Varieties of institutionalised populism …

One of the more interesting phenomena of the period during which the referendum on accession to the European Union was held, in 2003, was the strong connection between the voting ‘for’ or ‘against’ membership of the European Union and the voting in the previous parliamentary elections, in 2001. In this article, two competing hypotheses in respect of the emergence of new political parties, on the precise occasion of Poland’s accession to the European Union, and, in a way, because of it, are tested in reference to the phenomenon observed. The first hypothesis assumes that the voters’ attitudes toward the European Union were formed by the parties they identified with. The other suggests that a Eurosceptic electorate existed in Poland at the beginning of the new Millennium, but was not represented by the main parties of the Polish party system, which is why, with the referendum pending, the new parties made use of this fact in order to make political capital out of these unrepresented voters. It is to this that they owe their success at that time.