

PARTISAN

Polish Election Political Tech Review

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Executive Summary

The Partisan Webinar “Polish Election Political Tech Review” explored the digital dynamics of the 2025 Polish presidential election, marked by record political ad spending, platform fragmentation, and the normalization of AI-generated content. Panelists highlighted the far right’s dominance on TikTok and YouTube, driven by disciplined messaging, influencer networks, and high engagement among young voters.

Mainstream parties, particularly on the liberal side, were seen as underprepared digitally —relying too heavily on traditional media and lacking platform-specific strategies. The campaign also saw new actors like YouTuber-candidates shaping public debate and quasi-PAC NGOs testing legal boundaries in online campaigning.

Disinformation emerged as a major challenge, with coordinated operations using synthetic media and ephemeral content such as TikTok Lives. Panelists called for stronger digital strategies, coordinated disinformation response, and long-term investment in political tech.

Looking ahead, speakers predicted increased use of lifestyle content to embed political narratives and emphasized the need for strategic innovation ahead of the 2027 elections.

**This transcript is unedited and may include errors or informal phrasing.*

Partisan: So there will be a recording. So if you have to leave early, please refer to the recording which we will share in the newsletter. With this I hand over to Jakub.

Partisan: Looking forward to your remarks.

Jakub Szymik: Joseph, thank you very much for this introduction. Yes, we do have official results in Poland now, and Karl Navdotsky is a winner. This was announced by National Election Committee. So there is a definite decision on this, even though the evening yesterday looked like Chzkowski might be the one winning the elections. And he even claimed victory in the first minutes after the polling stations closed.

But today we'll not be talking about the results this much. Take from what we say what you wish. We'll be talking about how the campaign looked like online, what innovative tools were being used, what the disinformation landscape was, and what Poland is up to in 2025 in light of the election results and broader geopolitical climate, and how it manifested throughout the campaign.

I'll start with briefing you on a few innovative tools or situations that were created in this campaign. These were not easy to manage for the State authorities and political campaigns. But this might feed into your global understanding of how modern digital campaigning looks today.

The first thing we observed and monitored throughout this political campaign was political advertising spending. This is a very big change compared to the last elections—the European Parliament elections in 2024. Those elections are a smaller, quieter campaign compared to the presidential ones. But during this presidential campaign, we saw around 4 million euro in spending on political advertising in Poland.

This is four times what we saw in European Parliament elections a year ago. It shows a very strong mobilization and spending on behalf of all candidates. And it wasn't only the candidates who were spending money. We followed the campaign through the lens of the general political advertising definition we see on the platforms, which includes NGOs and business groups.

Something new in the Polish political landscape is quasi political action committees—NGOs spending their own money, publicly claiming it's "get out the vote" campaigning but pushing the boundaries of what's legal in the Polish system. They support their candidates through foundations, nonprofits, or associations.

We have two major inputs from this ad campaign that might also hint at the results we're seeing today. First, while Meta and Google allow us to track political campaigning spend, there are platforms where it's harder to monitor spending or who is behind it. Especially on X (Twitter), during the campaign and particularly in the last weeks, we saw large political ad spending. But it wasn't always clear who was behind it—many anonymous accounts were likely verified by X, but the identities weren't visible publicly.

As many of you know, TikTok doesn't allow political advertising on their platform, and we didn't see anything to the contrary. But there are other ways to mobilize on TikTok, which we'll talk about in a moment.

We also saw very different approaches to political ad strategy from the candidates. On Navdotsky's side, there was a strong focus on issues. For example, he ran ads about potential online censorship connected to the Digital Services Act or other internet regulations. He also addressed migration—targeting young men on Meta and Google—along with messages about the Green New Deal and diversity in government. He emphasized that government and president shouldn't be from the same party to ensure checks and balances.

Chaskowski, on the other hand, also campaigned on security, but most of his political ads were connected to local events. He used ads to bring people to those events and mobilize crowds rather than campaign on specific issues.

We will analyze this more after the election, but what we can say is this was a campaign four times larger than the previous one, and this trend may continue—even though some platforms have said they will no longer allow political ads due to legal risk.

Jakub Szymik: The results we saw this morning weren't so surprising if you followed the online numbers throughout the campaign. The far-right vote and parties had a strong online presence. On the right side of the screen, you can see a chart of the top 20 TikTok accounts during the campaign. What stands out is that a far-right candidate who didn't make it to the runoffs had a strong lead in engagement and views, especially among young people across Poland.

This is something all candidates were trying to catch up with, but not always successfully. The gap between the far-right candidate and others was significant. Both candidates who made it to the second round—Navdotsky and Chaskowski—performed much weaker on TikTok.

If you look at other charts from the campaign, you'll see that Confederacia, the far-right party, was very mobilized and active across almost all social platforms. A left-wing party with a Podemos-style profile was also very active on TikTok, while the more mainstream parties failed to match their activity levels.

Around 74% of Confederacia's politicians were active on the platform, compared to just 26% from Batelska. This large gap in platform activity helped mobilize right-wing voters—especially young ones—who strongly supported Navdotsky in the second round. Vomit Benson was particularly active and popular on TikTok, with viral tweets and videos reaching 6–7 million views. His message discipline focused on being the “Rainbow Coalition” candidate, the “Green Deal” candidate, and the pro-migrant candidate. These three messages were highly effective in generating online engagement.

One thing Joseph mentioned earlier is the presence of a YouTuber candidate in the election. This was interesting. When Krzysztof Stanowski, a former sports journalist turned YouTuber, entered the race, he was seen as an anti-establishment figure. Early on, some thought he might perform well in the polls. But over the months, it became obvious his goal was monetizing his content and platform.

He ended up with just 1.3% of the vote—disappointing for an anti-establishment hopeful. But his impact was larger than that figure suggests.

Since he was registered as a candidate, he gained access to many internal campaign processes and was able to release content about debate negotiations and official correspondence. And because his channel was already popular, he hosted candidates, interviewed them, and shaped how they were presented. He had real influence on political debate.

Channel Zero—his YouTube channel—became one of the top live-streaming platforms globally during these events. His interviews with top candidates drew significant audiences. Financially, he benefitted as well. He publicly stated his channel monetized at

around €300,000–400,000 per month, with viewership reaching up to 100 million views monthly. It became one of the most influential political channels—possibly more impactful than traditional mainstream media.

He leaned conservative and anti-establishment, so his outsider status likely influenced voters in a very close race.

Another major trend in digital campaigning was the full normalization of tools we would've seen as risky or experimental just a year ago—namely AI tools and synthetic media. Deepfakes and AI-generated content were everywhere during the campaign.

We saw AI-generated images of blonde, white women supposedly supporting Karl Navdotsky go viral on Meta and TikTok. There were TikTok “brain rot” videos with voiceovers pushing campaign messages. Chaskowski’s campaign even created an AI tool that let voters generate videos of him encouraging them by name to go vote. Some left-wing candidates used video game livestreaming to build audiences.

All of this content was expected to appear in small amounts, but the scale of it ended up being massive. It became hard to distinguish “regular” campaigning from the “digital” kind—it was all digital, and AI tools were completely normalized.

Jakub Szymik: So this is the background—the digital campaigning landscape we saw and monitored over the past few months. We’ll definitely release more insights into how the numbers translated into final results. But this very positive “above-the-line” side of the campaigning also has its shadow side—disinformation and elements that may undermine fair elections or even basic truths. For this, I’ll hand over to Aleksandra.

Aleksandra Wojtowicz: Thank you so much, Jacob. When it comes to disinformation channels, I’d like to first emphasize the changed social media platform landscape. At the beginning of the elections, many analysts didn’t see YouTube as a key platform—it was expected to be TikTok. However, once the campaign began, TikTok was indeed hugely important, but YouTube also played a very large role, particularly in disinformation.

There were three highly popular disinformation channels: Canal Zero (already mentioned by Jakub), Suavo Mirmensens (a far-right Confederacia candidate who interviewed both Navdotsky and Tzkovsky in the second round), and Mateusz Matak, the pro-Russian far-right candidate. He didn’t get many votes, but he was responsible for spreading many narratives online. So the disinformation environment ended up looking quite different from what we expected at first.

What did we actually see in terms of disinformation? It became very diverse and thus harder to track. One omnipresent trend was AI. Many disinformation actors used AI to produce a large volume of low-quality videos that still amplified content supporting specific candidates.

The sheer volume of content and the number of channels grew massively, making monitoring even harder. It became easier for creators to generate, promote, and publish content—again, likely thanks to AI tools.

We observed five key disinformation phenomena during the campaign:

1. Mateusz Matak’s TikTok: He promoted pro-Russian disinformation, including narratives about Russia being the only guarantor of peace in Europe. He also

spread bizarre conspiracy theories, like European leaders being addicted to drugs. Matak had a network of accounts affiliated with his organization, the Movement for Prosperity and Peace. These accounts were active on YouTube and later TikTok.

2. Virality of the Gregor Brown video: Just before the first election round, a video of Brown storming the Ministry of Industry, tearing down the EU flag, and harassing staff went viral—unprecedented levels of reach. While a one-off incident, it suggests there was likely some network helping amplify it beyond normal user shares.
3. TikTok Lives: These were used heavily to spread disinformation, illegal hate speech, and even incitement to violence. TikTok Lives are difficult to monitor in real-time, and since they're not saved or transcribed, they disappear quickly—making moderation and research extremely difficult.
4. Operation Doppelganger: A pro-Russian influence campaign targeting the EU, Ukraine, and spreading electoral disinformation. Previously they imitated news sites (e.g. der Spigel instead of der Spiegel), but now they've moved to social media—posting tweets with disinformation amplified by bot/troll networks. They also linked to real articles from fringe or even mainstream outlets to make disinformation seem credible. However, the language in these posts was clumsy—broken Polish, many grammar errors.
5. Operation Overload: Similar to Doppelganger, but focused exclusively on electoral disinformation—like false claims about bioweapons on postal ballots to discourage voting. These claims appeared on X and TikTok before and after both rounds. Claims of election fraud are sadly common in Poland, but they didn't go viral this time as much.

Aleksandra Wojtowicz: So those were the five key phenomena related to disinformation.

Now I'll hand over to Konrad to talk about what this campaign tells us about the broader political landscape.

Konrad Kiljan: Thank you all. Let's move to the next slide.

I'd like to consider what the campaign dynamics tell us about the broader political context. I'll share three points that may help when planning or analyzing future campaigns.

First, the role of security. As we've confirmed in multiple studies, security is one of the main concerns in our region—on the eastern flank of the EU. Security was central to the Polish Presidency narrative, but it turned out to be more important as a general theme than the presidency itself.

If you look at media coverage—both online and traditional—issues tied to the Polish EU Council Presidency weren't reported frequently and didn't attract much attention. Even though the government tried to engage EU bodies on security concerns, it was national institutions that were seen as more impactful.

As Russia continues increasing its military budget and the war in Ukraine drags on—and especially after the U.S. administration's announcement in February that they may not continue supporting Ukraine—security became the number-one issue for Polish voters.

That said, this did not translate into any candidate gaining a decisive edge—because all candidates agreed on the basics of security. For example, Tchowski promised to increase defense spending to 5% of GDP, and Navrotsky pledged to expand the size of the military.

The government introduced new national security measures—like the Eastern Shield, supported by the EU. At the same time, they suspended the right to asylum, a controversial but popular policy. On the right side of the screen, you can see a former general—now a YouTuber—discussing these topics in detail.

Weaponry procurement, tactical defense issues—all were widely discussed. So while security was a top concern, it didn't make any one campaign stand out. Candidates competed more on personal image than on policy. Navrotsky cast himself as a strong leader ready to stand up to Putin. Tchowski portrayed himself more as a diplomat, aiming to build a European coalition against authoritarian regimes.

In short, security united rather than divided the candidates—and the Polish EU Presidency remained in the background.

The second point is the increasing visibility of global actors in national politics. This is a growing trend—not just in Poland.

For instance, Elon Musk publicly supported and boosted tweets from Polish and Romanian politicians. You can see him here sharing a video from Patrick Yaki, an MEP who criticized the Digital Services Act, falsely claiming it could lead to people being jailed for liking posts online. Musk called it Orwellian and thanked the U.S. public for not allowing similar laws.

These moments reached wide global audiences. Navrotsky met with Donald Trump two weeks before the first round, took a photo with him, and discussed semiconductor manufacturing agreements. Details of the deal were unclear, but the meeting itself had a major impact, especially due to its virality and Trump's public endorsement.

Between the first and second rounds, there was also a Polish edition of CPAC (Conservative Political Action Conference) in Rzeszów. Conservative leaders gathered there, shared campaign tactics, and energized supporters. A separate Hungarian edition of CPAC will feature speakers like Ben Shapiro and members of Netanyahu's family. So we see a coordinated international populist/anti-elite alliance boosting each other's visibility and tactics.

Meanwhile, the liberal side was more cautious. Barack Obama visited Poland just three days before the first round, but didn't meet publicly with Polish liberals. He only held a discussion with historian Timothy Snyder. Polish liberals occasionally met with European leaders but didn't highlight those connections—possibly to avoid being seen as “foreign-backed.”

This resulted in a huge disparity in visibility and energy between conservative and liberal international engagements.

Konrad Kiljan: On the last slide, I want to reflect on the broader implications and trends we've seen in recent years.

A few years ago, the European People's Party started shifting slightly to the right, trying to absorb some of the populist agenda. You can see that in how they began presenting themselves as the defenders of borders and the protectors of Schengen by opposing migration.

Already in 2023, the Civic Platform (Platforma Obywatelska) ran a large campaign accusing the previous populist government of failing to secure Poland's borders—claiming they were responsible for rising migration. That messaging helped them win.

But the side effect of this was that the anti-migration agenda became mainstream. It was normalized, absorbed into centrist platforms. So in the most recent election, every candidate—including liberal Tchowski—framed themselves as someone who would reduce migration and oppose the Green New Deal (claiming it harmed Polish farmers), while also pledging to protect national sovereignty.

In the middle of the screen, you see meetings with the far-right candidate Ola mentioned earlier. This candidate, who gained 15% of the vote, met with both mainstream candidates and asked them to sign onto his policy platform in exchange for support.

Karol Navrotsky signed all 8 of his proposals. Rafał Tchowski signed most, hesitating only on Ukraine's NATO membership and some LGBT issues. Even so, he later met with the far-right candidate privately, took friendly photos drinking beer, and thereby normalized someone who, just a few years ago, would have been politically ostracized.

As a result, Confederacia—previously considered fringe—has now become a legitimate political force. According to current polls, no new government can be formed without them. They're now kingmakers.

Even more extremely, a new ultra far-right party emerged and still won over a million votes. Confederacia is now perceived by some as part of the establishment, even "plotting with elites." That perception has opened space for candidates like Jagos Brown, a monarchist who opposes democracy and the EU, and calls Confederacia traitors to true national values.

This seems to be the new political environment we're entering. The next elections are due in two years, but it's uncertain whether the current government will maintain support until then. Things could change rapidly.

Partisan: Thank you very much, Konrad. Thank you also to Jacob and Aleksandra. That was a really excellent deep dive. Let's stop screen sharing now.

Let me just tell the audience—of course, if you have questions, please post them in the Q&A. Meanwhile, let me ask: I know none of you are campaign consultants, but based on what you know and what you've analyzed—if you could advise the Tchowski campaign digitally, what would you have done differently?

Partisan: Jakob, do you want to start?

Jakub Szymik: Yes, of course. I'm happy to take this.

I'm not sure I saw much strategic thinking about digital affairs in this campaign. If you looked at the numbers back in January, you could've intervened. Tchowski's party didn't

mobilize its MPs well on TikTok. Their politicians were not as supportive online as the far-right MPs were of their own candidates.

Civic Coalition was very strong on Twitter—but Twitter isn't the most engaging or popular platform in Poland. Facebook is. And on Facebook, Law and Justice had twice as much following and engagement. That matters. It's the country's biggest platform.

So I'd start with very basic but strategic analysis of which platforms needed more attention. The data is publicly available. That's where I'd begin.

As for content or messaging—I'll leave that to Aleksandra.

Partisan: Just to clarify—so you're saying the campaign lacked a visible digital strategy, and even if it had one, it wasn't executed well, particularly because internal party members weren't actively supporting the candidate?

Jakub Szymik: I'm not saying digital guarantees victory, but both mainstream parties seem heavily reliant on traditional media. This election may have been the first where that wasn't enough. Law and Justice was more robust, more effective online.

Janski, one of Law and Justice's digital strategists, shared a post-mortem of their digital campaign—I'm happy to share the link. It's in Polish, but it highlights three or four major successes they had and how they approached them strategically.

I'm not sure the Civic Coalition could show a similar breakdown.

Partisan: Great, thank you. Konrad, Aleksandra—what should the campaign have done differently in the digital game?

Aleksandra Wojtowicz: Yes, I'll take that. Also, there's a question in the chat about TikTok Lives and how to deal with disinformation there.

When it comes to the campaign, I agree with what Jakub said: it's a matter of strategy. From my perspective—focusing on disinformation—I believe these elections showed a real need for a joint campaign to tackle disinformation. Several candidates relied on narratives that were either created domestically or amplified by foreign actors—like in the Doppelganger or Overload operations.

We don't yet have a clear, unified approach to this issue. And that's dangerous because disinformation does influence campaigns. It's not confined to its own bubble—it affects real candidates and their chances.

Regarding TikTok Lives—they're very difficult to moderate. TikTok reportedly has moderators who intervene when content is flagged, but it's still extremely challenging. These Lives can be brief, spontaneous, and hard to find unless you already follow the right accounts.

Even reporting them is a challenge—it's basically a full-time job. They're not archived, not transcribed, and once the Live ends, it's gone. You can't go back and verify what was said unless you recorded it yourself.

We did report harmful content to TikTok and got responses—they were cooperative. But this is a massive task. Moderating TikTok Lives effectively hasn't been solved yet. A step

forward would be TikTok increasing their live moderation resources, especially for elections.

Jakub Szymik: I'll just add—these TikTok Lives aren't archived anywhere. Once they're gone, they're gone. If an account is taken down or a new one is created, the content disappears. It's incredibly ephemeral, which makes research difficult. But yes, TikTok was generally responsive to our reports.

Aleksandra Wojtowicz: I'd like to respond to the follow-up about Twitch and Discord, too.

Yes, Twitch was also used for political lives—by different sides of the political spectrum, including those spreading disinformation. As for Discord, I haven't seen Lives there, but I can confirm that disinformation content is spread on Discord servers.

The problem is that many of these channels are closed communities—you have to apply and be accepted by a moderator. This makes monitoring even harder. So yes, it's likely happening widely, just in a different format than TikTok Lives.

Partisan: Thank you. We're entering the last 5 minutes. My final question to you all: Looking ahead to the next election—what changes do you expect? Do you think a proper digital strategy will emerge? Will the digital game shift? Konrad, let's start with you.

Konrad Kiljan: Thank you. I think we'll see more lifestyle content subtly embedding political worldviews. That was crucial in this election and will likely grow.

As Kuba showed with Channel Zero—the YouTuber candidate discussed football, funny videos, gossip—non-political content, but laced with political undertones. His followers didn't come for politics, but they absorbed those messages anyway.

This approach—combined with a well-oiled network of micro-influencers, reposting, and meme creators—was a huge advantage for the winning side. Other political players should adapt to this model.

Partisan: Jakub, final thoughts?

Jakub Szymik: There was also a question about Dominik Tarczyński in the chat. It's no surprise the international audience sees him and others—like Patrick Jaki—as key players. They are amplified by algorithms, especially on Twitter and TikTok, and embraced by the global MAGA and CPAC networks.

Their messages are aimed at building a new Europe—more skeptical of EU integration and aligned with conservative global messaging.

If you visit our website and look at the data from the campaign (published every two weeks), you'll see these far-right figures consistently outperformed others online. Since January and February, they were always there.

So the liberal side needs structural work: rebuild their networks, create engaging and entertaining content, find the gaps—and catch up.

Partisan: Aleksandra, final word to you. What changes do you foresee?

Aleksandra Wojtowicz: I agree with both Konrad and Jakob. In the next two years, we'll see more of what we've already seen: lifestyle content embedding politics, and

disinformation continuing to grow. One phenomenon not mentioned yet is the “tradwife” content—traditional wife influencers pushing ideological messaging under a lifestyle guise. I expect that to increase.

Will the liberal side develop a better strategy? I don’t know. Let’s keep our fingers crossed for the 2027 elections.

Partisan: Thank you. Thanks everyone for participating, and thanks to our partners. A great webinar. We’ll share the recording and summary soon. Thanks for all the questions—and have a great week, everyone.

Jakub Szymik: Bye. Thank you.

Aleksandra Wojtowicz: Thank you so much. Goodbye.

[End of transcript.]