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**2025 Polish Election Analysis:**

**The Causes & Impact of Nawrocki's**

**Victory**

**By**

**Christian Georgiou**



**3 July 2025**

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For information about Rosa&Roubini Associates, please send an email to [info@rosa-roubini-associates.com](mailto:info@rosa-roubini-associates.com) or call +44 (0)20 7101 0718.

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Christian Georgiou

## 2025 Polish Election Analysis:

### The Causes & Impact of Nawrocki's Victory

3 July 2025

#### Executive Summary

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- ✦ **Nawrocki won by echoing nationalist sentiment, securing international endorsement, and by uniting the right.** His stance on Ukrainian refugees resonated with the electorate, and his prominence was bolstered by meeting President Donald Trump in May. His agreement with Slawomir Mentzen secured an electoral majority.
- ✦ **Nawrocki's successful self-portrayal as a smear campaign victim helped secure electoral success.** His wife's viral comment – that she 'catches gangsters, not marry them' – aided his campaign rather than denting it.
- ✦ **Polish legislative paralysis on certain issues is likely.** Nawrocki has pledged to use his veto power to block a range of policies concerning the EU and judicial reform.
- ✦ **The Law and Justice Party is likely to benefit.** The election of its endorsed candidate reintroduces its prominence in Polish politics. Nawrocki's veto power has the potential to cause a snap election if it sufficiently interrupts key legislation.
- ✦ **European Union & Weimar Triangle relations will suffer.** While broader cooperation is expected to continue concerning Russia's war in Ukraine, Nawrocki's campaign statement and veto pledges are likely to mitigate Donald Tusk's attempts to thaw broader Poland-EU relations.

#### Key Picture: Vote Distributions by Administrative Regions (Volvodeships)



Source: RTE

## Introduction

Karol Nawrocki, an independent candidate endorsed by the Law and Justice Party ('PiS'), was elected President of Poland in a political upset on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2025, following two rounds of voting. His election represents a tone shift away from Prime Minister Donald Tusk's pro-EU policies, and is likely to frustrate and potentially deadlock the Polish legislature. This article explores the core aspects surrounding his victory, as well as assessing the likely impact of his presidency, which will commence on 6<sup>th</sup> June 2025.

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## Section 1: Why Did Nawrocki Win?

Nawrocki's victory is the result of two core considerations: having successfully tapped into nationalist 'Poland First' sentiment, and by having positioned himself as the 'primary' right-wing candidate within Poland. These were achieved by successfully portraying allegations of criminality as a smear campaign, securing international recognition, and securing the backing of right-wing New Hope candidate Slawomir Mentzen.

### 1.1 Domestic Sentiment & International Recognition

Nawrocki campaigned extensively under the slogan 'Poland First, Poles First'<sup>1</sup>, amplifying nationalist concerns regarding contemporary migration. Poland has accepted approximately one million Ukrainian refugees since the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, becoming a political and domestic issue in its own right<sup>2</sup>. While not unique in his anti-immigrant political platform, Nawrocki's efforts were given significantly more air-time – and thus legitimacy – through a meeting with U.S. President Donald Trump on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2025<sup>3</sup>. These two elements combined – resonating with voter concerns, and earning recognition internationally – are critical to his coming second in the first round of voting, where he received 29.5% of the vote compared to Civic Coalition Trzaskowski's 31.3%.

### 1.2 Scandal Management & Uniting the Right

Following the first round of voting, Nawrocki came under increasing press scrutiny for alleged criminality and criminal links – including allegations of football hooliganism<sup>4</sup>, pimping<sup>5</sup>, and connections to elements of Poland's 'criminal underworld'<sup>6</sup>. Rather than denting his campaign, he succeeded in portraying himself as the victim of a coordinated smear campaign. This was aided by his wife, an employee at Poland's National Revenue Administration, whose following comment went domestically viral: 'I chase gangsters, I don't marry them'<sup>7</sup>.

Preceding the second round of voting, Nawrocki secured the support of third-place candidate Slawomir Mentzen's voters by signing a list of eight pledges, which includes promises to block any potential accession of Ukraine to NATO and the possibility of Polish soldiers being sent to Ukraine<sup>8</sup>. This agreement led to a transfer of 90% of Mentzen's voter base voting for Nawrocki during the second round, ultimately precipitating his narrow victory<sup>9</sup>.

## Section 2: Impact Assessment: Future Trade

### 2.1 Veto Power: Governmental Polarisation & Issue-Specific Paralysis

While broadly ceremonial, the Polish presidency carries a veto over domestic legislation. Nawrocki has pledged to use this to hinder Prime Minister Donald Tusk's Pro-EU reforms, as well as to meet the pledges agreed with Slawomir Mentzen<sup>10</sup>. Beyond reflecting this new dichotomy in Polish politics – the duality of a pro-EU Prime Minister and a eurosceptic President – Nawrocki's pledged usage of his veto may lead to legislative paralysis within Poland. With dialogue between the opposition-controlled government and nationalist presidency thus far appearing 'impossible', this is likely to foster legislative deadlock; although policies may pass the Polish lower house of Parliament (the Sejm) only to be vetoed shortly thereafter. This appears most likely to thwart the Tusk government's efforts to roll back PiS-led judicial changes<sup>11</sup>.

## 2.2 Potential for Law & Justice Party Resurgence

Furthermore, the election of a PiS-endorsed candidate has firmly strengthened the likelihood of a PiS resurgence in Polish politics – strategic use of the Presidential veto, most notably vetoing the Polish national budget, may be considered as a potential means to collapsing Donald Tusk’s government coalition in a bid to force a national election<sup>12</sup>. Whether this comes to pass or not, the prospect of issue-specific paralysis is likely to ‘outsize’ PiS influence within domestic politics, strengthening their position for the remainder of Tusk’s premiership.

## 2.3 The Weimar Triangle & Broader EU

Nawrocki’s presidency is poised to prioritise sovereignty over solidarity and is likely to overturn the thawing of Poland-EU relations enjoyed during Tusk’s premiership to date. Whereas Tusk’s government enjoyed a German state visit from Chancellor Friedrich Merz on the first day of his chancellorship, Nawrocki has explicitly stated that he will not be ‘a butler for German interests’ and promised to demand WWII reparations from Germany on his campaign trail<sup>13</sup>. Whereas international dialogue is very likely to remain open due to the security threat posed by Russia, the reversal of Tusk’s positive overtures - coupled with Nawrocki’s pledges to veto further EU integration - are likely to render Weimar Triangle and EU-based collaboration difficult. This is likely to impact projects focusing on greater EU integration<sup>14</sup>. Beyond Poland alone, Nawrocki’s election adds to a recent string of right-wing electoral success stories across Europe, many of whom have warmly received his election. The intra-EU development of a far-right, illiberal EU bloc may well pose larger questions of European stability in the years to come<sup>15</sup>.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Original Polish: 'Popierwsze Polska, po pierwsze Polacy'

<sup>2</sup> Statista, 'Ukrainian Refugees by Country 2025', Statista, 2025, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1312584/ukrainian-refugees-by-country/>; Will Vernon, "'Go Back to Ukraine": War Refugees Complain of Abuse in Poland', BBC News, 14 May 2025, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/clygv2dj78zo>. Page | 6

<sup>3</sup> Karol Nawrocki [@NawrockiKn], 'Great Meeting with @POTUS. It Was an Honour to Discuss the Bright Future of Poland-U.S. Relations.', Tweet, Twitter, 2 May 2025, <https://x.com/NawrockiKn/status/1918104003046408382>.

<sup>4</sup> Krzysztof Mularczyk, 'Polish PiS Presidential Challenger Targeted for Alleged Football Hooliganism', Brussels Signal, 26 May 2025, <https://brusselssignal.eu/2025/05/polish-pis-presidential-challenger-targeted-for-alleged-football-hooliganism/>.

<sup>5</sup> Andrzej Stankiewicz, 'Karol Nawrocki i tajemnice Grand Hotelu', Onet Wiadomości, 05:23 200AD, <https://wiadomosci.onet.pl/wybory/wybory-prezydenckie/karol-nawrocki-i-tajemnice-grand-hotelu-zrodla-onetu-uczestniczyl-w-procederze/kqwwbef>.

<sup>6</sup> Jacek Harlukowicz, 'Karol Nawrocki i jego znajomy neonazista. Kłopoty z pamięcią kandydata PiS na prezydenta', Onet Wiadomości, 12:00 100AD, <https://wiadomosci.onet.pl/tylko-w-onecie/karol-nawrocki-i-jego-znajomy-neonazista-klopoty-z-pamiecica-kandydata-pis/t6e6cp4>.

<sup>7</sup> Gazeta Prawna, 'Wybory prezydenckie 2025. Dr Annusewicz wskazuje błąd sztabu Trzaskowskiego: Nie wygrywa się wyborów na negatywnej kampanii', Gazeta Prawna, 2 June 2025, <https://www.gazetaprawna.pl/wiadomosci/kraj/artykuly/9812935,wybory-prezydenckie-2025-karol-nawrocki-wygral-bo-pokazywal-sie-jak.html>.

<sup>8</sup> Daniel Tilles, 'Polish Opposition Presidential Candidate Signs Far-Right Leader's List of Demands', *Notes From Poland* (blog), 22 May 2025, <https://notesfrompoland.com/2025/05/22/polish-opposition-presidential-candidate-signs-far-right-leaders-list-of-demands/>.

<sup>9</sup> Jon Henley, 'Populist Nawrocki's Triumph Threatens Poland's Place at Europe's Top Table', *The Guardian*, 2 June 2025, sec. World news, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/jun/02/poland-election-populist-nawrocki-triumph-threatens-place-at-europe-top-table>.

<sup>10</sup> Katarzyna Kubacka, 'Who Is Poland's Newly Elected President, Karol Nawrocki?', euronews, 11:00:40 +02:00, <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2025/06/02/who-is-polands-newly-elected-president-karol-nawrocki>.

<sup>11</sup> Henley, 'Populist Nawrocki's Triumph Threatens Poland's Place at Europe's Top Table'.

<sup>12</sup> Katarzyna Waś-Smarczewska, 'Zagraniczne media o wyborach w Polsce. "Wygrał nacjonalista Karol Nawrocki, a centrowy rząd poniósł porażkę"', Bankier.pl, 2 June 2025, <https://www.bankier.pl/wiadomosc/Zagraniczne-media-komentuja-wyniki-wyborow-prezydenckich-w-Polsce-Zwyciestwo-Nawrockiego-niespodzianka-8953220.html>.

<sup>13</sup> Poland Daily 24, 'Karol Nawrocki at the Congress of the Polish Village: "Hands Off Polish Land. Poland Needs a President, Not a Butler for German Interests"', *Poland Daily 24* (blog), 5 April 2025, 24, <https://polanddaily24.com/karol-nawrocki-at-the-congress-of-the-polish-village-hands-off-polish-land-poland-needs-a-president-not-a-butler-for-german-interests/poland-today/53857>; 'Inaugural Visit to Warsaw by Federal Chancellor Merz | Federal Government', Website of the Federal Government | Bundesregierung, accessed 20 June 2025, <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-en/news/merz-tusk-2346010>.

<sup>14</sup> Raphael Minder, 'Karol Nawrocki Win Deals Blow to Poland's EU Agenda', *Financial Times*, 2 June 2025; Henry Foy, Paola Tamma, and Laura Dubois, 'Poland's New President Puts EU Billions and Trade Goals at Risk', *Financial Times*, 2 June 2025.

<sup>15</sup> Jakub Krupa and Jon Henley, 'Orbán and Le Pen Cheer Karol Nawrocki's Election as Polish President', *The Guardian*, 2 June 2025, sec. World news, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/jun/02/orban-le-pen-cheer-karol-nawrocki-election-polish-president>; 'Donald J. Trump: "TRUMP ALLY WINS IN POLAND, SHOCKING

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