements aimed at legitimizing the President’s decisions, which essentially fulfill the functions of praise and defense and fall within the program framework, can be classified into several groups. First, there are statements indicating the geopolitical context. Paweł Soloch, Secretary of State in the Office of the President of the Republic of Poland, stated that:

“The primary reason for this regulation is the particular security threat on the Polish-Belarusian border, caused primarily by the policy of the Belarusian state. We are dealing with a migration crisis. From our assessments it follows, and we have this conviction, that the current situation unfortunately has a very high potential for escalation in an unfavorable direction. This is related to information that relates to the expansion by Belarusian state structures of the routes for the transfer of migrants primarily from Middle Eastern countries, as well as estimates of the number of migrants currently residing in Belarus and the potential for growth in terms of this situation” (“Stenographic Report…”, 2021, p. 104).
Mateusz Morawiecki also assessed the Belarusian attitude in the category of political provocation:

“This political provocation is about an attempt to push thousands, tens of thousands of people across the Polish border illegally – as more than 10,000 illegal migrants have already been brought into Belarus – who, by the way, according to international law, if they wanted to apply for refugee status, they should do so in the first country that is a signatory to the Geneva Convention precisely in the area of refugee rights, namely Belarus” (ibid., p. 107).

Second, statements by United Right politicians referred to the aggressive nature of the Zapad 2021 exercises\(^8\) and the associated ability to provoke. As Soloch noted:

“The culmination of these exercises will be between September 10 and 16. […] Both Polish and allied services have had information for a long time indicating that the scenarios for these exercises also include destabilization of the situation on our eastern border. In a way, we are dealing with this. This could have security implications not only for our country, but also for the entire region and, by extension, Europe. We see a correlation between the migration crisis and the Zapad exercises. Given the fact that both Belarus and Russia have considerable potential when it comes to escalation – not just migration pressure, but also the capacity for other types of provocations – one can risk the thesis that the level of threat to order at our eastern border may now be much greater, the greatest since the collapse of the Soviet Union. In recent weeks, we have seen an escalation of negative incidents: from unauthorized interventions at the border through verbal aggression against border guards, soldiers, to the destruction of border infrastructure or threats to illegally cross the state border” (ibid., pp. 105-106).

Prime Minister Morawiecki used a similar type of narrative:

“In a few days, on Friday, Your Honor, the Zapad 2021 exercises will begin. According to available information, these are the first exercises in 40 years, and are expected to involve the majority of troops: more than 200,000 – according to available information, I am told. This means that it is very easy to provoke. This means that just across our border, dozens, maybe even a dozen kilometers away, large-scale exercises will be conducted. How easy then – just imagine – for provocation. This pattern of activities, which has been dissected into roles, an attack on the Baltic States, an attack on the Republic, is something without precedent. It is not only a diplomatic conflict, it is an attempt to violate the integrity of the Polish state, the sovereignty of our borders, and we cannot allow it. And we will not allow it” (ibid., p. 107).

Mariusz Kamiński, Minister of Internal Affairs and Administration, noted that:

“an important element, officially, of the Zapad scenario is the activities of Belarusian and Russian special forces over our border. They are to practice fighting sabotage groups crossing from Polish territory into Belarus” (ibid., p. 111).

Third, the topic of the threat of the migrant crisis was also taken up by EU and NATO institutions and appeared in statements by EU leaders. Paweł Soloch, previously quoted, stated:

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\(^8\) Zapad 2021 was a joint exercise conducted by the armed forces of Belarus and Russia in September 2021; it was intended to serve the two countries’ allied military cooperation. Approximately 150,000 troops took part in the military maneuvers, which immediately preceded Russia’s invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022 (Banasik, 2022; Chassillan, 2022).
“I would like to remind you of the declarations and statements made by the presidents of Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia on August 23, speaking of a politically orchestrated hybrid operation. [...] I would also point out that the seriousness of the threats posed by the migration crisis is evidenced, among other things, by the debate on the situation on the European Union’s external border with Belarus and the use of the ongoing humanitarian crisis as a hybrid war against the European Union and member states. This debate took place on September 2 within the Foreign Affairs Committee of the European Parliament. We also have communications from the European Commission and the position of NATO Headquarters on this issue” (ibid., p. 105).

In turn, the Minister of Interior and Administration said:

“The entire European Union is keeping its fingers crossed for us, and the European Commission, and our friends from the national border guards. We are in touch with them, as we are in touch every day, and at the political level – the president, the prime minister, myself as interior minister – and at the organizational level – the heads of the services – with our Lithuanian neighbors, with our Latvian friends” (ibid., p. 110).

Law and Justice MP Zdzisław Sipiera noted the coordination between the Polish government and the European Commission:

“The European Commission supports the actions of the Polish government. Pay attention to this and, as the opposition, draw conclusions from it” (ibid., p. 112).

Fourth, the goals that guided President Duda in issuing the decree were indicated. As Paweł Soloch argued:

“The first goal was to provide conditions for the services and all structures responsible for protecting the state border. The second was to secure citizens and increase their sense of security. And, finally, the third condition was to introduce such solutions that would meet these first two conditions, but that at the same time would be as little as possible affected by the citizens” (ibid., pp. 105-106).

Coalition government politicians also referred to the personnel frame. As an example, we can point to Mateusz Morawiecki’s speech, in which he criticized the attitude of Bartosz Kramek of the Open Dialog Foundation on the Polish-Belarusian border, and Władysław Frasyniuk, who described the actions of Polish soldiers as “arrogance, rudeness and boorishness,” and themselves as a “pack of dogs” and “trash.”

“What the representatives of the Civic Platform, Mr. Frasyniuk or Mr. Kramek, who work very closely with them, have done is a festival of embarrassment. It is, in fact, a great shame. I am not surprised that you are now burying your heads, that you are sorry for this, but you should apologize loudly” (ibid., p. 107).

Minister Kamiński’s speech noted clear references to Alexander Lukashenko and the leaders of the Polish national minority, Andżelika Borys and Andrzej Poczobut:

“We can handle Lukashenko, but you don’t disturb us [...] The fact that, in a completely artificial and cynical way, Lukashenko’s neighboring regime takes advantage of the naivety of many people in the world [...] Lukashenko has it in his mind, Lukashenko would like a repeat of such events. He wants to create another great migration route in Northeastern Europe [...] Prisons in Belarus are filled with political prisoners. Our compatriots, leaders of the Polish national minority: Ms. Andżelika Borys, Mr. Andrzej Poczobut, are sitting in prisons” (ibid., p. 109).

The axiological frame, however, included statements by United Right politicians referring to the security of Polish borders, patriotism, responsibility, solidarity, among others.
Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki: “The borders of the Polish state are something that should be guarded with the utmost care, diligence by all Poles, by all functionaries. And today, in today’s circumstances, let the care for these borders also be a testament to the solidarity and responsibility of the entire Sejm” (ibid., p. 108).

Minister Mariusz Kamiński: “This is why it is so important that the Polish border is the border of a sovereign state and a sovereign nation, which no one will cynically smash. Its integrity is a sacred matter, which is why we will firmly defend international law and the right to sovereign respect for the integrity of our state border” (ibid., p. 109);

“That is why we must have for this time, for September, a free 3-kilometer strip around the border, where only our soldiers, our border guards, our policemen are operating. This is the security of Poland, this is the security of our citizens, and above all those who live there, in those hitherto quiet and peaceful towns on the border with Belarus” (ibid., p. 111).

MP Andrzej Sipiera: “Every country must defend its borders. As long as Law and Justice is in power, security is number one. This is something we will absolutely not let go of. That’s why there had to be such an operation, there had to be an intensification of these operations to ensure precisely this security […] Ladies and gentlemen, you can say what you like, but this is complete irresponsibility. This is not a dispute over who will win the elections. This is a matter of Polish border security” (ibid., p. 112).

Prime Minister Morawiecki called the attitude of opposing concern for the security of Poland’s borders a national betrayal:

“Today, on this day of trial, I very much ask the High Chamber to rise above political divisions, above what in recent weeks – one can infer so – has indeed led to disagreements, but also to tensions, to disputes, often provoked by some of your allies, acolytes. However, we propose to put all this aside for a closed chapter of history, an infamous chapter of last week’s history. We propose that you all support this decision to impose a state of emergency. By doing so, we will be able to ensure better security for our officers, greater comfort for those who defend our border. And at the same time, we will be able to protect against illegal immigration, and we will not be playing in that orchestra in which conductors in Minsk and Moscow rejoice if there is a quarrel in our parliament around this topic. In the past, ladies and gentlemen, such actions were treated as national treason” (ibid., p. 108).

Politicians of the “good change” camp during the 36th session of the Sejm appealed to the opposition to be responsible and give support to the decree of the President of the Republic of Poland on the introduction of a state of emergency. The words of MP Sipiera can be cited as an example:

“We appeal to politicians and journalists not to use the dramatic situation on the border with Belarus to stir up public emotions. If the opposition and the media cooperating with it continue to support the Belarusian regime, there will be more and more of these unfortunate people at the border. We expect more responsibility from the opposition” (ibid., pp. 112-113).

As for the attitude of the opposition deputies, their statements basically fulfilled the function of attack and referred to the following program-related issues:

− deprivation of income for border belt residents due to the introduction of a state of emergency, such as:

“Along with the presidential decree that is on the table, a law that would provide a pro-economic shield for those who are locked out of the area under this state of emergency, regardless of what we
think of it, should come to the High Chamber. The government must not forget that people come first, and the Law and Justice government today forgot that there are people who are closed there who come first, forgot about those people who make their living from tourism. We have canceled reservations, canceled tours, closed gastronomy. You have deprived the residents of their income and left them alone with this problem today” (MP Mirosław Suchoń, ibid., p. 103);

- the lack on the part of those in power to justify the introduction of a state of emergency in accordance with the provisions of the Polish Constitution. For example, MP Tomasz Siemoniak referred to the authority of Judge Wojciech Hermeliński, according to whom, “there is no mention in the rationale [of the decree imposing the state of emergency] that the threat could not be removed by using constitutional means, and then a state of emergency is imposed” (ibid., p. 113);

- the government’s inadequate information policy on the border crisis. The issue was raised by MP Hanna Gill-Piątek, MP Siemoniak and MP Jarosław Gowin, among others: “You have decided on a state of emergency, which deprives Poles of the right to reliable information about what is happening at the border, and security does not improve, instead it increases the temperature of the Polish-Polish war” (ibid., p. 119);

“In essence, the only special tool of the authority under the decree is to block the area near the border to media representatives – unprecedented and absurd, because journalists report on war conflicts and other dramatic events. Cutting them off from this is cutting the public off from reliable information. […] Withholding information about what is really going on is a fatal practice that shatters the unified attitude of Polish politics toward threats. […] The government’s information policy on the border crisis is fatal” (ibid., p. 113);

“Yes, Poles deserve reliable information, and this reliable information is no threat to state security” (ibid., p. 120);

- Poland’s lack of cooperation with EU and NATO structures. This accusation was raised against the government coalition by, among others, MP Siemoniak: “It is incomprehensible why we do not reach out to NATO’s hybrid threat team. Our allies also need to be included in this common problem. It was obvious for a long time that this crisis would affect Poland as well. The question: what were the government and its services doing during this time?” (ibid., p. 114);

- restricting some civil rights, introducing censorship, limiting the right of access to information. Among others, MP Krzysztof Gawkowski spoke about this: “For the first time in the history of free and democratic Poland, you have decided to restrict some civil rights, introduce censorship and limit the right of Polish women and men to access information. This is the key question, because it concerns the real reasons for the introduction of the state of emergency” (ibid., p. 114).

Accusations against such United Right politicians as Minister Kamiński, President Duda, President Kaczyński, Prime Minister Morawiecki were present in the opposition narrative (ibid., pp. 114-115, 117, 119-120). It is also worth noting the statements of Krzysztof Bosak (p. 118) and Artur Dziambor (pp. 118-119) from the Confederation, Jarosław Sachajko from the Kukiz’15 parliamentary club (p. 121) or non-aligned MP Łukasz Mejza (ibid., pp. 122-123), supporting the President of Poland’s rationale.
Conclusions
The media studies conducted proved the truth of the formulated hypotheses. In the analyzed parliamentary debate on the presidential decree on the introduction of the state of emergency, the majority of statements by politicians of the United Right expressed praise, while the opposition politicians presented attack. The research sample recorded statements by representatives of the government coalition and the opposition classifying themselves in both episodic and thematic frames, and found no dominance of either frame. The most significant contextual frame in the statements of both ruling and opposition politicians was the personal frame. This is consistent with the results of previous research in the area of information selection criteria and the relevance of personalization as an important tool of political communication (Leśniczak, 2022). Media scholars expose an increase in media interest in individual politicians, while a decrease in collective entities (Piontek, 2020; Mazur, 2022). Politicians, knowing the peculiarities of the processes of mediatization of politics, consciously refer to the profiles of specific individuals so as to increase the likelihood of media interest in their own public speech (Strömbäck, 2008). This is how one would justify the dominance of the personal frame in the research material.

The political dispute over the legitimacy of the state of emergency highlighted the legal consequences of the emergency legal regime (including partial restriction of human and civil liberties and rights). The debate noted the reference to constitutional provisions, as well as to legal authorities, such as Judge Hermeliński.

The high percentage, more than 58 percent, of statements by opposition politicians in which the attack function dominated can be explained by their communication and political strategy. This fact is confirmed by the way in which political scientists note the way in which opposition groups construct their relations with the government coalition, in which conflict dominates over consensus – i.e. “being in opposition to PiS” or “being anti-PiS” (Marzęcki, 2012, p. 104; Raciborski, 2020).

In summary, the parliamentary debate on the presidential decree of September 6, 2021 on the introduction of a state of emergency on the border with Belarus is part of the deep polarization of the political scene in Poland at the beginning of the third decade of the 21st century. The discourse analysis confirmed the presence of a party duopoly on the Polish political scene. The conducted study from the area of political communication showed the possibility of a complementary treatment of functional analysis of political discourse and analysis of the thematic framework, taking into account the context of the statements.

Bibliography


The parliamentary debate on the introduction of a state of emergency on the border…


