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Eesti tuleviku heaks

Political parties and party systems in the Baltic States

Part I

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Objectives of the lecture

- To introduce some new concepts: political party, party system, electoral systems, etc.
- To provide a general overview about the main characteristics of the party systems the Baltic countries
- To provide a more detailed overview about the party systems in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania
- To introduce briefly some major parties in the Baltic politics
- To provide a brief overview about the electoral systems in the Baltic States

Outcomes of the lecture

- The basic knowledge about the main characteristics of the party systems in the Baltic States
- The basic knowledge how party systems and electoral systems differ in the Baltic States country by country
- The basic knowledge about some most prominent parties in the Baltic politics

Origins of the conflicts: independence movements I

- Lithuania – *Sajudis* had two fractions:
 - moderate group – Vilnius, liberal, Western-orientated, moderate with Moscow;
 - radical group – Kaunas, nationalist, radical with Moscow, anti-democratic, church influenced. Lead by Landsbergis.
- Beside Sajudis strong Communist Party – lead by reform communists (Brazauskas).
- The essential conflict in Lithuanian politics in the early 1990's: moderate, Russian friendly left wing *versus* nationalist, anti-Russian, church influenced right wing
- Latvia and Estonia nationalist radicals formed their own semi-parliaments – Congresses

Origins of the conflicts: independence movements II

- Latvia:
 - Popular Front more unified (1 million members).
 - Latvian Congress quite weak
 - Strong pro-Soviet Inter-movement. Strong Inter-movement forced more consolidation inside pro-independence movement.
- Estonia – Popular Front strong, but since 1990 Congress offered strong counterbalance.
 - National Front – Soviet time specialists, reform communists;
 - Congress – dissidents and national radicals. Congress became more influential in 1991 when popular support of the Popular Front decreased.

Main conflicts in Baltic politics

- Main conflicts rather elite-based and having their roots in independence movement:
- Estonia – elite fractions + personalistic dimension:
Tensions between Congress and Popular Front. Struggle between old and new elite. Personalistic dimension also salient
- Latvia – ethnic cleavages: Conflict between Russian minority and Latvians. More moderate Latvian politicians versus Latvian nationalists.
- Lithuania – communist/anti-communist + ideological:
 - Nationalist and church-influenced right wing (basing on Sajudis radicals)
 - More Russian friendly, former communist based left wing.

Social cleavages

- Lipset & Rokkan 1960's. Parties are basing on these cleavages:
 - Class cleavages – became more important in the second half of the 1990's when transition process produced “winners” and “losers”. Dominant rather in Lithuania
 - Urban-rural. Emerged especially after economic reforms in 1st half of the 1990's, when economic changes and orientation to the Western market hit rural districts. Important in all 3 Baltic states (especially in the 1990's)
 - Center-periphery (ethnic cleavage) – Latvia and Estonia. Especially in Latvia.
 - Church-State – Estonia – religion is absolutely unimportant. Religious dimension has some importance in Latvia, but especially strong in Lithuania
- In CEE context Lipset-Rokkan valid only in some extent

Political parties - theory

- Political parties – main objective to gain the power.
- Emerged in the II half of the 19th century.
- Types:
 - Cadre parties: 19th century, franchise was limited, fractions in parliament, rather elitist clubs, weak organization, precursors of today's right wing parties
 - Mass parties: I half of 20th century: wide electoral base, strong ideological base, mobilizing working class, strong organization, local organizations, newspapers, activists.
 - Catch all parties: since 1960's. "Something for everyone". Try to get support from different social classes and groups. Instead ideology pragmatic marketing and tactics.
 - Cartel parties: financed from state budget. Part of the state structures not very rooted into society.

Functions in democracy

- Representation and interest articulation – articulate views of voters, represent and articulate various interests found in society.
- Elite formation and recruitment – training ground politicians (skills, knowledge, experiences).
- Goal formulation – party programs, program of the government
- Political mobilization and socialization – mobilize people, educate them politically, etc
- Organizing the government: forming opposition, formulating and implementing policies

Party systems and electoral systems

- Predominant party system – one party obtains over 50%
- Two-party system – USA, UK. Ideological distance between parties is not very big. Sometimes the third party represented (UK – Liberal Democrats)
- Moderate multi-party system – 4-6 parties, ideological distance is not very big, extremists are not usually presented or influential, coalition governments. Scandinavia, Baltic States.
- Segmented multi-party system – parties are concentrating on very district segments of electorate.
- Extreme multi-party system – a lot of small parties, extremists represented, ideological distance between some parties unsurpassable, only centre parties in government. Weimar Republic, Interwar Baltic States

Electoral systems

- Single Member Plurality systems – winner should get majority (over 50%) of the votes in district, other votes are not accounted. “First-pass-the-post”. USA, UK.
- Proportional (PR system) – votes given in the districts and distribution of the seats in the parliament are corresponding to each other proportionally (Party A 30% - 30 seats, Party B 20% - 20 seats)
- Mixed system – elements from both combined. (Germany, Hungary)

Electoral systems in Baltic States I

- Latvia and Estonia proportional. Lithuania mixed
- 5% threshold (in Lithuania for ethnic parties 3%; Latvia before 1996 – 4%). Scandinavia 2-4%.
- Parliaments elected 4 years interval, Lithuanian Seimas 141, Latvian Seimas 100, Estonia 101 seats
- Estonia (PR system)
 - Most complex. Triple-tier system:
 - 1. tier - personal mandate – if surpasses the quota of district (quota = votes/available mandates - means very strong support);
 - 2nd tier – party list should surpasses the quota (stronger support) and 5% threshold, first names in the party list get elected;
 - 3rd tier – all remaining votes gathered together and distributed by d'Hont formula, so bigger parties and politicians occupying top positions in the lists are in more favorable position.
 - Gives advantage to bigger parties and more powerful politicians.

Electoral systems in Baltic States II

- Latvia (PR system)
 - Simple proportional. 5% threshold.
 - Voter gives direct vote to party list at first and after that he/she can express his/her support (marking “+”) and negative opinion (marking “-”) within the list.
 - In this way voters rank candidates not party leaders.
- Lithuania (mixed system)
 - 70 members of Seimas are elected using single member plurality, 71 members using proportional party list system.
 - Single member constituencies: candidates obtain over 50% votes are elected, remaining two successful candidates go to the second round.
 - Proportional: at least 25% of voters should cast the vote.
 - Two ballots –one for party, one for candidate. Two rounds.
 - Favors bigger parties, but provides smaller parties an opportunity to get minimal representation. Big fluctuations.

Parties in the Baltic States – origin

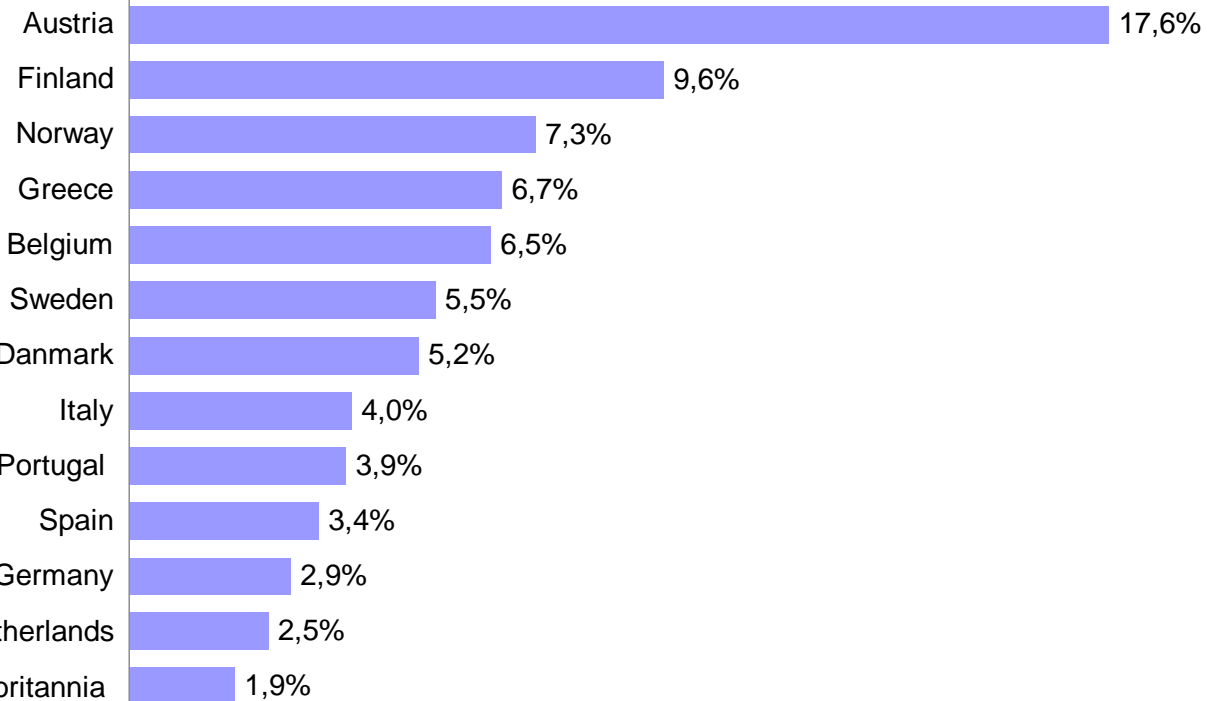
- First parties emerged in 1905.
- Interwar parties:
 - Very fragmented party system - 5% threshold was missing
 - Similar to Weimar Rep. From communists to fascists.
 - Estonia – strong rural parties, weaker socialists.
 - Latvia – strong socialists.
 - Lithuania – confrontation between socialists and church inclined nationalists
- First party in USSR – ENIP in Estonia 1988.
- 1989-1991 new parties emerged. Parties formed through de-fragmentation of the Popular Fronts (or Congresses). Later several newcomers.

Parties in Baltic S. - main features

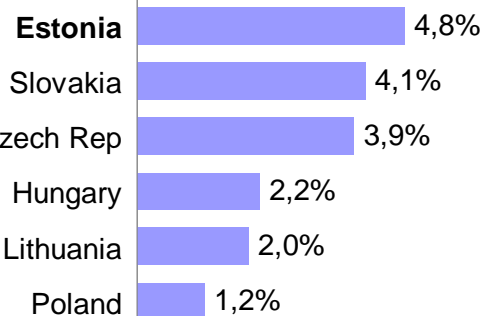
- Parties are basing not so much on social cleavages, but have their origins in independence movement. Ideology+cleavage-based voting not very prominent
- Party system is still in developing phase – newcomers, some disappear, some merge, some change the name.
- Fragmented party systems (even in CEE context)
- Other features:
 - Low party identification and party membership.
 - Fluctuations in party support are high (volatility)
 - Anti-party attitudes in society - poor linkage with people
 - Party support not very linked with social cleavages.
- The Problem: not so much rooted into society, but rather elitist institutions, founded to pursue certain kind of economic policies or reforms (in the early 1990's).

Party membership (% of electorate)

Western Europe



CEE



EU average 4,9%

0% 0,02% 0,04% 0,06% 0,08% 0,1% 0,12% 0,14% 0,16% 0,18% 0,2%

Fragmentation of party systems in CEE 1994 - 2004

	Effective number of electoral parties	Effective number of parliamentary parties
Hungary	4,20	2,83
Czech Rep.	4,96	3,78
Slovakia	6,67	5,09
Poland	4,53	3,28
Lithuania	6,43	3,73
Latvia	7,74	6,03
Estonia	6,06	4,77

Source: Jungerstam-Mulders 2006

Splits and mergers in CEE

	Splits	Mergers	Total
Hungary	3	1	4
Czech R.	2	2	4
Slovakia	9	6	15
Poland	5	4	9
Lithuania	0	4	4
Latvia	3	7	10
Estonia	5	10	15

Source: Biezen & Caramani 2007

Electoral volatility in CEE

	2 nd elections	3 nd elections	4 nd elections	5 nd elections	6 nd elections	Total
Hungary	24,2	34,6	20,8	7,8	-	21,9
Czech R	19,3	31,6	14,8	14,1	17,3	19,4
Slovakia	20,2	17,0	19,5	16,0	25,3	19,6
Poland	30,6	22,6	49,7	32,1	-	33,8
Lithuania	37,4	47,5	49,7	-	-	44,9
Latvia	42,9	42,1	43,4	13,4	-	35,5
Estonia	27,3	34,2	27,3	21,6	-	27,6

Source: Biezen & Caramani 2007

Voter turnout in CEE

	Average 1992 – 2007
Hungary	65,9
Czech Republic	68,2
Slovakia	71,6
Poland	48,1
Lithuania	59,9
Latvia	73,4
Estonia	62,8

Source: <http://www.idea.int/vt/central.cfm>