



Research summary: “Parties and the Political System in Lithuania“

The Lithuanian party system could be defined as a multi-party system that is still under-development and where one dominant party may emerge from time to time. The moderate pluralist party system is transforming into a fragmented extreme pluralist system. Political crises in the presidential and *Seimas* institutions damaged the stability and consistent strengthening of the party system. Compromised traditional political parties created conditions not only for the rise of a new dominant party, but also for the fundamental change of the party system as a whole.

At the moment there are four strong systemic parties in Lithuania (Social Democratic Party, “New Union”, Liberal and Central Union, and Homeland Union), which seek to maintain the existing political system and its legitimacy. Three most important anti-systemic parties (Labour Party, Liberal Democratic Party and Peasant and New Democratic Party Union) seek to change the existing political system and type of control. By doing so, they decrease the legitimacy of the current political system. Anti-systemic parties seek to attract the protest electorate, which currently accounts for a third of all the voters.

According to the currently available data, it is possible to produce three scenarios of the results of election to the *Seimas*. According to scenario A, Labour Party would get 37-53 mandates and would possess the right to initiate the forming of the majority. However, it would need a strong coalition partner. It is assumed that Labour Party would firstly look for a potential coalition partner among the traditional parties (social liberals, social democrats and maybe social centrists). According to scenario B, Labour Party would get around 49-62 mandates and would be able to form the majority without any major difficulties, by inviting even smaller parties or some independent politicians. According to scenario C, Labour Party and the coalition of social democrats and social liberals would get similar number of mandates (34-44 and 29-43 accordingly). They would also have the same right to initiate the forming of the majority. This scenario would provide an opportunity to form a ‘grand coalition’ of all four traditional parties. Even though such government would be ideologically diverse, it could be united by the common stance towards long-term state goals and by the pragmatic aim not to let anti-systemic parties ruin the current political system.

After election to the *Seimas*, Lithuanian party system may develop according to three scenarios: a) it may switch to the type of extreme pluralist multi-party system, which would constantly threaten the system with potential instability, decreased efficiency of the executive politics and lack of communication between the most important political institutions; b) it may switch back to the type of moderate pluralist system, which would be



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favourable to the political system, because it would allow strengthening of the political system without any radical changes to the election system or already established government balance; it would also ensure conditions for reducing the impact of anti-systemic powers in national politics; c) it may create the state of atomised pluralism, where there would be no ideologically identifiable parties; instead, they would become groups of persons, competing and seeking power in radical ways. Such scenario would be the most threatening to the political system.

Activities of anti-systemic parties may be really important in increasing political confrontation and party fragmentation. It would be dangerous not only for the current party system, but also for the political system as a whole as well as for political security of the state. Therefore, in order to stabilise the party system and ensure the efficiency of the political system, it is necessary to seek the consolidation of traditional parties.