Political parties and party systems in the Baltic States Part II

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Estonia – party system

- <u>Party system has two origins</u>:
  - Popular Front – rather left wing parties (Central Party);
  - Congress rather right wing (Pro Patria).
- Later some newcomers – e.g. Reform party 1994
- <u>Gradual stabilization</u>:
  - 1992 - 9 parties in Parliament, 2007 - 6.
  - 1997 – 30 parties registered, 2006 – 14.
  - Support to 3 major parties: 1992 – 57%, 2007 – 76%
- <u>6-party system</u> (with 3 dominant parties)
- Ideological dimension weak – personalities matter more
- Strong rightist inclination – social democrats weak
- After 2003 no Russian parties in parliament.

Estonia - Parties

- **Centre Party** – left wing. Rather leader-centred (Savisaar). Losers of transition, neutral towards Russians and communist past. Both Estonian and Russian supporters (80% of Russian population!)
- **Reform Party** – neo-liberal. Young people, rather winners of transition. Now like a catch all party
- **Pro Patria and Res Publica Union –** 2 parties merged in 2006:
  - Pro Partia – nationalist, right wing, neo-conservative. Initiator of Estonian neo-liberal reforms. M. Laar
  - Res Publica – right wing. Failure in 2004 – 2006.
- **Peoples Party** – left. Rural districts. Now marginal
- **Greens** – founded in 2006. Too narrow scope
- **Social Democrats** – social democratic ideology

Estonia – elections 1992 - 2003

- <u>1992</u> - Pro Patria (Congress) won, Central Party (Popular Front) failed.
- <u>1995</u> – Coalition Party (pragmatic reform communists, without certain ideology) won. Pro Patria failed.
- <u>1999</u> – Anti-Center Party alliance (Pro Patria, Social Democrats, Reform Party)
- <u>2003</u> – Res Publica (a new rightist populists) and Central Party most successful
- **General logic**: voters punish government parties and support opposition

Estonia - Elections 2007

- Reform Party – 28% (31 seats)
- Centre Party – 26 (29 seats)
- Pro Patria and Res Publica Union (IRL) – 18% (19 seats)
- Social Democrats – 11% (10 seats)
- Greens – 7% (6 seats)
- Peoples Party – 7% (6 seats)

- Conclusions:
  - Stabilization – governmental parties were successful
  - Greens – a new comer who didn't un-stabilize the system
- Current coalition: Reform Party + IRL + Social Democrats

Latvia – party system

- Party system has 3 origins:
  - Popular Front (Latvian Way, Harmony Party),
  - Congress (Fatherland and Freedom)
  - Russian movement/Communists (Russian parties)
- After every new elections newcomers on arena!
- Party system more fragmented than in Estonia
- Now 6-7-party system. Small parties are merged.
- Strong Russian parties – but never in government
- Leftist parties are weak or connected with Russians
- Cleavages
  - In the 1990s - Ethnic cleavage, ideological dim. weak
  - 2000's – politics slightly more ideology-based but parties connected with local oligarchs and have lost legitimacy
- The most unstable party system in CEE

Latvia – parties II

- <u>Latvian Way</u> (LL) – 1993, directly from Popular Front, liberal. 2002 failure. 2006 merged with Latvian 1th Party

- <u>For Human Rights in Latvia</u> –Russian party (radical)

- <u>Harmony Centre</u> (a Russian coalition – social democratic)
  - National Harmony Party (Latvian National Front) - moderate
  - Socialist Party (Inter Movement, Communists) – more radical

- <u>Peoples Party</u> – founded in 1998, nationalist, conservative, in the 2000's one of the most popular

Latvia – parties II

- <u>For Fatherland and Freedom</u> (FF) – nationalist, origins Latvian Congress (Independence Movement + Fatherland and Freedom). Supported in rural districts. (6%)
- <u>Greens and Farmers</u>– farmers, rural districts (17%).
- <u>New Era Party</u> – Program stressed fighting against corruption, rightist, populist (2002 - 24%; 2006 – 16%)
- <u>Latvian First Party</u> – populist, rightist (9,5% - 2002). Now merged with Latvian Way

Latvia - elections

- ## 1993
  - Latvian Way most successful (36%).
  - Independence Movement, Russian parties also succesful
- ## 1995. New comers successful:
  - Democratic Party (populists, disappeared),
  - J. Siegerist party (disappeared).
  - Governmental parties (Latvian Way, etc.) failed
- ## 1998
  - Peoples Party (Skele) – 21%,
  - Latvian Way (18%), FF (16%), Harmony Center (14%)
- ## 2002
  - A big earthquake – several successful new comers and total failure for older parties
  - New Era Party (24%), For Human Rights (19%), Peoples Party (16%), Latvian Way didn't surpass 5% (0 seats),

Latvia: elections 2006

- Peoples Party - 19% (23 seats)
- Greens and Farmers - 17% (18 seats)
- New Era Party – 16% (18 seats)
- National Harmony Center – 14% (17 seats)
- Latvian First Party and Latvian Way Union - 9% (10 seats)
- For Fatherland and Freedom - 7% (8 seats)
- For Human Rights in Latvia – 6% (6 seats)

- Aigars Kalvitis government: Peoples Party + Greens and Farmers + Latvian First Party + FF (resigned in December 2007,)
- <u>General logic</u>:
  - 1993 - 2006: governmental parties get punished → new comers. New comers fail → old parties back.
  - Last elections – a very brief stabilization for first time. No new comers. No total failures for older parties

Lithuania – party system

- <u>Party system has 2 origins</u>:
  - Sajudis (Homeland Union - conservatives),
  - Communist Party (Social Democratic Party – left wing)
- <u>Before 2000 quite stable two-party system</u>
  - 2 dominant parties (Social Dem. vs. Homeland Union)
  - 3 smaller parties
- <u>Cleavages:</u>
  - In the 1990's – communist-anti-communist
  - In the 2000's – socio-economic cleavage
- Stronger ideological dimension than in Estonia
- <u>2000</u> – a total transformation of the party system:
  - Center weak - several newcomers in center
  - The 2000's – a lot of mergers, splits between new parties
- Fluctuation of party support high (electoral system)

Lithuania – parties I

- <u>Social Democratic Party of Lithuania:</u>
  - leader for a long time A. Brazauskas.
  - Democratic Labour Party (Brazauskas – former communists) + Social Dem Party (merged 2001)
  - Social democratic ideology
- <u>Homeland Union:</u>
  - Rightist wing of Sajudis,
  - nationalists, conservative
  - leader for a long time V. Landsbergis.
  - Merged with Christian Democrats in 2000
- <u>National Resurrection Party</u> – founded in 2008
- <u>Order and Justice</u> – R. Paksas bloc. Founded in 2002. Populist, nationalist

Lithuania – parties II

- <u>Labour Party</u> – founded by by V. Uspaskich 2003, leftist, populist,

- <u>Liberal and Centre Union</u> – Liberal Union and Center Union merged in 2003

- <u>Liberals' Movement</u> – 2006, dissidents from Liberal and Centre Union, conservative/liberal

- <u>New Union</u> –1998 by Paulauskas – now marginal

- Now a 7-party system, more fragmented than in the 1990's.

Lithuania – Elections

- **1992**:
  - Sajudis bloc (Homeland Union) failed (21% of seats),
  - Democratic Labour Party (Brazauskas) successful (52% of seats).
  - Christian Democrats (13% of seats), Social Democrats (7% seats)
- **1996:**
  - An Opposite situation. Democratic Labour Party failed (9%)
  - Homeland Union most successful (50%).
  - Christian Democrats (11%), Social Dem (9%), Centre Union (9%)
- **2000**
  - Several newcomers in center. Older parties failed or merged.
  - Social Dem+Dem Labour (Brazauskas – 36%), Homeland Union (8%).
  - Liberal Union (24%), New Union (Palauskas – 21%),
  - Mergers: Centre Union + Liberal Union; Christian Dem + Homeland U.
- **2004**
  - Populist newcomers – further fragmentation.
  - Labour Party (Uspaskich 28%)
  - Freedom and Justice (Paksas – 9%), Liberal Centre Union (13%)
  - Homeland U. (18%), New Union +Social Democrats (22%)

Lithuania elections 2008

- Homeland Union - 31% of seats
- Social Democrates – 18%
- National Resurrection Party (Valinskas) – 11%
- Order and Justice – 11%
- Liberal Movement - 8%
- Labour Party – 7%
- Liberal and Centre Union – 6%
- Polish Party, New Uninon, Peasants Union - 2%

- <u>Conclusion</u>:
  - Populists and new parties came in 2000 and 2004 failed
  - New populists – but they were not so successful
  - Further fragmentation, however two old major parties were quite successful

Baltic States compared with Scandinavia and Central Europe

- Compared with <u>Scandinavia</u>:
  - Very different – ideological dimension, social democracy, stability
  - Maybe most similar to Finland (3 dominant parties). Very different from Sweden
- Compared with <u>Central Europe</u> (Visegrad countries)
  - Ideological dimension is weaker. Instability and fluctuations in party support – these are the same
  - Lithuania is belonging more to Central Europe (much more similar to Poland than to Estonia)
  - Estonia and Latvia are more unique cases

Conclusion

- <u>Estonia</u>
  - Rather stabilizing 6-5-party system,
  - Conflicts between leaders and elite-fraction-based conflicts matter more than ideologies and social cleavages

- <u>Latvia</u>
  - Quite unstable 6-8 party system.
  - The most unstable party system in the Baltic State
  - More similar to Ukraine or Yeltsin's Russia (business-politics linkage).
  - Ethnic dimension much stronger than in Estonia

- <u>Lithuania</u>
  - Stronger ideological dimension, basing more on cleavages
  - To 2000 quite stable and logical party system. After that fragmentation and several newcomers.
  - Some prospects for stabilization in future

Governments - stability

- <u>Latvia</u> 1991-2008 – 14 governments. Average duration 1-1,5 years.

- <u>Lithuania</u> 1991-2007 – 11 governments, but several of them have been in office 3-5 years (Brazauskas cabinet 2001 – 2006 – 5 years!).

- <u>Estonia</u> 1991-2007 – 11 governments. Average duration 2 years.

- <u>Conclusion</u>:
  - <u>Lithuania</u> - several long-lived coalitions, alongside several short-lived.
  - Latvia and Estonia rather short-lived governments.
  - Latvia has seen probably the most unstable coalitions

Exercises

- Compare the party systems in different Baltic countries with each other!
  - Latvia and Estonia
  - Estonia and Lithuania
  - Lithuania and Latvia
- Search for more literature about the following dominant parties in the Baltic Politics (in the internet, in the libraries)! What are the ideological stances of these parties and in what way they are manifested through the party programs?
  - Reform Party (Estonia)
  - Peoples Party (Latvia)
  - Social Democratic Party (Lithuania)
- Compare the party systems in the Baltic States with Western Europe. What are the main divergences?
- Compare the party systems in the Baltic States with the party system in your own home country. What are the main differences? Could you find some similarities?

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Suggested reading

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