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## **Elections in Poland: a revolution in polish European policy?**

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Europe: dream and culmination of the fathers of democratic Poland, primary objective, pursued with such impulse by governments of the 90's ... but now something seems to have changed.

The presidential elections of last May 24th were won by Andrzej Duda, leader of the Law and Justice Party (PiS), belonging to the family of so-called "Eurosceptics".

This vote is a result even more important if added with that of other movements more or less Eurosceptic, or "Euro-cold", in England, Spain, Greece, Italy.

Poland, being the first country where an Eurosceptic movement was winning the election of the Chief of the State and not only local or parliamentary ballots, is driving a change that is worrying Brussels.

If these elections have to be seen as a real change of direction of pro-european policy that Warsaw always undertaken, we'll find out in coming months when Duda, who formally will take office on August 6th, will make the first moves.

In fact it is not the first time that Europe is a central element in the Polish election campaign and already in 2001, long before the entrance in the EU, some movements as PiS arose clearly opposed this process. His front in 2005 gained both the Presidency of the Republic and the Government with brothers Kaczynski, but, despite that, Poland did not run out EU and instead caught the opportunities offered by the acquisition of European legislation in terms of market liberalization, mobility of people, and by the attraction of European structural funds for development, social cohesion and agriculture. A recent study shows that Poland is the best country in the use of Community funds.

The European economic policy and the advantages brought to the country are therefore not under discussion as in other EU Countries, but this EU disaffection might has its roots long ago, more than fifteen years ago, when Polish euro-skepticism was born.

But what are the reasons behind that?

First of all cultural ones: Poland, bastion and guardian of traditional values and jealous of her national identity, hard-won after centuries of foreign occupation, feels threatened within a secular and relativist Europe, disrespectful towards each member peculiarities.

Moreover there is immigration that Poland, managed alone during the 90s as is doing Italy today; the wave of emigrants, coming from Asia and former Soviet countries, crossed the long and porous east border, constituting a cost and a logistic problem for Poland. Fear of clash with different, which could threaten the European identity, was another subject as cheap labor, able to compete in the Polish one, both at home and in the rest of the EU, where many Poles, thanks to Schengen treaty, went to work. Nowadays immigration brings same problems as in the past, maybe accentuated: about them Poland, like others Countries, would a clear response from EU institutions, not always coming.

Finally "geo-strategic" questions, strictly connected to the "phantoms" of the past: today's Europe is controlled by Germany, the oldest polish enemy, that is sufficient to understand polish distrust about European institution. Germany was also the main buyer of polish public enterprises in '90s years privatizations, growing a never faded sense of "colonization".

And there's the other Polish historical enemy: Russia. For economic and strategic reasons Europe was always "soft on Moscow", avoiding conflicts with the Kremlin, holding back the creation of a missile defense system (the "missile shield" proposed by Bush Jr.) and preventing Union enlargement to other former Soviet countries, in particular Ukraine, so desired from Warsaw, which wishes a buffer-State between itself and Russia.

For these reasons Poland chooses to consolidate the alliance with the US, inside NATO, able to offer more guarantees in terms of national security. Recently US implemented military presence in the Baltic Sea organizing several operations, having Gdansk as center of the theater: these maneuvers underline closeness between Warsaw and Washington.

A closeness that Duda, convinced Atlanticist, will further increase and which Europe, particularly France and Germany, should take into account, because it can contrast with the line of building an independent Union in its international action and unmarked by US leadership. This will be the most important news taken from Presidential Polish elections.