

Protecting Women, Saving Europe: Polish Populist Radical Right Parties, Women MEPs and the Rise of Eastern Femonationalism

Aleksandra Polak

Faculty of Political Science and International Studies

University of Warsaw, Warsaw, Poland

aleksandra.polak@uw.edu.pl

ORCID: 0000-0003-0970-3899

Abstract

Despite the increasing political salience of migration and anti-gender backlash in Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries, femonationalism – the use of gender equality and feminist rhetoric by populist radical right parties (PRRPs) to advance anti-immigration and nationalist politics (Farris 2017) – has not been yet studied in the context of the region. Against this background, I conduct critical frame analysis of European Parliament (EP) plenary debates to examine the ways in which women MEPs from two Polish PRRPs, Law and Justice and the Confederation, construct meanings behind the notions of gender equality and women's interests and use femonationalist rhetoric. On this basis, I propose the concept of Eastern femonationalism. It is grounded in claims of moral and religious superiority of CEE over both the Muslim world and Western Europe. The West and the EU are portrayed as imposing secular values and moral depravity, and EU migration policies as threatening women's safety.

Word count: 7387 (without references)

Key words: anti-gender; Central and Eastern Europe; European Parliament; femonationalism; gender equality; populist radical right

Competing Interests: The author declares no competing interests.

I. INTRODUCTION

Femonationalism (short of “feminist and femocratic nationalism”) is a term coined by Sara Farris to describe the attempts of western European right-wing parties to advance xenophobic, racist and anti-immigration politics through the veneer of postulating gender equality (Farris 2017; Farris and Rottenberg 2017, 8). According to Farris, “despite their lack of concern with elaborating concrete policies of gender equality and their masculinist political style, these [contemporary European nationalist right-wing] parties have increasingly advanced their anti-Islam agendas in the name of women’s rights” (Farris, 2017, p. 1). Femonationalist rhetoric has particularly come to light after the stark success of populist radical right (PRR) parties in the 2014 European Parliament (EP) elections. Farris (2017) developed her framework based on the analysis of three PRR Western European parties: the French National Front (now the National Rally, *Rassemblement national*), the Dutch Party for Freedom (*Partij voor de Vrijheid*, PVV) and the Italian Northern League (*Lega Nord*, now *Lega*). Scholarly work on the interaction between women’s rights and anti-immigration rhetoric was furthered in the context of other parties and politicians, in particular the Brothers of Italy and its leader Georgia Meloni (Arfini et al. 2019; Giorgi et al. 2023; Indelicato and Magalhães Lopes 2024; Lavizzari 2024).

On the other hand, femonationalist discourses in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) have not yet received scholarly attention. Poland, the largest of the CEE European Union Member States, provides a particularly interesting background for a case study. The country’s communist heritage and the strong role of the Catholic Church have concurrently influenced Poles’ perception of women’s societal roles, emancipation, and feminism (Gwiazda 2021). What is more, in the recent years, Poland has been one of the main centres of anti-gender mobilization included opposition to gender equality legislation, sex education, sexual and reproductive rights, and to the use of the term “gender” in policy documents and public discourse (Gaweda 2017; Graff 2014; Graff and Korolczuk 2021; Korolczuk 2020; Korolczuk and Graff 2018; Kuhar and Paternotte 2017). Poland has also been one of the CEE countries in which anti-immigration and Eurosceptic sentiments have been on the rise following the 2015 European refugee crisis

(Krzyżanowski 2018; Polak et al. 2023). These sentiments were further exacerbated by the Poland-Belarus border crisis that started in 2021.

Against this backdrop, I examine the interventions of women Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) from two Polish populist radical right parties (PRRPs): the Law and Justice party (*Prawo and Sprawiedliwość*, PiS) and the Confederation Freedom and Independence (*Konfederacja*), in 32 EP debates during the 9th (2019-2024) and 10th (2024-2029) parliamentary terms. I explore the ways in which conservative Polish women MEPs understand and frame their role in the EP as representatives of women's interests. I compare discursive frames constructed by them to the Western femonationalist discourse as described by Farris (2017). EP plenary debates provide an important source material for analysing femonationalist discourse. With the rise of PRR political groups within the EP and increasing tensions between Western ("old") and CEE ("new") Member States, the EP has become an arena of clashes and political struggles around women's rights and gender equality policies, but also around European migration policy (Ahrens et al. 2022; Berthet 2022b; 2022a; Kantola and Lombardo 2021; 2024).

Based on my analysis, I propose the concept of *Eastern femonationalism*, which, just as femonationalist discourses in Western Europe, portrays male, Middle East migrants as a threat to women's freedom and safety. At the same time, Eastern femonationalism diverges substantially from its Western counterpart in several aspects. According to Farris, femonationalism is underpinned by "a common conviction regarding the supremacy of the West over the Rest" (Farris 2017, 11). Polish femonationalism is based on claims of civilisational, religious and moral supremacy over both the Muslim world and Western Europe. Secondly, in femonationalist discourse described by Farris, the Muslim culture was juxtaposed with the Western model of gender relations and women's emancipation; the Western model was presented as superior. Muslim immigrants were presented as a threat to achievements of second-wave feminism by PRR leaders such as Geert Wilders in the Netherlands. Polish PRR MEPs, on the contrary, denounce feminism and present their own set of women's interests, grounded in more traditional, conservative and Catholic values and family model characteristic for CEE societies. Femonationalist rhetoric in CEE, while adopting several discursive frames from Western European RRP parties, has its own, "Eastern" dimension, connected to the region's socio-

political post-communist heritage, religious background, and more conservative worldview.

II. THEORY

Populist radical right parties and gender. Populist radical rights parties (PRRPs) combine nativism, authoritarianism, and anti-elitism and focus on issues including nationalism, immigration, and the concept of the “other” (Mudde 2007; Mudde and Kaltwasser 2015). Their political strategies are often based in identity politics, ingroup and outgroup (“us” versus “them”) differentiation, as well as in morality politics arising from a Manichaeian perception of the struggle between the good and the evil in the world (Mudde 2007, 63). Over the last decades, PRRPs moved from fringe parties to mainstream politics in Western Europe. More recently, they have also been on the rise in the Central and Eastern Europe.

PRRPs have been traditionally perceived as male-dominated, both in terms of leadership and electorate. They have been described as *Männerparteien*: “political parties of men, by men, and for men” (Snipes and Mudde 2020, 439). They manifested fairly conservative views on family, gender roles and values, or even sexist and misogynistic political stances (Chueri and Damerow 2023; Erzeel and Rashkova 2017; Snipes and Mudde 2020). Researchers examined the phenomenon of the “Radical Right Gender Gap”: women vote for radical right parties substantially less frequently than men (Givens 2004). There has been a number of hypotheses about why such a gap exists, including diverging approaches to immigration, different socio-economic situations, and different socialization of women and men. However, a consensus on the matter has not been reached (Chueri and Damerow 2023; Erzeel and Rashkova 2017; Givens 2004; Hartevelde et al. 2015; Mayer 2022; Spierings and Zaslove 2017).

In the recent years, PRRPs made attempts to bridge the Radical Right Gender Gap and attract more female voters employing a two-fold strategy: appointing more female leaders and devoting more attention to women’s issues, even if at the same time maintaining the family-centred approach (Chueri and Damerow 2023). By giving more visibility to women within their ranks and to women’s issues, PRR parties attempted to “pinkwash” their masculinist, aggressive appearances that may have been discouraging for female electorates (Ben-Shitrit et al. 2022). Moreover, PRRPs embraced to some extent the issue of gender equality – however, usually only in the context of defending the status quo of

women's emancipation against the threat of the "Islamisation" of Europe (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2015). Erzeel and Rashkova remark that "[a] clear contrast seems to emerge between radical right parties' conservative gender stance in relation to moral issues and their emphasis on gender equality in their anti-immigration discourse" (Erzeel and Rashkova 2017, 815). Having examined PRR MEPs' interventions in EP plenary debates on gender equality during the 2014-2019 term, Kantola and Lombardo (2021) found that the concept of gender equality was strategically bent towards Islamophobia and against EU migration policies. According to their analysis, "Islamophobic language [was] used to construct an <<other>> hostile to gender equality, to claim the EU fails to protect its women from this threat" (Kantola and Lombardo 2021, 574).

Anti-gender mobilisations and the moral geography of anti-genderism. Anti-gender movements are conservative and fundamentalist mobilisations against gender equality policies, sexual and reproductive health and rights, and LGBTQ rights, which are perceived as a threat to traditional values and termed as "genderism", "gender theory", or "gender ideology" (Kováts 2018). Scholars described the notion of gender ideology as "an empty and adaptable signifier, encompassing a broad range of demands such as the right to abortion, sexual orientation and gender identity, to diverse families, education in gender and sexuality, HIV prevention and sex work, a basic basket that can be easily adjusted to the conditions of each context" (Corrêa 2017). In post-communist countries, gender ideology is often equated with "new Marxism" (Paternotte and Kuhar 2018).

Anti-gender backlash is a global phenomenon. In the European Union, it included Member States as diverse as Austria, Croatia, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Slovenia, and Slovakia (Kováts 2018; Paternotte and Kuhar 2018). Paternotte and Kuhar (2018) argued that "the East-West divide does not offer a particularly useful analytical lens" for understanding anti-gender mobilisation (Paternotte and Kuhar 2018, 8). Graff and Korolczuk (2022), on the other hand, described the existence of "an imagined moral geography of anti-genderism, which is based on assigning Central and Eastern Europe a special position vis-à-vis the West" (Graff and Korolczuk, 2022, p.106). In such discourse, the West is presented as the source of moral degeneration. International organisations, including the European Union, are depicted as propagators of gender ideology and of the "ideological colonization". Central and Eastern European countries are portrayed as

defenders of the conservative world and potential saviours of the West (Graff and Korolczuk 2021; Korolczuk and Graff 2018).

In Poland, anti-gender campaigners strived “to protect the Polish family (especially children) against feminists and the <<homosexual lobby>>, and to defend authentic Polish cultural values (which are equated with Catholic values) against the foreign influence of the corrupt West and liberal European Union, which has supposedly replaced the USSR as Poland’s <<colonizer>>” (Graff and Korolczuk 2017, 175). Polish PRR politicians quickly adapted anti-gender backlash for their own needs, claiming that the gender ideology is being imposed on Poland by the EU and its Western Member States. Mateusz Morawiecki, Poland’s Prime Minister heading the Law and Justice (PiS) government from 2017 to 2023, revealed in an interview in December 2017 that he had a dream to “rechristen Europe”. He also declared that his government would defend Poland’s “uniqueness in Europe that is unfortunately secularising and sinking into ever deeper consumerism, lacking principles and values” (Orłowski 2017).

Conservative women as gender-conscious actors. Politics and gender scholars have long explored what makes for “good” women’s substantive representation, i.e. good representation of women’s issues, interests, needs and wants. The earlier research often equated women’s interests with feminist postulates and over-emphasised the focus on left-wing women representatives (Campbell and Childs 2015). Researchers later established that the situation is much more complex, with diverse range of understandings of women’s interests, including conservative and anti-feminist voices (Campbell and Childs 2015; Celis and Childs 2012), and that “as long as there have been feminist women’s movements, there have been conservative women contesting them” (Schreiber 2014, 276). Different approaches to the representation of women and different claims that conservative politicians make on behalf of women challenge the assumption of a universal and feminist set of women’s interests. The political involvement of conservative women allows those with conservative views, whether male or female, to argue that feminists do not speak for all women and that conservative politician can welcome and represent women (Schreiber 2008; 2018).

Even when articulating anti-feminist postulates, conservative representatives can make explicitly gendered claims and assert to be speaking on behalf of women and their interests (Celis and Childs 2014). There are considerable disagreements among women

politicians on a number of key women's issues. These include abortion and reproductive rights, prostitution and sex work, pornography and censorship, the wearing of the face veil, positive discrimination, the status and financial benefits of marriage, and sexuality and transgender rights (Celis and Childs 2018). More recently, the rise of right-wing female politicians such as Marine Le Pen in France or Georgia Meloni in Italy drew even more attention to the role of conservative women as gender-conscious political actors that speak for women and strategically use their womanhood and motherhood to gain electoral support (Colella 2021; Geva 2020; Giorgi et al. 2023; Indelicato and Magalhães Lopes 2024; Lavizzari 2024; Schreiber 2018; Shurts 2024).

III. CASE SELECTION, DATA AND METHODS

Case selection. In this article, I examine the EP plenary interventions of women MEPs from two Polish PRRPs: Law and Justice (PiS) and Confederation (Konfederacja). PiS was established in 2001 by twin brothers Jarosław and Lech Kaczyński. Initially, the party positioned itself as a classical conservative and soft-Eurosceptic party. However, in the years that followed, PiS shifted its rhetoric towards a radical, populist and Eurosceptic discourse and built close ties with the Catholic Church (Gwiazda 2023; Markowski 2008; Polak et al. 2023). PiS headed the coalition government from 2005 to 2007 and was back in power from 2015 to 2023. Since 2012, PiS has been a proponent of anti-gender mobilization in Poland, hostile towards the “gender-ideology” and reluctant to implement feminist policies (Gwiazda, 2021b; Gaweda et al, 2022). Under PiS's rule from 2015 to 2023, the civic space was curtailed, leading to the exclusion of progressive and feminist groups from public consultation, defunding pro-gender and feminist NGOs, and limiting gender equality organizations (Gwiazda 2024). In 2019, PiS made a bid to appeal to a conservative female electorate and conservative women's voices within the PiS party became substantially more present than before. Policies aimed at eliminating the gender pay gap and reconciling work with family life, only briefly mentioned before, were mainstreamed in 2019 manifesto (Gwiazda, 2021b). In October 2020, Poland's Constitutional Tribunal, by then politicized and subordinated to PiS, adopted an extremely polarising decision to further restraint the already restrictive abortion law in Poland (Śledzińska-Simon and Wójcik 2024). The decision brought about a wave of mass protests. It has also been a subject of several plenary debates in the European Parliament.

The Confederation Liberty and Independence (Konfederacja Wolność i Niepodległość, commonly shortened to Konfederacja) was established in 2018 as a coalition of several far-right, ultra-nationalist, economically libertarian, and hard-Eurosceptic small parties. The party first competed in the May 2019 European Parliament elections, but did not reach the electoral threshold of 5%. A few months later, Konfederacja received almost 7% of votes in the Polish parliamentary elections of October 2019 and entered the Polish lower chamber - the Sejm - with 11 MPs. Following the 2023 elections, there are 18 Konfederacja's MPs in the Sejm. In the 2024 EP elections, Konfederacja won 12% of votes, which translated into 6 MEP seats. Since Konfederacja's inception, both the party's elites and the electorate have been composed predominantly of men. In the 2019 parliamentary elections, Konfederacja gained more than twice as many votes from men than from women (Markowski 2020). Konfederacja's politicians positioned themselves as more radical than PiS on issues concerning migration or gender. They accused PiS of being insufficiently determined in combating the "madness" of gender and LGBT "ideologies" (Korolczuk, 2020), as well as of being "too soft in the defence of Polish interests in Europe" and "too soft in the socio-cultural and nationalist domain" (Markowski 2020, 1519, 1521). The leaders manifested a strong anti-EU, anti-immigration, and anti-feminist stance. The party postulated the total ban on abortion law, Poland's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention, and preservation of family values and traditional gender roles (Gwiazda 2023).

PiS and Konfederacja were the only Polish political parties classified as radical right parties in the Chapel Hill Survey 2024 (Rovny et al. 2025). As demonstrated on Figures 1, 2 and 3, PiS and Konfederacja present the most anti-immigration, nationalist, anti-elitist, right-wing and conservative stances among the main Polish political parties. This supports the rationale behind selecting PiS and Konfederacja for the analysis, based on Mudde's (2007) criteria for PRRPs.

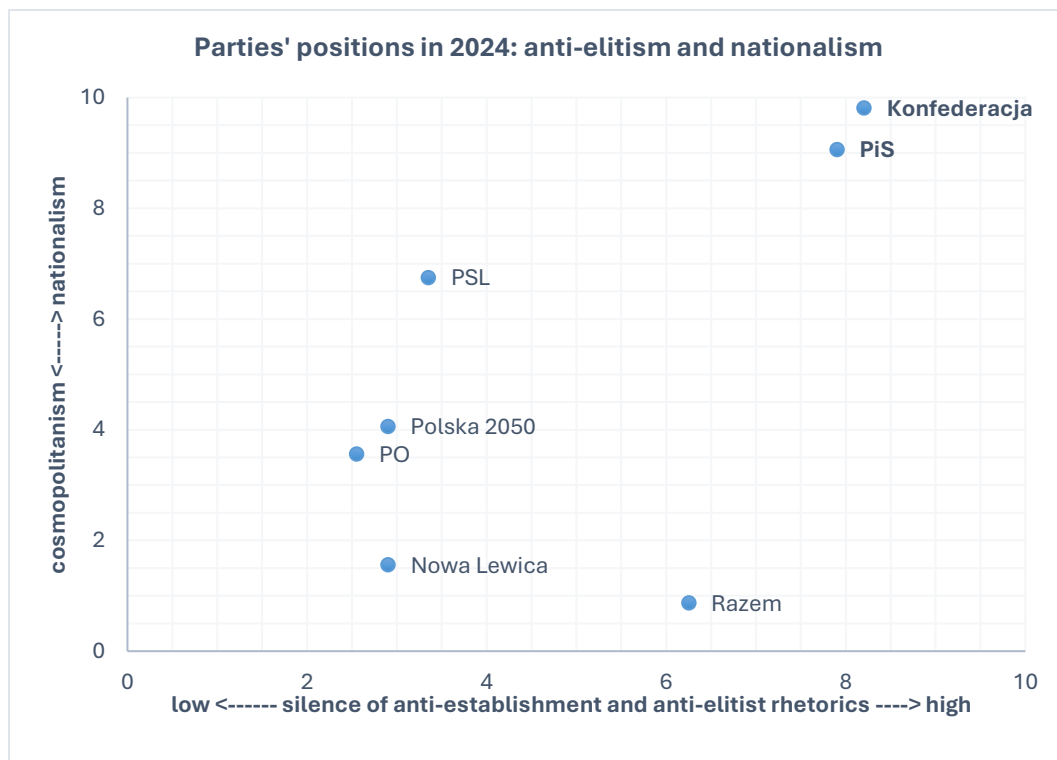


Figure 1 Own elaboration based on the 2024 Chapel Hill Expert Survey (Rovny et al. 2025).

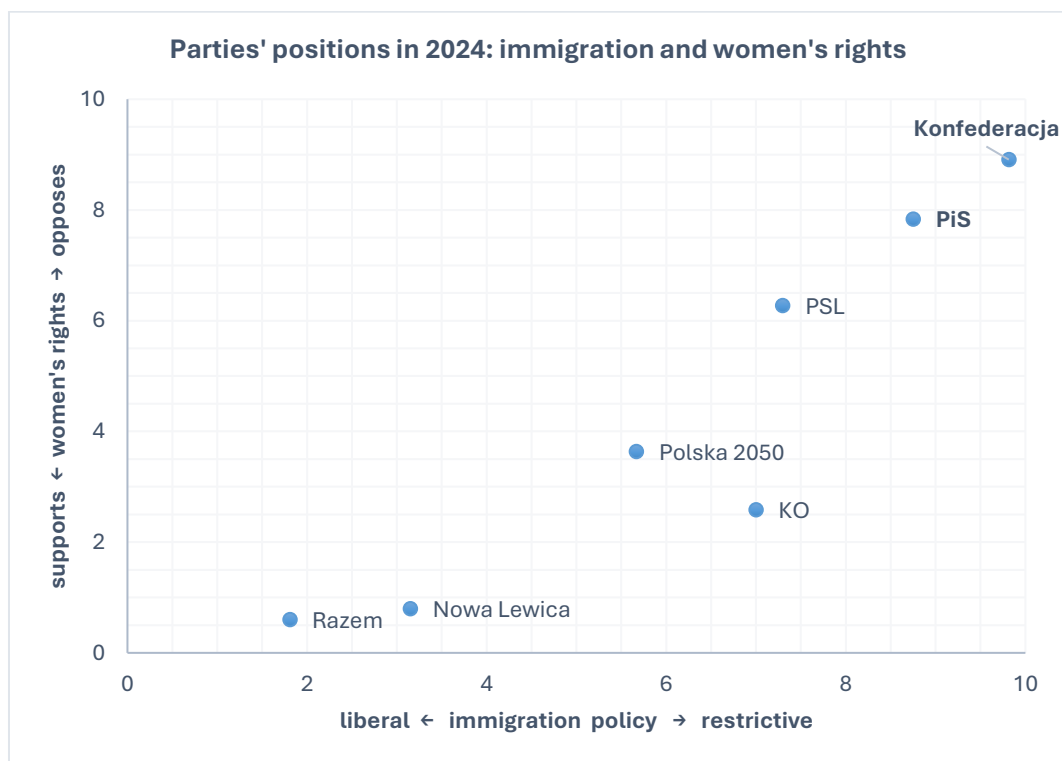


Figure 2 Own elaboration based on the 2024 Chapel Hill Expert Survey (Rovny et al. 2025).

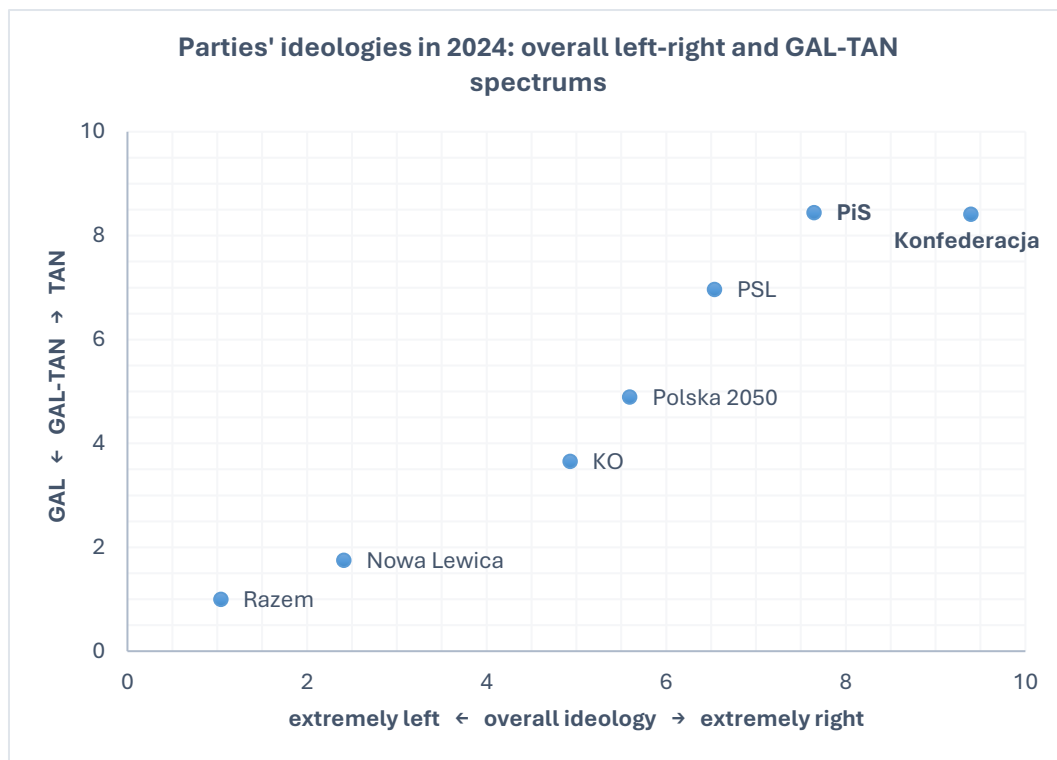


Figure 3 Own elaboration based on the 2024 Chapel Hill Expert Survey (Rovny et al. 2025).

Method. To examine the ways in which women MEPs from PiS and Konfederacja construct meaning behind the notions of gender equality and women's interests, the article employs critical frame analysis (Benford and Snow 2000; Verloo 2005; Verloo and Lombardo 2007). Frames are "action-oriented sets of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate the activities and campaigns" (Benford and Snow 2000, 614), and "specific constructions that give meaning to reality, and shape the understanding of reality" (Verloo 2005, 20). Frames can include metaphors, historical examples, catchphrases, depictions, moral evaluations and proposed solutions (Rawłuszko 2021, 11). They should resonate with the existing cultural narrations, myths and beliefs (Benford and Snow 2000, 622). Critical frame analysis requires "reflection on both the discourses within which actors operate and the active deployment of concepts and categories for political purposes" (Gaweda 2021, 365).

An interpretivist, discursive approach to analysing EP plenary contributions assumes that frames are constructed by actors and that notions such as gender equality are not fixed in one concept. On the contrary, they can be bent to fit various goals of political actors, their meaning can be stretched or reduced by means of intentional or unintentional framing (Verloo 2005; Verloo and Lombardo 2007; Lombardo et al. 2009).

Data. I searched through EP plenary debates interventions for contributions by women MEPs from PiS and Konfederacja. The sampling of quotes followed several prerequisites. In the case of PiS MEPs, only interventions from 9th (2019-2024) and 10th (2024-2029) EP terms were considered. Konfederacja did not have any MEPs during the 9th term, hence only interventions from the 10th term are included. Interventions had to be related to migration, women's interests and/or anti-gender discourses. I selected quotes from 32 debates taking place during the 9th and 10th EP term concerning these topics. I used purposeful sampling, therefore selecting instances that are information rich with a view to answering the research question (Schreier 2018).

The process resulted in the selection of 44 quotations from 12 MEPs. They were coded deductively based on themes of debates and then inductively based on analysis of textual data. 27 of those quotes are directly referenced or quoted in the article. All the quotes with codes and sources are available in the Appendix. Quotes can be identified and cross-referenced by numbers [Q1, Q2, Q3...]. Verbatim reports of all the plenary debates are publicly available at the European Parliament website, therefore anonymising the names of MEPs was not necessary.

IV. REFUGEE CRISIS AND THE RISE OF POLISH FEMONATIONALISM

Before the eruption of the European refugee crisis in 2015, Poland was primarily a country of emigration rather than immigration, with significant numbers of Poles moving abroad, especially after the country's accession to the European Union in 2004. Unlike many other European countries, migration was, for a long time, not a salient or politicized issue in Poland's public debate (Krzyżanowski 2018). The political discourse was relatively neutral, focusing rather on the economic implications of emigration than on immigration (Kosman 2024).

However, the issue of migration gained public, political and media attention when the European migrant crisis began. In 2015, the European Commission proposed a Europe-wide relocation scheme for 120,000 refugees, mainly from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq, who arrived in Greece, Hungary and Italy (European Commission 2015). The relocation scheme aggravated pre-existing political tensions between Western and Central and Eastern European member states, with the Visegrád Group countries (the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia) united in the opposition to the EU proposed migration

policy (Cichocki and Jabkowski 2019). Krastev and Holmes (2018) remarked that “populists in Warsaw and Budapest have turned the refugee crisis in the West into a <<branding opportunity>> for the East” (Krastev and Holmes 2018, 127).

According to the relocation scheme, Poland would have had to accept 5,082 refugees from Greece and Italy. The Civic Platform government, in power in the summer of 2015, initially agreed to participate in the relocation scheme and accommodate refugees over two years. However, the opposition PiS party saw this as an opportunity to capitalize on ambivalent sentiments of Polish society towards Muslim immigrants. PiS used xenophobic, Islamophobic and anti-EU rhetoric to raise anti-refugee emotions and gain support ahead of the October 2015 parliamentary elections, which they won. Poland ultimately declined to participate in the EU relocation scheme (Krzyżanowski 2018; Polak et al. 2023). Once in power, PiS continued to present both the EU policies and the incoming “masses” of refugees as a threat to Poland’s security, identity, civilization and culture, but also to Polish women, with the government implementing securitising and racializing policies (Grabán 2024; Piotrowski 2021; Sygnowska 2022).

Sygnowska (2022) analysed the media and parliamentary appearances of female PiS politicians between 2016 and 2018 and demonstrated that they framed the European migration policies as a menace to Polish women, their safety and their rights. Sygnowska quotes, among others, PiS MP Anna Siarkowska who said that “[i]t is the Islamists who assault women, humiliate them, harass them sexually, rape them” and that “[t]oday it is German, French, and Swedish women who are assaulted. Tomorrow, if Poland does not counteract, it will be Polish women”. MEP Jadwiga Wiśniewska cautioned that “[e]very now and then, we hear about women being attacked by Muslims who came to Europe”. PiS’s MP, spokesperson and later MEP Beata Mazurek warned: “[t]errorist attacks, rise in crime rates, rapes, fear, and sharia zones. These are the consequences of multiculturalism and the open-door policy for the immigrants” (all quoted in: Sygnowska 2022, 30, 32).

According to Sygnowska, the 2015-2018 period marks the development of a political programme based on exclusion and on the notion of Polishness as a superior quality. At the same time, the EU became an enemy that, through liberal migration policies and multiculturalism, but also through support for women’s rights and LGBT rights, wanted to sabotage Polish values, identity and traditions (Sygnowska 2022, 29, 35–36). Along the same lines, Graff and Korolczuk (2021) note that “[t]he trope of the racialized rapist has

also been employed in Poland around 2015 and 2016, but in the absence of actual refugees and minority groups, emphasis was placed on European elites as accomplices in the <<rape of Europe>>” (Graff and Korolczuk 2021, 88).

The situation has changed again in the summer of 2021, when the so-called Poland-Belarus border crisis started. Asylum seekers and migrants from Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria and Africa attempted to cross the border between Belarus and Poland and Belarus and Lithuania every day. They were promised a safe passage to the European Union by Belarusian authorities and assisted by smugglers. In response to the border crisis, the humanitarian actors were mobilized to help the asylum seekers, while the Polish government introduced a state of emergency in the area. Politicians, media and public opinion has become extremely polarized on the issue, with many Poles fearing the influx of migrants. PiS government associated asylum seekers on the border with terrorism and sexual violence, presenting them as a threat to Poland’s security (Grabian 2024). This coincided with the debates about the shape of the New Pact on Migration and Asylum after the European Commission presented their proposal in September 2020.

In the meantime, a new PRR party – Konfederacja – emerged on the Polish political scene and secured 11 seats in the Sejm in the 2019 parliamentary elections. Politicians from both PiS and Confederation firmly opposed the Pact, claiming that the migration policy proposed in the document was not restrictive enough. One of the sites of the contestation of the Pact on Migration and of migration policies of Western European Member States by Polish PRR parties was the European Parliament. The 2024 EP elections marked the first time that Konfederacja entered the EP. Out of six MEP seats gained by the party, two were won by women: Ewa Zajączkowska-Hernik and Anna Bryłka. Already during one of the first debates of the newly elected EP in July 2024, Ewa Zajączkowska-Hernik sparked controversy when she confronted Ursula von der Leyen, the then-candidate for the second term as the Commission President, in a fiery speech:

Madam Ursula! [...] I say to you as woman to woman, as mother to mother: how can you not be ashamed to promote something like the migration pact, which leads to millions of European women and children feeling threatened on the streets of their own cities? You are responsible for every rape, for every assault, for every tragedy caused by the influx of illegal immigrants. [Q33]

Not only has she used the femonationalist discourse, explicitly mentioning the threat of rape and victimization of women by migrants but also referred to her own – as well as von der Leyen's – womanhood and motherhood. This is a tactic characteristic of RRP female politicians such as Georgia Meloni (see Indelicato and Magalhães Lopes 2024). In another parliamentary intervention, she mentioned the victimisation of women and children by migrants again:

The Europe that you are creating is a continent of hypocrisy and torment for the common man... women and children being the victims of immigrants for whom you pay hotels and benefits with our money. [Q41]

Her party colleague Anna Bryłka, on her part, declared that the influx of “culturally alien newcomers” to Europe contributes to “an ever-increasing scale of murders, assaults and rapes”:

'We can do it', said German Chancellor Angela Merkel in 2015, inviting millions of immigrants into her country and thus exposing us all to the invasion of culturally alien newcomers. As a result, we have an ever-increasing scale of murders, assaults and rapes. [Q35]

During the EP debate on the 2025's Commission Work Programme in February 2025, Bryłka argued that “uncontrolled and massive immigration” has been “the great crime against Europe”. Due to this crime, “Europe is not safe, and Europeans cannot feel safe on the streets of their cities”. She demanded an immediate programme of deportation for all illegal immigrants [Q44].

Against the backdrop of high salience of migration in Poland due to the situation on the Polish-Belarusian border and the controversies around over the migration pact, PiS MEPs also re-engaged in the narrative that migrants are a sexual threat to women and that Western Europe is not safe anymore. In September 2024, PiS MEP Małgorzata Gosiewska warned:

Western Europe is struggling with rising crime, for which immigrants, or rather those who invited them to Europe, are responsible. Groups of young, unemployed, aggressive men are an increasingly common sight on European streets [...] Spain - one in two perpetrators of sexual aggression is a foreigner. African immigrants, although making up 2.5% of the population, are responsible for 20% of sexual crimes in the country...

Germany - the crime report shows that immigrants are over-represented in homicide, murder, grievous bodily harm and rape. [Q34]

V. ANALYSIS

As discussed in the Theory section, Farris (2017) presented her ideas in the context of three PRR Western European parties: the French National Front (now the National Rally, Rassemblement national), the Dutch Party for Freedom (Partij voor de Vrijheid, PVV) and the Italian Northern League (Lega Nord, now Lega). I argue that femonationalism in Central and Eastern Europe, while adopting several discursive frames known from Western European RRP parties, has its own, “Eastern” dimension, connected to the region’s historical heritage, religious background, and more conservative worldview.

Poland as the last bastion of women’s safety. In Farris’s conceptualization, femonationalism is underpinned by “a common conviction regarding the supremacy of the West over the Rest”, “the idea of the supremacy of the western culture when it comes to women’s rights” and gender relations (Farris, 2017, pp. 11, 55). I argue that femonationalism in the Polish version assumes supremacy over both the Muslim world and Western Europe. In the speeches of Polish MEPs from PRRPs, Poland is depicted as one of the last bastions: of Christianity, of traditional, family values, and of women’s and children’s safety. This is due to Poland’s resistance to accepting migrants from the Middle East and resistance to the “ideological colonisation” by EU elites and Western Europe. Just as described by Farris (2017, 8), Polish PRR MEPs juxtapose non-white, non-European, uncivilized, and Muslim “Others” or “Them” with white, European, western, civilized “Us”. Both PiS and Konfederacja’s MEPs present migrants as a threat to the European civilization. Anna Bryłka from Konfederacja said that German Chancellor Angela Merkel through “inviting millions of immigrants into her country” in 2015, exposed “us all to the invasion of culturally alien newcomers” [Q35]. Elżbieta Kruk (PiS) argued that the EU’s migration policy of bringing migrants to Europe would “hasten the end of nation-states and create new people without ideals, without national identity and without Christian faith” [Q5].

However, PiS and Konfederacja’s MEPs argue that apart from European “Us” and uncivilised “Others”, there is also civilised “Us” and barbaric “Them” within the EU. It’s not the Western culture, the Western model of family and of women’s emancipation that will provide women’s safety – it’s the Eastern model, with Poland acting as a defender of true

European values, morality, and order. Beata Mazurek (PiS) suggested that “[p]erhaps the European Parliament should follow the example of Poland, where the gender pay gap is one of the lowest in Europe, and where the low rate of violence against women places Poland among the safest countries on the Old Continent” [Q4]. This is counterposed with the situation in the West, where, due to the liberal migration policy, women and children are being the victims of immigrants [Q41], they feel threatened on the streets of their own cities [Q33], and face an ever-increasing scale of murders, assaults and rapes [Q35]. The responsibility for this situation lies not only on immigrants, but also on “those who invited them to Europe” [Q34]. Western European women suffer “consequences of the European Union's policy of 2015, when borders were opened to all comers, who were mistakenly or deliberately classified as refugees, although they were mostly economic migrants” [Q5].

Opposing the ideological depravation. Aside from the threat from migrants and EU migration policies, the safety of families is also endangered by the “ideological colonisation” from the West (Graff and Korolczuk 2021; Korolczuk and Graff 2018). According to Graff and Korolczuk, “[t]he alleged colonizers include what anti-genderists view as power elites: feminists, left-wing and liberal politicians, transnational NGOs and international bodies” (Graff and Korolczuk 2021, 95). According to my frame analysis, the “ideological colonisers” are EU leaders and the “left-liberal majority in the European Parliament” [Q14]. After the 2024 elections, MEPs belonging to three left-wing political groups in the EP – S&D (Socialists and Democrats, 136 MEPs), the Greens (53 MEPs), and The Left (46 MEPs) together constituted only one-third of the EP (235 out of 720 MEPs) and added up to 36% (269 out of 751 MEPs) after the previous 2019 EP elections. Yet, PiS MEPs mentioned “the dictatorship of the rampant left” [Q23], “[t]he leftist aggressive social engineering” that is being forced in the EU and constitutes a threat to civilisation [Q14], “left-wing representatives pushing their political agenda” [Q11], “the clamour of the EU left and their unrealistic ideas” [Q27], “a leftist dictate” [Q16].

Graff and Korolczuk (2021) showed how the Polish anti-gender activists portrayed the West as the source of moral degeneration and the East as a defender of the conservative and religious order. Confederation MEPs accuse EU leaders of propagating moral degeneration. Ewa Zajączkowska-Hernik claimed that “Mrs von der Leyen and her EU elites, on the other hand, hold values that strike at the traditional family model, deprave children with leftist propaganda”. She continued that “if Europe is to survive [...] Poland

and Hungary should lead a grand coalition of states to simply reject these sick ideas. [...] You can count on the Poles.” [Q36]. In another EP intervention, Hernik-Zajęczkowska warned that the EU elites want to brainwash and ideologically experiment on children:

Instead of protecting children, the Union wants to turn them into objects of ideological experimentation. [...] The Eurocrats want to brainwash children and desensitise them to the real dangers. To teach them that gender identity is a choice and that sex is the only source of pleasure. Why does the ideological left want to desensitise children to the threat of paedophilia? Parents have the right to say enough, and children have the right to be safe. Children need love, not ideological experiments. As a mother, I say plainly: keep away from our children. ‘No’ to depravity. ‘Yes’ to the family. [Q42]

Secularism vs antemurale christianitatis. Western femonationalists present Muslim immigration as a threat to a secular state. Farris notes that secularism under attack by immigrants was one of the key themes of Marine Le Pen’s 2012 presidential campaign (Farris, 2017, p. 34). Similarly, Netherlands’ Geert Wilders built his platform on atheism and secularism, even if he sometimes used Christianity as a “negative identifier” against Islam. The situation is more complex in Italy, where the League used religious discourse and has aligned its position with views of the Catholic Church on issues related to family, sex, or abortion (Vaughan 2024). However, as Caiani and Carvalho (2021) argue, “the League is not so much Christian as anti-Muslim” and uses religion as an identity marker to legitimise claims about national identity and immigration (p. 225).

Polish PRR politicians, on the other hand, built their rhetorics strongly on their Christian faith and the connection between the Catholic Church and the Polish state and tradition. It is not only Muslim immigrants that they see as a threat: secular trends and “Christianophobia” inside the European Union also pose a menace to the European civilization, its Christian roots, and to the Polish Catholic culture. According to PiS MEPs, Christian values and European civilization based on Christianity are being progressively undermined by the EU and its policies [Q37, Q8]. PiS’s Izabela-Helena Kloc, discussing the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme 2021-2027, said that

In 2004, when Poland joined the European Union, we believed that we were entering a community of sovereign nation states based on such pillars of civilisation as Christianity, the rule of law and personal freedom. Today, looking back from the

perspective of this Parliament, I regret to say that our original vision of Europe is being called into question. [Q13]

Jadwiga Wiśniewska, when commenting on the European Commission's guidelines on inclusive language, noted that

By disconnecting from Europe's Christian roots, you are not only denying our common European past, but you are also calling the future into question. A Europe without Christian values will simply cease to exist. [Q20]

Discussing the EU migration policy, PiS's Elżbieta Kruk implied that one of its aims is to develop a non-Christian society:

Perhaps, then, we are dealing with a deliberate social engineering intended to bring millions of migrants to Europe in order to hasten the end of nation-states and create a new people without ideals, without national identity and without Christian faith. [Q5]

According to Marlena Małag, speaking in the context EP debate about Poland's abortion law, "[o]nce again, under the guise of combating discrimination, ideological content is being introduced that undermines Christian values and promotes liberal policies" [Q40].

PiS's MEP Beata Kempa mentioned the issue of increasing Christianophobia in Europe, manifested in the raising numbers of attacks on Christian churches and believers [Q31]. In her opinion, the EP "lacked courage" to condemn those attacks [Q25].

This kind of discourse evokes associations with the historical myth of Poland as *antemurale christianitatis* – a wall, fence, bulwark, shield or fortress of Christianity (Tazbir 2005, 73). In the 15th century, Poland was described as the bulwark of Christianity to show that the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, in defending its borders in the wars against the Tartars and Turks, was acting for the benefit of the entire Christian world. The myth of the bulwark returned during the period of partitions of Poland and again during the Polish-Soviet war of 1919-1921, when Poland was said to be defending Europe against the anti-religious Bolsheviks (Miziołek and Sosnowska 2020, 7). The trope of Poland as *antemurale christianitatis* further continued in the times of the Polish People's Republic. It was mentioned by the Polish pope John Paul II on several occasions as well as invoked by opposition groups linked to the Church. Finally, it survived the

transformation of 1989, being still used by politicians and commentators in Poland (Muchowski and Tazbir 2024).

Feminists do not stand by all women. Women from PiS and Confederation fit into a model of conservative women who are gender-conscious political actors that organise as, and speak for, women - even if, at the same time, they reject feminism in a determined manner (Schreiber 2018). For example, the ex-Prime Minister of Poland from PiS and MEP of 9th and 10th EP term Beata Szydło asserted in an interview in 2017 that she did not identify herself as a feminist and believed feminists often did not help, and failed to stand by, all women. She argued that the PiS government was pro-women because it adopted pro-family regulations, such as the Family 500+ programme (quoted in Gwiazda 2021, 586).

Ewa Zajączkowska-Hernik in a tweet in January 2025 accused feminists of hypocrisy for not defending women from sexual violence:

Hey feminists from all over the world! There's just been a scandal in the UK about mass rapes of young girls! Where the hell are you when women's rights really need to be defended? You dream of bringing Muslims and Africans to Europe en masse! You don't give a damn about the safety of women and young girls! You call them "grooming gangs", but they're just plain rapists! Hypocrites! (Zajączkowska-Hernik 2025)

According to Polish PRR MEPs, voices of conservative women are not being heard in the EP and many women do not feel represented by feminist claims. MEP Wiśniewska expressed the sentiment that “the voice of conservative women who want to combine work and family life” and of “who do not see marriage and motherhood as the proverbial crutch that gets in the way of their careers” is not being represented in the EU [Q7]. Instead, there is “a very strong voice from the left-liberal circles seeking to recognise abortion as a human right and a method of family planning, as well as seeking to sexualise children and manipulate sexuality” [Q7].

Polish women MEPs representing PRR parties do not perceive themselves as feminists. However, this is not to say they do not see themselves as advocates of women’s interests. Apart from protecting women from sexual threat of migrants discussed before I identify several framings of women’s interest, including protecting women from the post-abortion syndrome, tackling wage inequalities between men and women, reconciling career with motherhood.

While they generally reject feminism, female RRP politicians indirectly refer to second-wave feminist issues such as pay inequality and discrimination in the workplace. PiS MEP Beata Mazurek stressed that “the inequalities that exist between men and women in both social and working life must be tackled effectively” [Beata Mazurek, Q19]. Mazurek, as well as Jadwiga Wiśniewska, mention the need to close the pay gap between men and women, to tackle structural inequalities in the labour market, and to protect women’s right to combine professional and family life [Q19, Q11, Q4, Q7].

Beata Mazurek argued that the European Commission does not pay enough attention to these inequalities, instead focusing too heavily on matters such as LGBTQI rights and reproductive rights:

Wage discrimination against women is one of the most serious obstacles to real gender equality. [...] However, we should ask ourselves whether the issues raised in the report, such as LGBT rights, legal abortion, reproductive and sexual rights, and health, will lead to women earning as much as men or to full parity in the positions they hold. [Q19].

[S]teps need to be taken so that women all over the world no longer face problems such as violence, broad economic inequality, or even discrimination against women as mothers in the employment environment. [...] At the same time, we say an emphatic ‘no’ to the demands of certain circles for abortion to be one of the methods of family planning, and for the European Union to fund organisations involved in its promotion [Q4].

Western versus Eastern femonationalism. The summary of the differences between “Western” femonationalism as described by Farris and “Eastern” femonationalism as conceptualised based on Polish women MEPs’ interventions in the EP is presented in Table 1.

“Western” femonationalism (Farris 2017)	Femonationalism from the East
▪ underpinned by “a common conviction regarding the	▪ assumes supremacy over both the Muslim world and the West - West is presented as the source of moral

supremacy of the West over the Rest”	degeneration and the East as a defender of the conservative world
▪ PVV, FN, and LN adopted themes unusual for traditional far right, such as women’s rights and gay rights, and are generally not undermining the achievements of the second-wave feminism; Islam constitutes a threat to these achievements	▪ Issues of women’s reproductive rights, access to abortion and contraception, sexual education in school, LGBTQI+ rights are still highly contentious and polarizing topics; the danger of ideological depravation by EU elites and the West
▪ Secularism endangered by Muslim immigrants	▪ Christianity endangered by both Muslim immigrants and Western secularism and Christianophobia
▪ Muslim women need to be saved from the oppression	▪ No Muslim women to save from the oppression, „migrants are only male”

Table 1 Western versus Eastern femonationalism

CONCLUSIONS

Femonationalist discourses in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) have heretofore remained understudied, despite PRR politicians using “gender as a symbolic glue” (Kováts and Põim 2015) and despite the increasing political salience of the issue of immigration in the region. In this contribution, I qualitatively analysed interventions of women MEPs from Polish populist radical right parties in European Parliament plenary debates during the 9th (2019-2024) and 10th (2024-2029) EP terms. As a result, I proposed the notion of *Eastern femonationalism*. Just as Farris described femonationalist discourse in Western Europe, Polish MEPs from PRRPs positions themselves as protectors of women’s freedom and safety in the context of Muslim immigrants to Europe. However, Eastern femonationalist discourse differs from its Western precursor in numerous dimensions. In Sara Farris’s (2017) original conceptualisation of femonationalism, the West and its achievements in the area of women’s emancipation and gender equality are presented as superior to the rest of the world. Immigration is presented as a phenomenon that could

threaten and undo these achievements, including shifting back gains made through successive waves of feminist activism. Polish PRR MEPs frame women's interests differently: in more family-centred, conservative, and traditional terms. Western societies, with progressing secularisation, "Christianophobia", broad LGBTQ rights, and liberal abortion laws, are in this discourse framed just as "barbaric" as the Muslim world.

Another conclusion to be drawn from the conducted analysis is that Polish women MEPs from PRRPs strategically use their womanhood and motherhood to give more credibility to their claims and soften their radical messages. They use phrases such as "as a mother" [Q42, Q38], "as a woman, I would like to say..." [Q11], "I am a woman, and you are a man" [Q22], "I say to you as woman to woman, as mother to mother" [Q33]. This is similar to strategies employed by female PRR politicians in other countries (Indelicato and Magalhães Lopes 2024) and consistent with observations of other scholars studying Polish PRRPs. Sociologist and gender scholar Elżbieta Korolczuk in an interview with the Polish weekly *Newsweek* noted that Anna Bryłka and Ewa Zajączkowska-Hernik (two Konfederacja's MEPs studied in this article) "are more convincing than their colleagues when they say that immigrants are mainly young men from the Middle East, potential rapists, and that they, as women, feel threatened and are therefore against letting them in" (Wężyk and Korolczuk 2024).

This study was exploratory in its nature and as such has several important limitations. Due to unequal sample sizes of quotes coming from PiS's and Konfederacja's MEPs, a systematic comparison between the two parties was not possible. Rhetoric of Konfederacja's MEPs appears to be more radical, more anti-EU and more critical of EU migration policies compared to PiS, which reflects an overall more radical stance of Konfederacja in these aspects. However, these are my unsystematic observations based on textual analysis, unsupported by methodical comparative examination. Finally, the article proposed a new theoretical contribution of *Eastern femonationalism* based on the frame analysis of EP plenary interventions of Polish women MEPs. While a one-country exploratory study was conducive for in-depth analysis and for theory building, it did not allow for theory testing and cross-country comparisons. As prospects for future research, it would be extremely interesting to extend this research and apply the proposed new framework to other CEE countries as well as to national parliaments.

REFERENCES

- Acker, Joan. 1992. 'From Sex Roles to Gendered Institutions'. *Contemporary Sociology* 21 (5): 565–69.
- Ahrens, Petra, Barbara Gaweda, and Johanna Kantola. 2022. 'Reframing the Language of Human Rights? Political Group Contestations on Women's and LGBTQI Rights in European Parliament Debates'. *Journal of European Integration* 44 (6): 803–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07036337.2021.2001647>.
- Arfini, E.A.G., R. Ghigi, and S. Magaraggia. 2019. 'Can Feminism Be Right? A Content Analysis of Discourses about Women by Female Italian Right-Wing Politicians'. *Rassegna Italiana Di Sociologia* 60 (4): 693–719. Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.1423/96112>.
- Benford, Robert D., and David A. Snow. 2000. 'Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment'. *Annual Review of Sociology* 26: 611–39.
- Ben-Shitrit, Lihi, Julia Elad-Strenger, and Sivan Hirsch-Hoefler. 2022. "'Pinkwashing' the Radical-right: Gender and the Mainstreaming of Radical-right Policies and Actions". *European Journal of Political Research* 61 (1): 86–110. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6765.12442>.
- Berthet, Valentine. 2022a. 'United in Crisis: Abortion Politics in the European Parliament and Political Groups' Disputes over EU Values'. *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 60 (6): 1797–814. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcms.13378>.
- Berthet, Valentine. 2022b. 'Norm under Fire: Support for and Opposition to the European Union's Ratification of the Istanbul Convention in the European Parliament'. *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 24 (5): 675–98. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616742.2022.2034510>.
- Burnham, Peter, Karin Gilland, Wyn Grant, and Zig Layton-Henry. 2004. *Research Methods in Politics*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Caiani, Manuela, and Tiago Carvalho. 2021. 'The Use of Religion by Populist Parties: The Case of Italy and Its Broader Implications'. *Religion, State and Society* 49 (3): 211–30. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09637494.2021.1949935>.

Campbell, Rosie, and Sarah Childs. 2015. "'To the Left, to the Right': Representing Conservative Women's Interests'. *Party Politics* 21 (4): 626–37.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1354068813491536>.

Celis, Karen. 2008. 'Gendering Representation'. In *Politics, Gender, and Concepts*, edited by Gary Goertz and Amy G. Mazur. Cambridge University Press.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511755910.004>.

Celis, Karen, and Sarah Childs. 2012. 'The Substantive Representation of Women: What to Do with Conservative Claims?' *Political Studies* 60 (1): 213–25.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9248.2011.00904.x>.

Celis, Karen, and Sarah Childs, eds. 2014. *Gender, Conservatism and Political Representation*. Studies in European Political Science. ECPR Press.

Celis, Karen, and Sarah Childs. 2018. 'Conservatism and Women's Political Representation'. *Politics & Gender* 14 (1): 5–26.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X17000575>.

Chueri, Juliana, and Anna Damerow. 2023. 'Closing the Gap: How Descriptive and Substantive Representation Affect Women's Vote for Populist Radical Right Parties'. *West European Politics* 46 (5): 928–46.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2022.2113219>.

Cichocki, Piotr, and Piotr Jabkowski. 2019. 'Immigration Attitudes in the Wake of the 2015 Migration Crisis in the Visegrád Group Countries'. *Intersections* 5 (1).

<https://doi.org/10.17356/ieejsp.v5i1.480>.

Colella, Daria. 2021. 'Femonationalism and Anti-Gender Backlash: The Instrumental Use of Gender Equality in the Nationalist Discourse of the Fratelli d'Italia Party'. *Gender & Development* 29 (2–3): 269–89. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13552074.2021.1978749>.

Corrêa, Sonia. 2017. 'Gender Ideology: Tracking Its Origins and Meanings in Current Gender Politics'. *London School of Economics Blog Engenderings*, December 11.

<https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/gender/2017/12/11/gender-ideology-tracking-its-origins-and-meanings-in-current-gender-politics/>.

Disch, Lisa, and Mary Hawkesworth, eds. 2015. *The Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theory*. Vol. 1. no. 1. Oxford University Press.

<https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199328581.001.0001>.

Erzeel, Silvia, and Ekaterina R. Rashkova. 2017. 'Still Men's Parties? Gender and the Radical Right in Comparative Perspective'. *West European Politics* 40 (4): 812–20.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2017.1286181>.

European Commission. 2015. 'Refugee Crisis – Q&A on Emergency Relocation'. Text. *European Commission Commission Spokespersons' Service*, September 22.

https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/memo_15_5698.

Farris, Sara R. 2017. *In the Name of Women's Rights: The Rise of Femonationalism*. Duke University Press.

Farris, Sara, and Catherine Rottenberg. 2017. 'Introduction: Righting Feminism'. *New Formations* 91 (91): 5–15. <https://doi.org/10.3898/NEWF:91.INTRODUCTION.2017>.

Flyvbjerg, Bent. 2011. 'Case Study'. In *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 4th ed, edited by Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln. Sage.

Gaweda, Barbara. 2017. 'The Recent Uprising against Gender Equality. Exploring the discursive construction of the «war on genderism» in Poland'. *Comunicazione politica*, no. 2: 251–68. <https://doi.org/10.3270/87223>.

Gaweda, Barbara. 2021. 'Europeanization, Democratization, and Backsliding: Trajectories and Framings of Gender Equality Institutions in Poland'. *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society* 28 (3): 629–55.

<https://doi.org/10.1093/sp/jxab023>.

Gerring, John. 2004. 'What Is a Case Study and What Is It Good For?' *American Political Science Review* 98 (2): 341–54. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0003055404001182>.

Gerring, John. 2013. 'The Case Study: What It Is and What It Does'. In *The Oxford Handbook of Political Science*, 1st ed., edited by Goodin. Oxford University Press.

<https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199604456.013.0051>.

Geva, Dorit. 2020. 'Daughter, Mother, Captain: Marine Le Pen, Gender, and Populism in the French National Front'. *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society* 27 (1): 1–26. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sp/jxy039>.

Giorgi, Elisabetta De, Alice Cavalieri, and Francesca Feo. 2023. 'From Opposition Leader to Prime Minister: Giorgia Meloni and Women's Issues in the Italian Radical Right'. *Politics and Governance* 11 (1): 108–18. <https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.v11i1.6042>.

Givens, Terri E. 2004. 'The Radical Right Gender Gap'. *Comparative Political Studies* 37 (1): 30–54. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414003260124>.

Goertz, Gary, and James Mahoney. 2012. *A Tale of Two Cultures: Qualitative and Quantitative Research in the Social Sciences*. Princeton University Press.

Graban, Artem. 2024. 'Instrumentalisation of Fear and Securitisation of "Eastern Borders Route": The Case of Poland-Belarus "Border Crisis"'. *European Security* 33 (2): 236–60. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09662839.2023.2287499>.

Graff, Agnieszka. 2014. 'Report from the Gender Trenches: War against "Genderism" in Poland'. *European Journal of Women's Studies* 21 (4): 431–35. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1350506814546091>.

Graff, Agnieszka, and Elżbieta Korolczuk. 2017. "'Worse than Communism and Nazism Put Together': War on Gender in Poland'. In *Anti-Gender Campaigns in Europe : Mobilizing Against Equality*, edited by Roman Kuhar and David Paternotte. Rowman & Littlefield.

Graff, Agnieszka, and Elżbieta Korolczuk. 2021. *Anti-Gender Politics in the Populist Moment*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003133520>.

Gwiazda, Anna. 2021. 'Right-Wing Populism and Feminist Politics: The Case of Law and Justice in Poland'. *International Political Science Review* 42 (5): 580–95. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192512120948917>.

Gwiazda, Anna. 2023. 'Gender Ideologies and Polish Political Parties'. *Government and Opposition* 58 (4): 641–60. <https://doi.org/10.1017/gov.2021.57>.

Gwiazda, Anna. 2024. 'Feminist Protests in Times of Democratic Backsliding: A Comparative Analysis of Hungary and Poland'. *European Journal of Politics and Gender*.

European Journal of Politics and Gender 1 (aop): 1–26.

<https://doi.org/10.1332/25151088Y2024D000000057>.

Halperin, Sandra, and Oliver Heath. 2020. *Political Research: Methods and Practical Skills*. 3rd ed. Oxford University Press.

<https://doi.org/10.1093/hepl/9780198820628.001.0001>.

Hammersley, Martyn. 2013. *What Is Qualitative Research?* 1st ed. Bloomsbury Publishing Plc. <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781849666084>.

Harteveld, Eelco, Van Der Brug, Wouter, Dahlberg, Stefan, and Andrej and Kokkonen. 2015. 'The Gender Gap in Populist Radical-Right Voting: Examining the Demand Side in Western and Eastern Europe'. *Patterns of Prejudice* 49 (1–2): 103–34.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/0031322X.2015.1024399>.

Indelicato, Maria Elena, and Maíra Magalhães Lopes. 2024. 'Understanding Populist Far-Right Anti-Immigration and Anti-Gender Stances beyond the Paradigm of Gender as "a Symbolic Glue": Giorgia Meloni's Modern Motherhood, Neo-Catholicism, and Reproductive Racism'. *European Journal of Women's Studies* 31 (1): 6–20.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/13505068241230819>.

Kantola, Johanna, and Emanuela Lombardo. 2021. 'Strategies of Right Populists in Opposing Gender Equality in a Polarized European Parliament'. *International Political Science Review* 42 (5): 565–79. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192512120963953>.

Kantola, Johanna, and Emanuela Lombardo. 2024. 'Feminist Institutional Responses to Anti-Gender Politics in Parliamentary Contexts'. *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 26 (4): 833–57. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616742.2024.2366478>.

King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton University Press.

King, Nigel, Christine Horrocks, and Joanna Brooks. 2018. *Interviews in Qualitative Research*. SAGE Publications Ltd.

Korolczuk, Elżbieta. 2020. 'The Fight against "Gender" and "LGBT Ideology": New Developments in Poland'. *European Journal of Politics and Gender*. *European Journal of Politics and Gender* 3 (1): 165–67.

<https://doi.org/10.1332/251510819X15744244471843>.

- Korolczuk, Elżbieta, and Agnieszka Graff. 2018. 'Gender as "Ebola from Brussels": The Anticolonial Frame and the Rise of Illiberal Populism'. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 43 (4): 797–821. <https://doi.org/10.1086/696691>.
- Kosman, Marcin. 2024. 'The (Il)Liberal Shift in Polish Migration Discourse: A Multimodal Analysis of Civic Platform's Portrayal of Immigrants'. *GEMA Online® Journal of Language Studies* 24 (4): 240–65. <https://doi.org/10.17576/gema-2024-2404-13>.
- Kováts, Eszter. 2018. 'Questioning Consensuses: Right-Wing Populism, Anti-Populism, and the Threat of "Gender Ideology"'. *Sociological Research Online* 23 (2): 528–38. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1360780418764735>.
- Kováts, Eszter, and Maari Põim, eds. 2015. *Gender as Symbolic Glue. The Position and Role of Conservative and Far Right Parties in the Anti-Gender Mobilization in Europe*. FEPS - Foundation for European Progressive Studies. <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/budapest/11382.pdf>.
- Krastev, Ivan, and Stephen Holmes. 2018. 'Imitation and Its Discontents'. *Journal of Democracy* 29 (3): 117–28. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2018.0049>.
- Krzyżanowski, Michał. 2018. 'Discursive Shifts in Ethno-Nationalist Politics: On Politicization and Mediatization of the "Refugee Crisis" in Poland'. *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies* 16 (1–2): 76–96. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15562948.2017.1317897>.
- Kuhar, Roman, and David Paternotte. 2017. *Anti-Gender Campaigns in Europe: Mobilizing Against Equality*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Incorporated. <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/kcl/detail.action?docID=5042858>.
- Lavizzari, Anna. 2024. 'The Anti-Gender Movement and the Populist Radical Right in Italy: A Symbiotic Relationship'. *European Journal of Politics and Gender. European Journal of Politics and Gender* 1 (aop): 1–27. <https://doi.org/10.1332/25151088Y2024D000000047>.
- Lombardo, Emanuela, Petra Meier, and Mieke Verloo, eds. 2009. *The Discursive Politics of Gender Equality: Stretching, Bending, and Policy-Making*. Routledge/ECPR Studies in European Political Science 59. Routledge.

Lowndes, Vivien. 2014. 'How Are Things Done around Here? Uncovering Institutional Rules and Their Gendered Effects'. *Politics and Gender* 10 (4): 685–91.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X1400049X>.

Mackay, Fiona, Meryl Kenny, and Louise Chappell. 2010. 'New Institutionalism through a Gender Lens: Towards a Feminist Institutionalism?' *International Political Science Review* 31 (5): 573–88. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192512110388788>.

March, James G., and Johan P. Olsen. 1984. 'The New Institutionalism: Organizational Factors in Political Life'. *American Political Science Review* 78 (3): 734–49.

<https://doi.org/10.2307/1961840>.

Markowski, Radosław. 2008. 'The 2007 Polish Parliamentary Election: Some Structuring, Still a Lot of Chaos'. *West European Politics* 31 (5): 1055–68.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/01402380802234763>.

Markowski, Radosław. 2020. 'Plurality Support for Democratic Decay: The 2019 Polish Parliamentary Election'. *West European Politics* 43 (7): 1513–25.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2020.1720171>.

Mayer, Nonna. 2022. 'The Impact of Gender on Votes for the Populist Radical Rights: Marine Le Pen vs. Eric Zemmour'. *Modern & Contemporary France* 30 (4): 445–60.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/09639489.2022.2134328>.

Mieñkowska-Norkiene, Renata. 2019. 'Kobiety Na Szczytach Władzy w Unii Europejskiej'. In *Kobiety w Polityce. Studia i Rozprawy*, edited by Justyna Grażyna Otto. Wydawnictwo Elipsa.

Miziołek, Jerzy, and Joanna M. Sosnowska, eds. 2020. *Triumf 1920. Obraz i Pamięć*.

University of Warsaw Press. <https://doi.org/10.31338/uw.9788323548348>.

Muchowski, Jakub, and Janusz Tazbir. 2024. 'Rycerz na przedmurzu'. *Miesięcznik Znak*, November. <https://www miesiecznik.znak.com.pl/7142014z-januszem-tazbirem-rozmawia-jakub-muchowski-rycerz-na-przedmurzu/>.

Mudde, Cas. 2007. *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*. 1st ed. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511492037>.

Mudde, Cas, and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser. 2015. 'Vox Populi or Vox Masculini? Populism and Gender in Northern Europe and South America'. *Patterns of Prejudice* 49 (1-2): 16-36. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0031322X.2015.1014197>.

Orłowski, Maciej. 2017. 'Morawiecki: "Mam marzenie: zrechrystianizować Europę. Europie brak zasad i wartości"'. *Gazeta Wyborcza*, December 9. <https://wyborcza.pl/7,75398,22760029,morawiecki-rzad-w-podobnym-albo-identycznym-skladzie.html>.

Parlament Europejski. 2021. *Rezolucja Parlamentu Europejskiego z Dnia 21 Stycznia 2021 r. w Sprawie Europejskiej Strategii Na Rzecz Równouprawnienia Płci (2019/2169(INI))*. Bruksela.

Paternotte, David, and Roman Kuhar. 2018. 'Disentangling and Locating the "Global Right": Anti-Gender Campaigns in Europe'. *Politics and Governance* 6 (3): 6-19. <https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.v6i3.1557>.

Pettit, Philip. 2010. 'Varieties of Public Representation'. In *Political Representation*, edited by Ian Shapiro, Susan C. Stokes, Elisabeth Jean Wood, and Alexander S. Kirshner. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CB09780511813146.005>.

Pieliński, Bartosz. 2016. 'Pomiędzy Nowym a Starym. Badanie Zmian Polityczno-Społecznych z Perspektywy Instytucjonalizmu Feministycznego'. In *Perspektywa Gender w Polityce Społecznej*, edited by Anna Kurowska, Bartosz Pieliński, Ryszard Szarfenberg, and Anna Wójtewicz. Wydawnictwo Naukowe UMK.

Piotrowski, Grzegorz. 2021. 'Mapping the Field of Turbulent Changes around the Issue of Migration in Poland'. *Intersections* 7 (2): 88-92. <https://doi.org/10.17356/ieejsp.v7i2.880>.

Pitkin, Hanna Fenichel. 1972. *The Concept of Representation*. University of California Press.

Polak, Aleksandra. 2024. 'European Parliament elections and women's representation. Comprehensive data on MEPs, national political parties, and member states' electoral systems, 2004-2019'. RepOD, October 11. <https://doi.org/10.18150/5IML18>.

Polak, Aleksandra, Christopher A. Hartwell, and Katarzyna W. Sidło. 2023. 'Physically Present but Spiritually Distant: The View of the European Union in Poland'. *Comparative Southeast European Studies* 71 (3): 300–332. <https://doi.org/10.1515/soeu-2022-0054>.

Rawłuszko, Marta. 2021. 'And If the Opponents of Gender Ideology Are Right? Gender Politics, Europeanization, and the Democratic Deficit'. *Politics & Gender* 17 (2): 301–23. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X19000576>.

Rovny, Jan, Ryan Bakker, Liesbet Hooghe, et al. 2025. *The 2024 Chapel Hill Expert Survey*. <https://www.chesdata.eu/2024-chapel-hill-expert-survey-ches>.

Schreiber, Ronnee. 2008. *Righting Feminism: Conservative Women and American Politics*. Oxford University Press.

Schreiber, Ronnee. 2014. 'Understanding the Future of Feminism Requires Understanding Conservative Women'. *Politics & Gender* 10 (2): 276–80. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X14000087>.

Schreiber, Ronnee. 2018. 'Is There a Conservative Feminism? An Empirical Account'. *Politics & Gender* 14 (1): 56–79. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X17000587>.

Schreier, Margrit. 2018. 'Sampling and Generalization'. In *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Data Collection*, edited by Uwe Flick. SAGE Publications,.

Shurts, Sarah. 2024. "'We Are Looking for a New Feminism": Marine Le Pen's Reappropriation of the Liberal Language of Women's Rights and Gender Equality'. In *Far-Right Newspeak and the Future of Liberal Democracy*. Routledge.

Śledzińska-Simon, Anna, and Anna Wójcik. 2024. 'Taking Women's Rights Seriously: Women's Struggle for a New "Social Contract" in Poland'. *Pravni Zapisi* 15 (1): 20–56. <https://doi.org/10.5937/pravzap0-50567>.

Snipes, A., and C. Mudde. 2020. 'France's (Kinder, Gentler) Extremist: Marine Le Pen, Intersectionality, and Media Framing of Female Populist Radical Right Leaders'. *Politics and Gender* 16 (2): 438–70. Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X19000370>.

Spierings, Niels, and Andrej Zaslove. 2017. 'Gender, Populist Attitudes, and Voting: Explaining the Gender Gap in Voting for Populist Radical Right and Populist Radical Left

Parties'. *West European Politics* 40 (4): 821–47.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2017.1287448>.

Sygnowska, Aleksandra. 2022. 'Women and Nationalism in Poland: Defending the Dignity of Polish Women'. *DiGeSt - Journal of Diversity and Gender Studies* 9 (2): 2.

<https://doi.org/10.21825/digest.84672>.

Tazbir, Janusz (1927-2016). 2005. 'The Bulwark Myth'. *Acta Poloniae Historica* 91.

<https://rcin.org.pl/dlibra/publication/42504/edition/25412>.

Vaughan, Kenneth R. 2024. 'Religion, Secularization, and Far-Right Support in the Netherlands, Hungary, and Italy'. *International Sociology* 39 (6): 650–71.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/02685809241292078>.

Verloo, Mieke. 2005. 'Mainstreaming Gender Equality in Europe. A Critical Frame Analysis Approach'. *The Greek Review of Social Research*, 11–34.

<https://doi.org/10.12681/grsr.9555>.

Verloo, Mieke, and Emanuela Lombardo. 2007. 'Contested Gender Equality and Policy Variety in Europe: Introducing a Critical Frame Analysis Approach'. In *Multiple Meanings of Gender Equality*, edited by Mieke Verloo. Central European University Press.

<https://doi.org/10.1515/9786155211393-005>.

Viola, Donatella M. 2016a. 'Epilogue: Old and New Trends in the 2014 European Election'. In *Routledge Handbook of European Elections*, edited by Donatella M. Viola. Routledge.

Viola, Donatella M. 2016b. 'The Genesis of the European Parliament: From Appointed Consultative Assembly to Directly Elected Legislative Body'. In *Routledge Handbook of European Elections*, edited by Donatella M. Viola. Routledge.

Węzyk, Katarzyna, and Elżbieta Korolczuk. 2024. 'Marsz konfederatek. Kobiety zmieniają wizerunek partii skrajnie prawicowych'. *Polityka. Newsweek*, June 26.

<https://www.newsweek.pl/polska/polityka/socjolozka-kobiety-zmieniaja-wizerunek-partii-skrajnie-prawicowych/hfys0g0>.

Yin, Robert K. 2014. *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. 5th ed. SAGE Publications.

Zajączkowska-Hernik, Ewa. 2025. 'Hey feminists from all over the world!' Tweet.
Twitter, January 5. <https://x.com/EwaZajaczkowska/status/1876037203492544652>.