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## A TURNING POINT? POLISH 2005 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION AND CONSOLIDATION OF PARTY SYSTEM

From many reasons Polish parliamentary elections held in 2005 are similar as well as different from the previous ones. They are similar because of low level of turnout, of the result (next alternation of power) and of the weakness of the victor (no party was able to gain the majority of the seats). They are also different, among the others, because of the fact they were parallel to presidential election, because of the change of political competition's patterns on the electoral, as well as on governmental arenas, and because of the fact that, the first time, only exactly the same parties what were present in the previous Sejm have been capable to win the seats. All these circumstances have affected the processes of the consolidation, stabilization and institutionalization of Polish party system. This paper focuses on the impact of parliamentary elections on fragmentation, concentration and competitiveness of party system, considered as its quantitative parameters. The next step will be the analysis of the qualitative ones. They are, above all, the representativeness and effectiveness of the party system. I will try to reconstruct the trajectory of party system's development after 1991 and, finally, to answer the question whether the last election is the turning point on this way, taking into account the patterns of political competition.

### 1. The electoral results

After the expelling the coalition junior partner, resignation of the prime minister L. Miller, the series of corruption scandals and the first serious split, the position of governing Alliance of Democratic Left (SLD) had significantly weakened. Long before the date of election, the defeat of the post-communist had been commonly predicted and expected. Additionally, the candidate SLD for the post of the president stepped aside from the electoral race. The slogans of the need of moral revolution and of the cleaning of public life had dominated electoral campaign. It was fierce, aggressive and negative<sup>1</sup>. From the beginning, the two right-wing as well as "post-Solidarity" formations had been at forefront. By the election day, the victory of liberal-conservative Citizen Platform (PO) had seemed to be certain, although the difference between it and the nationalist-conservative Law and Justice (PiS) had been systematically lessening. Evidently, Law and Justice gained almost 27 per cent, while Citizen Platform slightly above 24 per cent. Such a small difference between the first and the second strongest party (2,85 per cent) has not taken the place since 1991. It is worth to note that Law and Justice has tripled, and Citizen Platform has doubled their votes, attained in 2001. The results achieved by the remind parties were significantly worse. As the third parliamentary force, Self-Defense (SO) obtained slightly above 11 per cent, likewise as SLD. For Self-Defense it was more or less the same result as in previous election. ADL lost about 4 million of votes (almost 75 per cent), so one may say about electoral disaster. Two smallest parties, League of Polish Families and Polish Peasant Party achieved respectively almost 8 and almost 7 per cent, similarly as in 2001. Thus, only these six parties turned out to be capable to pass the electoral threshold. The newly formed Social Democracy of Poland (SdPL) and Democratic Party, both leftist, were left behind the Sejm. In sum, six parties have

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<sup>1</sup> See M. Drzonek, J. Mieczkowski (eds), *POPiSY w polityce. Uwagi o polskiej scenie politycznej*, Biblioteka Acta Politica, Szczecin 2006, esp. pp. 31-55.

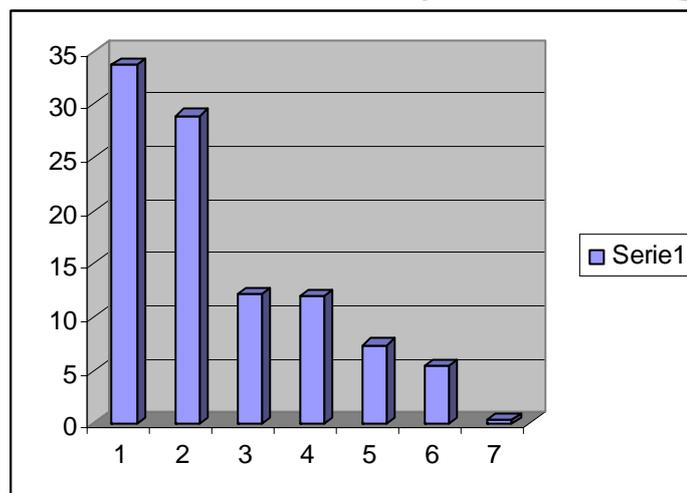
gained almost 90 per cent of votes. The turnout was the lowest since 1989 and amounted to 40,57 per cent. The results of the elections are completed in table 1:

Table 1: Electoral results of 2005 parliamentary election

Party	Per cent of Votes	Number of seats
Law and Justice	26,99	155
Citizen Platform	24,14	133
Self-Defense	11,41	56
Alliance of Democratic Left	11,31	55
League of Polish Families	7,97	34
Polish Peasant Party	6,96	25
Social Democracy of Poland	3,89	-
Democratic Party	2,45	-
German Minority	0,29	2
Others	10,93	-

As the distribution of the seats is taken into consideration, one has to point out that there were the changes of electoral law, introduced by the Alliance of Democratic Left in 2002. The electoral formula of Sainte-Laguë, being in use in 2001 has been replaced by d'Hondt method. It is commonly perceived as the favorable for the strongest parties. This formula used in 1993 had given the victorious party huge advantages; the seats/votes ratio was as 1,6 to 1. But it was possible, above all, due to extremely high per cent of wasted votes (35 per cent). In 2005, the advantages of the two strongest formations were more modest. Law and Justice gained above 33 per cent seats, and Citizen Platform, respectively – 29. It has meant, than two-party, minimal winning coalition has been possible only between these two parties. In order to form each another majority cabinet, the coalition of at least three parties has been necessary (see figure 1). Thus, the relatively short process of the cabinet forming (46 days) was, to some extent, surprising.

Figure 1. Distribution of the seats in Sejm elected in 2005 (per cent)



The legend: 1 – Law and Justice, 2 – Citizen Platform, 3 – Self-Defense, 4 – Alliance of Democratic Left, 5 – League of Polish Families, 6 – Polish Peasant Party, 7 – German Minority

The analysis of the electoral support and the distribution of the seats leads to the conclusion that moderate multiparty system with the two main parties<sup>2</sup> has been the result of 2005 parliamentary election. There is, however, serious difference between the shape of party system formed in the result of 1997, 2001 and 2005 elections. In the first of them, two predominant formations have appeared. In the second one, one party has become the predominant formation. This suggests that Polish party system is floating rather than stable. Let me consider its quantitative parameters in detail.

## 2. The quantitative parameters of Polish party system

I assume that there are three basic quantitative parameters of party system, concerning its **format** and enabling the comparison. They are: fragmentation, concentration and the level of competitiveness. If we consider the level of **fragmentation** of Polish party system (see table 2) we may use three indicators. The first of them is fractionalization index [FI], measured on the electoral level, the second – effective number of parties measured on the electoral as well as parliamentary levels and the third – aggregation index, measured on the parliamentary level. As concerns question of fractionalization, we may say that value of the index has gradually decreased from 0.93 in 1991 to 0,78 in 2001, and next has increased to 0,83 in 2005. Then, the first stage of the development of party system may be labeled as evolution from extreme to more moderate fragmentation, while the second, as the reverse trend. It has been the result of disappearing of predominant party, which was Alliance of Democratic Left (SLD) in 2001 and has reflected the balancing of the system (the differences between the support for the two strongest and between the third and fourth strongest parties are lesser in 2005 than in 2001). The same trend has been confirmed if we have used index of effective number of parties on the electoral level [ENP(e)]. Polish party system was extremely fragmented in 1991 and the value of the index amounted to 13,8 what has been the highest one in East Central Europe up to now. In the next election, this value slightly dropped to 9,9, but in the further two ones it fell significantly (resp. to 4,6 and 4,5). In 2005, however, we have witnessed to the growth of the effective number of parties again. It is the evidence of not linear character of party system's development in Poland<sup>3</sup>.

Table 2: The level of fragmentation of Polish party system 1991-2005

	1991	1993	1997	2001	<b>2005</b>	Average
ENP(e)	13,8	9,9	4,6	4,5	<b>5,9</b>	7,6
ENP(p)	9,8	3,9	2,9	3,6	<b>4,3</b>	4,9
IF	0,93	0,90	0,80	0,78	<b>0,83</b>	0,84
AI	0,9	6,2	8,7	7,8	<b>5,6</b>	5,8

*Source: Markowski, M. Cześnik, Polski system partyjny. Dekada zmian instytucjonalnych i ich konsekwencje, w. R. R. Markowski (ed.), System partyjny i zachowania wyborcze. Dekada polskich doświadczeń, Instytut Studiów Politycznych Polskiej Akademii Nauk, Warszawa 2002, p. 20, A. Siaroff, Comparative European Party Systems. An Analysis of Parliamentary Elections Since 1945, Garland Publishing, New York 2000, p. 56 and my own calculations.*

The trajectory of the development of Polish party system considered on parliamentary level looks slightly different. It is obvious that the number of parties represented in the parliament has always been lower than the numbers of parties competing in the election. The

<sup>2</sup> See A. Siaroff, Comparative European Party Systems. An Analysis of Parliamentary Elections Since 1945, Garland Publishing Inc., New York 2000, p. 106. The Author has suggested that the similar system had existed between 1997 and 2001. It seems to be more adequate to label the former “moderate multipartyism with two dominant parties.

<sup>3</sup>This opinion is expressed also by foreign researchers. See M. Kubát, Electoral reforms in Poland after 1991 and their political consequences, Politics in central Europe 2006, vol. 2, No 1, p. 53.

changes in the value of the index of effective number of parliamentary parties [ENP(p)] have demonstrated that between 1991 and 1997 the fragmentation of party system decreases (we may find its lowest level in 1997) while after 1997 it increases. This tendency has been confirmed if we use the index of aggregation [AI], measuring proportion between the number of seats controlled by the strongest party and the number of parties represented in the parliament (see row 4 in the table 1). Using this index we have to take into consideration, however, the deformation of electoral results caused by the electoral system, because its value depends on the size of the strongest party's overrepresentation (see table 3). The coefficient of overrepresentation (calculated by dividing the percent of seats by the percent of votes and next subtracting numeral 1) was the lowest in 1991, when the extremely proportional, and then permissive, electoral formula of Hare-Niemeyer was in use. The change of the electoral system in 1993, including the diminishing of the size of electoral constituencies, the introducing of electoral thresholds and the replacing of Hare-Niemeyer formula with the less proportional d'Hondt one, resulted in highest size of the overrepresentation of the victorious party, so far. After following elections in 1997 and 2001 the tendency of its decrease was evident (the less value of the index we may find in 2001, when the moderate Sainte-Laguë formula was applied). Finally, in 2005 when d'Hondt system was restored, the size of the overrepresentation of the strongest party grew to the level of 1997. One may say that, despite the frequent changes of electoral formulas, the party system measured on the parliamentary level has remained moderately fragmented since 1993, although last elections brought inconsiderable growth of the level of its fragmentation. It would be difficult, however, to estimate it as the symptom of its qualitative change, let alone its destabilization. But, from the other side, hypothesis about not linear character of party system development in Poland gains additional support.

Table 3: The overrepresentation of the strongest party in 1991-2005

1991	1993	1997	2001	2005
0,09 (UD)	0,82 (SLD)	0,29 (AWS)	0,14 (SLD)	0,25 (PiS)

*Source: My own calculations based on the data published in Dziennik Ustaw (further cited as Dz. U) 1991, Nr 41, poz. 287; Dz.U. 1993 r., Nr 50, poz. 470; Dz. U. 1997 r., Nr 64, poz. 620; Dz. U. 2001 r., Nr 109, poz. 1186. See also WWW.pkw.gov.pl*

The level of the **concentration** of the party system is the next, important indicator of its stabilization. This concept refers to the size of the support given to the parties by the voters and to the size of parties' parliamentary representation. As it is known, the high level of concentration characterizes above all two-party systems considered as the most effective framework for political competition. One may hypothesize that the growth of the electoral support for the strongest parties stabilizes immature multipartyness, characteristic for majority of post-communist democracies. Data reflecting the support for the strongest party and the two strongest parties taken together are presented in table 4. They have shown us that, by 2001, the clear tendency of the growth of support for the victorious party is evident. The highest results were achieved by the Alliance of Democratic Left (SLD) in 2001 (above 40 per cent) and Electoral Alliance Solidarity (AWS) in 1997 (close to 34 per cent). In 2005, however, this support dropped to the level 27 per cent. To be sure, one has to remember that SLD as well as AWS were not the parties but the electoral coalitions, while Law and Justice (PiS) has been the first single party capable to win the parliamentary election since 1991. It is worth to note also that the size of support achieved by Law and Justice is similar to those attained by the victorious parties in multiparty West-European democracies. But, from the other side, one may discern that it is the lowest one in comparison to the last elections in Hungary, Czech Republic and Slovakia (resp. 43,2 percent; 35,4 percent and 29,1 per cent).

Table 4: The concentration of Polish party system 1991-2005

	1991	1993	1997	2001	<b>2005</b>
Support for the strongest party (per cent)	12,32	20,41	33,83	41,04	<b>26,99</b>
Support for two strongest parties (per cent)	24,31	35,81	60,96	53,72	<b>51,13</b>
Seats gained by the strongest party (per cent)	13,47	37,17	43,69	46,95	<b>33,69</b>
Seats gained by the two strongest parties (per cent)	26,52	65,87	79,35	61,09	<b>62,61</b>

*Source: My own calculations based on the data published in Dz. U. 1991, Nr 41, poz. 287; Dz. U. 1993 r., Nr 50, poz. 470; Dz. U. 1997 r., Nr 64, poz. 620; Dz. U. 2001 r., Nr 109, poz. 1186. See also WWW.pkw.gov.pl*

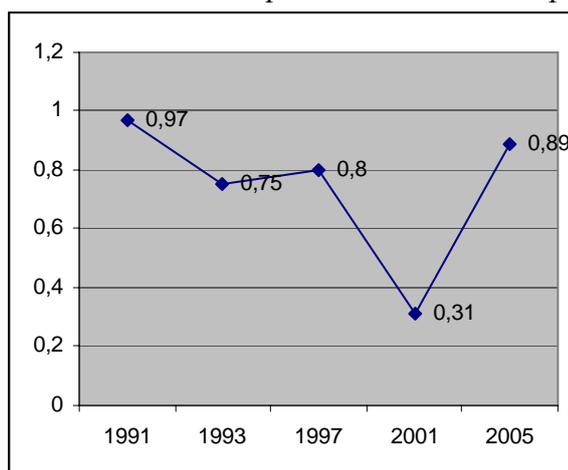
The concentration of the support for the two strongest parties looks quite different. It has amounted to slightly above 50 per cent. Comparing with the results of last elections in Hungary, Czech Republic and Slovakia it is slightly higher than that reached in this last country (resp. 47,5 per cent), moderately lower than in Czech Republic (resp. 67,7 per cent) and significantly lower than in Hungary (resp. 85,2 per cent). As far as the trajectory of Polish party system is considered, the level of the support for the two strongest parties had increased since 1991 up to 1997 when it reached its top level. The trend of its decrease was visible in the elections in 2001 and 2005. There is, however, the crucial difference between them. Two strongest parties were main competitors in 2001, while in 2005 they had intended to form the governmental coalition just before election. Because this intension was officially announced and, thus, was known by the public opinion, one may assume that above half of voters gave their support for the **bloc**, presenting itself and having been perceived as the alternative for the post-communist parties. This assumption lets to recognize the last parliamentary election as critical in this sense that the support for the strongest political formation (although not for the single party) passed the threshold of 50 per cent, for the first time in the post-communist Poland. As it has proven to be, this fact did not prevent, however, the serious troubles with the forming the majority cabinet.

The level of the competitiveness may be considered as quantitative as well as qualitative parameter. If I have decided to treat it as quantitative one I did so because of its strict link with the format of party system. The size of opposition has been recognized as the important indicator of the balance of party system and of the level of democracy of every political system. At the risk of oversimplification, one may say that the more competitive party system, the more democratic political system is<sup>4</sup>. This factor may be precisely measured what makes the comparisons possible. The competitiveness index is calculated by the dividing the number of votes cast for the second strongest party by the number of votes cast for the victorious one. Its value oscillates between 0 (perfectly uncompetitive systems) to 1 (perfectly competitive systems). Up to 2001 parliamentary election the differences between the first and the second parties were rather small in Poland (the value of the index was respectively 0,97 in 1991, 0,75 in 1993 and 0,80 in 1997) so we may say that the party system was highly competitive (in 1991 it was close to what I called perfect competitiveness). But in 2001 the predominance of the victorious ADL turned out to be significant. It gained almost three and half times more votes than the second Citizen Platform. Then, the party system proved to be

<sup>4</sup> According to some political scientists, the situation where the winner take almost support of voters, is the evidence that democracy has become replaced by competitive authoritarianism. See L. Diamond, Thinking about Hybrid Regimes, Journal of Democracy 2002, vol. 13, No 2, esp. pp. 29-33.

moderately competitive. In the last election, the level of competitiveness has significantly increased; the difference between the first Law and Justice and the second Citizen Platform has been inconsiderable (see figure 2). But, contrary to previous elections, the two strongest parties, as I have already mentioned, announced, at least in initial phase of electoral campaign, that they would govern commonly. It means that the value of index does reflect the level of the competitiveness between the potential coalition parties rather than between governing party and opposition.

Figure 2. The level of the competitiveness of Polish party system



It must be repeated that, what we may say about the development of Polish party system (in quantitative aspect) is that it has not got linear character. The main conclusion following the analysis of quantitative parameters of Polish party system is that it has consequently been in a state of flux<sup>5</sup>. Its parameters have undergone frequent and significant changes since 1991. Trying to analyze of the experience of 23 democratizing countries, G. Reich has suggested two opposite hypotheses, concerning the trajectories of the post-authoritarian multiparty systems<sup>6</sup>. The first of them, so called *shakedown hypothesis*, assumes that after initial fragmentation of the party systems, the small parties have been gradually eliminated, so the level of the concentration of party system has increased (Hungary seems to be an example). *The party dispersion hypothesis* predicts another path; from the initial two-bloc confrontation to the growth of fragmentation, resulting from the disintegration of post-authoritarian and anti-authoritarian camps (Slovakia and Czech Republic may be recognized as the cases in point). The example of Poland does fit neither to first nor to the second hypotheses. After initial, top-level fragmentation, the next phase, namely concentration of the system had taken place between 1993 and 2001. But the last election had brought the growth of fragmentation. To be sure, we should not to forget about the impact of the changes of electoral law on the format of party system<sup>7</sup>. Hence, taking into account the uncertainty of the

<sup>5</sup> See M. Kubát, *Postkomunismus a demokracie. Politika ve středovýchodní Evropě*, Dekořán, Praha 2003, p. 79, and *idem*, *Demokracie v Polsku. Politický systém Polské republiky (1989-2005)*, Slon, Praha 2005, pp. 107-11.

<sup>6</sup> G. Reich, *The evolution of new party systems: are early elections exceptional?* *Electoral Studies*, 2004, vol. 23, Nr 4, pp. 235-250.

<sup>7</sup> See more in detail, H. Lisicka (ed.), *System polityczny Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej*, Biuro Doradztwa Ekologicznego, Wrocław 2005, pp. 44-51; M. Migalski, *Wpływ ordynacji wyborczych na kształtowanie się systemu partyjnego*, w. M. Migalski, W. Wojtasik, M. Mazur, *Polski system partyjny*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2006, pp. 55-79 and M. Kubát, *Electoral reforms...op.cit.*, pp. 41-62.

further transformations of electoral system, it is particularly hard to predict further trajectories of Polish party system.

## 2. The qualitative parameters of Polish party system

The quality of the party system is the question, to some extent, underestimated, if not neglected in comparative researches. I have suggested the considering of the two dimensions of quality, namely representativeness and effectiveness. The concept of the **representativeness** refers to the capability to reflect the full mosaic of common and divergent interests and expectations, existing in given society, which may be implemented with governmental policies. There are four main indicators of so understood representativeness: the level of turnout, the level of electoral volatility, the percent of wasted votes (e.g. votes cast for the parties unable to pass the thresholds) and the support for new parties. The first, and may be most important, of them is the turnout. As it is commonly known, the level of electoral participation in Poland has been recognized as the disastrously low. It is enough to say, that with only one exception (1993), the turnout has never passed the threshold of 50 per cent. Moreover, it has systematically decreased since 1993, gaining its bottom-level in 2005 (slightly above 40 per cent). The level of the turnout seems to be the indicator of its extremely low representativeness, in comparison to that in Hungary, Czech Republic and Slovakia, (see table 5).

Table 5: The electoral turnout in Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia and Poland

Kraj	I elekcja	II	III	IV	V	Przeciętna
CZECH REPUBLIC	84,7	76,3	74,0	57,9	64,5	71,5
HUNGARY	65,1	68,9	56,7	50,5	67,8	61,8
SLOVAKIA	84,7	75,4	84,2	70,1	54,7	73,8
<b>POLAND</b>	<b>43,2</b>	<b>52,1</b>	<b>47,9</b>	<b>46,3</b>	<b>40,6</b>	<b>46,0</b>

Źródło: [WWW.essex.ac.uk/elections/](http://WWW.essex.ac.uk/elections/); [WWW.idea.int/vt/](http://WWW.idea.int/vt/); [WWW.pkw.gov.pl](http://WWW.pkw.gov.pl)

The level of electoral net volatility seems to be also the indicator of the low representativeness of Polish party system (see table 6). If many voters have changed their preferences between the elections, as it was the case in 2005, it would be interpreted as the evidence of disenchantment with the governmental policies. Although, if 2001 and 2005 elections are compared, the measurement is precise, because of the stability of political scene, one has to remember that the net electoral volatility index itself does not reflect the scope of the electoral realignment. Then, it would be better to replace it with the index “forced volatility”<sup>8</sup>, taking into account the absence of the parties competing in the previous elections. It concerns particularly Poland when the parties have appeared and vanished very frequently. In this respect, last election suggests the increase in the level of the representativeness. No party present in the previous parliament has disappeared and all of them have saved their seats. But the question whether it is the stable tendency has remained open.

Table 6: Net electoral volatility between 2001 and 2005

Party	2001	2005	Difference
Law and Justice	9,50	26,99	+17,49
Citizen Platform	12,68	24,14	+11,46
Self-Defense	10,20	11,41	+1,21

<sup>8</sup> See, J. Wasilewski, M. Kopczyński, S. Szczur Stabilność zachowań wyborczych, w, R. Markowski (ed.), Wybory parlamentarne 1997. System partyjny. Postawy polityczne. Zachowania wyborcze, Wydawnictwo Instytutu Studiów Politycznych PAN, Warszawa 1999, p. 86.

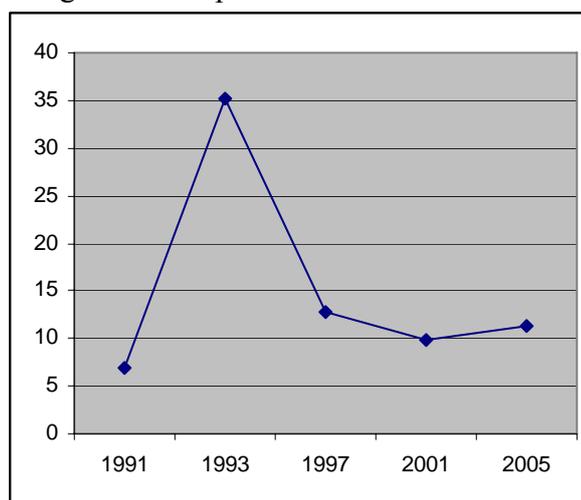
Alliance of Democratic Left	41,04	11,31	-29,73
League of Polish Families	7,87	7,97	+0,10
Polish Peasant Party	8,98	6,96	-2,02
Others	9,73	11,22	-1,49
<b>Net Electoral Volatility</b>			<b>31,75</b>

Source: Dz. U. 2001 r., Nr 109, poz. 1186 oraz Dz. U. 2005 r., Nr 195, poz. 1626.

The electoral volatility is strictly connected with the growth of the support for new parties. This phenomenon may also reflect the disillusionment with political and/or economic outcomes. By 2001, in every election new political formations have appeared. Non Party Bloc for Reform, created by the president L. Wałęsa shortly before the election, received above 5 per cent of votes in 1993. New formations – Electoral Action Solidarity and the Movement for Reconstruction of Poland gained together almost 40 percent in 1997 and, starting the first time, Citizen Platform, Law and Justice and The League of Polish Families along with the Self-Defense (never represented in the parliament before) reach commonly also 40 per cent. Only in 2005, the new parties did badly, what has been regarded as the evidence of stability of party system<sup>9</sup>.

If we will take into account the percent of wasted votes, cast for the parties incapable to pass the electoral threshold (let me remind that it amounts to 5 per cent for the single parties and 8 per cent for the electoral coalitions) we have to point out that it has remained rather stable since 1993, when it reached its top-level as a result of the change of electoral law (see figure 3). Moreover, after this time it has been also low and similar to the level reached in other post-communist countries. In sum, we may conclude that the last parliamentary election has been the small step on the path of the increasing of the representativeness of Polish party system, although the low turnout may be considered as the basic obstacle for significant progress in its stabilization and consolidation.

Figure 3. The per cent of the wasted votes



The **effectiveness** of the party system may be understood as the capability to avoid or resolve political crises, recognized as the main, internal disruption for political processes. The “product” of effective party system is the cabinet which has been stable, durable, integrated and able to formulate and implement domestic and foreign policies, aggregating, integrating

<sup>9</sup> See M. Migalski, W. Wojtasik, M. Mazur, *Polski system partyjny...op.cit.*, p. 137.

and harmonizing the divergent interests of different social groups. As it is commonly thought, the most favorable conditions are created within two-party systems, which most effectively prevent the political deadlocks and fierce political conflicts. However, the high effectiveness may characterize the multiparty systems too. It occurs when the patterns of inter-party cooperation and competition have become crystallized, established and accepted by the all relevant participants of the political game what would be resulted in the reduction and/or elimination of internal tensions<sup>10</sup>. To put it another way, party system will be effective if it is institutionalized, no matter the number of parties is. There are several indicators of effectiveness, among the others, the number of early parliamentary elections, following political standstills, the time of forming the cabinet (the more is the time, the less effective party system is), the number of the effective votes of no confidence, the stability and durability of the governmental coalitions and number of “technical”, no party cabinets. The most of these indicators concerns the inter-election periods. There is not the place to discuss them in detail. Let me only say, that, by 2005, we had found in Poland one early parliamentary election (1993), two cases of disintegration of the governing coalitions (2000 and 2003) and five cases of effective vote of no-confidence (1992, 1993, 1994, 1995 and 2004) and the no case of “technical” cabinet. The average time of the forming cabinet had been rather short and the durability of the cabinet between 1991 and 2005 amounted to 18,5 month. These suggest that the Polish party system has been moderately effective. Considering in this respect 2005 parliamentary election, we may claim that, despite relatively short time of the forming the cabinet, the effectiveness of party system has worsened. The proposal of the shortening of the parliament term was put forward by the governing party as early as in the beginning of 2006. Next, as the solution of political crisis, the governmental coalition encompassing Law and Justice and two small radical parties was formed in May. In July the prime minister, K. Marcinkiewicz has resigned and was replaced by the leader of Law and Justice, J. Kaczyński. Then, the first two cabinets what were approved by the Sejm after the parliamentary election and came to the end<sup>11</sup>, have lasted only respectively 6,5 and 2 months, well below the average durability. In September, the leader of Self-Defense, A. Lepper was dismissed from the post of the deputy of prime minister, and, as a result, its party was *de facto* expelled from the coalition. The cabinet has lost its majority status and the threat of the early election has appeared again. But the question has arisen: may premature election be considered as an effective solution of such a deadlock as currently does exist? The results of public opinion surveys carried out in 2006 have suggested that the future such political formations as the League of Polish Families, Polish Peasant Party and even Self-Defense may be uncertain. Then, one may say about artificial stabilization of political scene and about the symptoms of the decrease of the effectiveness of Polish party system, at least in respect to the capability to build majority, effectively supporting the cabinet.

### 3. 2005 Parliamentary election and the patterns of political competition

Using indicators mentioned above, we may claim that 2005 parliamentary election did not bring the revolutionary transformation of Polish party system, although some of its parameters have changed. Such the conclusion may be drawn from the analysis of format of party system and, particularly the number and the size of the parties. But this is only one side of the coin. The second one is, what G. Sartori has labeled the **mechanism** of party system. For him followers, the more important than the number and the size of the parties is that how

<sup>10</sup> See S. Mainwaring, Party Systems in the Third Wave, *Journal of Democracy* 1998, vol. 9, No 3, p. 69.

<sup>11</sup> The first, minority, single party cabinet, was replaced in May 2006 by three-party majority one.

does the system work<sup>12</sup>. Following this track, we may say that for the students of post-authoritarian party systems, the most important is the question: how does the system develop and stabilize. In other words, how does it institutionalize. What is emphasized in the body of the literature, is that repeatability and, hence, predictability of the parties' interactions, considered in two dimensions: the inter-bloc competition and the relationship between governing and the opposition, has been the evidence of party system stability<sup>13</sup>. This means, in turn, that the crucial factors, deciding about the stability or instability of party systems are the strategies of political parties, concerning the competition on electoral, parliamentary and governmental arenas. According to P. Mair, the structure of inter-party competition, and especially, the competition for the government is the most important aspect of every party system<sup>14</sup>. It has meant that, if the mechanism of party system is analyzed, the relations between the parties are more significant than the relations between the parties and voters<sup>15</sup>. How to evaluate Polish 2005 parliamentary election from this point of view will be the subject of further considerations.

Taking into account the competition for the seats in the parliament, we can see significant changes in comparison with the previous elections. First, although the support for the Left has ever been more or less lower than for the Right (the only exception was in 2001), the distance between these blocs has rapidly grown in 2005 (see figure 4). It was the first time, when post-communist Left took a part in the election as not united formation, as the result of the split, confirming the deep divisions and conflicts within apparently cohesive political force. It was the first time, since 1991 when the Left was incapable to fight for the power, and even for the role of the leader of opposition. Finally, it was the first time, when the post-communist Left finished neither as the first nor as the second political formation, as so far. It has become fourth the strongest (or, if you will, third the weakest) parliamentary party, being defeated even by populist, also leftist too, Self-Defense. The almost fourfold drop of the votes resulted in excluding the post-communist left-wing parties from the race not only for the power but also, what seems to be more important, for political relevance (because of the little, close to none, coalitional potential). Then, the struggle for the power in the parliament took place not between the Left and the Right, but between two, relatively strong, conservative parties. Additionally, the candidate of the Left for the presidency, like in 1990, was not the competitor to be reckoned with. Taking electoral results of both the campaigns into account, one may insist that the electoral cycle, initiated in 1990 and 1991 has become closed in 2005, and the Left, particularly post-communist, has turned up in the point of the departure.

Figure 4: The support for the Left and Right 1991-2005

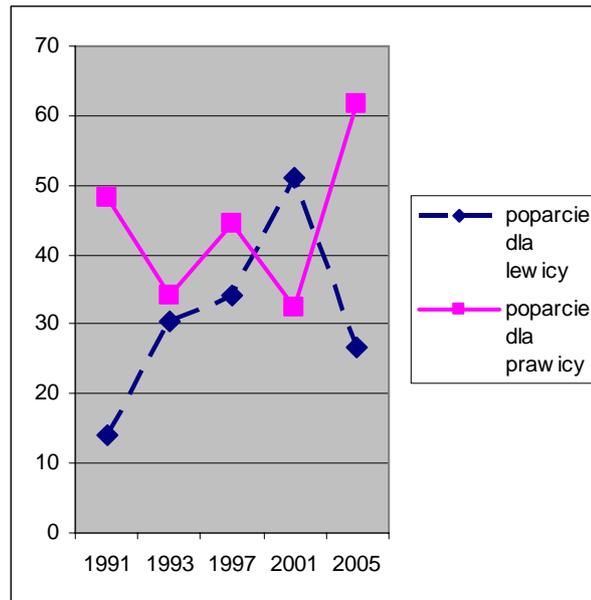
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<sup>12</sup> G. Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems. A Framework for Analysis*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1976, p. 128

<sup>13</sup> See E. Bakke, N. Sitter, *Party Competition and Strategy in Central Europe since 1989*, *Party Politics*, 2005, vol. 11, No 2, p. 245.

<sup>14</sup> See P. Mair, *Party System change. Approaches and Interpretations*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1997, p. 206.

<sup>15</sup> See J. Toole, *Government Formation and Party System Stabilization in East Central Europe*, *Party Politics*, 2000, vol. 6, No 4, p.442.



Second, in all previous elections the main axis of political competition was that between “post-communism”, personified by Alliance of Democratic Left, and “anti-communism”, represented mainly, although not exclusively, by post-Solidarity formations. Polish sociologist M. Grabowska has suggested the forming of new political cleavage, labeling it post-communist one<sup>16</sup>. It has manifested in the accentuating the meaning of historic divisions and their consequences, for example, decommunization or lustration. In the other words, the scrutiny and evaluation of the communist past had been the leading motive of the electoral campaigns by 2001. In that electoral atmosphere, the programmatic questions, concerning economic development, tax policies, the path and the scope of the privatization or social transformation, were often put into back burner. Instead of “post-communist cleavage” the new axis of political competition has been formulated by the strategists of Law and Justice, namely between “solidary”<sup>17</sup> and “liberal” Poland. The first was to be represented by Law and Justice; the second one – by its opponents, with the Citizen Platform at the forefront. From the other side, the second line of political divisions has been shaped, that is between those who have negated the achievements of the transformation (Law and Justice, the League of the Polish Families and Self-Defense) and those who have defended them (Citizen Platform and Alliance of Democratic Left). The demand of building Fourth Republic (instead of the Third One, initiated after the “Round Table”) put forward by Law and Justice has included not only the promise of final solution of the question of communist past but also of the post-communism. The strengthening of the state, absolutely fighting against corruption, the moral revolution and the restraining the “thievish” privatization were at the heart of electoral platform of Law and Justice (and also of League of Polish Families). These slogans, being the peculiar mixture of anticommunism, populism and state control have turned out to be very effective as a tool for mobilizing the voters. What is more important is that, the two post-solidarity parties have become the main competitors. Thus the structure of competition has changed dramatically, in comparison with the previous elections.

Finally, it is worth to note that this structure has changed only during the electoral campaign. Initially, Law and Justice and Citizen Platform, leading in public opinion surveys, have treated each other as “friendly competing partners”. What is the most striking feature of

<sup>16</sup> See M. Grabowska, *Podział postkomunistyczny. Społeczne podstawy polityki w Polsce*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, Warszawa 2004.

<sup>17</sup> This adjective means in English *loyal*, but derives from the word “Solidarity”.

electoral campaign is that the both parties have announced the intension of co-governing. This announcement was made probably because of the existence of the “common enemy”, personified by Alliance of Democratic Left. As the time had elapsed, and the position of the Alliance had weakened, both Law and Justice and Citizen Platform turned against each other. As a result, the electoral campaign had sharpened and radicalized. Partially that was so because of the growth of the stake of elections. That was possible for both the parties to gain the victory in both, parliamentary and presidential elections. It was particularly important for the Law and Justice, because the implementation of its radical programme has been dependent on the support of the president. The double victory over Citizen Platform in parliamentary as well as presidential elections, secured presidential support but, on the second hand, made impossible to form two-party, majority government.

Let me now turn my attention to the governmental arena. According to P. Mair, the competition for the government may be either closed or open. There are three variables what determine the structure of competition: alternation of government what may be wholesale or partial, governing formula what may be familiar or innovative, and the access to government what may be for new parties difficult or easy<sup>18</sup>. He has predicted that not only the open competition would be prevailed in East Central Europe, but the process of its closing would be lengthy. Analyzing the experience of three post-communist countries, namely Hungary, Czech Republic and Poland, J. Toole has shown that P. Mair was wrong, at least as to both the firsts<sup>19</sup>. It is worth to point out that Poland was recognized as the example of the most, although not absolutely, open competition. The process of forming the cabinet after 2005 Polish parliamentary election has been the evidence that political competition on the governmental arena has still been open in 2/3. Although the alternation of government has remained wholesale, but the access to it is easy (evidently, the coalitional cabinet was formed by the three parties who entered it the first time). League of Polish Families and Self-Defense, entering the cabinet, have gained political relevance, they have not had before. It is worth to note that, at the moment, there is no party in Polish Sejm which lacks coalitional potential. In other words there is no isolated one. Moreover, the governing formula has rapidly changed since 2005. Let me remind that, immediately after election, the first in history of post-communist Poland, minority, single-party government was formed. One has to point out that all remaining cabinets, appointed as a result of parliamentary elections were the coalitional ones, and only one but four had minority status. From the other side, the governing formula has undergone the changes for the last year (from the stabilization pact *via* the three-party minimal-winning coalition to the minority, two-party one). At the moment, the efforts to build parliamentary majority have been made. The participation of the Polish Peasant Party in cabinet has been seriously considered. Possible access this party to government would mean that the last condition, mentioned by P. Mair would be fulfilled. Thus, the stabilization of the mechanism of the Polish party system seems still to be the question of the future, and we may insist that 2005 parliamentary election has not removed the uncertainty as to further trajectory of system development. It would be difficult, therefore, to regard it as a turning point in the path of stabilizing and consolidating party system.

### Conclusions

2005 parliamentary election, may be recognized in some respects as typical as well as innovative one. The alternation of power has been the rule in Poland. The electoral disaster of governing formation has been nothing new: Electoral Action Solidarity suffered from it in 2001 as did it the right-wing parties in 1993. The growth of the support for the Right does confirm the regularity revealed in previous elections, except of that in 2001, although inter-

<sup>18</sup> P. Mair, *Party System Change...*op.cit., pp. 207-214.

<sup>19</sup> See J. Toole, *Government Formation...*op.cit., ss. 441-461.

bloc volatility has been significantly higher than before. Radical, populist parties have achieved the same support as four years ago. What should to be, however, emphasized is that post-communist Left has found itself in deep crisis and has turned out to be incapable to effectively compete not only for power but for the role of dominant party in the opposition, as it had played between 1997 and 2001. Additionally it has been organizationally disintegrated. The problems of the Left, resulting in the low position in political ratings, may transform, hitherto prevailing, the structure of political competition, because one may not to rule out that in nearest future the struggle for power will be between two right-wing, conservative formations have being descended from "Solidarity". From the other side, the reconciliation between them is also possible, though unlikely at the moment.

How did 2005 election affect the development of party system? As far as quantitative parameters of the system are taken into account, we may say that, all in all, they have changed insignificantly. To be sure, the levels of fractionalization as well of concentration have decreased but this does not provide the serious threat for further institutionalization of party system. From the other side, the number of seats gained by the victorious formation made impossible to form minimal-winning, two-party coalition with anyone except of the main competitor. Thus, the alliance with radical populist parties was necessary in order to form majority government. Such syncretic coalition was formed in May of 2006. This decrease of the level of what I have called the concentration of party system may result in growing troubles in forming and maintaining future cabinets. As concerns qualitative parameters, we have to point out that from the one side, we have witnessed lowest level of electoral turnout, what has resulted in decreasing of the party system's representativeness, and from the other one, the stability of political scene what acts in reverse direction. There are, however, the serious problems with the effectiveness of party system because of the troubles with forming and maintaining the cabinet supported by parliamentary majority.

The patterns of political competition have changed significantly. Traditional "post-communist" cleavage has been replaced by the new conflict between the parties originating from the same political roots, although initially they announced to govern together what was expected and, probably, supported by the majority of voters. The failure of coalitional talks with Citizen Platform forced Law and Justice to look for unconventional solutions. First of them was minority, single-party cabinet and second, stabilization pact. Both had never been in use before. The next step was the forming of the minimal-winning coalition with the parties entering the government for the first time. This cabinet was able to last only slightly above four months, with the change of Prime minister having been the place in the meantime. Thus, we can say that the patterns of political competition, particularly on the governmental arena have remained unstable and unpredictable. This may suggest that Polish party system may be still located in transition phase rather than in consolidation one.