

Political Preferences

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Electioneering in Lithuania

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Abstract:

This article serves as an introductory note to the “Lithuanian chapter” of the journal. A brief description of the electoral history after the restoration of Lithuanian independence in 1990 is provided, the most important political parties are introduced and their interactions shortly explained. The article also describes basic research on electoral topics in Lithuania.

Key words:

Elections, campaigning, Lithuania

The year 2016 could be labeled as a period of great electoral victories and defeats. The final description of the outcomes should correspond to the system of particular political attitudes: it is possible to portray the Brexit vote as a free choice of free people, as a reckless decision of an uninformed public, or as a crucial political mistake, encouraged by irresponsible activities of selfish politicians. Similar or even stronger words could be found to characterize the electoral outcome of the American presidential elections and their winner Donald J. Trump, who, with equal success, is self-described as “the very definition of the American success story, continually setting the standards of excellence” (*Donald J. Trump - Biography*), or “little more than narcissistic motivations and a complementary personal narrative about winning at any cost” (McAdams 2016). The problem is, that it is hard to imagine, that only half of the electorate share the particular opinion, and another half strongly disagrees with it.

The electoral season of 2016 exposed not only the highest levels of polarization among the voters, but also revealed another important shift in modern political life: crisis of electoral research in general and forecasting in particular. For decades, electoral races in most Western democracies were highly predictable; experienced pollsters were able to proclaim the winners in

advance, the forecasts became a sort of self-fulfilling statements or important arguments in the hands of election campaigners. However, the final results of the most important elections of 2016 came to a great surprise for the mainstream media and for a significant part of the political establishment.

In this context, the Lithuanian parliamentary elections of 2016 and their outcomes look rather ordinary and perhaps even a bit boring. The fact that the results of the Lithuanian elections mirror, to some extent, the outcomes of the most important elections worldwide do not help to recognize its importance. However, it is hard to expect that regularly scheduled elections which are swiftly organized without any major complications in a small country, could attract at least moderate attention from the international media or political analysts. In the world, which is obsessed with the cult of celebrity, life in the periphery of great politics could look like a punishment, which, paradoxically, provides the comfort of stability. Nevertheless, understanding of democracy as a permanent and regime change-free state of society would be short-sighted. The experience of Central European countries during the 20th century reaffirm the fragility of the democratic order, which could be jeopardized by outside as well as by inside forces. Democratic order is not irreversible, the rank and file as well as political elites are equally responsible for the health of political system. From this point of view, there cannot be any “unimportant” elections for young democracies, and the success of every “ordinary” vote shows at least the vitality of the democratic system.

Elections in Lithuania

Lithuanian independence was restored in the middle of the election campaign which lasted for more than two years and was never finished. The Act on the Re-establishment of the State of Lithuania was passed on March 11th, 1990 by the Supreme Council, which was later renamed into Reconstituent Seimas. The elections to this body were held under Soviet law on February 24, 1990, when 98 of 141 members of the parliament were elected. In 43 constituencies, the second poll was held on March 4th, 7th, 8th or 10th. On the day of the declaration of the independence, powers of 133 members of the parliament were confirmed (*Lietuvos Respublikos Seimo posėdžių stenogramos 1990*). This was more than enough for the quorum and all the historical decisions were safely passed. The rest of the members of the Reconstituent Seimas were elected in by-elections later on. Nevertheless, one place in

the parliament remained vacant till the first Seimas elections under new laws were held on October 25, 1992. Despite all the attempts at the time, by-elections in Naujoji Vilnia electoral district never brought any results, as the Soviet era law required a minimum participation of 50 percent in the second poll, which was never achieved in this constituency, dominated by national minorities.

Since the restoration of the independence of Lithuania in 1990, there were only three years (2001, 2006, and 2010), when the citizens were not asked to participate in parliamentary, presidential, local, European elections or referendums. Some years (1998, 1999, 2005, and 2013) were not so busy for the Central Electoral Commission, as only by-elections in some electoral districts were held.

Such nearly permanent election campaigning inevitably had an impact on participation rates. In 1990, the Supreme Council (Reconstituent Seimas) was elected with a 71.72 percent participation rate in the first poll, and 66.4 percent in the second. However, the highest participation rate in the polls was registered on February 9, 1991, when so called “National survey on the independency of the Republic of Lithuania” was held. Then, 84.74 percent of the registered voters casted their votes and 90.24 of the participants were for the independence. The high rates of participation (more than 75 percent) were preserved only until 1993, when the first presidential elections were held. From this time on, the participation rate in Lithuanian elections remains relatively stable and fluctuates at about 50 percent. The most popular elections (presidential) attract a few percent more voters, the participation rate in the most unpopular (European parliament elections in 2009) elections goes down to the low 20s and is among the lowest rates throughout the European Union. The record of lowest participation rate among Lithuanian voters was achieved in a referendum on June 29, 2014, when only 14.98 percent of the registered voters bothered to vote. The poll was organized one month after presidential and European elections, at the very beginning of the vacation season. The so called referendum on land ownership was held on the demand of civic groups against the will of the political establishment. On the whole, referendums organized outside the regular elections days have a poor record in Lithuania. As the law requires a minimum participation of 50 percent in order to pass the law in referendum, the success of such decision making in Lithuania looks highly improbable.

The basis of the Lithuanian electoral system was created in 1992, and with minor changes survived until nowadays. It was a result of a compromise between Sajūdis movement, the principal force, which lead Lithuania to independence, and the reformed Communist party, who slowly gained some strength after independence was restored.

The summer of 1992 became a scene of hot parliamentary discussions, and the principal question was, which electoral system to choose for Lithuania: single-member plurality or proportional representation. The supporters of both systems had their own arguments and political calculations. The center-right wing Sajūdis movement had a longer list of well-known personalities and expected it to become an asset in the new election campaign, while the center-left wing ex-communists were more eager to support proportional representation, as they had a feeling that public opinion is shifting to their side, but ex-members of soviet nomenclature were not very popular as personalities.

After long and heated discussions, a compromise was achieved and “for the time being” a mixed electoral system was established, with the same number of the members of the parliament (141 places) as before. It was agreed to create 71 constituencies: and in each one of them, one member of the parliament should be elected. If none of the candidates were able gain more than a half of the votes, then the second poll was to be held between the two winners. The other 70 members of the parliament were elected according to the party list (proportional system). It was widely expected that such a mixed system would be temporary. As Liudvikas Narcizas Rasimas remembers: “We understood that such a system is neither equal, nor popular or direct, therefore, we agreed that a new elected Seimas will improve this system till October 25, 1993” (Rasimas 2016).

Despite all attempts to reform, the current electoral system survived without major changes. However, on the eve of the nearly each parliamentary election in Lithuania, we see a political party or movement that addresses the public with suggestions to cut the number of members of the parliament and argues for the switch to classical single-member plurality vote. As political parties are not trusted in Lithuania, there is a good basis for popular belief, that party lists only create some sort of nomenclature politicians, who feel the greater need to please the party leaders and receive a high place on the party list than to represent the needs of their voters.

In 1992, in order to encourage party building and to stop fragmentation of the political scene, a threshold of 4 percent for the party lists to get into the parliament was established. Only

national minorities were exempted from this rule, as it was believed that Polish and Russian political parties would be unable to draw such level of support. At the moment, diversity of the parliament was considered to be more important than proportionality. But this 4 percent rule and its exemption proved to be short lived. In the 1996 parliamentary elections, all political parties had to cross a new 5 percent barrier, a minimal 7 percent threshold was set for coalitions with no exemption for national minorities. Mainstream politicians tried to frame these changes not as an obstacle for national minorities to enter national politics, but as a way to encourage mainly Poles and Russians to join mainstream political parties. Until the 2012 elections, representatives of national minorities were elected to the parliament only in single member constituencies and lacked enough members to form parliamentary groups of their own.

The design of the electoral system was taken seriously by politicians from the very beginning of the restoration of Lithuanian independence. At the end of every parliamentary term, parties in power usually make some attempts to reform the electoral system in order to fit better their interests. Usually these changes are presented as a way to save state funds and make democracy “cheaper”. A good example of this sort could be short lived reforms of 2000. The Electoral law was changed in such a manner, that the winners in the single member constituencies were declared after the first poll, and no second poll was held. This first-past-the-post voting method in Lithuania showed itself unpopular, and was used only once. In some constituencies there was enough for the candidate to get support of some 20 percent of the registered voters to be elected. With the participation rate of about 50 percent this looked not very democratic.

For more than a decade, some wasteful political battles were fought in order to change the electoral calendar. With high expectations that the electoral pendulum will bring the change of power, parties in the opposition usually had suggestions to hold Seimas elections earlier in spring in order to allow a new government to draw a new budget plan, and not be obliged to live according to the plan passed by the previous Seimas, as parliamentary elections in Lithuania are traditionally held in autumn. These discussions lasted until 2004, when the amendment to the Constitution was passed and Seimas election date was fixed on the second Sunday of October.

As Lithuania is a parliamentary republic with some elements of a presidential republic (Jankauskas 2010: 21), Seimas elections are the most important date on the electoral calendar and have a crucial impact on national politics. But presidential elections are the most popular

among the voters. The creation of the institution of the president in Lithuania was a bit complicated and contradictory. On May 23rd, 1992, a Referendum on the restoration of the presidential authority of the Republic of Lithuania was held, but the proposition failed to get support and presidency was established during the process of creation of the new constitution. This left the highest political authority in Lithuania with limited powers.

The Lithuanian president is elected by popular vote, if no candidate receives more than half of the votes, the second round is held between the two leading candidates. From 1993, six presidential elections were held in Lithuania, and in two cases the head of the state was elected in the first round: in 1993 there were only two nominees (Algirdas Brazauskas and Stasys Lozoraitis), and in 2009 Dalia Grybauskaitė managed to win in the first round.

Local (municipal) elections were pushed into periphery of political life from the very beginning of the Lithuanian independence. The first free local elections were held just a few weeks after the declaration of the independence (March 24th, 1990), and “were left on their own” (Krupavičius 2004: 269). After long political debates, since 2015 the direct mayoral elections are held in Lithuania. Therefore, to some extent, this “personification” galvanized local politics, but created some serious contradictions in administration of municipalities, as in some cases ruling majorities of the local councils are in the hands of one party or coalition, while the popular elected mayor represents different political forces.

To no surprise, the new sort of elections, i.e. vote for European parliament, are the least popular in Lithuania. Despite the fact that Lithuanians are relatively pro-European, the turnout in European parliament elections is among the lowest in the EU: in the 2009 elections, 21 percent of Lithuanians casted their votes; five years later, the turnout was artificially boosted, as the European elections coincided with the second poll of presidential elections.

Political players

In 2017, there were 23 political parties in Lithuania. According to the law, political parties should have no less than two thousand active members (*Lietuvos Respublikos politinių partijų sąrašas 2017*). The Ministry of Justice, which oversees all political parties in Lithuania, has initiated re organization or abolition of at least fifteen political parties which do not match the new strict rules of member registration.

Despite the fact that, the principal aim of any political party is to win support of the citizens and influence the governance of the state, not all Lithuanian political parties participate in the parliamentary elections. Usually between 14 and 24 political parties have lists in a so called multi-mandate constituency, where 70 members of the parliament are elected according to the party list. At least four party lists receive support of more than 5 percent of the voters and receive places in the parliament. The electoral scene was most crowded in 1996 with 24 party lists, and the last elections in 2016 saw the smallest amount of competitors (14).

The roots of the contemporary Lithuanian party system could be traced back to the last days of the Soviet occupation, when most of the political parties, which existed between the two World Wars and, to some extent, were preserved in exile, were recreated. This was the fate of the Lithuanian Social Democratic Party, National Union, and Lithuanian Peasants Party. But the most important forces on the right and on the left were formed from the remnants of the Communist party and pro-independence Sąjūdis movement. Ex-communists created Democratic Labour party (*Lietuvos Demokratinė darbo partija*, LDDP), which later merged with social democrats; center right party Homeland Union (*Tėvynės Sąjunga*, TS) was formed on the basis of Sąjūdis. The creation of Liberal (and Central) parties took a bit longer.

Ideological differences, which usually form the backbone of political parties, are of less importance in Lithuania. According to Ainė Ramonaitė, “the Left-Right axis in Lithuania reflects the dominant Communist-Anti-Communist cleavage despite of purposive attempts of some political actors to change its content and to transform it into “Western” Left-Right dimension with dominant socio-economic-content” (Ramonaitė 2007: 177). In its negligence of “Western style” ideological divide, Lithuanian political scene is not unique in the region, similar trends could be traced in the neighboring countries as well. Such a situation highly complicates the consolidation of political forces and creates a fertile ground for the creation of new political parties, whose popularity and (usually) one-time electoral success lies in the strategy of populism. The political elite made some attempts to solve these structural problems: the laws increasing the obligatory membership of a political party to two thousand members were passed in 2013, and some restrictions on party finances were designed. This makes creation of new political parties in Lithuania highly complicated, and to some extent preserves current political landscape which is far from democratic perfection.

Since 2000, during every parliamentary elections every four years, a new political party emerged in Lithuania. In 2000: New Union–Social Liberals (*Naujoji Sąjunga-socialliberai*, NS) was created as a part of so called “New politics” movement. Lead by Artūras Paulauskas this party formed a coalition with Social Democrats for the elections of 2004, but four years later was already unable to cross the 5 percent threshold independently, stayed outside the parliament and later merged with the Labour Party (*Darbo partija*, DP), a newcomer from 2004, which had its representatives in the Parliament until the most recent elections (2016). These two parties comfortably fit into a so-called business-firm parties model, which could be “characterised by the absence of any unifying official ideology; instead, they manifest a related policy making flexibility that allows for the changing of political positions based on the current public mood. Party policies are not preset but determined by the results of “electoral market” surveys. The party is, thus, conceived as an organization with only one basic function – to mobilize immediate and superficial broad public support during elections” (Just, Charvat 2016: 87).

The 2008 Seimas elections brought a completely new National Revival Party (*Tautos prisikėlimo partija*, TPP), created by professional entertainers, which could be understood as a joke. The Kaunas pedophilia story was a source of the political party “The Way of Courage” (*Drąsos kelias*, DK) in 2012. These two parties were in the parliament only for one term.

It is highly questionable if the 2016 parliamentary elections in Lithuania make an exception from the rule, which predicts a creation of a new electorally successful party for every electoral cycle. We can argue, that Lithuanian Peasants and Greens Union (*Lietuvos valstiečių ir žaliųjų sąjunga*, LVŽS) is not a newcomer to Lithuanian politics. The roots of this party could be traced back to the resurrection of Lithuanian nation at the end of the 19th century, it was successful in 1920s, members of party were active in exile during Soviet occupation. For the last two decades LVŽS was associated with the names of two politicians: Kazimiera Prunskienė and Ramūnas Karbauskis, and had a few members in Seimas, the European Parliament and a broader representation on local level. LVŽS had changed the name more than once, in search of the popularity and votes, entered different unions. During the last few years, the leader of the party, R. Karbauskis, managed to attract some popular political and civic personalities and change the party. The question of how real the change of LVŽS is, or whether it is only a “rebrand” of the old party, remains open. As already mentioned, new restrictions of the laws complicate the creation of a new business-firm parties in Lithuania. In such situation,

political parties without deeper ideological roots can become an economically rational and cheaper substitute for creation of new political entities.

Election Research in Lithuania

Analysis of electoral campaigns and systems is a peculiar activity, as in the public it is usually overshadowed by the results of public opinion surveys. Foretelling of the future is a very promising business, predictions of election results often serves as a self-fulfilling prognosis and is used as an important tool of propaganda.

A skeptical attitude towards public opinion research in Lithuania dates its roots back to 1992, when the first Seimas elections were held. On the evening of elections day, when the polls were already closed, Lithuanian National broadcaster announced the exit polls results, which from the one hand were a great surprise as predicted the victory of ex-communist party. On the other hand, the reality occurred to be even more unpredictable: Lithuanian Democratic Labour party gained an even more convincing victory than predicted. This highly publicized story helped to create a long lasting suspicion towards sociological research, although the reality was much more nuanced, but remained unknown for broader public. As the famous public opinion researcher Vladas Gaidys remembers: “The winner of the 1992 election was known already in spring. Why did nobody speak about it? Such a prognosis looked not true. Media tried to avoid publication of such data, which was at the disposition of politicians who contravened the data and behaved in an opposing manner” (Gaidys 1998: 155).

The recovery from the 1992 political forecasting disaster was relatively quick. The 1996 parliamentary elections in Lithuania brought a decisive victory of the right wing forces, which was easily explained and predicted as a typical result of so called electoral pendulum, when electoral support quickly switches from the governing party to the opposition. Unavoidable, but painful economic reforms, which accompanied the collapse of Soviet rule in Central Europe, created a fertile ground for such electoral pendulums all over the region. The political outcomes of the 1996 elections received a comprehensive analysis in a serious volume edited by Algis Krupavičius “Seimo rinkimai '96: trečiasis atmetimas” (Krupavičius 1998). The next three consecutive parliament elections (2000, 2004 and 2008) were analyzed in a series of books named “Lithuania after Seimas Elections” (“Lietuva po Seimo rinkimų”), compiled by Algimantas Jankauskas (Jankauskas 2001; 2005; 2009). Electoral research, published in different

scientific journals by M. Degutis, D. Žeruolis, M. Jurkynas, R. Mačiūnas, G. Šumskas, M. Jastramskis, I. Petronytė, R. Žiliukaitė, J. Kavaliauskaitė, A. Šuminas, L. Bielinis, V. Savukynas and others should be mentioned as well.

The last decade of electoral research in Lithuania and the most important achievements in the field could be associated with the name of Professor Ainė Ramonaitė, who managed to assemble a group of young scholars and, employing the best practice of contemporary election analysis, began a consistent research of Lithuanian voters. Her ambition to have a Lithuanian equivalent of the famous book “The American Voter” became a reality in 2014, with the publishing of a volume “How do Lithuanian Voter choose?: Ideas, Interests and Images in Politics” (“Kaip renkasi Lietuvos rinkėjai?: idėjos, interesai ir įvaizdžiai politikoje” (Ramonaitė 2014)). The book became a “must read” source for every researcher of electoral processes in Lithuania.

This section of “Political Preferences”

This section of the journal “Political Preferences” is devoted to the initial analysis of the 2016 Lithuanian Seimas elections and is a result of joint efforts of researchers from two institutions: Vilnius University and Mykolas Romeris University. A fresh look into recent political developments has always its appeals as well as disadvantages. The presented collection of articles only confirms this rule.

This “Lithuanian chapter” opens with the article of Dr. Virgis Valentinavičius. The dean of the faculty of Politics and Management at Mykolas Romeris University concentrates on the roots of the victory of Lithuanian Peasants and Greens Union (*Lietuvos valstiečių ir žaliųjų sąjunga*, LVŽS). According to the author, LVŽS success lied in its ability to create an image of an anti-establishment movement, it attracted voters using its candidates’ list with a “wide amalgam of contrasting personalities”, and did not seem to care about the contradictions between the electoral messages. However, the largest burden of responsibility falls on the shoulders of the established political parties and their leaders, who were unable to understand the changes of the mood of the electorate. It looks like that mainstream politicians are eager to forget lessons from the past, which show that a significant part of the Lithuanian electorate is always ready to support a newcomer. Such a situation allows us to look for parallels between Lithuanian politics and the global surge of anti-establishment forces. Nevertheless, “it is too early to declare the end

of party politics and democracy as we know it”, thinks dr. V. Valentinavičius. He points the most important problems of contemporary Lithuanian political system out, which uncomfortably functions in the shadow of big businesses. However, nearly permanent leadership problems, arrogance towards the man in the street quickly translates into low trust of political parties and fragmentation of the whole political system. These long living hardships could be solved only by the established politicians themselves, waiting for the help from some miraculous outside forces only deepens the feeling of the crisis.

Dr. Renata Matkevičienė, vice-dean of the Faculty of Communication at Vilnius University, raises one of the most mysterious questions of the 2016 parliamentary election campaign. Half a year before the elections, Liberals Movement of the Republic of Lithuania (*Lietuvos Respublikos liberalų sąjūdis*, LRLS) was broadly expected to be one of the winners of the upcoming elections, when in May 2016, the leader of the party Eligijus Masiulis was involved in one of the largest political bribery scandals in the history of Lithuania. Large sums of money were discovered in the politician's home, E. Masiulis resigned from his position of the leader of the party and left Seimas and politics as well. The electoral strategy of LRLS was partly based on the image of E. Masiulis, a young promising politician of a new generation. The bribery scandal evolved during the electoral campaign, but had a moderately reverse impact on the voting results: Liberal movement even increased its share of votes from 8.57 percent in 2012 to 9.06 percent in 2016, and gained four extra seats in the parliament (14 instead of 10). However, we should notice, that a party, involved in the bribery scandal, achieved better results in 2016, but its absolute amount of received votes (115,361 votes) was a bit smaller than in 2012 (117,476 votes). This situation allows dr. R. Matkevičienė to formulate an important question: how does media construct popular understanding of political corruption. Employing qualitative and quantitative media content analytics, the researcher formulates an alarming conclusion, that the media support, or media bias can even help a political party and its leaders to remain popular, even during political corruption scandals.

A group of researchers (associate professor Dr. Arūnas Gudiničius and PhD student Arnas Aleksandravičius) from Media Research Lab at the Faculty of Communication in Vilnius University lead by Dr. Andrius Šuminas, concentrates on one peculiar question of the 2016 Lithuanian Seimas electoral campaign – the use of negative political online video advertisements. The principal goal of their research is to identify the forms and means of

negative communication used in political video advertisements. Employing concepts of forms of negativity and targets of negativity the researchers suggest that negative communication is being used by Lithuanian political organizations, but positivity is still dominant in political video advertisements. The authors conclude, that “most widely used forms of negativity in Lithuanian political video advertisements are policy attacks and fear exploitation. The most popular targets of negativity are political opponents and national government. The forms and means of negativity vary greatly between the parties – while the more traditional parties use moderate means of negativity, questioning their opponents’ policy decisions, the radical populists use different methods, exploiting fear and organizing personal attacks on their opponents”.

Dr. Jolanta Mažylė, associated professor from Institute of Journalism at Vilnius University, employed literature and source analysis to examine the process of public information and its particularities during election campaign, while concentrating her attention on the regional press. The principal question of this article is how the regional press follows the main principles of journalism – accuracy, objectivity and impartiality – during the 2016 election campaign. To some extent, this research corresponds with the questions raised by Dr. R. Matkevičienė in her article about the impact of political scandals in election campaigns. Investigation of opinion survey of regional media editors and journalists reveal that attempts of the owners of the media could cause a serious threat to the independence of the content providers.

The article by Dr. Gediminas Kazėnas, director of the Institute of Political Sciences at Mykolas Romeris University, deals with the problems the Lithuanian Polish national minority and its participation in the electoral campaign. His research singles out three factors, which had a significant impact on the performance of Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania (*Lietuvos Lenkų rinkimų akcija*, LLRA), which in 2016 parliamentary elections had a joint list with the Union of Christian Families (*Krikščioniškų šeimų sąjunga*, KŠS). According to Dr. G. Kazėnas, changes of constituency boundaries allowed Polish politicians to concentrate its supporters, while worsening the security situation after Russian aggression against Ukraine and the complicated socio-economic situation in Lithuania had a contradictory impact. However, LLRA gained the same number of seats in the Parliament. The more detailed analysis of Medininkai constituency suggests, that the loyalty of the voters to LLRA could be seriously questioned in the future. For now, the majority of Polish voters are faithful to the principle “vote for your own”

(“za swoich”). But rural communities begin to value the impact on local life more and more, so loyalty to the national party could be questioned in the future.

The article by Dr. Andrius Navickas from the Faculty of Philosophy at Vilnius University and editor in chief of the journal “Kelionė”, concludes this initial analysis of recent Seimas elections in Lithuania. The story of political turbulences in Lithuania serves as a background for the principal question raised by A. Navickas, on which direction Lithuania is moving. As the author says, he would like “to foster the discussion about the future of liberal democracy in Lithuania, about the prospects of political parties and the threat of the final victory of “consumer” against “citizen”, also about the lessons of political life in Lithuania for other post-communist states”.

We are thankful to the Editors of “Political Preferences” for this opportunity to present our research results to the broader international public and hope that parallels between the Lithuanian elections and votes held in other parts of the world could lead to important findings. However, the most interesting observations could come from comparisons with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, which have the similar experiences of the past.

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**Lithuanian Election 2016: the Mainstream Left
and Right Rejected by Voters Angry with the
Establishment**

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Abstract:

In the 2016 Lithuanian parliamentary election the established political parties suffered an unexpected and crippling defeat at the hand of the Lithuanian Peasant and Green Union (*Lietuvos valstiečių ir žaliųjų sąjunga*, LVŽS), a populist one-size-fits-all formation. The aim of this article is to identify and analyze major reasons of the populist victory in Lithuania in the context of global trend of *trumpisation* of politics. The traditional message of the establishment parties to take care of the economy, to advance foreign investment and improve business climate did not appeal to voters, while the LVŽS made a point of talking about issues people wanted to hear: the need to tackle social exclusion and poverty; to address the privileged position of big business; to fight endemic corruption; to deal with the underfunding of education and culture. The electoral message of the winner combines the hard left promise of radical change on socioeconomic issues and the far right conservative approach to identity politics, human rights, minority rights, gender equality, and refugees. The LVŽS did its best to look as an anti-establishment, anti-party politics force, a loose and wide amalgam of contrasting personalities and contradicting messages. At the same time, the major factor behind the ‘revolutionary’ victory for radical change seems to be the inability of the mainstream parties to sense the change of sentiment of the electorate and to address the growing grievances of the public. The Lithuanian anti-establishment revolt is being compared with Donald Trump’s victory in the US, Brexit in the UK, Poland after the last election in 2015, and Hungary under Victor Orban.

Key words:

Lithuanian politics, Lithuanian election, party politics, populism, establishment, radicalism

Introduction: Green Peasants reverse the trend of political fragmentation

The victorious Lithuanian Peasant and Green Union (LVŽS) is an old-timer in Lithuanian politics, with its high point of having their contender Kazimiera Prunskienė in the second round of the 2004 presidential election, which she lost to President Valdas Adamkus. Otherwise LVŽS achievements in politics have been modest: a minor partner in the 2004–2008 left-of-center Government led by Prime Minister Algirdas Brazauskas, later by Gediminas Kirkilas. At that time the party was called differently—the Peasants and New Democracy Coalition – and had up to 14 seats in the Seimas (Lithuanian Parliament) and was part of the ruling four-party coalition led by the Lithuanian Social Democratic Party (*Lietuvos socialdemokratų partija*, LSDP). In 2008–2012 the LVŽS had just two members in parliament, and after the parliamentary election in 2012 the LVŽS parliamentary representation was reduced to just one seat, although at the municipal level the party retained several strongholds, like Ignalina region in the North East Lithuania.

A year before the 2016 election, in October, opinion polls indicated some growth in popularity of the LVŽS; nevertheless, the landslide victory of the ‘Green Peasants’, as they are often called, by far exceeded any forecast, and 56 seats that the LVŽS won in the Seimas election in 2016 came as a tectonic shock.

The 56 seats in the 141-seat Seimas is not a majority, but the last time the outright parliamentary majority was won happened in the distant 1992 when the post-Communist Lithuanian Democratic Labor Party (*Lietuvos Demokratinė Darbo Partija*, LDDP) took 74 seats. In 1996, the Homeland Union-Lithuanian Christian Democrats (*Tėvynės Sąjunga-Lietuvos krikščionys demokratai*, TS-LKD) with 70 seats won were a seat short of the majority, and in 2004 the Lithuanian Social-Democratic Party (LSDP, formerly LDDP) led the Social Democratic Coalition to gain 54 seats. This was the last time a single party won more than 50 seats. With the 2004 election, Lithuania entered a period of political fragmentation when elections were won with 40-something or even fewer seats, and ruling coalitions included three and more political parties.

A fresh start of the second-tier political old-timer LVŽS was orchestrated by twofold means: by the intake of new outside cadre to add more luster to the party list and by expanding its political appeal to cover every extreme of the ideological spectrum from far left to far right and everything in between.

Anti-system outsiders: the ones voters were dying for

Probably as early as 2015, LVŽS leader Ramūnas Karbauskis initiated a massive search and recruitment of the outside personalities to add weight to the party list. The celebrity hunt brought in Saulius Skvernelis, a popular former interior minister and former high-ranking police officer, not known for any particular political or ideological affiliation. The LVŽS ratings in the opinion polls went up past the announcement in March 2016 that Mr. Skvernelis would lead the party list and would be an official candidate of the party for the position of Prime Minister.

Although Saulius Skvernelis proved to be the undisputed crown jewel of the celebrity hunt, there were others to make the LVŽS list more attractive. Mr. Karbauskis succeeded in luring into his fold very different-minded people like Dovilė Šakalienė, an ultraliberal firebrand for minority causes; or Agnė Širinskienė, an academician of Christian Fundamentalist conviction; or Virginijus Sinkevičius, an up-and-coming professional combining economic liberalism and moderate conservatism on social issues; or professorial Eugenijus Jovaiša, an archeologist keen to glorify the power of Lithuanian nationalism; or Aurelijus Veryga, a fierce fighter against alcohol consumption and against the lobby of alcohol producers in Lithuania; or Justas Džiugelis, a disabled entrepreneur with an agenda to defend the rights of the disabled. All in all, out of the 56 initial members of the LVŽS fraction in parliament, only 26 had LVŽS membership, while 30 of them had no political party affiliation.

Moreover, the non-partisan character of the LVŽS offer was touted as an asset, which appeals to the public that has developed a certain degree of aversion to partisan politics. The popular view is that political parties have become a self-serving *nomenklatura* of politicians elected by party lists, who are spending decades in parliament while their ability to win in a first-past-the-post way in many cases is never put to the test (In the Lithuanian election system, half of the parliament – 70 seats – are filled with MPs elected in a proportional representation format where voters vote for a preferred party list; the remaining 71 seats are filled with MPs elected in a first-by-the-post format in 71 voting districts. In municipal elections, local councils are elected through a proportional representation procedure, while mayors are elected directly by a majority vote).

The non-partisan aspect was further emphasized by declaring that the ruling LVŽS-led coalition would form a technocratic government of professionals. Indeed, the Government of Prime Minister Skvernelis has only one member of the LVŽS (Bronius Markauskas, minister of

agriculture); the other two partisan ministers (Linas Linkevičius, foreign affairs minister, and Dainius Sinkevičius, economics minister) have been appointed by the Lithuanian Social Democratic Party (LSDP), a junior member of the ruling coalition. Probably the best summing up of the non-partisan strategy of the LVŽS is provided by the political analyst Rima Urbonaitė who said: “They offered an oxymoron: politics without politics” (Urbonaitė 2016). Her opinion is seconded by Liutauras Gudžinskas, president of the Association of Lithuanian Political Scientists, who said: “In Lithuania, a situation is unfolding where the anti-party sentiment is becoming increasingly important” (Vireliūnaitė 2016).

The manifestly non-partisan electoral philosophy indicates that LVŽS strategists have learned the two-year-old lesson of the 2014 municipal election better than the mainstream political parties. The distinguishing feature of the last local election was the unexpected success of so called Public Electoral Committees (*Visuomeniniai rinkimų komitetai*, VRK), loose political formations claiming non-partisanship and aspiring to some sort of direct democratic action or at least a more direct democratic action than the traditional political party representation in Lithuania would allow.

Although all over Lithuania VRK gathered just over 10% of the vote (all the political parties won 1,008,493 votes in total, while VRK secured 121,196), specific Public Electoral Committees were successful in four important cities. In Kaunas, the second largest city in the country, the Public Electoral Committee ‘United Kaunas’ (*Vieningas Kaunas*) received 35,738 votes, the largest share of seats at the city council, and assumed leadership in the ruling coalition, meanwhile the ‘United Kaunas’ candidate for the mayor’s post, Visvaldas Matijošaitis, got 117,310 votes and won by a landslide (All vote numbers are the official data of the Lithuanian High Electoral Commission, *Vyriausioji rinkimų komisija*). Candidates of various Electoral Committees won mayoral elections in Panevėžys, Šiauliai and Alytus. All four cities are former industrial centers, economically lagging behind the capital city Vilnius, and could be considered a Lithuanian equivalent of the rust belt in the US, which largely favored Donald Trump. Mayoral candidates backed by non-partisan Public Electoral Committee ousted the incumbent mayors supported by the mainstream political parties. All in all, in the four major cities, VRK non-partisan formations dealt a heavy blow to the established parties. Kaunas and, earlier, Panevėžys were considered strongholds of the conservative TS-LKD, while Šiauliai and Alytus used to be controlled by the left-of-center LSDP.

Differently from a municipal election, a Public Electoral Committee-type structure is not formally allowed in a parliamentary election, so the LVŽS succeeded in accomplishing a complicated balancing act to look as non-partisan as possible and at the same time to remain a political party still to be allowed legally to run in the national election.

The winning formula: one-size-fits-all ideology

On a parallel course, Ramūnas Karbauskis and his team have labored to reshape the political message of the LVŽS to make it embrace sometimes extremely diverse ideas brought in by the accumulated personality miscellany of the party list.

Historically, the LVŽS gradually transmuted from an outfit focused purely on agriculture to one representing a broader spectrum of issues. More than two decades ago the LVŽS started as a genuinely agrarian party named the Lithuanian Peasant Union (*Lietuvos Valstiečių Sąjunga*), in 1994 renamed the Lithuanian Peasant Party (*Lietuvos valstiečių partija*). In 1995 the party made their first pitch trying to reach different segments of the population when it joined forces with the Lithuanian Women Party (*Lietuvos moterų partija*), later renamed the New Democracy Party (*Naujosios demokratijos partija*) led by Kazimiera Prunskienė, a former prime minister. The Lithuanian Peasant Party subsequently was renamed the Lithuanian Peasant and the New Democracy party. In 2005 the party was renamed one more time to become the Lithuanian Peasant People's Party (*Lietuvos valstiečių liaudininkų partija*) to highlight the continuity with the interwar period party of the same name and also to point up the party's leanings towards the Left. The last time the change of name took place was in 2012 when the party was given the current title the Lithuanian Peasant and Green Union, reflecting the fact that the party and its chairman Karbauskis took a stance to defend renewable energy and to fight against plans to build a new, cutting-edge technology nuclear power plant in Visaginas, the home of the Ignalina nuclear plant with a Soviet type RBMK reactor, which was shut down by the end of 2009.

Although prior to the last parliamentary election in 2012 the LVŽS had already developed some liking for eclectic policies, such as combining, somewhat schizophrenically, both the interests of agriculture and the elements of green policies, by the 2016 election eclecticism became a major constituting principle of the LVŽS electoral platform. As a result, the Green Peasants were able to achieve the undisputed victory by exploiting a catch-all

ideological hodgepodge: the mixture of the extreme left in economic matters and the extreme right in some social issues, all spiced up with an anti-establishment rhetoric of radical change.

The central message of the LVŽS was that the people had been increasingly impoverished by the decades of liberal policies cultivated by the ‘evil system’ embodied by the established parties, no matter left or right. The central promise of the LVŽS was to address growing social exclusion and poverty, which is a fitting task, since 29.3% of the Lithuanian population was at risk of poverty or social exclusion in 2015, well above the EU average of 23.7%, according to the latest available data of the Eurostat (Eurostat 2015). The leftist mouthpieces among the party leaders, like the deputy chairman Tomas Tomilinas, avouched that at the root of the extreme social polarization was the habitually pro-business policy practiced both by the Social Democrats and the Conservatives, so the voters could put a stop to these ‘forces of global neo-liberalism’ by voting LVŽS (Ironically, Ramūnas Karbauskis, the LVŽS leader, would also talk occasionally about social exclusion in spite of the fact that he himself is a multimillionaire and the biggest landowner in the country, taking the 9th place on the 2016 list of Lithuania’s richest people, with wealth accumulated in land trade, industrial farming and the trade in Russian-made fertilizers and agricultural machinery).

The LVŽS also dwelled on a growing gap between the relative prosperity of the elitist capital city of Vilnius and the rest of Lithuania, where high unemployment and lack of prospects for economic, social and cultural recovery are driving young people *en masse* to look for jobs in the UK, Ireland, Norway, Spain and some other European countries, as well as the USA and Canada. It is believed that, since Lithuania regained independence from the Soviet Union in 1990, some 825,000 or almost one third of the total population has left the country (European Migration Net 2016). Mass emigration is widely perceived as a strategically damaging trend that is emptying the Lithuanian countryside and small provincial towns of inhabitants and pushing the Lithuanian demographic situation further off balance. The Lithuanian social care system is already overstretched, as, according to the last official data available, the number of pensioners in 2015 was 912,000, while the employed and productive population made 1,317,000 (Department of Statistics 2017).

In its electoral action plan ‘The Government Program for Sustainable Lithuania’ (*Darnios Lietuvos Vyriausybės programa*), the LVŽS was promising to move the problem of two-speed Lithuania to the forefront of their agenda: “the tackling of poverty and regional exclusion must

become a priority task for the new government. Acknowledging that the economic reason for high unemployment and emigration is relatively low pay, we will take expeditious and efficient measures to increase the income of the population, and at the same time we will seek to ensure a proper social safety net” (LVŽS 2016: 58). Reflecting a peasant side of the LVŽS history (and, coincidentally, aligned with Mr.Karbauskis’s business interests in agriculture) the LVŽS program puts a special emphasis on ‘the preservation of vitality of the Lithuanian countryside’ (LVŽS 2016: 53-58).

The leftist part of the split psyche of the LVŽS pledged a sharp turn left: by promising to take care of a common man, by making an overtly populist commitment to painless employee-friendly reforms in education and healthcare, a hike in pensions and a promise to somehow increase salaries, including in the private sector. The LVŽS also assured voters that it would suspend and revise the pro-business Labor Code, which had been hastily pushed through parliament by the Social Democratic Government of Prime Minister Algirdas Butkevičius.

One of the key issues in the LVŽS election campaign was a promise to apply extreme measures to combat the acute problem of massive alcohol consumption in Lithuania. Among a variety of means to limit the accessibility of alcohol, the LVŽS promised an increase in the alcohol excise tax, a total ban on alcohol advertising and the enforcement of state monopoly in the alcohol trade. Drinking is a scourge that devastates Lithuania: according to the World Health Organization, in 2014, the latest data available, with 17.8 liter of pure alcohol consumption per head, Lithuania is among the leading countries in the world (WHO 2014). Another salient campaign slogan was a pledge to create a state-run network of pharmacies in order to reduce the price of medications. The LVŽS also promised a heavy-handed zero tolerance approach on corruption.

At the conservative end of the schismatic LVŽS thinking, the first section of the LVŽS program is pointedly dedicated to the notion of a ‘strong family’, which is explained in an extremely conservative way, literally as a patriarchal traditional family, to be supported morally against abnormal modern ideas as well as financially in order to boost the birth-rate. The social conservatism of the LVŽS takes the Catholic Church teaching to the extreme with regard to abortion, same-sex partnerships and assisted reproductive technologies. The fundamentalist stance is led by the aforementioned Mrs. Širinskienė.

At the same time, inside the LVŽS, Christian fundamentalism is coupled with neo-paganism. Ramūnas Karbauskis and his close following are fascinated with the self-invented version of Lithuanian neo-paganism. In his first Christmas greetings as the leader of the ruling party at the Seimas, Karbauskis presented an animation story explaining Christmas as a purely pagan ritual, featuring mythical figures of the nine-horn deer, the Sun, the blacksmith, the mythical goat and so on (DELFI 2016).

To complete the doctor Jekyll and Mr. Hide case in the LVŽS understanding of family, the already mentioned Dovilė Šakalienė, a member of the LVŽS parliamentary faction and former head of the Lithuanian Institute for Human Rights, is staunchly defending women rights, minority rights, including the idea of civil partnership for gay couples.

The eclecticism of political ideas, ideologies and even religions obviously helps to meet the expectations of a wider spectrum of voters than narrowly ideological parties would be able to attract. Deliberate eclecticism works even better in the society where many are immersed in an inarticulate primeval farrago of contradictory ideas, beliefs and superstitions, similar to LVŽS ideas. In her decades-long research of voter preferences in Lithuania, Ainė Ramonaitė, a political scientist at the International Relations and Political Sciences Institute of Vilnius University, points to the entrenched aversion of the voters to any ideology. “Our analysis shows [...] that abstract ideological labels like right-left, liberalism and so on by themselves do not mean much. Those who call themselves liberals could be intolerant of minorities or support redistribution through taxation, just like the Christian Democrats or the Social Democrats. While trying to understand on what grounds people choose a preferred ideology, one cannot help thinking that the choice of ideology follows the choice of the party people decide to vote for, not vice versa” (Ramonaitė, Jastramskis 2014: 143-144).

The irresistible us-against-them narrative

So far the road system of Lithuania’s capital Vilnius does not have a completed beltway, but the LVŽS succeeded in convincing the public there exists a political Beltway, inside which the self-centered and self-serving establishment is wheeling and dealing, while the people are left out in the cold without the slightest chance to make an impact on decision making. Since the plight of the ordinary people ‘proves’ that the establishment parties, first of all, the Social Democrats and the Conservatives, have betrayed them, the LVŽS was able to position itself as

the ‘first’ political force that is ‘truly’ of the people, by the people and for the people. In the electoral narrative of Ramūnas Karbauskis, the Social Democrats and the Conservatives have been governing Lithuania interchangeably for two decades, their ideological differences being only on paper, while in reality both pursue an identical no-limits free-market policy, which impoverishes large chunks of the population. As presented by Karbauskis, wild capitalism in this country has run amok, poverty and social polarization are out of control, and the established parties must take the blame for that; therefore, they cannot be trusted anymore. Lithuania’s ‘salvation’ depends on an outside force, not tainted with corrupt practices of the previous governments; so Lithuania’s best hope, according to Karbauskis, is the repainted LVŽS: a non-partisan party that the disappointed people could trust once again.

This truly people’s party comes with the promise of radical change—redistributing public wealth in favor of a regular Joe; thus the resistance of the elitist establishment will be desperate, the LVŽS leader Karbauskis duly promised. Immediately after the election he forewarned about a massive attack by the establishment which would soon follow, including by the ‘liberal’ media, aiming to stymie the good intentions of the election victors, but to this pressure they would not succumb. Via Facebook Karbauskis declared: “No matter how much smear, malice or scorn is thrown at us, I must assure you that we will not waver, and we will take on change Lithuania has awaited for more than two decades” (Karbauskis 2016).

As if taking inspiration from Donald Trump, during the first months in power, Karbauskis quickly shifted the blame for the early scandals of the LVŽS to the media and the conspiracy of the establishment. Both before and after the election, Karbauskis has borne considerable likeness to Trump in managing a manipulative us-against-them narrative and in using social media to shoot from the hip without much deliberation. Karbauskis is the Lithuanian equivalent of Trump also in the sense that, being a multimillionaire, he sometimes has problems with remembering what he actually owns. It was disclosed that in the obligatory declaration of income, assets and liabilities, Karbauskis failed to declare several valuable pieces of real estate in downtown Barcelona, Spain, as well as a loan that amounts to hundreds of thousands of euros.

And, similarly to Trump, being superrich was not an obstacle to portray himself as a champion of the ordinary people although Karbauskis sounded more socialist in declaring war against the forces of capitalism which made them poor (overlooking the fact that the same capitalism made him rich). In both cases consistency might be wanting; nevertheless, Karbauskis

and the LVŽS adroitly constructed a captivating narrative of the classical opposition between ‘us’ as the force for good against ‘them’, the selfish elite.

The mainstream failed to change the old mantra

The appeal of the LVŽS for the voters was much facilitated by the mainstream parties themselves. The LSDP, the leader of the ruling coalition in 2012–2016, was plagued by corruption scandals, especially during the past two years in government. Although Algirdas Butkevičius, the chairman of the LSDP and the then Lithuanian Prime Minister, for the better part of his term was the second most popular politician after President Dalia Grybauskaitė – even earning a nickname of Teflon Prime Minister, his popularity started to dwindle after his son-in-law’s public relations company had been exposed in a shady public procurement deal in 2015.

The crushing blow to the LSDP’s reputation came in early 2016 when the scandal of the so called Vijūnėlė Mansion (*Vijūnėlės dvaras*) erupted. The word ‘mansion’ is a popular sarcastic description of the sizeable and ostentatious lake-shore property, built in the Southern Lithuanian spa of Druskininkai allegedly by Ričardas Malinauskas, mayor of the spa and, at that time, one of the leading LSDP politicians nationally. Firstly, he is suspected of having constructed the mansion against the law of the day and, secondly, of twisting hands of the members of the Government, including Prime Minister Butkevičius himself, to change the regulation in order to make the property legal. The transcripts of the phone conversations surfaced in which the mayor was unceremoniously tasking a Government minister with amending the current legislation.

More generally, in addition to the now routinely unscrupulous muddle of public and private interests, the mansion scandal has exposed an opulent life style of the influential member of the LSDP, a party which in theory is vowing to take care of the working man and not of *nouveau riche* with party cards.

The reputation of Mr. Butkevičius and the LSDP was also badly dented by a few more scandals related to the abuse of public procurement. One of them was the Golden Spoons scandal when the Lithuanian Defense Ministry under the minister Juozas Olekas, an influential Social Democrat, bought hugely overpriced cutlery for the army. Also there were allegations of siphoning public funds in state-run enterprises, especially the practices revealed by the ongoing investigation of the big public company Lithuanian Railways (*Lietuvos geležinkeliai*). Among other things there is a suspicion that the company was engaged in various forms of pork barrel

spending in constituencies of heavyweight Social Democrats, including Butkevičius. All in all, the LSDP approached the election in a cloud of corruption hanging over it.

Moreover, politically, the LSDP made a suicidal move to advocate a revision of the Labor Code, which mostly favored the demands of the business community and largely ignored the wishes of the trade unions, in spite of the fact that most of the unions had been faithfully supportive of the LSDP and many of the union leaders are members of the LSDP. The legislative procedures which enacted the revised Labor Code could not come at a worse time: although the Code itself was adopted in June 2016 and subsequently vetoed by President Dalia Grybauskaitė, the Seimas overturned the presidential veto of the Code just a month before the election on 14 September 2016. This means that for good three months before the election the public space was overwhelmed with the presidential criticism of the Code. Among other things, in July 2016, President Grybauskaitė expressed dismay at the government that had brutally steamrolled the Labor Code proposals of their social partners. In an interview to *Lietuvos rytas TV* she said: “I was astonished at the total dehumanization of those in power. We undertake reforms not for the sake of some abstract creatures, but for the sake of the Lithuanian people. Or are we undertaking reforms for some aliens who will be living here? Such reforms [as the Labor Code] are further marginalizing our own people, undermining their trust in the government and fueling a sense that the people are not heeded: with all of this we push them even more to emigrate” (ELTA 2016).

As the LSDP, the main party of the ruling coalition, effectively imploded in the run-up to the election, the situation should have favored the opposition, but the opposition managed to dodge what at some point looked like a certain victory and hand it over to the LVŽS. The opposition ruined their chances with a series of missteps of their own making.

Since the defeat in the 2012 election, the conservative Homeland Union-Lithuanian Christian Democrats (TS-LKD), the main opposition party, was immersed in the process of generation change and search of a new leader. In May 2015, Gabrielius Landsbergis, a 34-year-old grandson of Vytautas Landsbergis, the icon of Lithuania’s fight for independence, was elected chairman of the TS-LKD. With a smart usage of social media, the new leader attracted an additional number of young voters in the first round of the election when the TS-LKD won the party list vote with 21%, but the party effectively collapsed in the second round, ending up with 31 seat. The result was two seats down from 2012, when the party was led by Prime

Minister Andrius Kubilius who at the time became a public hate figure after the four years of austerity policies aimed to rescue the country from the severe economic crisis in 2009.

Many believe that Gabrielius Landsbergis lost the election in the two weeks between the first and the second round when his inexperience and lack of sensitivity became apparent, especially when he was savaged in a TV debate by Ramūnas Karbauskis, who skillfully exposed the young opponent's willingness to carry out painful reforms in education or healthcare without much consideration for the employees of these sectors. Political analysts also largely agree that the overall message of Landsbergis and the TS-LKD to improve the investment climate in order to create jobs sounded bookish and out of touch with the ordinary people. While Karbauskis and the LVŽS poured loads of generous promises of instant relief to the needy, hurt and humiliated by the evil forces of the free market, the TS-LKD was promising further assistance to the very same evil forces of the free market.

At the beginning of 2016, the second biggest opposition party, the unfalteringly pro-business Lithuanian Liberal Union (*Lietuvos Liberalų Sąjūdis*, LLS) in opinion polls was on an equal footing with the Conservatives, sharing a third place behind the ruling Social Democrats and the rising LVŽS. The LLS looked set to fare well in the October election until May when Eligijus Masiulis, chairman of the LLS and its presidential hopeful, was caught red-handed with an alleged €109,000 bribe, hidden in a drink box and delivered by the vice-president of the MG Baltic conglomerate, an oligopoly which commands a major market share in hard liquor production as well as a major share of Lithuania's clothing retail market. Although the case is still under investigation and yet to reach court, the ratings of the LLS plummeted and, in the end, the Lithuanian liberals were glad to get 14 seats: four seats up compared with the 2012 election, but much less than expected before the money-in-the-drink-box embarrassment.

To sum up, in this context, the established parties have been increasingly perceived as detached from the voters, clinging to their passé mercantile free-market economism and not able to find a kind word for the poor and the weak in times when the crowd-pleasing LVŽS wooed the people by saying that the party feels their pain and has a cure for everything.

Conclusions: the mainstream could recover if a lesson is learned

Ramūnas Karbauskis might be inspired not only by Donald Trump. He also bears some likeness to Jaroslaw Kaczynski by his refusal to take a senior position in the Government or Parliament after the election. Instead, the head of the LVŽS party, an election winner by a

landslide, opted for a humble seat of the Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee for Culture and the leader of the LVŽS faction in the Seimas. The intention, clearly, was to direct politics from behind the scenes, while publicly trumpeting something like ‘we are here not for the power grab, but for the people’.

The aspiration for the grey eminence act has received a beating as the LVŽS and Karbauskis blunder through the considerable chaos of the first months in government. The new rulers are taking a battering, because the public is dissatisfied with the first broken promises and revelations of a more private kind. Karbauskis, officially a devoted champion of ‘strong traditional family’, is engulfed in a scandal around his relationship with a fellow party functionary and LVŽS member of parliament, a divorcee who received, in dubious circumstances, a luxury car from Karbauskis’s company *Agrokonzernas*, while his wife and children have been living separately in Spain for years. True or false, speculation about the extra-marital affair, which involves generous material benefits for the alleged amorous alternative, has substantially undermined Karbauskis’s public profile, leaving the technocratic Skvernelis an uncontested leader in charge of Government policies.

At the level of government policies, little has been achieved so far and in some cases the new government is backtracking from what was promised: the idea of a state monopoly in the alcohol trade has been abandoned; the negotiation over the disputed Labor Code is stalling. At the same time, the Skvernelis Government adopted a law that will facilitate the immigration of foreign skilled workers that the Lithuanian labor market is said to be short of. The measure is supported by the industrial lobby and protested by critics, like the economist Aušra Maldeikienė, an independent member of parliament, who are anxious that the intake of cheap work force from Belarus, Ukraine, Russia and beyond will freeze the salaries of Lithuanian workers.

Leaving aside the inevitable initial disruptions, the LVŽS Government under so far blemish-free and much respected Skvernelis still has its chance to level out the course, especially if helped by the popular President Grybauskaitė.

While the ability of the LVŽS to fulfill ample and contradictory promises is being tested and their first steps and missteps closely watched, it is too early to declare the end of party politics and democracy as we know it. As far as Lithuania is concerned, it is difficult to unconditionally accept the main point made by Ronald F. Inglehart and Pippa Norris that, all over the world, populist challenger victories – like Trump’s or Brexit – over the establishment are

powered by a cultural backlash against progressive ideas which went too far (Inglehart, Norris 2016). In Lithuania's case, the victory of the populist challenger can be primarily explained by the simple fact that the mainstream parties did a poor job in running the country and preparing for the election.

The early snags the LVŽS Government is hitting give room for the mainstream parties to turn the tide. The analysis of Inglehart and Norris could be applicable to the current Lithuanian situation in so far as the researchers admit that there is a certain moment of equilibrium in which both populist challengers could consolidate their gains or, on the contrary, the established parties could make a comeback. According to Inglehart and Norris, the cultural backlash (in the Lithuanian case the alleged public disapproval of 'neoliberal' paradigm) 'generates tensions and divisions within mainstream parties' and allows 'new opportunities for populist leaders on the left and right to mobilize electoral support, although it still remains challenging for populist parties to build an organizational base and to sustain any temporary breakthroughs if they enter government coalitions and become part of the establishment'. The evolving situation –when the establishment and populists both believe they can overwhelm each other – means that “Western societies face more unpredictable contests, anti-establishment populist challenges to the legitimacy of liberal democracy, and potential disruptions to long-established patterns of party competition” (Inglehart, Norris 2016: 31).

With a certain degree of caution, the Lithuanian political commentator Kęstutis Girnius views the Lithuanian election result as a continuation of the global trend of the demise of traditional political parties: “The number and influence of non-traditional political parties is growing considerably: one could name the Italian Five Stars movement, Spanish Podemos, Greek Syriza as well as the Polish, Slovak, Hungarian ruling parties and, perhaps, the Lithuanian Peasant and Green Union party” (Girnius 2016).

The British weekly *The Economist*, a stalwart supporter of liberal thought, would certainly ascribe the Lithuanian case to what it sees as an advance of 'illiberal democracy': “If you believe, as *The Economist* does, in open economies and open societies, where the free exchange of goods, capital, people and ideas is encouraged and where universal freedoms are protected from state abuse by the rule of law, then this has been a year of setbacks. Not just over Brexit and the election of Donald Trump, but also the tragedy of Syria, abandoned to its suffering, and widespread support – in Hungary, Poland and beyond – for 'illiberal democracy'.

As globalization has become a slur, nationalism, and even authoritarianism, has flourished” (*The Economist* 2016).

The major factor behind the ‘revolutionary’ victory for radical change in Lithuania still seems to be the inability of the mainstream parties to sense the changing sentiment of the electorate and to address the growing grievances of the public over social inequality spiraling out of control, the overt bullying of the political system by big businesses. It is a general stagnation of the establishment parties, which manifests itself in leadership problems, perceived arrogance towards the man in the street, low trust and fragmentation. In sum, it is not so much a LVŽS victory, but the establishment’s defeat of its own making. The question is whether the Lithuanian mainstream parties will be able to learn the lesson of the LVŽS revolution and get to the next general election in 2020 renovated, rejuvenated and reinvigorated with a new message that the people would care for. Editors of *The Spectator*, a rather conservative British weekly, in the leading article, are reminding politicians of what is to be done: “There can be a tendency among politicians to confuse their own disorientation with the end of the world – when, in fact, the world is doing rather well. [...] For almost two centuries, it has offered a lesson in how to handle what is too often called populism: if you respond to what is troubling people, the ‘populism’ tends to go away” (*Spectator* 2016).

The mainstream parties can certainly recover their strength, provided they take on board the message the voters are sending them in Lithuania as well as in Poland, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, France, Netherlands or might be soon sending in Germany. The establishment must find ways to reconnect with voters in a credible way. At the cost of the electoral defeat, the mainstream parties in Lithuania were given precisely the lesson *The Spectator* is writing about: if you are not addressing the grievances of the people, the populists will do it for you. In Lithuania, a municipal and presidential election in 2019 will give early indications whether the lesson has been learned, with a final verdict coming with a 2020 parliamentary election.

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**How Media Constructs Political Corruption: Case
of the Internet Media Reaction to the Political
Corruption Scandal during Election Campaign to
the Parliament of Lithuania in 2016**

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Abstract:

Corruption is not just a problem of developing countries, corruption scandals arise and develop also in Western democracies, what differ are the perception and assessment of corruption. As scientists state, corruption is a phenomenon that is determined by the country's democratic (state) traditions and culture, dominant values and behaviour standards, etc.

Most of the time corruption is analysed in the context of political, business, health care and media systems that are interrelated. By far, talking about the understanding and reaction to corruption in politics, are based on public perception of corruption. Corruption in political arena is related not only to actions of politicians, or public officers, but depends on the understanding and its tolerance in society. The cases of political corruption are rare, but they still happen, and it does not matter whether it is a developing county, a newly established democracy, or a so called western democracy. The phenomenon of political corruption is based on political culture, or even more broadly speaking, on national culture, traditions. And because of that cases of political corruption and their evaluation and reaction to them of the participants of political system (political actors, media and citizens) in general demonstrates the level of tolerance of such actions. Results of political election campaign can be considered as the mirror of perception of political corruption in political system, because they demonstrate the activities of all participants of political system and their attitude toward the case.

This article aims to analyze the concept of political corruption in order to identify its main determinants and to investigate the potential influence of the case of corruption of political actor on the outcome of the political elections.

In this paper the quantitative media content analysis is presented to show the coverage of the political party in relation to political election campaign during the political election period and political corruption event. It is done in search for the factors that determine the presentation and possible impact of political corruption event on the results of political elections. In the research the media content of the political actor, that was accused of corruptive activities (bribery) was analysed. The article also discusses whether the political corruption of political party leader and its presentation in the media may affect the political election results.

Key words:

corruption, political corruption, bribery, corruption scandal, media, elections

Discussion on the concept of corruption

Corruption is one of the topics in question, a problem, which has been tackled, and the problem that has been faced by many countries. Corruption is also a problem that is difficult to communicate, because in every country corruption has different public understanding of it, and the damage that could be the result of corruption to different aspects of social life (political system, economics, etc.).

Perhaps the most common definition of corruption is describing corruption as actions that are contrary to performance standards set in certain society. As Oskar Kurer (2015: 31) states, “corruption always involves a failure to conform to some standards”. The standards may cover different actors - both persons and state figures and organizations.

This definition refers to a number of important aspects: First of all, it requires pre-agreed rules, recognized infringement of these rules, “conventions or laws concerning the proper exercise of public duties for the purposes of private, pecuniary or personal gain” (Thompson 2000: 28). Corruption is always associated with personal benefit that could be direct or indirect, material or immaterial, related to actions that enhance the welfare of the person’s family or the group or clique as it’s called by Kurer (2015: 33) with whom the person identifies (political party, business entity, etc.).

There are several key aspects in defining corruption, which are consistent with description of corruption in the political system: corruption as such should put the (1) intended rogue actions (or otherwise, actions that violate rules and norms) (2) that could serve others

illegitimate outcomes and could lead to bribery or favour (Arnold, Heidenheimer 2007: 6-7) of (3) a person that has a position of trust (official, civic servant, person who has a power) and (4) holds position of trust; (5) what indicates the influence for the beneficial effects of the giver (Thompson 2000: 28).

As it was mentioned earlier, researchers had identified correlation, or to be more precise - some relations between corruption and culture, cultural values and norms, accepted rules of conduct, that are recognized in a given society. As John Gardiner states, different nations have different notion, and different legal regulations of corruption, for example, in some nations, laws deal only with the most blatant bribery: other nations however have added laws to regulate nepotism, conflicts of interest, election campaign contributions, etc.; while in some nations “gift-giving” or “dash” payments are acceptable (Gardiner 2007: 36).

These statements about the prevalence of corruption in various countries are enhanced by the results of the special Eurobarometer study on corruption: three-quarters of respondents (around 80%) think that corruption is widespread in their own country. The countries where respondents are most likely to think corruption is widespread are Greece (99%), Italy (97%), Lithuania, Spain, Czech Republic, Croatia, Romania, Slovenia, Portugal and Slovakia (all more than 90%); respondents from Nordic countries think corruption is rare – more than half of respondents from those countries agree to this statement - Denmark (75%), Finland (64%) and Sweden (54%) (Special Eurobarometer 2014: 6).

As Mark Philp (2015: 18-19) states, we usually attach the negative connotations to calling things corrupt, especially if they are ascribed to them by politicians, journalists, or ordinary people, “each of whom may have different concerns and different interests in identifying certain types of conduct as corrupt.” As it is discussed in many scholarly publications, public opinion, understanding or status of corruption in country, set not only by the law, but by the cultural values as well, affect behaviours and responses to corrupt activities. John Gardiner (2007: 32) provides an explanation of the relation of cultural values and citizen’s behaviour stating that “investigators and prosecutors know that if citizens are concerned about corruption (...) they will be more likely to report crimes, to assist in investigations, and to vote for convictions when they serve as jurors. (...) Citizens’ values about corruption are likely to affect how they behave themselves – whether they will offer bribes or will abide by the requirements of the law”.

But the most important factor that influences the occurrence of corruption and rooting of it in different fields and social systems is money: the vast part of the activities, their success depends on the money, and this creates an environment conducive to corruption. As it was stated in the Global Corruption Report (2004: 19), “much of democratic political activity simply could not occur without it”, because of this, possibilities of corruption in political processes are high.

Political corruption: party finances, political actors, and interests

Corruption in politics usually is defined as the process in which the political actor that has some power to make an impact on (political) decisions receives beneficial proposal to use that power to meet the interest of the third party.

Mark Philp (2015: 22) strengthens some key elements that describe political corruption: political actor (or more broadly - public official), who has some power and who is intended to violate the norms of performance of the public institution to suit public interests; someone (person or institution) who will benefit from the act of political actor by themselves or a third party they represent and will “gain access to goods or services they would not otherwise obtain.”

The misuse of money and power, particularly when it reflects corrupt practices in politics, creates some problems— and not only because this harms democratic principles, but violets the faith in fair representation, transparent decision making. According to public opinion on political corruption researches corruption is seen in some countries like Poland, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Finland, Luxembourg as widespread within political parties - around 40% of respondents in the countries mentioned before have claimed that political corruption is in political system (Special Eurobarometer 2014: 24).

It is believed that political corruption could lead to some possible ways of response by citizens: it could be related with decreasing political participation rates, apathy and distrust in the political institutions and processes. But at the same time the research results (Special Eurobarometer 2014: 24) show some contradictory numbers - countries where it is quite widely understood that corruption in political system is used, in the same countries the most positive perceptions of politicians have been displayed: in countries like Cyprus, Lithuania, Latvia, Bulgaria, Malta and Poland, Luxembourg and Sweden - around 40% of respondents are positive toward evaluation of political actors and institutions.

In the context of political corruption the financing policies and practices of political parties play an important role. The practices in different countries differ (in some countries parties could be financed by the state, in some - political parties could be owned by individuals), and those differences make an impact on the understanding and evaluation of political corruption. For example, in the countries where political parties are financed by the state, political actors “are less beholden to their voters, supporters and members, and this may erode ties of loyalty and weaken accountability” (Williams 2000: 7). On the other hand, when political parties are financed by individuals, the political party can be used as a means of reaching the interests of a single person (owner, supporter) and determine pure accountability.

Political finances are mostly related not only to political party finance, but to campaign finance, and the last one is the most important “in both new and established democracies as well...” (Global Corruption Report 2004: 13). In established democracies and developed countries, “the key problem is often seen as corruption arising from the financial needs of competitive political parties” (Williams 2000: 9). The financial support of political parties and their activities causes some political scandals because of the nature, sources and consequences of the support. As Robert Williams states, party finance is understood as funds that “are received and expended by the political parties” (Williams 2000: 12) to “ensure a stable and viable democratic process of representation” (Smilov 2007: 2) according to national regulation system that is tailored to make the system accountable and transparent.

Political finance is two sided - it is influenced by, and influences relations between participants of political system such as political parties, political leaders or party members. Political finance and corruption are separate notions, as emphasized in Global Corruption Report (2004: 19) “but when their valences overlap, the zone of political corruption emerges”. The factors that encourage the emergence of political corruption are the lack of openness and transparency in party finance, lead by ineffective government regulation; closeness between financial contributors and the political parties. These actions influence and determine “subversion of democratic processes, and, more simply, straightforward bribery” (Williams 2000: 2).

A bribery as a form of corruption could be assumed as an action that involves a public official or political actor and their behavior that represents a perversion of the standards of the institution the person represents (Thompson 2000: 29). Bribery could be also defined as the

attempts of business to make an influence through their support to political parties (Williams 2000: 10).

According to Eurobarometer research on corruption (2013: 6), more than the half of Europeans believe that bribery and the abuse of positions of power for personal gain are widespread among political parties and politicians at national, regional or local level (around 60%).

Around 70% of Europeans agree that bribery and the use of connections is often the easiest way of obtaining some public services in their country: this kind of belief is most widespread in Greece, Slovakia, Croatia, Lithuania, the Czech Republic, Italy and Slovenia (around 90%); and least so in Denmark and Finland and Sweden (less than 40%) (Special Eurobarometer 2014: 7).

As it was mentioned before, corruption is a phenomenon, which is caused not only by the political system, its regulation, but which is also based on cultural peculiarities. Next part of the article includes the analysis of media coverage of corruption event that involves a political party leader, suspected of taking a bribe from big business corporations that had happened in Lithuania during the election campaign.

Research methodology. Suspicion on bribery and its representation in internet media: how representation of crisis could have an impact on results of election campaign

The aim of the research that is presented in the article is to investigate manifestation of political corruption case in the selected internet media portal Delfi.lt (the most popular internet portal in Lithuania based on unique entries and time spent in the portal during the period of research, source: <http://www.delfi.lt/apie/>), and to determine how certain media (re)presents political corruption that occurred in Lithuanian political party – Liberals Movement of the Republic of Lithuania (*Lietuvos Respublikos liberalų sąjūdis*, LRLS) when the leader of the party was suspected of bribery. As the outcome of the research is to discuss how the case of political corruption fits in with the messages presented in the media are related to political elections, and how this relates to public opinion on the relevant political party and political election campaign results.

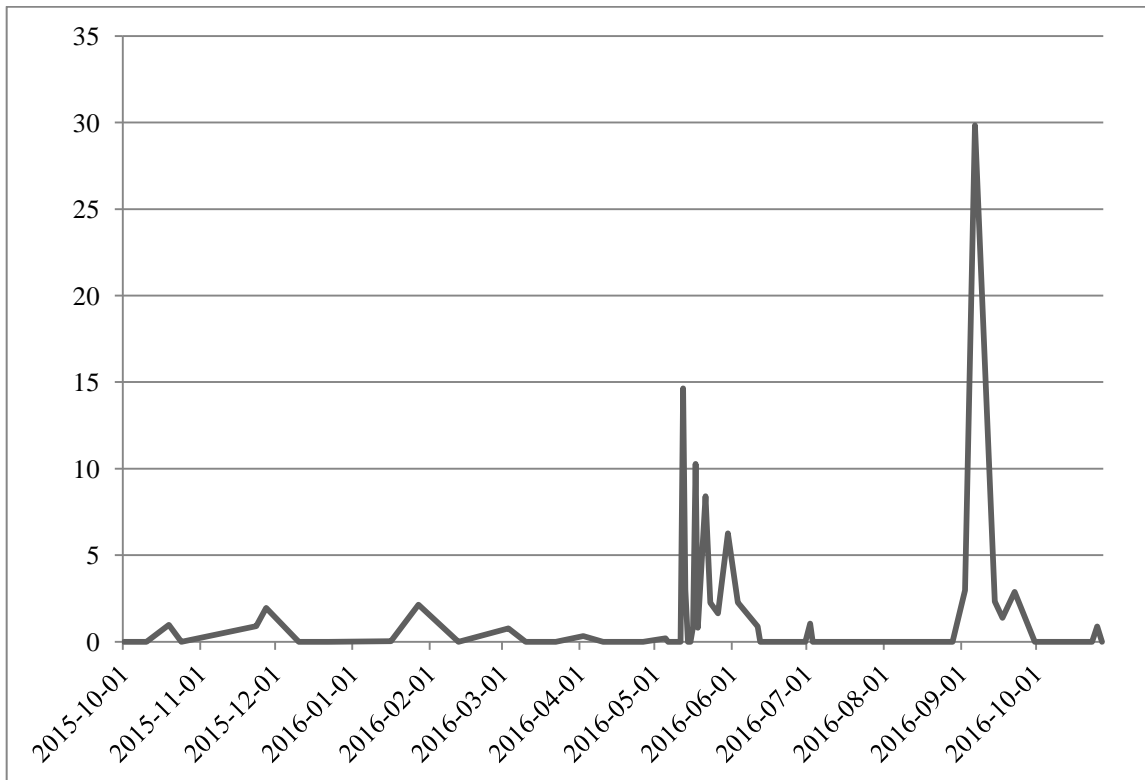
For the research qualitative and quantitative media content analysis methods were selected. The selection of messages was based on the keywords related to a specific party and its

participation in the elections, as well as specific policies on the political corruption action / event.

The period of study was chosen in relation to political election campaign and political corruption scandal. The chosen sample was one pre-election year – 9 October, 2016 election to the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania: one year before the elections: October 2015 - October, 2016. The events related to one of the popular political parties – LRLS. Its leader Eligijus Masiulis was detained on suspicion of bribe on 12 May, 2016.

During the period that has been chosen for investigation LRLS and its preparations for the elections to the Seimas have been mentioned in 198 messages, among which - 34 messages mention LRLS and party’s relation with corruption case, and 9 publications were messages that represented E. Masiulis as the leader of LRLS and were related to the political corruption event (suspicion for the act of bribery, allegation of possible influence making).

Figure 1. Timetable of publications related to the LRLS, political elections and political scandal in Delfi.lt, %.



Source: own construction based on conducted research

As it is provided in Figure 1 of the publication distribution in time, the messages that mention LRLS and events related to corruption were published largely only during the period of several weeks starting with the event of detention of E.Masiulis on the suspicion of bribery.

The analysis of the distribution of publications (see Figure 2) shows the domination of the reporting about suspicion of political corruption (90% of publications). The majority of publications relate to corruption events (suspicion of bribery), and only partially link this event with political party, its activities (8%), the assessment of the event from commentators and reports on public opinion researches (17%).

Figure 2. Distribution of thematics of publications in Delfi.lt during the period of research

topics	%	%
investigation of corruption		53
investigation actions	26	
suspicion for bribery	12	
E. Masiulis guilty for bribery	1.9	
approval of E. Masiulis actions	13	
E. Masiulis honest politician	0.1	
LRLS actions in relation to political corruption		8
E. Masiulis resigns from LRLS	2	
elections of new leader of LRLS	4	
political party management	2	
political elections 2016		17
political elections	6	
public opinion, political parties ranking	11	
other		22

Source: own construction based on conducted research

While discussing the publications, it is worth paying attention to the fact that some changes in media performance have been detected. Before the corruption scandal has occurred, LRLS was named by media and commentators as one of the leaders of political arena, it was presented as one of the leading parties in the election campaign, in the context of the possible outcome of elections: setting of possible coalition of ruling political parties. In those messages

the LRLS members, especially party leader - E. Masiulis were interviewed as experts or commentators, presenting and discussing prospective political election results, commenting on other political parties a number of (dissonant) decisions taken by government (LRLS - opposition party during the election campaign), especially in relation to possible non-transparent decisions.

After the crisis (after bribery scandal) media reports have changed: LRLS leaders and representatives were not interviewed as experts, even in the messages on the analysis of the political election campaign and its prospective or actual results. The number and names of chosen representatives of the party were given, but they were not interviewed.

Figure 3. Type of publications: intensity, publications distribution of genres and themes in delfi.lt during the period of research

	high intensity (%)	low intensity (%)	medium intensity (%)	Comments (%)	Analytical investigation (%)	Information (%)	Interview (%)
investigation of corruption	26.09	0.00	4.35	0	4	24	4
LRLS actions in relation to political corruption	4.35	13.04	13.04	0	8	20	8
political elections 2016	4.35	13.04	13.04	0	4	16	4
other	0.00	4.35	4.35	4	4	0	0
			100				100

Source: own construction based on conducted research

This is confirmed by data presented in Figure 3 in the analysis of the media reports' intensity¹: messages that are devoted to covering the corruption scandal and the actions related with the suspicions of bribery, actions carried out by politicians involved in the situation are presented in the intense mode. But the comparison and linking of messages' intensity and publications' themes shows the fact that the publications, that discuss the political election campaign, potential results of political elections, ratings of political parties, public opinion

¹ Intensity was measured as high when the entire publication was dedicated to the topic; medium intensity was assigned when the topic was covered in the publication together with other topics; low intensity was assigned when the topic was only mentioned in the publication.

surveys’ results or similar themes - have not been mentioning or only episodically (fragmentary) mention this specific political corruption event that occurred.

It is worth to note the fact that the publications, in which the main subject was the case of political corruption, were usually presented as an information (they presented facts with comments on the investigation, with no focus on the politician, political party or political system): they presented facts and information on actions taken by the politician, the prosecutor and the investigators, the process of elections of the new leader of political party, however, there were no publications presenting comments or opinions on the topic.

It is worth noting the fact that in the media publications were dominated by leaders of other political parties who had voiced opinions about the E. Masiulis as an honest politician, and they were not expressing negative opinions of evaluations of the case (excluding statements made by one of LRLS’s members that a politician in question might have acted improperly).

Figure 4. Members of LRLS mentioned in Delfi.lt publications during the period of research

	actor - A.Guoga, as candidate to replace E.Masiulis	actor - E.Gentvilas, vice- chairperson	actor - E.Masiulis, leader of political party, suspected for bribery	actor - G.Steponavicius, vice-chairman of the party	actor - R.Simasius, as candidate to replace E.Masiulis
investigation of corruption (%)	8.97	5.13	29.49	6.41	1.28
LRLS actions in relation to political corruption (%)	10.26	8.97	8.97	2.56	2.56
political elections 2016 (%)	3.85	1.28	5.13	1.28	2.56
other (%)	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.28	0.00
					100
Length of citations, words	785	393	9145	390	149
Length of citations (%)	7.23	3.62	84.19	3.59	1.37
					100

Source: own construction based on conducted research

As for the analysis of media publications, it is worth to analyse the attention media devoted to the members of LMP linked with political corruption cases (see Figure 4).

As the research data shows, all those involved in corruption scandal - questioned whether mentioned in the context of corruption scandal – were relatively rarely mentioned in a number of

publications in the context of political party and its activities during the political election campaign. As the research data shows, those members of LRLS who were connected with political corruption scandal were not actively represented in the media content during the election campaign in the messages related with the performance of the LRLS. This could be the result of political party management, but this is related with the media-friendly performance as well.

Conclusions

Political corruption scandal has been a topic that has been discussed, and brought up by the media in the political election campaign.

After the political corruption scandal when the leadership of political party has been changed (leader of the political party that was suspected of political corruption resigned from the leadership and from the political party), and the person suspected of taking bribes withdrew from politics, the linkage between political party and the political corruption was lessened.

The media has not been investigating the schemes of political corruption, such topics as political party finances and possible corruption offenses have not been analyzed and the performance of the politician who was suspected of bribery was analysed just through giving the factual information by the media on investigations carried out by representatives of the law enforcement institutions.

The results of the research showed quite positive attitude of the media toward the political party and neutral coverage of the party leader and party management during the corruption scandal: interviews of the experts, opinion leaders, the evaluation of the political situation construct a relatively neutral presentation of the political actor's and political parties corruption case, without an expert assessment of critical statements on unfair practices performed by politician, possibilities of opaque financing of political party and election campaign.

Another aspect revealed in the analyses of the case was the support of other political parties - during the case representatives of other political parties were not criticizing nor commenting negatively on the particular political party and its leader who was accused of the bribery.

Maybe because of the media bias demonstrated during the case, or cultural context dominating in Lithuania in understanding and evaluation of corruption (especially in the finances of political parties), or confidence in political parties and politicians, voiced especially by young people, the political party that was involved in political corruption scandal gained support from the electorate during political elections, even though they took place relatively shortly after the political corruption scandal had occurred.

Therefore, it can be said that the media support, or media bias can even help political party and its leaders remain popular, even during the political corruption scandals.

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**Negative Political Communication in Online Video
Advertisements: Case Study of 2016 Lithuanian
Parliamentary Election**

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Abstract:

In the course of election campaigns politicians and political parties try their best to highlight their most favored topics that would help them draw public attention and increase people's regard for specific political figures. In contrast to the positive communication content announced during an election campaign, candidates sometimes choose negative messages that focus on their opponents' weaknesses (real or imagined) rather than their own strengths. The goal of this research is to identify the forms and means of negative communication used in political video advertisements during Lithuanian parliamentary election of 2016. To achieve our goal, we analyze the political video advertisements that were categorized as negative communication. We categorize and analyze those advertisements by using concepts of forms of negativity and targets of negativity. Our findings suggest that negative communication is being used by Lithuanian political organizations, but it is the positive one that is still dominant in political video advertisements. Despite that, negative aspects of communication are used by different parties, in diverse forms and for different targets.

Key words:

negativity, political communication, online video advertisements, election campaigns

Introduction

During election campaigns, politicians and parties seek to dominate in the general information environment by any means in order to increase their popularity and the opportunities to win election. The number of people using the Internet and interactive media is increasing every year, therefore, nowadays politicians include the Internet and social media on the list of

communication channels in order to ensure the widest dissemination of their messages that is possible. With each election campaign, interactive communication media play an increasingly important role in the overall communication process, sometimes even becoming the central field of political fight.

Due to the formation and constant increase of the number of active social media users, online groups have become an attractive message audience for politicians, in particular during election campaigns. As well as performing the function of a resource of political information, the Internet and social media are changing substantially the ways and forms in which politicians communicate with the electorate. Due to different social media, politicians have wide opportunities to easily access large audiences and to communicate with electors directly, without the mass media acting as an intermediary. In addition, with social media helping to combine the mass outreach and the personal impact opportunities, new opportunities arise that enable political actors to include potential electors into the electoral communication processes.

Positive, negative and neutral political communication

In the course of election campaigns politicians and political parties try their best to highlight their most favored topics that are to help them draw public attention and increase people's sympathy towards chosen political figures. Campaign strategists make every possible effort to ensure that the topics pertaining to various problems which are favored by candidates and are relevant to society get into the centre of public discourse (e.g. taxes, unemployment, health security, social insurance, etc.). Attempts are also made to show that specific candidates are the only ones capable of solving the emerging problems, i.e. they possess adequate competences, know-how, experience, etc.

However, the focus on a specific topic is often linked with a thoughtfully selected and explicitly stated candidate's position on a particular issue. In order to win an election, candidates take special caution in selecting when and how to express their position on controversial issues polarizing society. The selection and defence of one's position on relevant issues causing considerable controversy in society always pose a certain risk that politicians will not only draw attention of a part of voters and win their favour but will inevitably drive a certain percentage of potential voters with an opposing opinion on the issue away from them. Nevertheless, the adoption of a clear position on controversial issues and its expression help candidates running in an election to draw public attention and to stand out from their political competitors.

Besides, if political competitors have diverging views on the issues of interest to voters, it may serve as a basis for the implementers of an election campaign to launch a direct or indirect discussion with political opponents on the issues of public interest. The discussion may occur directly when candidates announce their messages via interactive media with a direct reference to the positions of their opponents, such as “political competitors are going to increase taxes and we are not,” or indirectly when candidates express their positions by abstaining from mentioning those of competitors on the same issues directly (Foot, Schneider 2006).

The overall communication content that appears in social media can be classified into three groups by the type of information provided in election campaigns:

1. Positive communication messages which aim at forming a positive public opinion on candidates through social media, i.e. to highlight their value and strengths;
2. Negative (attack) communication messages, which are targeted at political opponents of the candidates publishing them and intend to show their opponents in an unfavourable light or to put them into an uncomfortable position;
3. Neutral communication messages, which cover the whole political content published in social media in the course of election campaigns containing neither positive nor negative elements.

In contrast to the positive communication content announced during an election campaign, candidates’ negative messages focus on their opponents’ weaknesses (real or imagined) rather than their own strengths. However, the purpose of both positive and negative messages is to make potential voters understand and memorise the information addressed to them.

In the context of elections, negative communication messages are otherwise known as attack, smear or question messages. Negative information relates to critical statements and images of the problems of politicians, institutions, political processes or a specific policy which appear during an election campaign. The negativity of communication in election campaigns varies from the criticism addressed by one politician to another to cynical statements on candidates’ motives and the selfishness of their objectives in political decision-making (Unikaité 2008).

Among other purposes, negative messages seek to prevent political opponents from proceeding with their planned election campaign. Usually, after negative messages on political opponents published in social media receive considerable public attention, the latter may not

ignore them and have to react at least partially, in one form or another. Opponents are forced to dedicate their time and efforts to replying to negative messages, thus causing a certain disruption in the usual rhythm of their election campaign and its changes. What is more, negative and attack messages may provide much better positions in the electoral struggle even for a weak candidate.

One of the reasons explaining the increasing domination of negative messages during election campaigns is people's ability to memorise negative information much better than positive one. It is also believed that positive messages only strengthen the beliefs of existing supporters, while negative messages have a stronger effect on undecided voters and help them decide not to vote for a political opponent. As noted by Breyglio, one of US President Ronald Reagan's campaign managers, it is important in these times to not only equip people with arguments why they should vote for you but also provide arguments why they should not vote for other competitors. Hence, negative campaigning or an attack strategy is a necessary part of any electoral activity (Johnson-Cartee, Copeland 1997).

Forms and targets of negative political communication

Theoretical contributions on the circumstances under which parties or politicians exploit negative campaigning are mainly developed in the context of the American two-party system. However, recently scholars are beginning to study negative communication in a European context, when parties or politicians make use of negative campaigning in a multiparty system in a more active manner.

The main difference between a two-party system and a multiparty system is that in a multiparty system parties have to make a trade-off between their goals. In a two-party system such as the United States, winning votes in the election campaign means getting into office and acquiring policy influence. In a multiparty system in which coalition governments are the rule, this is not necessarily the case, as winning the biggest share of votes does not automatically translate into government office or policy influence (Walter et al. 2014).

Summarizing the various results from different continents it is possible to identify main candidates or parties characteristics that affect candidates or parties inclination to make use of negative campaigning:

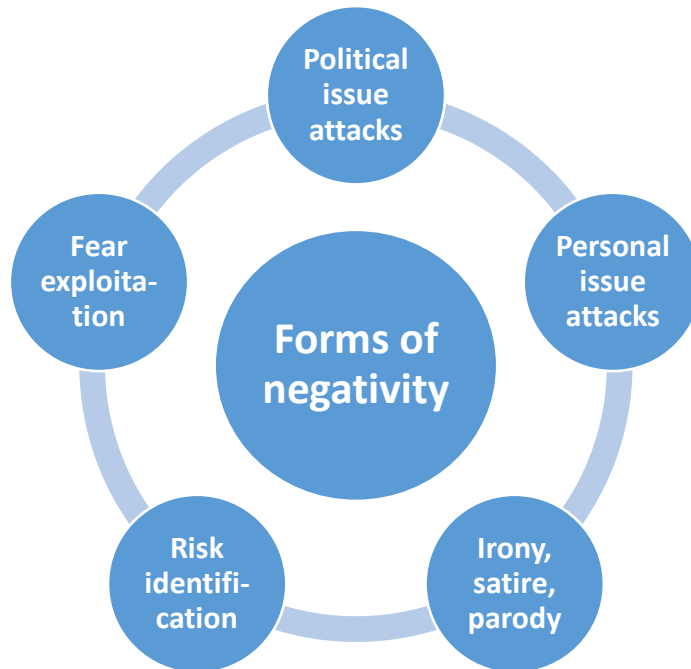
- **The government status of the party or politician.** Opposition parties or politicians are more likely to engage in negative campaigning than government parties or politicians.

- **Standing in the polls.** Parties or politicians that are losing in the polls are more likely to go negative than parties or politicians that are gaining in the polls.
- **Previous government experience.** Parties or politicians that have more government experience are less likely to go negative than parties or politicians that have less or no government experience.
- **Ideological position of the party or politician.** Parties or politicians that are closely positioned to the median political position within the system are less likely to go negative than parties or politicians that are positioned far away from the median positions.
- **Available resources of the party or politician.** Parties or politicians that have less resources (money, human and etc.) are more likely to go negative than parties or politicians that have plenty of resources.
- **Size of the electorate.** When the relative size of the electoral market is larger, parties or politicians are more likely to make use of negative campaigning than when the relative size of the electoral market is smaller.
- **Time to election.** The closer the elections, the more parties or politicians are likely to make use of negative campaigning. As election day approaches, the tone of a campaign becomes increasingly more negative.

Two main forms of negative campaigning could be discerned: political issue attacks and personal attacks. Quite often those are not the political positions of the opponents that are attacked, but emphasis is laid down on personal characteristics. Such type of an attack affects strongly the electors' emotions and can be traced down back to Ancient Greece and Rome. Thus in the 6th century B.C. in his Rhetoric, Aristotle defined the fundamentals of any effective public communication as follows: a reliable and trustworthy source (ethos), a message supported by facts (logos) and emotionally backed expression (pathos).

Besides the two main forms of negative campaigning other forms of negative political communication can be identified, such as fear exploitation, risk identification, irony, satire and parody (Picture 1).

Picture 1. Forms of negativity



Source: own construction

Usually, parties or politicians resort to negative campaigning in an attempt to become voters' preferred choice by diminishing positive feelings for opposing candidates or parties. The most obvious strategy to achieve such a goal and win voters is a direct attack on political opponents. By criticizing their opponents politicians and parties are, first of all, trying to persuade voters not to vote for political opponents in anticipation to receive the votes of the people who change they opinions.

Negative communication messages may be targeted not only at specific political opponents but also at abstract enemies by not identifying them explicitly. For instance, the messages of candidates running in an election may be dominated by topics ‘against monopoly’, ‘against corruption,’ ‘against crime’ and at the same time those candidates may abstain from mentioning specific monopolists, corrupt persons or criminals.

The findings indicate that the impact of negative messages varies depending on (a) the status of the candidate delivering the message, (b) the characteristics of citizens receiving the message, and (c) the style of the candidates' criticisms (e.g., policy vs. personal attacks) (Fridkin, Kenney 2004).

Picture 2. Targets of negativity



Source: own construction

Online video advertisements as a tool for negative political communication

It is better to see something once than to hear it a hundred times. This old proverb describes the fundamental dimension of modern communication in business and politics – images, especially when they are moving, are a magnetizing force that draws attention. Therefore, video advertisements have been seen as one of the most effective channels of political communication for several decades.

According to a survey carried out in France in 1975, 64% of voters said that television is the most useful and efficient way to choose a candidate. In 2009, 50% of them stated that television is the first source of political information (Borrell, Dakhliya 2017). Nowadays most of the content from television is published online, some of the video content is also published directly on video sharing platforms (YouTube) or social media (Facebook). People are getting their news online, following politicians on social media – reading their posts and watching their videos. In 2009, 30% of Americans watched political videos online, rising from 15% in 2007 (Purcell 2010). In 2012, 66% of respondents watched political videos online, and 36% watched especially political advertisements (Smith, Duggan 2012).

As in other channels of communication, some of online political video advertisements are negative. These negative advertisements often generate substantial attention – during the 2010

United States Senate election, negative advertisements accounted for only one third of all online video advertisements, but also generated more than half of the views (Ridout, Fowler, Brandstetter 2012). However, politicians must be careful – sometimes negativity has a “backlash” effect. This could have happened in the 2012 United States presidential election, when Republican candidate Mitt Romney’s approval ratings lowered when respondents watched attack ads against Democratic candidate Barack Obama (Baumgartner 2013).

Many politicians and political parties are creating videos that are only posted online. This is one of the cheapest and cost-effective ways to reach target audiences. Studies on online political advertising show that online video advertisements could prove more effective than the static display ads (Broockman, Green 2013). Moreover, political videos posted online have this possibility that they might go viral and reach a tremendous number of people in days or even hours. Politicians and political strategists understand that and choose online video advertisements as a channel to transmit all kinds of messages – not only positive or neutral, but also negative, with different forms and targets.

Negative communication during the 2016 Lithuanian Parliamentary election campaign: research method

In order to understand the aspects of negative communication during the 2016 election, we constructed our sample from video advertisements that were published on political parties’ or coalitions’ official Facebook pages from September 1 to October 9. We restricted this sample to only those videos that were created as professionally edited political advertisements, excluding other videos e.g. livestreams or video reports from conferences, discussions, etc. 10 out of 14 political parties and coalitions participating in 2016 elections had professionally edited political advertisements posted on their official Facebook pages.

When categorizing these videos as positive, neutral or negative we followed this rule: negative videos must not only be easily described as “attack ads”, but also have a particular target, mentioned in Picture 2 – political opponents, national government, political institutions, economic institutions, business subjects or foreign countries. However, this target does not have to be named, because it can be obvious without naming it. Even if an advertisement has some positive aspects, we include it in our sample if it has at least some negativity and particular target. We found 12 videos that we categorized as negative. These negative videos were created by 5 different political parties or coalitions – Lithuanian Social Democratic Party, Homeland

Union – Lithuanian Christian Democrats, S. Buškevičius and Nationalists’ Coalition “Against corruption and poverty”, Lithuanian Farmers and Greens Union and Lithuanian People's Party.

The goal of this research is to identify the forms and means of negative communication used in political video advertisements during Lithuanian parliamentary election of 2016. To achieve our goal, we analyze the political video advertisements that were categorized as negative communication. We categorize and analyze the advertisements by using concepts of forms of negativity and targets of negativity.

Political context

Political parties and coalitions that expressed negativity in their political video advertisements varied greatly in their government status or experience, ideological position and standing in the polls. Here we introduce these five political forces and the political context in Lithuania in 2016.

Lithuanian Social Democratic Party was the governing party during the 2016 election, having been in power since 2012, also carrying a great experience of leading the majority governments since 1992. This political party has an ideological stance of centre-left (social democracy) and pro-European. The ruling party and its leader, the prime minister Algirdas Butkevičius, were very popular for most of the time since 2012 but during last months their popularity declined rapidly.

Homeland Union – Lithuanian Christian Democrats was the main opposition party during the 2016 election, having lost power in 2012 to Social Democrats. This party also carries great experience in leading the majority governments since 1996 and has always been the main rival of Social Democrats. Homeland Union has an ideological stance of centre-right (conservatism and Christian democracy) and pro-European. The party is not very popular since 2012 but in April 2015 it has a new, young leader, former MEP Gabrielius Landsbergis and since then the popularity of this party had been growing.

S. Buškevičius and Nationalists’ Coalition “Against corruption and poverty” is a block of two parties – Young Lithuania and Lithuanian Nationalist Union. Neither of the parties had seats in Lithuanian parliament or European Parliament. Their ideological stance can be described as ultra-nationalism and right-wing populism. The coalition was very unpopular before the 2016 election.

Lithuanian Farmers and Greens Union had one seat in Lithuanian parliament and one seat in European Parliament before the 2016 election, but was widely represented in municipalities

(147 seats in the whole country). Their ideological stance can be described as agrarianism and green politics. Despite being represented in Lithuanian parliament for many years and even being part of the coalition government from 2004 to 2008, Farmers and Greens Union was never considered a major force in Lithuanian politics. However, in March 2016 the party has attracted a new, popular, independent public figure (former police commissioner and Minister of the Interior) Saulius Skvernelis who became the leader of Farmers and Greens election list. This move has put them among the most popular political parties in Lithuania.

Lithuanian People's Party had no seats in Lithuanian parliament or European Parliament. Their ideological stance can be described as radical left and pro-Russian. The party was very unpopular before the 2016 election.

Of the political parties and coalitions that used negative communication during the 2016 election, three parties (Lithuanian Social Democratic Party, Homeland Union – Lithuanian Christian Democrats and Lithuanian Farmers and Greens Union) were considered as having the best chances of winning the election as they had similar high status in opinion polls. Remaining 2 of the 5 political forces were considered radical populists and performed very poorly in the opinion polls. There were also parties who had a good chance of winning at least some seats in the 2016 election (e.g. Party “Order and Justice” or Liberal Movement) but these parties either did not publish any political video advertisements or all of their video advertisements were categorized as either positive or neutral.

Analysis

Negative communication during the Lithuanian parliamentary election of 2016 had different forms and targets of negativity. Some advertisements had more than one form of negativity or more than one target of negativity. The most widely used form of negativity was policy attacks (6 times). Less common, but still used forms were fear exploitation (4 times), personal attacks (3 times) and irony, satire and parody (1 time). The most common targets of negativity were political opponents (8 times). National government (3 times), political institutions (2 times), business subjects (1 time) and foreign countries (1 time) were also used as targets. We begin by analyzing the forms of negativity and later continue with the analysis of targets of negativity.

Policy attacks, as the most widely used form of negativity, was used by 4 political parties. Social Democrats used policy attacks 2 times while criticizing their opponents' past decisions and comparing the results of two different coalition governments. Homeland Union

used policy attacks in their advertisements 2 times, criticizing government's failing policies and constant scandals. Farmers and Greens used policy attacks one time, criticizing current governments' neglect of poor people. People's Party also used policy attacks one time, criticizing other parties for accepting European Union's refugee quota system.

Fear exploitation was used by 3 political parties. Social Democrats used fear exploitation in one attack advertisement which was to make people believe that it would be a nightmare if their opponents were back in power with their tax reform. Buškevičius and Nationalists' Coalition used fear exploitation 2 times on a wide range of issues from so-called European Union's or Russia's imperialism to rich people exploiting poor people. People's Party used fear exploitation in one advertisement on a wide range of subjects from "homosexual propaganda" to migrant crisis.

Personal attacks, as a form of negativity, in all 3 cases were used by one party – People's Party. They did it by showing pictures of politicians who accept European Union's refugee quota system or just by showing pictures of politicians and criticizing them without arguments. Also, in one advertisement, the leader of People's Party comments that one of the reasons why he is running for office in Centras-Žaliakalnis electoral district is because the leader of Homeland Union is also a candidate there.

Irony, satire and parody were used only once in the advertisements – when Homeland Union edited the video advertisement published by their opponents and turned everything around, making the advertisement about them.

Most widely used targets of negativity were political opponents. Social Democrats used all 3 of their attack advertisements to criticize Homeland Union. The first two advertisements were made in the similar manner (Picture 3). The first advertisement meant to show the difference of average salary in Lithuania between 2008 and 2012 when Homeland Union lead the coalition government, between 2012 and 2016 when Social Democrats lead the coalition government and the projected average salary between 2016 and 2020 if Social Democrats continued their work. The second advertisement meant to show how Homeland Union reduced the retirement pensions and passed 60 amendments overnight. Both advertisements follow the same logic – they are trying to show that Social Democrats are better at their job than their opponents. The effect is reinforced by statistics and such visual effects as showing opponents in dark animation colors or making them look destructive by putting their logo on a bulldozer.

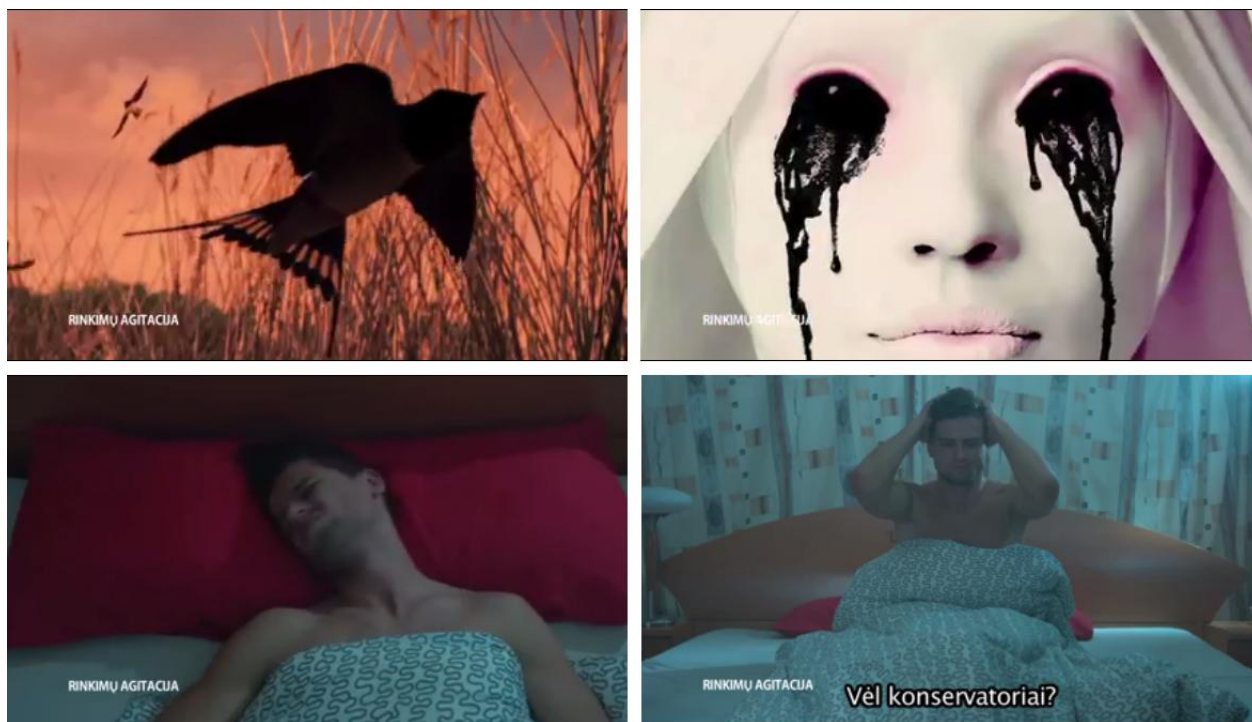
Picture 3. Screenshots from Lithuanian Social Democratic Party video advertisements



Source: own construction based on video advertisements

Another negative advertisement published by Social Democrats showed a man who is sleeping restlessly and rolling in bed because he is having a nightmare – that Homeland Union is coming back to power (Picture 4). The dream shows flying swallows (the symbol of Homeland Union) which are painted black and a black-eyed entity with blood running out of its eyes. When the man wakes up, he grabs his head and shouts „No! Overnight tax reform? Conservatives again? Are they really coming back?“. The screen becomes bright when the voice says „If you choose right, they will not come back“, and the logo and the slogan of Social Democrats appear.

Picture 4. Screenshots from Lithuanian Social Democratic Party video advertisement



Source: own construction based on video advertisements

Homeland Union used political opponents as targets of negativity in one of their advertisements, and that advertisement was created as a parody of an advertisement by Social Democrats that was mentioned before. Homeland Union edited the advertisement in a way to show that the sleeping man is not seeing swallows in his nightmare, but popular speech blunders by politicians from two main parties of the coalition government – Social Democrats and Labour Party (Picture 5). These political opponents were already being mocked by opinion leaders on social media for their failure to speak proper English, comment on economic issues or even pronounce the word „constitution“ („Konstitucija“). Despite the fact that this parody was just an addition to the ongoing mockery, it soon went viral on social media and reached a lot more people than the original made by Social Democrats.

Picture 5. Screenshots from Homeland Union – Lithuanian Christian Democrats video advertisement



Source: own construction based on video advertisements

Political opponents were also criticized in the advertisements of far-right Buškevičius and Nationalists' Coalition and pro-Russian People's Party. Buškevičius and Nationalists' Coalition called all their opponents the *nomenklatura* and People's Party went personal with showing pictures of different politicians and criticizing them.

National government was the second most popular target of negativity in video advertisements. Homeland Union criticized government in two advertisements, stating that the government is sleeping in the first one and attacking the government because of the never ending scandals in the second (Picture 6). All the negative comments were spoken by party leaders and one additional visual effect was used – the Vilnius skyline is pictured in bright, sunny day at first, but when the vice-chairwoman of Homeland Union, Irena Degutienė, says “the government is sleeping” (“Vyriausybė miega”), the bright day in Vilnius becomes the night. Later in that advertisement the chairman of the party Gabrielius Landsbergis talks about change and the essential conditions for change: “we need your vote” (“Mums reikia jūsų balso”). Another advertisement shows party chairman and his colleagues talking with people and saying “don’t know about you, but I’ve had enough” (“Aš nežinau kaip jūs, bet man jau įgriso”). However, both advertisements showed more positivity than negativity, introducing party candidates and policy plans, therefore negative comments were just a part of these advertisements. Farmers and Greens also attacked government in one advertisement by saying that the government “doesn’t care”. However, this advertisement was also more positive than negative.

Picture 6. Screenshots from Homeland Union – Lithuanian Christian Democrats video advertisements



Source: own construction based on video advertisements

Political institutions, as the target of negativity, were criticized in two advertisements by Buškevičius and Nationalists' Coalition. They criticized the institutions of the European Union by accusing them of imperialism and they attacked Lithuanian parliament by saying it should be swept out as it is. In the first advertisement they also picked another two targets of negativity – business subjects (poor people feeding the rich) and foreign countries (Russian imperialism).

Conclusions

The purpose of our study was to extend the understanding of the use of negativity in political video advertisements in Lithuania. Our findings suggest that negative communication is being used by Lithuanian political organizations, but positivity is still dominant in political video advertisements. Despite that, negative aspects of communication are used by different parties, in different and diverse forms and targets.

Most widely used forms of negativity in Lithuanian political video advertisements are policy attacks and fear exploitation. The most popular targets of negativity are political opponents and national government. The forms and means of negativity vary greatly between the parties – while the more traditional parties use moderate means of negativity, questioning their opponents' policy decisions, the radical populists use different methods, exploiting fear and organizing personal attacks on their opponents.

The most popular video effects used in advertisements were symbolic – using dark colours, bulldozers or sunsets to portray that their opponents go hand in hand with negativity, destruction and misery. The messages are also clear – the opponents or the government either don't care about the people or they are incompetent and unqualified to run the country.

The negativity in Lithuanian political system was not influenced by the main characteristics that usually affect candidates' or parties' inclination to make use of negative campaigning. In Lithuania, main government party was as much likely to use negative campaigning as opposition parties, also parties that were gaining in the polls used negative advertisements as much as parties who were losing in the polls. Use of negativity was also not influenced by parties' or coalitions' government experience, ideological position or available resources.

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**Lithuanian Parliamentary Election and the
Regional Press (2016)**

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Abstract:

Although an election campaign is a crucial part of political communication that encompasses much more than just development of media strategies or their implementation during elections, yet most solutions of modern election methods are based on the specifics of mass media. The end recipient of information is misled, if instead of disseminating information about a candidate and his intentions, media outlets provide a distorted image of an election campaign. The image which is created, when politicians seek to attract media attention by using their election methods (such as pseudo-events).

Using literary and source analysis, the paper examines the viewpoints of political scientists, sociologists, media and communication theory experts about the process of public information and its particularities during elections. Legal framework regulating political advertising during the elections in Lithuania is presented and the data of the empirical research – the content of the regional press during the 2016 elections to the Seimas (Parliament) of the Republic of Lithuania – is summarised focusing on the behaviour of the regional press. When analysing regional periodicals published during the election campaign, it was intended to ascertain what roles the regional press chose – that of an observer or a watchdog, a provider of information or an analyst, an evaluator. Content analysis of regional press publications published during the election campaign and a sociological survey of media employees helps to determine what roles the media adopted.

Key words:

Election campaign, press, voters, pseudo-events, partisanship, bias, agenda-setting, media

Introduction

Elections represent a major part of life of democratic countries, a tool that implements the citizens' right to participate in the state governance and to elect their representatives that adopt vital decisions. Since their emergence, the media gradually became an intermediary between the citizens and politicians, created an environment for politicians to convey their ideas to voters, and enabled the voters to learn about the existing alternative choices. Lithuanian political scientists and media experts say that the mass media are the preferred means of informing the voters about the candidates and reveal the full and multifaceted image of the democratic process (Bielinis 2000). However, the end recipient of the information is misled, if media outlets, instead of providing information about a candidate and his or her intentions, give a distorted image about the election campaign, which is created when politicians seek to attract media attention by using their election methods (such as pseudo-events).

The objective of the study is to examine how the regional press followed the main principles of journalism – accuracy, objectivity and impartiality – during the 2016 election to the Seimas (Parliament) of the Republic of Lithuania. Also, to identify what roles were adopted by the regional media –that of an observer or a watchdog, a provider of information or an analyst, an evaluator.

The study consists of three parts. The first one reviews different standpoints of various academicians, political scientists, sociologists, media and communication experts on the particularities of the public information process during elections. The second part describes the legal framework of political advertising during elections in Lithuania and legal regulations of the activities of the regional press. The third part is dedicated to content analysis of the regional press publications during the parliamentary election and summarises the sociological survey of regional media employees.

THE CONTEXT OF ELECTION COMMUNICATION IN THE MEDIA

The role of the media in democratic processes varies. First of all, it is the main source of information for the public, which is the implementer of democratic processes. The media takes on additional roles as well. The quality of information provided in the media, according to Denis McQuail, is directly related to the objectivity of information. Objectivity is an expression of media practice. Denis McQuail emphasises that journalistic objectivity should not be confused

with the notion of truth, even though objectivity is one of its versions (McQuail 2005). In this case the truth is a broader notion that besides of objectivity includes impartiality, freedom and a fair reflection of reality.

In the democratic political system, the media acts as both a transferor of political communication, which is not related to a media outlet itself, and as a sender of a political message created by journalists. In both of these cases the media plays a crucial role. First of all, politicians seek to use the media when sending their message across to the target audience. Political programmes, political statements, election promises, decision-making and political arguments can exist politically and potentially be politically effective depending on the number of messages disseminated and how many of them reach the audience (McNair 2003).

Because political success of parties and candidates is directly related to media attention, all candidates striving for votes seek for the greatest possible access to media channels. This can be done in legal ways, when the media reflects political tendencies justifying them by the principle of balance and impartiality. However, in practice media can digress from its role to provide quality and objective information, and may start painting a positive picture about politicians expecting gratitude, understanding or for any other reasons.

Lithuanian political scientist Lauras Bielinis calls the media a virtual field of political life, events described in which have a different effect on people who perceive the events as a personal experience turning it into beliefs, stereotypes or emotional experience (Bielinis 2003). According to Lauras Bielinis, the media becomes as if the sole medium of political communication, and political activities turn from real into symbolic –into a declaration of decisions. Thus, he says, for politicians it becomes the vital task to involve the media in the processes of an election campaign.

However, direct inclusion of the media in the course of elections has a second dimension to the issue – the media not only does not comply with candidates' whims but frequently adopts a political position itself. It is said that the media does not shy away from taking part in politics, doing this as if “neutrally”, informing about politics, criticising it or exalting some of its aspects. According to Lauras Bielinis, because of such actions the mass media becomes the main and often the single instrument developing political consciousness of the people (Bielinis 2003). In order to correctly understand the role of impartial media, one has to consider the conception of objectivity in the theory of communication. Another important aspect of dissemination of news

by the media is agenda-setting, when the mass media formulates the topics on the public agenda based on the news it publishes.

Journalistic objectivity in the theory of mass communication

Nowadays, it is universally acknowledged that quality media are objective, impartial and independent. Journalism gains a major part of reliability in the public eye on the condition that it reflects the reality. It would lose its meaning if the distorted images detached from life would become a subject of journalism. The truth and reality comprise the foundations of journalism that are embodied by a journalist's strive for objectivity (Wien 2005).

Nonetheless, objectivity remains the main point of the discussion. Some say that it guarantees the trustworthiness of information and draws the line between respectable and dubious media outlets. Yet others claim that objectivity is an unachievable goal only leading to doubts about the information disseminated by journalists.

Denis McQuail argues that the main characteristic of objectivity is the ability to adopt an impartial position and retain neutrality in relation to the subject about which it is reported. Meanwhile, support and backing are alien concepts because objective journalism supports none of the conflicting sides and must not be biased. He also emphasises that objectivity requires commitment to accuracy and other truthful criteria such as relevance, entirety and the importance of ties. When these standards are followed, there is no precondition for concealed motives or for serving a third party. "The process of observing and reporting should thus not be contaminated by subjectivity, nor should it interfere with the reality being reported on" (McQuail 2005).

Tony Harcup also analyses this issue and offers a practical approach. He believes that objective reporting can be defined as: consistent balance presenting different issues or sides to the topic; attentiveness and truthfulness, revelation of all important related details; differentiation of facts from opinions but deeming opinions to be just as important; reduction of a reporter's personal opinion or involvement; avoidance of malicious or cunning goals. Tony Harcup says that everyday objectivity depends on how various independent facts are separated from subjective values (Harcup 2004).

Tibor R. Machan raises another issue of objectivity in the media – moral obligations of journalists, publishers, academicians and other disseminators of information. He believes that information disseminators are at the very least obliged to supply information. Therefore, they are

obliged to speak truthfully, be accurate, objective, comprehensive and fair. Whereas information that is incorrect, inaccurate, biased or incomplete is not information altogether (Machan 2004). He maintains that inaccurate news could be regarded as causing damage to readers, listeners or viewers and it is a sign of avoidance of professional responsibility.

As we will see later on, when analysing the content of the regional press during the 2016 parliamentary election in Lithuania, the issue of professional dependence is one of the reasons creating conditions for biased political information to emerge in the media. One may also question if a journalist's objectivity, when providing a piece of information (an article, a message or a photograph), can guarantee the objectivity of the entire newspaper whose content is concluded of separate pieces of information about specific events.

The results of agenda-setting and other media effects in the context of elections

Media agenda represents a causal relationship between continuous actions – media reports the news and these reports affect readers' understanding about the importance of issues. Studies suggest that readers' shifting priorities determine changes in politics (Cook et al. 1983). A research by communications theorists Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw on presidential elections concluded that voters believe election debates and not major political issues to be the key topic of elections (McCombs, Shaw 1972).

This is because the media broadcasts debate and voters use them to collect. If during an election campaign the media focuses on such issues as the chances of different candidates to win, on the pretence for candidates to attack one another in debates etc., then voters perceive this as a priority. Whereas candidates aim to create a positive image about themselves and choose to focus on certain issues more than others, this may be foreign policy, law enforcement, social security and so on.

In their study Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw analysed the relation between voter reactions to the amount of news in the media and topics highlighted the most by parties or all political news covered in the media. "If one expected voters to pay more attention to the major and minor issues oriented to their own party – that is, to read or view selectively – the correlations between the voters and news/opinion about their own party should be strongest. This would be evidence of selective perception. If, on the other hand, the voters attend reasonably well to all the news, regardless of which candidate or party issue is stressed, the correlations

between the voter and total media content would be strongest. This would be evidence of the agenda-setting function” (McCombs, Shaw 1972).

The study showed that voters who had not committed to a specific candidate at the beginning of the campaign followed all the news. As far as major issues are concerned, correlation was higher between the opinion of voters on major issues and issues reflected in all the news (including the party they favoured) than on the issues relating only to their candidate. Meanwhile, as regards minor issues, the correlation was higher between all the news rather than the news about their favoured candidate (McCombs, Shaw 1972). The result of the study demonstrates that voters decide what is the most important in the election campaign based on what is highlighted in the media, regardless of whether it is related to their favoured candidate or not. This is the evidence of agenda-setting function in the media – because voters view the media as a whole, they form an opinion about major election topics in the order provided for by the mass media.

Circumstances forming media roles during election campaigns

When election time comes, the media’s political role increases at the expense of its role as an observer or a watchdog. There is no evidence that information provided by the media or its political position is managed by owners of media outlets because editors and journalists strongly deny that owners interfere with their work or the content of their publications. Still, one can assume that the content of a media outlet depends on subjective opinions of certain people (Page 1996). Benjamin Page says that an editor’s subjective opinion may intervene with the content of a media outlet because this person hires and dismisses journalists, edits their articles and approves them for print. Editors may hire journalists depending on their political views and edit stories through their own political prism even if they do not intend to distort information. Such influence may not even contradict journalists’ autonomy if the latter are aware that they were hired because of political views and begin to act based on expectations (Page 1996).

Political course of the media may be formed similarly at the higher structural level of management. Owners hire editors and directors, thus one should not even doubt if they are selected based on the political taste of the media owner or not. That is the reason why later on they do not have to care about forming the political position of the media outlet day to day. Brian McNair says that there are several main purposes of the media – to inform, to develop the audience’s ability to recognise information (to give meaning and significance to facts), to give a

platform for a public political discourse thus consolidating the formation of public opinion, and to give publicity to governmental institutions (McNair 2003).

Political role of the media

Some suggest that the media augments negative impact on the stabilisation of democratic countries, where the democratic order is newly created or re-established. According to Richard Gunther, in new democracies, whose people lack long-lasting experience in the implementation of democratic policies, media negativity may cause mistrust and alienation (Gunther, Montero, Puhle 2007). Even such media that carries out its democratic role perfectly may still contribute to citizens of new democracies distancing themselves from democracy as they lack the required political experience that would help them reconcile with the political picture painted by the news media that plays a role of monitoring and supervision in a democratic country. An alternative hypothesis states that the mass media has democratised political information and made it available to all the people regardless of their status or education. A positive feature of democratically oriented media is that it has a mobilising power unlike biased media (Gunther, Montero, Puhle 2007). Nevertheless, studies by various authors show that during elections a small portion of the media chooses the unbiased approach. It rather actively participates in the democratic election process opting for a not entirely democratic role.

Benjamin Page maintains that media organisations, similarly as other business structures, turn into political agents seeking for ways to steer decision-makers towards a direction that benefits them (Page 1996). For this reason, they can use their influence over the audience – to offer assistance or similar services to politicians when political campaigns are ongoing. On the other hand, the media frequently uses indirect references in their publications that can affect political decision-making and convictions of the mass (or elite) audience. Such indirect actions particularly benefit the media because of the ability to disseminate political information. Benjamin Page describes the media's political role as observational activities that are targeted (often implemented in practice if not deliberate) and somewhat joint so it can be regarded as one player (Page 1996).

Consequently, a question arises if the media is using its publications to achieve a particular political role and what the extent of such actions is. Benjamin Page says that editorials are frequently used to voice a biased opinion about political developments and that is often the

declared role of editorials. Meanwhile, columns and opinion pieces require a separate study in each case, even though Benjamin Page admits that influential newspapers and journals limit the flow of opposing opinions in their publications, and opinions that differ from the ones expressed in editorials or from general political views are not always published (Page 1996).

It is a matter of discussion between journalism theorists and practitioners whether media outlets use articles for their political gain. Benjamin Page adds that most boundaries of objectivity and impartiality have eroded in most media outlets, yet it is doubtful that concrete values are promoted in the news tendentiously instead of chaotic support of one or another side. It should be noted that the main sources of political news are governmental officials and this limits the flow of the news in the media. This raises a question if the media can be regarded as a political player if it only relays the opinions of the government or its representatives. Brian McNair states that during elections the media is not inclined to conceal its bias towards certain candidates. Individual newspapers are even engaged in active campaigns in an openly propaganda manner, something that both the yellow and quality press do not refrain from (McNair 2003).

Political bias of the media in editorials

It is accepted that some journalistic genres allow some amount of subjectivity. In the press these are often articles that are evaluative in nature – editorials, columns, opinion pieces, satire or caricatures. These articles express an opinion of the public, viewpoints of an editor or an opposing opinion and are published in a special section stating that this is not outright factual information provided in analytical articles and messages. An editorial is regarded by media experts as a reflection of values and points of view of the editorial staff. In the time of elections, naturally, editorials provide opinions on the election process and on candidates, they criticise or praise. Following journalistic practice, such openly subjective articles are rarely signed by a specific editor or journalist as it is perceived to be the position and voice of the whole publication. On the other hand, the genre of authorised political journalism is fulfilled in columns and opinion polls, comics and similar pieces. Their influence lies within the author (McNair 2003). The author often is a journalist-expert – an analyst or specialist that has an authority among certain audiences. During elections he or she becomes a source of expert opinion on political events, thus such person has an opportunity to form an opinion and helps

readers to form their own opinions. Frequently journalists-experts give an opinion that is of the identical political course and similar to the opinion of the editorial office (McNair 2003).

Opinion pieces written by journalists-experts are usually published next to editorials, on the same or the next page. The trustworthiness of such texts often lies within the personalities of journalists. They often have confidential sources in top governmental bodies, reveal information only when they are sure that it is reliable and are deemed to be insiders (McNair 2003). Editorials and analytical articles boost circulation of a newspaper and allow the press to reveal its political viewpoint publicly. Readers are aware about the purpose of this genre and support the political direction of the newspaper they read, hence usually supporting the opinion expressed in editorials.

Pseudo-events as a tool affecting public opinion

The goal of political communication is to persuade people. Irrespective of whether it is US presidential election or lobbying aimed at certain MPs or Cabinet members, the communicator is seeking to affect political behaviour of the recipient of the message in such a way that benefits the former. However, in different media spheres, including those related to political communication, it is difficult to determine the connection between the audience and the message as well as the impact of the piece of news.

Lauras Bielinis says that candidates can use media as a mechanism of manipulation. This is because of the human factor in journalism, when every fact is presented through the eyes of a journalist, editor or owner (Bielinis 2000). He notes that politicians frequently attempt to take advantage of personal acquaintances with individual journalists who would help the required information to be published by a media outlet. Another precondition for publishing biased information is coinciding interests of a politician or a political party and corporate media. In such case a media outlet may support a political force because of business reasons (Bielinis 2000). Although the media often seeks to control the flow of information and regulate its quality, it is still dependent on sources. Election candidates may use this to create media opinion that benefits them by invoking information dramaturgy that is based on the supply of specific information at the right time and place (Bielinis 2000). One of the goals of such information is to adjust the agenda of the media by removing competitors from the field of information and overshadowing

them with neutral events of facts, replacing information about them with information benefiting the candidate or the party.

Daniel Boorstin notes that political communication is just unilateral exchange in which attention is devoted to meaningless messages. He says that the number of reports on fake, fabricated and artificial news is growing rapidly in the media. He calls such news “pseudo-events” (Boorstin 1992). They are not spontaneous, they are often planned and orchestrated by electoral campaign managers. They are organised with a goal to gain immediate media attention and are planned in such a way that is best suiting for the media. The success of a pseudo-event is measured by how widely it is reported in the media. Its relation with time is often fictitious and not factual, while relation with the real situation is ambiguous. They are often dedicated to praise a certain personality or an institution.

The phenomenon of pseudo-events emerged in the 19th century and was related to media growth and the need to fill newspaper pages. The media’s need to turn events into news coincided with politicians’ need to gain publicity and thus mutual dependence was created. It should be noted that such tendency still remains – events exist that are created by politicians and indulged in by journalists. The former provide material to the latter, whereas the latter grant publicity.

Information sources as factors affecting voter preferences

In modern elections voters receive political information about candidates and parties from a variety of very different sources. Information that reaches the electorate is rarely unaltered. Important features of the political communication process during election campaigns include the distribution of information to different intermediary sources, the types of information that is prepared to be disseminated to voters and the extent to which voters’ personal political preferences coincide with messages that are being communicated (Gunther, Montero, Puhle 2007).

The flow of political information in the media, of course, is not the single factor impacting voter preferences because an important role is played by individual standpoints, values, interests and perception. The most widely noticeable information sources in the time of political campaigns – newspapers and television – have direct contacts with the world of political candidates and parties, and act as if information pipelines laid from the political elites to voters

(Gunther, Montero, Puhle 2007). The media is so important when disseminating information about politics that it often dominates in the entire information flow and hence alternative sources of information can hardly match it.

LEGAL REGULATION OF PUBLICITY OF POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS IN THE MEDIA AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS OF REGIONAL PRESS

At present, publicity of political campaigns in the media is regulated by the Republic of Lithuania Law on Funding of, and Control over Funding of, Political Parties and Political Campaigns, as well as by the Law on the Provision of Information to the Public and by the Code of Ethic of the Media. This demonstrates that not only a political party or a politician may be interested in disseminating political advertising, but a disseminator of public information (a media outlet).

The aim of the Republic of Lithuania Law on Funding of, and Control over Funding of, Political Parties and Political Campaigns (PPPKFFI) is to guarantee that political campaigns are democratic, funded legally, transparently and publicly; to regulate the procedures of funding of political campaigns and monitor funding. It should be said that prior to the adoption of the law (in 2004) the term “political advertising” existed in the Lithuanian public discourse “de facto” but was not defined. The law stipulates that “political advertising” is information that is disseminated during election campaigns by a state politician, political party, or its member, a participant of a political campaign, on behalf and/or in the interest thereof, in any form and through any means, for payment or without return consideration, where such information is intended to influence the motivation of voters when voting at elections or referendum, or where it is disseminated with the purpose of campaigning for a state politician, political party, its member or a candidate.

The law stipulates that political advertising has to be marked in accordance with legal procedures by indicating the source of funding and visibly separating it from other disseminated information. If during a political campaign such information is not marked in accordance with the law, it is regarded as surreptitious political advertising and is prohibited. Furthermore, the law states that political advertising is prohibited from being disseminated on the front page of regional publications. There also are additional restrictions related to political advertising. Producers and disseminators of public information are legally prohibited from disseminating

political advertising for free, with an exception of discussion shows on television, except discussion programmes and campaigning-related videos of not less than 30 seconds duration in which a political campaign participant informs about his political programme or speaks on issues topical to the public.

The PPPKFFI law states that not only its requirements apply but so do those listed in the Law on the Provision of Information to the Public. This means that certain aspects of political advertising are regulated by the Law on the Provision of Information to the Public (VVI), too.

A declaration of public information producer or disseminator requires to declare what political advertising is published during a political campaign. Article 25 of the PPPKFFI law states that the Central Electoral Commission (VRK) monitors political campaigns and has to constantly publish such supervision data on its website. What is more, the law enables producers and disseminators of public information to refuse to publish political advertising that contains information discrediting other candidates or political parties, if it is refused to bear potential expenses related to dissemination of a counter opinion. Dissemination of political advertising is prohibited if it violates the Constitution and laws of the Republic of Lithuania.

As mentioned, the Law on Funding of, and Control over Funding of, Political Parties and Political Campaigns (PPPKFFI) stipulates that media outlets participating in the process have to follow the Law on the Provision of Information to the Public (VVI). Therefore, it is highly important that this law defines what is advertising and surreptitious advertising. Based on the VVI, surreptitious advertising means information disseminated in any form and by any means about a producer of goods or a provider of services, the name or activities, or the trade mark thereof presented in a way that the user of advertising might fail to perceive as advertising or may be misled by the true aim of advertising. Presentation of information is considered to be surreptitious advertising in every case when it is done for payment or similar consideration. All of the above applies to political communication entities during the process of a political campaign. Moreover, these provisions are substantially expanded by Article 22(11) of the VVI stating that producers and/or disseminators of public information may not distort correct and impartial information and opinions and use that for sordid purposes. In other words, this would be surreptitious advertising (or defamation) for which a journalist or information disseminators might receive illegal proceeds. The same article stresses that public information disseminators must be objective and impartial, provide as many opinions as possible on controversial issues

relating to politics, economy and other issues of public life. They must not publish unfounded, unchecked accusations that are not based on facts. Article 39 of the Law on the Provision of Information to the Public (VVI) states that requirements for political advertising, its publishing and marking procedures in the media are established by the Law on Funding of, and Control Over Funding of, Political Parties and Political Campaigns (PPPKFFI) as well as other legal acts. Responsibility for misleading and prohibited comparative advertising is set out in the Law on Advertising. The VVI requires information producers and disseminators to have their ethics code and follow it.

Accordingly, when the election campaign began (on 9 April 2016), taking into account provisions of the aforementioned laws, political advertising in Lithuania, including that published on social media, had to be marked in accordance with legal regulations, indicating the funding source, and clearly distinguished it from other disseminated information. During the political campaign, political advertising that is not marked based on requirements of the law, or is marked in violation of the requirements, is regarded surreptitious advertising and is prohibited. Dissemination of unmarked political advertising and other violations are subject to liability provided for in the law. In addition, as discussed, during this period the press was prohibited to disseminate political advertising in the front page of publications. Whereas public information producers or disseminators had to publish political advertising under the same price rates and conditions for all participants of the political campaign submitted to the Central Electoral Commission (VRK) by 9 April 2016. Once the political campaign began, rates and conditions that applied could not be amended or submitted to the VRK.

Advertising is the main source of income for the Lithuanian media, particularly for the regional media. Consequently, the wish to generate as much income as possible from advertising sales may create conditions for editorial content to become dependent on advertisers. Media organisations face a dilemma in such a situation, whether to retain the freedom of content or create content that is favourable to advertisers.

The influence of customer generated information on political communication

One may notice that during election campaigns there is a considerable amount of information unrelated to politics. Political campaigning may be frequently concealed as information about a politicians' personal life or as similar messages. During elections, politicians

or institutions in the jurisdiction of the state or municipalities are not necessarily the ones that create or commission political messages. There is plenty of information in the current day media that is created by public relation agencies or officials of state or municipal institutions. In this case, the roles of the media and politicians overlapping the discussed process and the media turns from a producer of information into its publisher. Being aware that the media not only filtrates reality when selecting the news but also modifies it, politicians that are concerned about immaculate public relations often seek that as much as possible positive political information would be published about them in the press. Studies carried out by responsible institutions prove this and show that in 2009-2010 state institutions were the biggest commissioners of advertisements in the press (Jastramskis 2012). Perhaps the term “an advertiser” is not the best fitting one for political entities as products are not showcased in the case of commissioned political communication, yet it should be called advertising because such information serves public relations of a state institution or a politician and help them achieve certain goals.

The more a media outlet is dependent on advertising, the more it may be influenced by advertisers. In some publications it is even difficult to distinguish editorial content from customer produced advertising, even though surreptitious advertising is prohibited and has to be marked (Jastramskis 2009). Striving to benefit advertisers to the maximum extent, media outlets use certain techniques. It must be taken into consideration that in order to curry favour with advertisers, media outlets may use not only direct advertising but can also favourably treat in their editorial content interests of clients or products that are being advertised. They may avoid publishing information that is unfavourable to advertisers, they can promote a mood to buy, cater to higher earning audiences, create special sections or pages motivating advertisers to provide information about themselves or their goods (Jastramskis 2009).

Some of these techniques apply to the regional media as well. For example, in some cases the regional press provides sections offering municipalities to publish information about themselves, whereas it is difficult to notice that an outlet avoids reporting information unfavourable to a customer. Nonetheless this may be noticed as far as major clients are concerned.

An opinion prevails in the public discourse that the regional press features the biggest amount of information commissioned by governmental institutions. This is generally preconditioned by several reasons:

1. In most rural areas newspapers are still the main source of information after television, hence it is very handy for local politicians to “address voters” via a local newspaper.
2. Circulations are small and so is the market, there also are other limitations characteristic to the periphery, whereas the regional press is looking to somewhat improve its situation.
3. Content is generated by and received from governmental institutions and this is convenient for the media, election campaigns or publicity tenders mean that information is prepared by other people and newspapers do not have to use their own human resources to produce information.

Clearly, both the media and politicians benefit from as high as possible amount of customer generated political communication in the media. This proves that in the regional press political communication is strongly affected by certain economic factors. Regular and major customers exist, while reluctance to lose steady income diminishes the objectivity of a media outlet.

The influence of media ownership on political communication

It is important for politicians to maintain ties with the public and one of their main goals is to communicate their message about activities and decisions taken. The objectives of political relations with the public may be described in two aspects. First of all, it is a need to inform the public about key decisions undertaken by governmental bodies. Second objective is to garner support for their activities as political entities. Renata Matkevičienė writes that regardless of these goals politicians mostly use the media to maintain contacts with the public (Matkevičienė 2015). Seeking to foster effective public relations, politicians and institutions headed by them quite strongly affect the country’s media. Politicians influence the media not only as legislators or advertisers but even as media owners.

In 2013, non-governmental organisation combating corruption Transparency International – Lithuania (TILS) announced that in the last five years before that there were cases when politicians owned media outlets by themselves or via third parties. Two of them were members of municipal councils and at the same time owners or co-owners of media outlets. The freedom of speech is determined by a number of social, political and economic factors. Exposed to them, media owners adopt decisions. Because of this, it is necessary to monitor in certain ways not only the content of the media but also to apply certain legal restrictions on media ownership.

Emphasis and importance on media ownership is placed for a reason – most theorists agree that owners or shareholders of the media, affected by economic factors, influence the content of the media. After all, the content is affected the least when a media outlet is co-owned by several people and the board makes decisions on strategic and capital management issues. Meanwhile, editors and other journalists create content without any particular control. For instance, some major participants of Lithuania's media market (online, press, television) are owned by limited liability companies. This reduces the likelihood that a narrow group of persons may be represented – shares are traded publicly and both the law enforcement and the public have greater chances of learning about the company's activities. Besides of this, major media outlets that are managed in a modern way and have self-regulation mechanisms that specifically define who is responsible for the management of financial and other resources and who is responsible for the content. The situation in Lithuania's media market is rather interesting. Apart from several major media market participants owned by joint-stock companies or international corporations, the major part of Lithuania's media outlets is limited liability companies owned by small number of legal or natural persons (Jastramskis 2009).

As far as the regional media is concerned, the situation is again different – there are almost no major corporations, and sole proprietorships operate next to limited liability companies. According to Deimantas Jastramskis, when a natural person owns more than 50 percent of authorised capital, it means that his interests will be easily guaranteed even without him actively involved in running the company (Jastramskis 2009).

As already discussed above, the regional media features a large amount of customer generated material that is produced by governmental institutions via communication tenders. In regional areas, responsibility for managing the content of an organisation or a media outlet is often in the hands of a single person or a small group of shareholders. Political communication is often acquired because owners frequently do not distance themselves from the content produced by regional media outlets and due to the great demand of purchased-sold political information. Business relations existing between political parties, politicians and owners of regional media outlets lead to them being involved in each other's activities. Media owners are looking for services to be ordered by politicians, while the latter wish to promote themselves in the media. To add to this, as mentioned, responsible institutions inform from time to time that in certain districts politicians used to own or still own media outlets.

Based on the legislation regulating activities of the Lithuanian media, only legal persons registered in Lithuania or branches or foreign legal persons or other organisations may produce and/or disseminate information, with an exception of managers of information society media. State and municipal institutions and agencies, banks and political parties cannot be producers of public information. With an exception of cases when parties produce non-periodical publications to inform about their activities. Such legal regulation of media activities means that officially politicians do not have direct control over the media. However, perceiving the inevitability of the effects of political relations with the public, politicians are still allowed to non-periodically inform people in the press or online about their activities.

Although in the summer of 2015 the President and the Parliament debated in the public sphere about the need to amend the Law on the Provision of Information to the Public (VVI), yet restrictions concerning the assets of politicians, as private persons, were not introduced and they can still acquire and manage media outlets themselves or via third persons. Moreover, there are comparatively few limitations in Lithuania preventing the media from being amassed in the same hands. One person is allowed to manage 100 percent of shares of a media outlet irrespective of its market share. The same person is allowed to own television, radio and other types of media. What may also lead to media bias is the fact that the law does not prohibit politicians, as private persons, from owning a media outlet.

Consequently, legislation that has to regulate media freedom to avoid political influences allows client-patron relationships to exist. State institutions and municipalities are not prohibited from informing about their activities in the press or their own non-periodical publications, and are allowed as private persons to manage them. The regional media is strongly financially dependent on contracts that are in the hands of political powers, as a result, the media may become more biased during political campaigns.

SELECTION OF POLITICAL NEWS AND FRAMING IN THE REGIONAL MEDIA DURING THE 2016 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION IN LITHUANIA

Review of the study of the regional press

The term “the regional media” alone suggests that proximity is the main criterion when selecting relevant news. Its extent depends on the type of the piece of news. People want a

regional newspaper to publish news about local political events, local politicians as well as other prominent local personalities and their achievements. In other words, political communication of local significance is predominant in such media.

As one is aware that local media focuses on political news within close proximity, one should consider the threshold determining when the regional press publishes national or foreign news. Coverage of national political news and events in the regional press is commonly provided in small segments filling a third of a page and titled “Briefly” or “Yesterday in Lithuania” etc. These often contain dry facts provided by news agencies. What is more, news is filtered based on its importance – information related to taxes, pensions or regulation of prices are selected. That is to say, information important for every person is chosen.

Another rather important criterion for regional journalists is negativity. Examining the regional press one can see even without any in-depth analysis that a substantial amount of coverage is dedicated to negative political information. Local newspapers devote much attention to news about corruption, conflicts of interest and crime.

It should be noted, too, that many stories are filtered using the criterion of personalisation. A simple example of information selected this way is a daily question on a political (but not necessarily) issue and responses of several passers-by. Pictures of the interviewed people are taken and published together with the article including an interviewee's name and age. Another example of personalisation is when political scandals are revealed through a personal story of a specific person. Journalists tend to approach people that allegedly fall victim to maligned actions of local government and are willingly unravelling such personal stories.

Another aspect to a degree related to personalisation includes news about the elite. Due to geographical reasons that elite is usually of local importance. Furthermore, a visit of a high-ranking official may also become the most important news. It is true that such criteria in the regional press should be valued with reserve as there are people regarded to be part of the elite who themselves seek to be featured on front pages of local newspapers whatever the price just to be praised. This is especially noticeable during elections, when candidates running for municipal councils or parliamentary candidates competing in single-member constituencies appear in publications not only because of their position or the ongoing election.

One more criterion particularly characteristic for the regional media comes to existence when politicians want local newspapers to cover stories about them favourably. That is the financial criterion. It can be distinguished as numerous studies show that parties, state and municipal institutions and their representatives are the main advertisers in the press. Thus journalists that have to filter news face a dilemma – should they be critical of politicians when their newspaper prints plenty advertisements commissioned by the aforementioned bodies? Editorial staff that operate transparently probably do not face any issues, but there are cases suggesting that some regional newspapers have turned into a platform for politicians.

Thus regional and local newspapers use more or less all of the news selection criteria taking into account what is more important for a specific region. The press does not hesitate to publish financially beneficial articles. Although news framing applies more for television, yet its certain aspects can be easily identified in the printed media, too. Various frames are predominant depending on the type of news and its audience. So a person that reads all local periodicals can learn about a political event in terms of different aspects.

When reporting about finances and prices, certain aspects of such news are distinguished as well. Due to the amount of customer generated information, local media may be of a particular interest in terms of differences in framing customer generated and media generated material. It is likely that thematic framing will be used more often striving to emphasise good deeds of a client. However, episodic framing is also used for customer generated information. When the press publishes its own original material it often uses episodic framing in the news looking for sensationalism or negativity. For example, in the case of fraud or corruption it is often focused on the significance of consequences and on culprits, while reasons and prevention of such crimes are ignored.

Analysing regional newspapers published during the 2016 Lithuanian parliamentary elections, it is apparent that editorial staff of nearly all regional newspapers used the aforementioned filtering criteria and framing techniques. Delving deeper into media ownership it is possible to clearly identify which representatives of political parties enjoyed particular attention of which media outlets. By the way, apart from political advertising that is marked as required by law, newspapers also use various journalistic genres to provide information about candidates that participate in festivities or meetings with town and village communities etc. This

way pseudo-events are created by editorial staff seeking to raise audience's interest about certain personalities.

Following the law, the Central Electoral Commission (VRK) monitors political advertising and its reports are made available to public. The data provided by the VRK demonstrates that in the regional media there were only 14 cases when political advertising was only partially or inadequately marked and 44 cases when it was unmarked altogether. The supervision is carried out by territorial committees established by the VRK that operate in constituencies. Still, the results are not objective because it is not information and communication professionals who monitor the situation but members of electoral committees who personally interpret the information provided and its content. In the 2016 election period, 56 more instances were identified in the regional press when political advertising was unmarked or partially marked.

It is also interesting to note that the party Order and Justice (TT) disseminated the highest amount of unmarked advertisements (22 cases). Most of them were published by the local newspaper *Šilales Artojas*. 11 such violation cases in the regional press were related with political advertising of the Labour Party's (DP) candidates, 8 – with the Lithuanian Social Democratic Party (LSDP), 6 – with the Lithuanian Farmers and Greens Union (LVZS).

In essence, regulations on political campaigning defined by the law are violated during every election. Most violations are observed on the Election Day. While violations related to political campaigning occur in the media the most often a day before elections. But such violations are few. For example, prior to the last parliamentary election newspaper *Taurages Žinios* on its website advertised two candidates running for parliament in the single-member constituency in the town of Taurage. Even though the VRK ordered the political advertisement to be removed from the website it was still displayed until 11 a.m.

The results of the survey of editorial staffs

In April-May 2016, after the parliamentary election campaign had already begun, the author of the study carried out a survey of Lithuanian regional press employees – editors and journalists. The sample size of the survey is 10 editors and 20 journalists of regional newspapers (N30). The study aimed to ascertain, based on the opinion of the polled, the level of media

integrity in a region/district when reporting about political events occurring in the region/district, news on the election campaign and political advertising.

It is noteworthy that replies to many questions given by the two polled groups varied greatly. For instance, as many as 72.5 percent of editors stated that media integrity was not an issue at all, whereas by 34.5 percent fewer journalists held such an opinion. The opinion of editors and journalists about the ethics of publications differed substantially, too. 43.75 percent of journalists and just 17.5 percent of editors indicated that the press of their region/district featured publications that violated ethics and a person's right to privacy. What is more, as many as 60 percent of editors believed that unethical publications were not published in the press of their region/district, additional 22.5 percent of the editors did not provide answers to the question.

The study attempted to determine causal ties, i.e. to identify the reason of unethical behaviour of regional/district periodicals. Perceptions particularly stood out that unethical behaviour is conditioned by cheap sensationalism and poor professional ethics of the modern-day media. When evaluating the aspects of modern-day journalist ethics, the majority of the respondents of the two groups noted that the standards of ethics, the tone and some models of activities were spreading to the regional press from the national media. Speaking about the inclination of media owners to dictate to editorial staffs what topics to write about, the opinion of editors and journalists varied. 86 percent of editors stated that owners did not intervene in the content of their outlets, whereas only 42 percent of journalists thought that owners did not dictate to their editorial staff what the content should be. The result of the political survey somewhat signals that certain threats exist for the regional media, especially during elections.

Summary of the survey results

Summarising the content analysis of the regional media during 2016 parliamentary elections in Lithuania and the results of the political research – sociologic survey of editors and journalists of the regional press, it can be concluded that:

- During elections the media not always published objective and unbiased information about the candidates.
- The viewpoint of a regional media outlet on specific political candidates depends on political views or political preferences of the owner of that outlet.

- In turn, politicians are looking to take advantage of the media as a tool to form public opinion.
- The regional media can influence voter priorities and understanding about key political events.

Conclusions

The analysis of scientific literature shows that even though objectivity and impartiality remains the main dimension of the quality of journalism, yet in certain circumstances these values remain in the background. In crucial moments of democratic processes, the media strives for direct or indirect benefit and manipulates the audience's opinion.

Political powers – both parties and individual candidates – have mastered ways that allow them to take advantage of the media's attempts to become a political player. Their goal is to shift the flow of information in the direction that benefits them, to consolidate and broaden their voter base. In the case of elections, political parties are not bound by objectivity or honesty, they deem the media to be a useful channel enabling to influence the audience and strive towards their goals whatever the case.

The media does not provide the complete information – limited amount of time, sources, newspaper space and human resources affects the content of news. The media sets the agenda for the audience which perceives it to be a set of key topics without questioning their importance.

The audience, however, is not directly influenced by politicians or the media. Immeasurable changes of a message in its sending and receiving process makes estimating its precise impact complicated – even after the end of elections or when the votes are counted it is impossible to determine what determined the winner of elections: a well-executed political campaign or mistakes of the competition, a broad base of long-time voters or voter support resulting from political changes observed during the last campaign.

Even though dissemination of political advertising is regulated, there nonetheless are cases when political campaigns try to avoid this and supply unmarked advertising. After the qualitative content analysis of publications of regional media outlets it is possible to say that although the amount of unmarked/partially marked advertising has decreased in the media, yet separate regional media outlets violate legal provisions and thus distort the fundamental principles of journalism, even though their activities are well regulated (the Law on Funding of,

and Control over Funding of, Political Parties and Political Campaigns; the Law on the Provision of Information to the Public; the Code of Ethics of the Media).

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**Lithuanian Polish Political Party in Parliamentary
Election 2016 in Lithuania**

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Abstract:

The purpose of this article is to present the analysis of the election results of *Lietuvos lenkų rinkimų akcija-Kriščioniškų šeimų sąjunga* (LLRA-KŠS, Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania-Christian Families Alliance) in Lithuania's Parliamentary election 2016. The article presents a short review of the development of Lithuanian-Polish relationship. Several new events took place before Parliamentary election 2016 and had a certain impact on it. First of all, constituency borders were changed in Lithuania, what in general was very advantageous for LLRA-KŠS. Secondly, geopolitical and security situation in Russia changed dramatically because of its aggression in Ukraine and it also revealed prokremlin's orientation of LLRA-KŠS that in turn had a very negative impact on the party's image. Probably due to this LLRA-KŠS received about 10,000 votes less. This drop was most significant in Vilnius city but had an immaterial effect in the constituencies controlled by LLRA-KŠS. Nevertheless, the election reveals another important fact that voters in Vilnius district value not only candidates' nationalities (as it might be expected) but also their origin and bonds with local communities.

Key words:

Lithuania, election 2016, Lithuanian Poles, Lithuanian Polish party, Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania-Christian Families Alliance

Introduction

Lithuanian-Polish political activity was born along with the wave of restructuring and softening of the regime in the former Soviet Union. In 1988 the Public-Cultural Society of Poles in Lithuania (Stowarzyszenie Społeczno-Kulturalne Polaków na Litwie) was established. Next

year, in 1989, the organization changed name to the Union of Poles in Lithuania (Związek Polaków na Litwie) (Szostakowski 2001). Seven members of the Union of Poles in Lithuania were elected to the Supreme Council of Lithuania-Reconstituent Seimas (Parliament) (1990-1992).

In 1994 Lithuania passed a law on public organizations that separated governmental organizations and political parties and henceforth only political parties could participate in elections. As a result, the Union of Poles in Lithuania urgently convened a general congress during which it was decided to set up a political party. After collecting 739 signatures of the founders on 28th of August, 1994 the founding congress was organized and on 23rd of October, 1994 *Lietuvos lenkų rinkimų akcija* (LLRA, Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania) was registered with Jan Sienkiewicz being elected as a Chairperson. In 2016 *Lietuvos lenkų rinkimų akcija* (LLRA, Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania) changed its name and attribution to *Lietuvos lenkų rinkimų akcija-Krikščioniškų šeimų sąjungos* (LLRA-KŠS, Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania – Christian Families Alliance).

Lithuania has 141 members of the Seimas (Parliament) who are elected by a mixed system of election – 70 members are elected by a proportional system according to the party list and the other 71 members of the Parliament are elected by single-member constituency.

Until 2008 LLRA-KŠS in the Parliament was represented only by members elected in single-member constituencies. In 2012 LLRA-KŠS for the first time managed to crossover a 5 percent electoral barrier and thus formed their own parliamentary group. Since then LLRA-KŠS always exceeds the 5 percent barrier.

Since 1990 Lithuanian-Polish relations can be currently dichotomized into 4 stages. Phase I (1990-1994) – when Lithuanian-Polish relations have been quite artificial until signing a Lithuania-Poland agreement (Traktat Polsko-Litewski) in 1994. Phase II (1995-2005) could be described as period of normalization when the two states actively cooperated on their way towards Euro-Atlantic integration. Phase III (2007-2014) is a period of deterioration of relations mainly due to the Polish Card emergence and the matter of spelling personal and place names in Lithuania. Phase IV (2014 to present) is a period when an open confrontation ended and relations became rational due to changes in the security situation in the region and other international political threats. It is interesting to note that the turnout of Lithuanian Polish voters during this

period was not stable and greatly depended on the political mood in the public sphere of Lithuania.

Parliamentary election in 2016 for LLRA-KŠS differed from previous elections in several aspects: 1) the changes of the single-member constituency boundaries allowed LLRA-KŠS to concentrate its supporters in 3 new single-member constituencies; 2) geopolitical and security situation, after the Russian aggression against Ukraine, changed; 3) the worsening of internal socio-economic situation in Lithuania was a big hit to traditional parties.

The author of this article has already analyzed election results of LLRA-KŠS from 1990 until 2012 and presented them in the article “Akcja Wyborcza Polaków na Litwie: jak udało się przekroczyć 5-procentowy próg wyborczy?” (Kazėnas 2014: 269-295). The purpose of this article is to make an analysis of the election results of LLRA-KŠS in Lithuania’s Parliamentary election 2016.

The new single-member constituency boundaries

The changes of domestic demographic situation in Lithuania, in particular massive internal and international migration, created the situation when the new redraw of constituency boundaries was inevitable. The need to equalize the number of voters in constituencies was ripe. On 20th of October, 2015 Lithuanian Constitutional Court decided that the number of voters in single-member constituencies may not differ by more than 10 percent in average (*LR Konstitucinis Teismas* 2015). Although the Constitutional Court decision was made about one year before the scheduled parliamentary election the need to organize a redraw of constituency boundaries was clear. If there were no changes of constituencies, anybody could have doubts about the legality of the vote and 2016 election could have been declared unconstitutional. Nevertheless, after the decision of the Constitutional Court, the unconstitutional act can no longer be applied according to Lithuanian constitutional law. The new constituency boundaries map was approved by the Central Electoral Commission on 16th of December, 2015 (*Vyriausioji Rinkimų Komisija* 2015).

The changes of constituency boundaries were basically favorable for LLRA-KŠS as the adjustments guaranteed three representatives from single-member constituencies. Such a situation has arisen because of the Vilnius district, one of few in Lithuania that has a population growth. This is due to the fact that a lot of newcomers settle around Vilnius while in other

municipalities the population is rapidly declining. As a result, some municipalities were merged into a single constituency (eg. Širvintai-Molėtai or Švenčionys-Ignalina municipalities) or generally eliminated (in Kaunas case one constituency was abolished). On the other hand, within the city of Vilnius one additional constituency was distinguished. Under the new constituencies plan Vilnius and Šalčininkai districts were divided into 3 single-member constituencies: Šalčininkai district and a small part of the Vilnius district forms Šalčininkų-Vilnius constituency. The rest of the Vilnius district is divided into 2 constituencies: Nemenčinė and Medininkai constituencies. In these three constituencies Polish national minority constitutes a majority of the population, ranging from 55 to 80 percent of the total population there. Those two municipalities, within which the new three constituencies are formed, were managed by LLRA-KŠS at their own discretion since Lithuania regained its independence in 1990.

Changes in the geopolitical security situation and its influence on elections

If we look into Parliamentary election of 2016 in the context of Lithuanian-Polish relations, we should note great changes in political environment that were unfavorable for LLRA-KŠS. This is primarily related to the international situation and the events in Ukraine that finally forced public opinion to pay attention and acknowledge the influence of Russian propaganda in the former Soviet republics. Russian information policy disclosed the lack of alternative information sources and revealed propaganda attempts to disorganize the society, to discredit the national state and to justify Russia's policy. In all former Soviet republics the main target of that propaganda policy are ethnic minorities that are a significant part of the population. The events in Ukraine clearly presented the effectiveness of such Moscow policy. Lithuania started to pay even more attention to ethnic minorities after public statements of some Polish and Russian political leaders, justifying or supporting Russia's policy and actions in Eastern Ukraine and at the same time criticizing the Lithuanian position. As a result, ethnic minorities became an important topic of the information war: open and direct discussions began; even the questions of minority loyalty to the state were raised. A large part of the population began to critically assess LLRA-KŠS and its leaders' activities. We can notice open criticism of the Polish party policy. Even representatives of Polish minority were criticizing LLRA-KŠS. During their preparation for 2016 Parliamentary election the main Lithuanian systemic parliamentary parties in their electoral programs included a section for ethnic minorities.

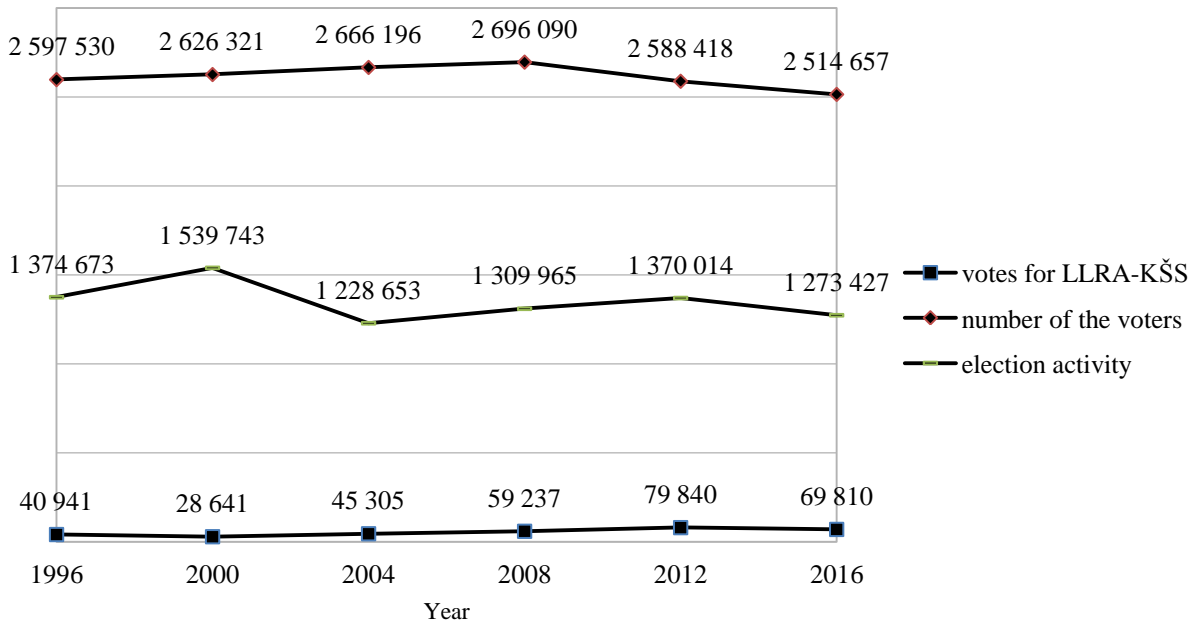
This situation has also affected the Poland's policy towards Lithuania. First of all, there was a sharp decrease of public speeches and criticism towards Lithuania from the Polish side and the situation calmed down. On the other hand, this does not mean that both sides were retreating from their positions. However, due to geopolitical tensions mutual Lithuanian and Polish disagreements were postponed for the sake of regional cooperation.

LLRA-KŠS analysis of the election results

As it has been already mentioned, the analysis of the LLRA-KŠS in the elections in Lithuania from 1990 until 2012 had been made and results are presented in the article "Akcja Wyborcza Polaków na Litwie: jak udało się przekroczyć 5-procentowy próg wyborczy" (Kazėnas 2014: 269-295). The study shows that LLRA-KŠS cooperated with Lithuanian Russian organizations in elections from the very beginning of Lithuania's independence in order to get more votes. Initially, the collaboration was concealed, later formal coalitions were created. As Lithuanian electoral law creates a higher electoral barrier (7 percent) for coalitions, Polish and Russian politicians eventually decided to form an informal coalition where the representatives from Russian organizations are simply added to LLRA-KŠS electoral lists thus attracting Lithuanian Russians votes and avoiding electoral barrier required for coalitions.

In 2016 election, the multi-constituency LLRA-KŠS has collected 69,810 votes in total and it is about 10,000 less votes than in the previous 2012 election (79,840 votes). The drop is substantial and accounts for about 12.5 percent, but taken as a whole this result is not the worst, because from 2000 the results of LLRA-KŠS has been steadily growing. On the other hand, it suggests that the maximum number of votes that LLRA-KŠS can collect in Lithuania is about 80,000 votes. Such an assumption comes from the fact that in 2012 election political context in Lithuania was very favorable for LLRA-KŠS since extremely liberal social attitudes prevailed. The fact that in 2015 during the municipal council elections LLRA-KŠS candidates collected 85,937 votes across Lithuania could be explained by the fact that the level of trust in individual candidates was greater than in the party in general.

Figure 1. LLRA-KŠS in the Parliamentary elections in Lithuania



Source: own construction

Vilnius plays a vital role for LLRA-KŠS electoral results as about 17 percent of Lithuanian Poles live there and it is about 90,000 persons. As a result, any support that LLRA-KŠS receives in Vilnius greatly influences the final outcome of the party in the multi-member constituency. As can be seen from the calculations, there is a clearly identifiable correlation between Vilnius and final results of the votes received by this party (Kazėnas 2014: 269-295). Continuing the analysis in Vilnius, these 2016 election, namely the number of received votes in Vilnius, decrease hugely from about 30,000 down to 20,000 votes, what makes about 1/3 of the votes compared to the 2012 election. This leads to the conclusion that the decreased support in Vilnius contributed to the overall decreased results of about 10,000 votes. The difference of results is minimal in 2012 and 2016 Parliamentary Elections in other municipalities where LLRA-KŠS is dominating. In Vilnius district municipality number of received votes decreased from 23,000 to 21,000 votes. In Šalčininkai district municipality number of received votes remained almost unchanged (from 11,084 to 11,061 votes). These data also show very clearly that the general public opinion about LLRA-KŠS between Lithuanian Poles work in different ways and depends on inhabited areas. There is a political monolith being formed in municipalities that are already managed by LLRA-KŠS for many years (Vilnius and Šalčininkai

districts) and the changes in electoral support are minimal there while in Vilnius – substantial. There is a “center-periphery” effect quite clearly visible in those areas. In the “periphery” people are more isolated, less educated and depend more on the local authorities in various forms and therefore are more influenced. In the "center" people are more integrated into the overall informational and cultural life, better educated and economically independent from local authorities. As a result, the local government is not able to influence them in any way, thus it has no effects on election results.

The analysis of individual vicinities in Vilnius district shows a tendency that the votes are being distributed to the other parties in the places with the increasing number of Lithuanians and areas close to the capital city – Vilnius. In this case we could note the impact of new Lithuanian voters. Lithuanian voters here are usually working-age people, who work in Vilnius, so they are integrated into general Lithuanian political life. They are influenced by the prevailing mood in the state and it is reflected in the election results. As mentioned above, during 2016 election to the Parliament *Lietuvos valstiečių ir žaliųjų sąjunga* (LVŽS, Lithuanian Peasants and Greens Union) swept over Lithuania. In Vilnius district this wave was very weak and was more notable in vicinities inhabited mostly by Lithuanians. As it can be seen from the results, votes of Lithuanian voters increasingly polarize and split. Respectively this fact is useful for LLRA-KŠS. But generally it can be stated that the Lithuanian electorate in this “Polish region” remains fairly faithful to the traditional parties. This can be explained by existing opposition between Lithuanians and Poles and unconditional focus on the “starting positions”.

Bigger polarization and LVŽS wave effect is notable in Nemenčinė constituency, where the number of Lithuanians is already big enough. The second round of election was held in this constituency as the representative of LLRA-KŠS failed to get more than half of the votes in the first round. This constituency already includes 5 vicinities (54) that are situated around Vilnius and LLRA-KŠS representatives no longer get the majority of votes there. It is inhabited mainly by settlers who work in Vilnius and are economically independent.

In Medininkai constituency, that is located on the Southeastern side of Vilnius, LVŽS wave effect is practically imperceptible. Traditional parties, such as LLRA-KŠS, *Tėvynės sąjunga-Lietuvos krikščionys demokratai* (TS-LKD, Homeland Union-Lithuanian Christian Democrats), *Lietuvos socialdemokratų partija* (LSDP, Lithuanian Social Democratic Party), received the majority of votes in almost all vicinities, and only in a couple of them the more

significant number of votes was collected by LVŽS only. Those vicinities are bigger villages close to Vilnius and grow because of the new settlers there. This once again confirms the fact that in the places with larger share of new voters, who are mostly Lithuanians in origin, we can notice increased integration into mainstream Lithuanian politics and voters' polarization increases at the same time.

In the Šalčininkų-Vilnius constituency, LVŽS wave was pretty weak and just much more present in the larger settlements located near Vilnius (Pagiriai vicinity).

Table 1. Percent of votes received by party

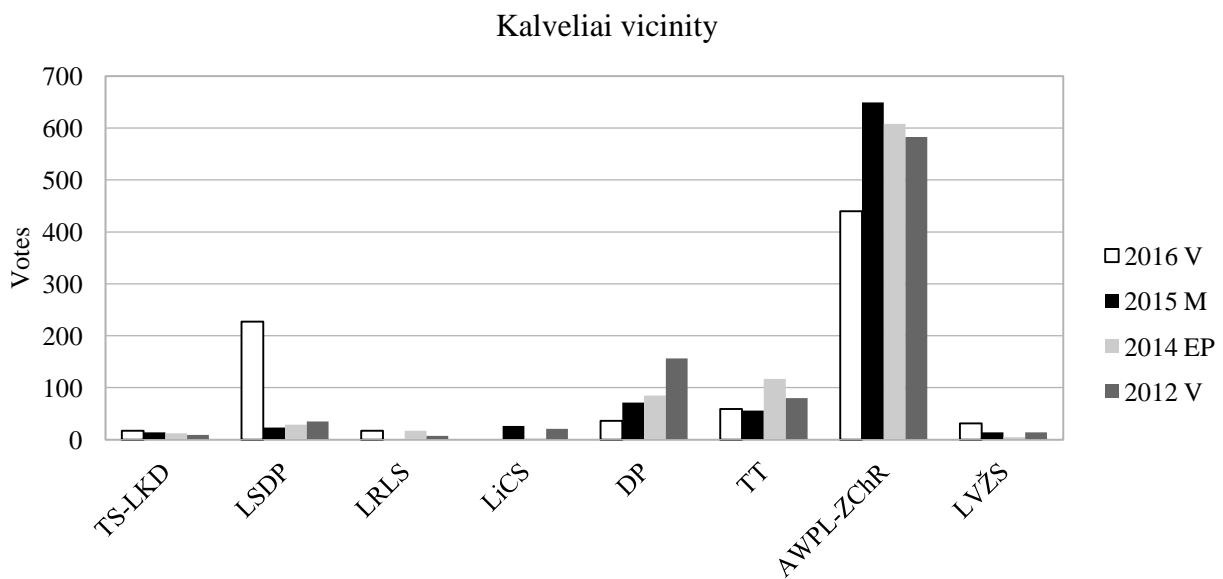
	Nemenčinė constituency	Medininkai constituency	Šalčininkai-Vilnius constituency
LVŽS	8.09	5.17	3.66
TS-LKD	17.71	7.36	4.42
LLRA-KŠS	42.97	59.28	66.53

Source: Central Electoral Commission of the Republic of Lithuania, 2016

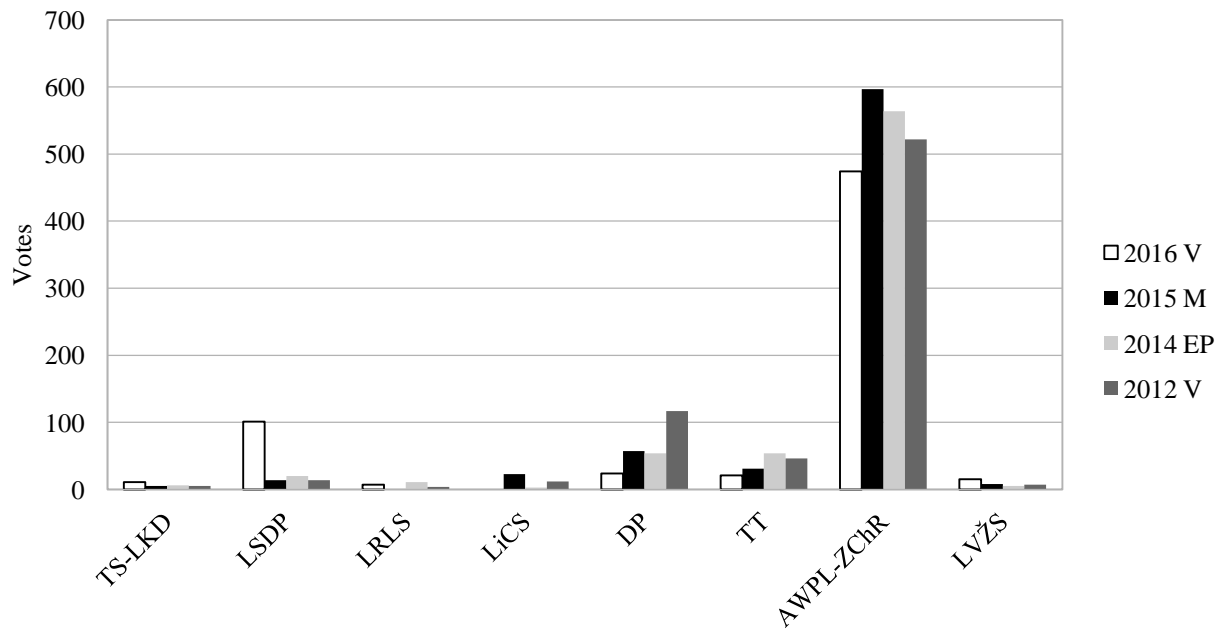
There is a strong phenomenon of voting "for your own" in the South East Lithuania, where LLRA-KŠS dominates the elections at municipal level for many years and where the Polish and Lithuanian political opposition exists. This "for your own" („za swoich”) voting phenomenon is particularly strong among Lithuanian Poles. As all previous election results show, all attempts to create an alternative for LLRA-KŠS and its candidates failed. The aforementioned situation happened in 2000 parliament election, when a former Lithuanian Polish union member and an active politician Artur Plokšto tried to compete in Šalčininkai-Vilnius constituency with LLRA-KŠS leader Valdemar Tomaševski. A. Plokšto got only 11 percent of votes compared with 51 percent received by V.Tomaševski. Similarly, in 2004 election in the former Širvintos-Vilnius constituency a candidate – Leokadija Počikovska, a former Mayor of Vilnius district municipality, collected the majority of votes, but in the next legislative election in 2008 after a conflict with LLRA when she tried to go with LVŽS she got only 3.8 percent of votes and remained on the 7th place. It's also possible to remember Ryšard Maceikianec's, a former Lithuanian Poles' active political leader, attempt in 2002 municipal elections to go with the newly founded Lithuanian Poles People's Party when he was last, at the 6th place. Lithuanian parties trying to win in South East Lithuania often put candidates with Polish nationality on their

lists during every election but none of the attempts was successful. All this shows that LLRA-KŠS's experience in this region is very high and sustainable enough.

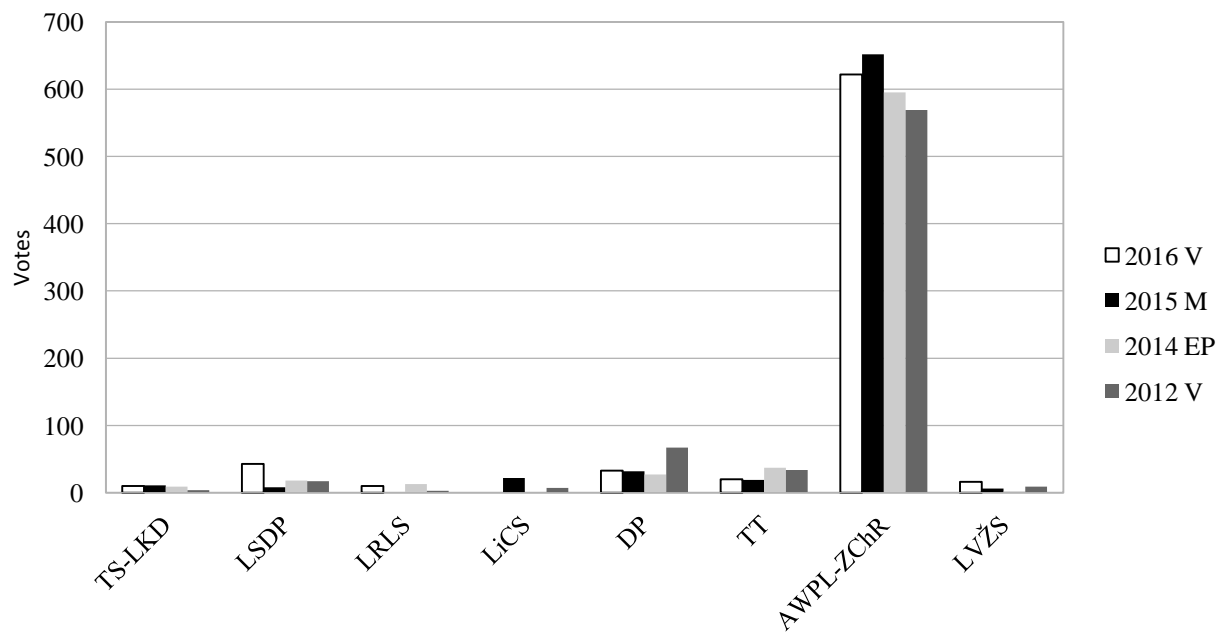
However, electoral results in 2016 in some vicinities of Medininkai constituency suggest that support for LLRA-KŠS is not absolute. This conclusion comes after analysis of voting results in several individual vicinities of this constituency. Below are very distinguished results in Šumskas, Lavoriškės and Kalveliai vicinities. What is most noticeable from the results in these vicinities is a quite striking drop of votes for LLRA-KŠS representative and the corresponding increase of votes for LSDP representative. In the single-member constituency of Medininkai LLRA-KŠS and the LSDP nominated candidates who are originally from this constituency, i.e. Česlav Olševski (LLRA-KŠS) and Algimantas Vaitkevičius (LSDP). The evaluation of these candidates' results in general terms does not differ from the general trends and shows expected numbers. However, a bright deviation from previous elections and certain correlation of the results in those 3 vicinities can be seen. Meanwhile, the results of other parties are consistent with general trends in that constituency and in Lithuania.



Šumskas vicinity



Lavoriškės vicinity



The results in these three vicinities can be explained by the fact that the LSDP candidate Algis Vaitkevičius was born and raised in Kalveliai and was well-known to people in the surrounding areas. As a result, he received a sufficient number of votes that most likely were "cut off" from LLRA-KŠS representative, who also came from this area, but already worked in local government for many years and held high positions. It is a common approach that voters blame government for everything, thus in this case LLRA-KŠS's candidate Česlav Olševski became the target of their dissatisfaction and voters chose another "for your own" ("za swoich") option. This case indicates that a link with the local area plays an important part for some Lithuanian Polish voters and it might be even more important than nationality of a candidate. Many scientific researches indicate that there is a very strong regional identity, which builds strong communal and social connections. In that case, it is important to be part of the community, but not necessarily of Polish nationality. It also indicates that some LLRA-KŠS voters are not truly loyal to the party and in certain circumstances can vote for other parties.

Conclusions

1. In 2016 Parliamentary election LLRA-KŠS collected about 10,000 votes less than in previous election. However, this did not affect the number of seats obtained in the Parliament. Both in 2012 as well as in 2016 Parliamentary election LLRA-KŠS had 8 members: 3 elected in single-member constituencies and 5 entering from a list.
2. The total number of votes received is primarily related to the lower number of votes in Vilnius, where there is no direct LLRA-KŠS administrative influence. The changed geopolitical and security situation revealed LLRA-KŠS prokremlin provisions, that in turn greatly influenced public opinion against it.
3. LLRA-KŠS has a great experience in municipalities controlled by LLRA-KŠS, where their candidates easily win the elections. However, the trend shows that in areas where there is an increasing number of Lithuanians, the support for other parties is growing. Voting in these municipalities is quite conservative and traditional parties are supported there. This can be interpreted as the trace of long existing Lithuanian-Polish opposition.
4. LLRA-KŠS voters' loyalty is largely associated with "for your own" (za swoich) provision. However, a more detailed analysis of the voting results in 2016 in Medininkai constituency

suggests that this is not an absolute provision. It is assumed that voters value membership of local community more.

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Lithuania after Politics?

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Abstract:

The results of the Seimas elections in 2016 have revealed one of the greatest transformations in Lithuanian party system since its formation in 1992. Though there are similarities between the political processes in Lithuania, Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic, it is important to stress important differences, which enable us to speak about the unique “Lithuanian way”.

First of all, the new political group, which dominates in Lithuanian political system after the elections – Lithuanian Peasants and Green Union (LPGU), not only rejected the tradition political continuum of “right-left” politics, but also does not fit into the main political cleavage in post-communist political system of Lithuania - between ex-communists and anti-communists.

Secondly, the elections revealed a huge crisis of democracy based on political parties in Lithuania. The dissatisfaction with parties, as the main actors in modern liberal democracy, constantly increases.

Thirdly, we can speak about the decisive victory of anti-politics in Lithuania, the marginalization of political deliberations and political competence in the governance of the state. This triumph of anti-politics in Lithuania is not the outcome of cultural tradition of anti-politics which was strong in Poland and Czechoslovakia during the 20th century (Havelka 2016), but rather a price which we have to pay for the invasion of consumptive mentality in political sphere.

The main hypothesis of this article is that the triumph of anti-politics in Lithuania means the victory of “consumer” over “citizen” and it will cause the growing turmoil in political system of Lithuania.

Key words:

elections, anti-politics, consumer, citizen, parties

Liquid party system in Lithuania

Democratization process in Lithuania started in 1988, when the monopoly of *Communist party* was broken by a national movement *Sąjūdis*, which eventually became the main political force to ensure the restoration of Independence. *De jure* the first multiparty system in the USSR was created, then Article 6 of the Constitution of Lithuanian SSR which guaranteed the *Communist Party* the leading role in the political life of the republic was eliminated.

New political parties started to emerge in 1989, but they were still unimportant political players in the first free elections to the Supreme Soviet of Lithuania in 1990 (Ramonaitė 2007: 92). The real starting point of the democratic multiparty system in Lithuania was year 1992 when 17 political parties took part in the national elections (Krupavicius 1996: 16). On the other hand, if we compare the list of the parties, which exist now and the list of the parties before the national election in 1992, only one party is still in existence – the Lithuanian Social Democratic Party (*Lietuvos socialdemokratų partija*, LSDP). However, the contemporary LSDP is more a creation of ex-communist Lithuanian Democratic Labour Party (*Lietuvos Demokratinė Darbo partija*, LDDP), than, in general, an anti-communistic LSDP of 1992. Those two, in many aspects different political organizations, merged in 2001. One of the main reasons of this political wedding was the necessity for LDDP to hide its communistic legacy and claim being the representative of more than hundred years old social democratic tradition in Lithuania.

In the national election in 1992 ex-communistic LDDP was surprisingly victorious and gained absolute majority in Seimas (new name of Parliament, which replaced Supreme Soviet)¹. The reasons of such unexpected results were the widespread dissatisfaction with the economic changes during the early post-communist period and the ex-communists' promise to restore social justice. LDDP, which did not have enough names on its electoral list, was also surprised by such political victory. In Lithuania, as well as in many post-communist countries, there is a tendency for every new national election to brush off the former ruling coalition and give power to the former opposition, the voters turn their back on the political forces that had been in power. This tendency was very strong in Lithuania until the election of 2000.

In national election of 1996 a decisive winner was a right wing political party which was formed on the basis of *Sąjūdis* – the Homeland Union – Lithuanian Conservatives (*Tėvynės Sąjunga-Lietuvos konservatoriai*, TS-LK). It gained 70 seats out of 141 in Seimas. Right wing

¹ Data of elections in Lithuania during the post-communist period can be found in www.vrk.lt.

politicians benefited from widespread dissatisfaction with the ruling LDDP which had failed to reignite the economy and was plagued by financial scandals.

TS-LK formed the coalition with the Lithuanian Christian Democratic Party (*Lietuvos krikščionių demokratų partija*, LKDP) which was the first coalition of political parties in post-communist Lithuania.

Despite the political pendulum, it seemed that the Lithuanian party system gained stability after two national elections with clear “right-wing” continuum and the dominant ex-communist and anti-communist cleavage (see Ramonaite 2007).

In the first period of the development of Lithuanian party system, it seemed to bear a striking resemblance, at least in appearance, to the multiparty systems of Western Europe, including the familiar Christian, social democratic, liberal and conservative party types. Therefore, this resemblance is strictly superficial, as from the very beginning Lithuanian parties were the creation of scanty political elites and failed to gain the firm ground in the society. They had no internal ideological or policy coherence and interpreted political life not as deliberation or negotiation but rather as fiercely ideological battle, confrontation.

We can only speculate about the prospect of natural evolution of political parties in Lithuania without the questionable initiative of president Valdas Adamkus to form the centrist coalition of *New Politics* in order to create a strong alternative for LSDP and TS-LK ideological confrontation (Novagrockiene 2001: 142). On the one hand, we can interpret the initiative of the President as the promotion of politics founded on the acceptance of differences and a belief in conciliation, as an attempt to overcome the deep political polarization in the society. It was evident that in the early political system there was no place for political dialogue not only between different parties but even inside the political organizations. Only between 1999-2000 five new parties were established. All of them were created as a result of the split of already existing parties.

On the other hand, Adamkus promoted *New Politics* which real novelty was not the higher political culture, but rather the lack of long-term vision, it was based on short-term interests rather than political values, on the creation of image rather than comprehensive political program. The main aim of all new parties constituting New Politics was to overcome the “dictate” of “traditional parties”, such as TS-LK and LSDP. The political slogan of the New Union (*Naujoji Sąjunga*, NS) in the election – *We deserved to live better* – became the motif for political organizations aiming to win “the protest votes.” for a long time. It was not a surprise

that in the national elections of 2000 the Lithuanian party system experienced a real shake-up. The main result was the emergence of two new parties in Seimas – NS and the Liberal Union (*Liberalų Sąjunga, LS*). These parties pushed out Christian Democrats and the Centre Union. Even though these two parties had different origins – LS had roots in Sąjūdis and the NS was a newly created political formation – both could be labeled as charismatic rather than programmatic parties.

The ruling coalition of the *New Politics* was fragile and was replaced by the centrist-left coalition of NS and LSDP next year. However, the Pandora's box was opened and the new political projects essentially changed the party system. In the parliamentary election of 2004, the Lithuanian party system experienced a second transformation, as three new parties – the Labor Party (*Darbo Partija, DP*), the Liberal Democratic Party (*Liberalų Demokratų partija, LDP*) and the Union of Peasants and New Democracy (*Valstiečių ir Naujosios demokratijos sąjunga, VNDS*) – entered the political arena, dramatically increasing political fragmentation.

DP was established by a businessman of Russian origin Viktor Uspashich several months before the election. The party leadership was dominated by businessmen while the party voters were concentrated in the lower social stratum. DP was not an advocate of socialist ideology as its name suggests. It was rather a populist party gaining popularity from its charismatic leader. This party was marginalized after the Seimas election in 2016.

LDP was established to support Rolandas Paksas² in the successful presidential election of 2002. After the first impeachment of the President in Lithuanian history, the party turned into radical anti-establishment party and became an outcast in the Lithuanian party system. It changed the name to Order and Justice (*Partija "Tvarka ir teisingumas", PTT*) in the eve of the national election in 2004. One of the reasons for changing the name was the need to dissociate from liberal tradition in order to present itself as the defender of "traditional national values".

VNDS, later renamed as the Party of Peasants and People (*Valstiečių liaudininkų partija, VLP*), increased its popularity after the successful performance of its leader Kazimira Prunskienė³ in the presidential election of 2004. This party was based on political union of

² Rolandas Paksas is the controversial Lithuanian politician. He was a member of the Communist Party during the soviet period. In the post-communist period he began his carrier as a member of HU-LCD. Then he joined the LU and became its chairman. In 2002 he founded LDP and ran for the presidency winning the run off against Adamkus. He was roved from office by the impeachment in 2004. He was elected to European Parliament in 2009 and reelected in 2014.

³ Kazimira Prunskiene was one of the co-founders of Sąjūdis. She was elected to the position of the Prime Minister of the first post-communist government. After nine months in the office, Prunskienė resigned and later headed the Department of Agriculture in Lithuania. She was one of the key persons in left wing of Lithuanian politics, took part

Prunskiene and Ramunas Karbauskis. Their relations were highly strained and Prunskiene created her own political organization. Karbauskis in the eve of the election of 2016 publicly confessed that the collaboration with Prunskiene was his biggest political mistake⁴.

Despite the political invasion of new parties, LSDP succeeded in dominating the formation of the new government. Though the relations between members of ruling coalition were complicated and in the summer of 2006 LSDP had to form a minority government.

The national election of 2008 was successful for TS-LK, as it won 45 seats. After a long period the traditional or “old” parties (TS-LK and LSDP) were dominating in the Seimas. Both parties fought for the right to form the new government, therefore the role of king maker in Seimas was the greatest surprise of the elections – National Revival Party (*Tautos Prisikėlimo partija*, TPP), with 16 seats.

TPP was founded only a couple of months before the beginning of the election campaign. The party was headed by a popular TV star from the entertainment shows and producer Arūnas Valinskas⁵. The majority of its members were colleagues of Valinskas from the show business. Those people had no political experience but were skillful in effective communication techniques. They insisted that pop artists could be better politicians than specialists who have considerable knowledge but no skills in communication with the audience.

The success of TPP revealed that there was a real danger of replacing politics by imagology (about such warnings – Donskis 2005). It is the art of creating sets of various slogans and images that people are supposed to follow without thinking or critically questioning. Imagology is an offspring of media and advertising. All contemporary politicians have to care about the techniques of political communication, however in some cases we can rather speak about the public relations campaigns which use masks of politics. NRP was one of such examples. The political carrier of this party was short, though in Seimas of 2008-2012 it played the crucial role and was an important part of the ruling right wing coalition. The decision of

in presidential elections twice and once was very close to the victory. He founded Lithuanian Women Party, then collaborated with Karbauskis, after the split she tried to popularize new founded Lithuanian people movement. She left political area because of serious health problems.

⁴ Karbauskis published such confession in his Facebook account in April 10 of 2016.

⁵ Arūnas Valinskas In 1990s, Valinskas began his acting and hosting career. He created several famous TV shows in Lithuania and became quite popular. Valinskas founded the NRP in 2008 before the elections to the Seimas. He was the Speaker of the Seimas from 17 November 2008, to 15 September 2009. Valinskas declared as a candidate for the 2009 Lithuanian presidential elections, but withdrew right before the election. In 2011 National Resurrection Party merged with the Liberal and Centre Union and it was the end of its formal existence. Valinskas returned to business in 2012.

Valinskas to collaborate with TS-LK, not with LSDP, opened the way for the government headed by Andrius Kubilius⁶, who faced very complicated economic problems.

It was the period of severe economic recession. The government attempted to control the situation by introducing broad austerity measures, including cuts in public spending and higher taxes. Despite the unpopularity of measures and the resulting public protests, the coalition government became the first one in the history of post-communist Lithuania to serve the full term of the parliament. Still, it was clear that the national election of 2012 would be a very difficult test for TS-LK. Despite all attempts to change the public opinion, the important decision to consolidate right wing politics was to merge with LKDP, TS-LKD⁷ was doomed to cause losing the elections. The winner was LSDP. It became the largest party in the Seimas with 38 seats. LSDP and other left wing parties had campaigned on the promise of ending the austerity measures, increasing the minimum wage, reducing unemployment and boosting up public spending.

The “black horse” of the election was a newly created party Way of Courage (*Drąsos kelias*, DK). The main aim of this party was to fight corruption and to make essential changes in the legal system, especially the courts. This party was very skeptical about “systemic parties” and promised radical transformation of the whole political system. In general election this party gained 8% of the popular vote. It assured the fraction in the Seimas but not a real political influence. This party declared to be in opposition and eventually *de facto* disappeared.

It seemed that we could speak about the stabilization of Lithuanian party system after the national election of 2012 (Ramonaitė 2014: 278). Despite the fact that coalition government was formed by four political parties (LSDP, DP, PTT and Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania (*Lietuvos Lenkų rinkimų akcija*, LLRA), the real power was in the hands of social-democrats. Their traditional opponents – TS-LKD – were the strongest fraction in opposition. It seemed that after a long period of liquid party system the classical ideological triad would consolidate in Lithuania: TS-LKD (right wing), LSDP (left wing), and Liberals Movement of the Republic of Lithuania (*Lietuvos Respublikos liberalų sąjūdis*, LRLS) (in the center).

However, all speculations about the new stability of the party system in Lithuania were cut short by national elections of 2016.

⁶ Andrius Kubilius entered politics as the member of Sąjūdis. He became one of the leaders of HU-LC and succeeded Vytautas Landsbergis as a chairman of this party (until 2015). He served as the Prime Minister twice: from 1999 to 2000 and again from 2008 to 2012.

⁷ Homeland Union and Lithuanian Christian Democratic Party merged in 2008 and was named as – Homeland Union – Lithuanian Christian Democrats (*Tėvynės Sąjunga-Lietuvos krikščionys demokratai*, TS-LKD).

National elections of 2016: revolution or evolution?

The national election of 2016 was like a thriller. Before the election different opinion polls predicted that three political parties would achieve approximately the same number of seats: LSDP, TS-LKD and Lithuanian Peasants and Greens Union (*Lietuvos valstiečių ir žaliųjų sąjunga*, LVŽS)⁸.

LSDP as the ruling party tried to convince people to keep the political course. Both TS-LKD and LVŽS campaigned for radical changes. In the election campaign these two parties fiercely criticized the widespread political corruption, stagnation in economics and unsuccessful measures to stop exodus.

The first round of the election revealed the great volatility of voters. LVŽS gained votes from all the spectrum of electorate and reached 22.45% in the nationwide constituency. It was only slightly less than the result of TS-LKD (22.63%) and much better than LSDP (15.04%). The message from the first round of election was that Lithuanian people strongly voted for changes.

The second round of the election was a great surprise for both - politicians and political analysts⁹. LVŽS candidates defeated their rivals in the majority of single-mandate constituencies. LVŽS secured 56 seats in Seimas¹⁰. The second biggest fraction was formed by TS-LKD but it only had 31 members. It was absolutely indisputable that the new government would be formed by LVŽS and this party had the possibility to choose its partners.

At a first glance it seems that the victory of LVŽS was the repetition of the success of Law and Justice in Poland and Fidesz in Hungary, ANO 2011 in the Czech Republic. But it should be pointed out, that there are some important differences and it is reasonable to analyze the origins, tactics and the message of LVŽS more precisely. Unlike DP, TPP or DK, which were founded shortly before the beginning of the campaigning period, LVŽS has more than ten

⁸ Until the summer of 2016 there was only one political organization with great political ambitions – Liberals Movement of the Republic of Lithuania. Its chairman Eligijus Masiulis was one of the most popular Lithuanian politicians in the public opinion polls in 2015 and the first half of 2016. LRLS won the battle against our political organizations which pointed to liberal part of the electorate and it seemed that Masiulis is one of the solid candidates to Prime Ministry offices after the national elections of 2016. However, in May 2016 Masiulis was alleged for €106k bribe from MG Baltic, one of the largest business groups in the Baltic region.

⁹ For example, in the press release in English about the results of the first round of elections, BNS (Baltic News Service) insisted that TS-LKD had the biggest chances to be win the elections. (BNS seen April 10, 2016)

¹⁰ The candidates of LVŽS list won 54 seats. However, two extra seats to the fraction of LVŽS came from the candidates who took part in the elections independently as “non-party”. This “freedom” was very paradoxical. For example, Darius Kaminskis won in the single seat constituency in Kedainiai. In the electoral campaign he highly criticized all parties and stressed his independence. However, he left DP only in 2015 and it was his third party. He was elected on the DP list in Municipality of Kedainiai. However, he claimed to be a physician not a politician.

years history with various combinations of its name. Despite this fact, LVŽS took part in the latter national election as a platform rather than a consistent political party. It was not the sign of poor political management or lack of time to prepare a different campaign. It was a conscious choice of Karbauskis.

An industrial farmer, one of the richest businessmen of Lithuania, Karbauskis has participated in politics since mid 1990s. He has been elected for Seimas three times, his political career began when he was elected as an independent candidate in the single-seat constituency in the national election of 1996. In 1998 he joined the Lithuanian Peasant Party (*Lietuvos valstiečių partija*, LVP) and became its chairman. LVP was founded as a left wing party which was nostalgic towards soviet times. It was appealing to rural people and had no real influence in political life. Karbauskis revitalized this political organization. However, it failed to pass the threshold in the nationwide constituency. Karbauskis himself and some other members of LVP were elected only in the single seat constituencies. Furthermore, he was elected as the deputy speaker of Seimas for one year. Eventually he announced that the career of politician is not for him and decided to return to the governing of *Agrokoncernas*, one of the largest agricultural groups in Lithuania.

Karbauskis came back as the chairman of Lithuanian Peasants Popular Union (*Lietuvos valstiečių liaudininkų sąjunga*, LVLS, former LPP) in 2009, when, after a lot of various transformations, merges and splits, the party was in a difficult situation. In 2012 this party merged with a group of politicians who were dissatisfied with the politics of Lithuanian Green Party. It was an impetus to change the name of the party once again to LVŽS.

LVŽS successfully took part in the European Parliament Election (1 seat) and in Municipal elections of 2015 (140 seats). In both elections Karbauskis was active as an agitator, though had no interest in participating as a candidate.

Only after the Municipality elections Karbauskis announced that he had decided to join the campaign for national elections of 2016 and promised that LVŽS would suggest very different way of action from other political parties.

The first novelty was the statement of Karbauskis that he had no ambitions to lead the new government or to be the chairman of Seimas. He declared that his aim to change the political system was not to be on top. Karbauskis also stated that LVŽS would be open for people outside this political organization.

The majority of Lithuanian political parties usually have “legionaries” on their lists of

candidates. For example, the member of Seimas from TS-LKD is a famous economist Ingrida Šimonytė. She has no affiliation with this party but worked in the government of Kubilius. The “legionaries” were common on the lists of TPP or DK. They were people united by the same group of colleagues (the case of TPP), or by the same fight against the corruption of legal system (the case of DK). However the final electoral list of LVŽS involved 44 “legionaries” and many of them were not familiar until the beginning of the campaign and they came from the groups with very different societal values.

Even the leader of the LVŽS list Saulius Skvernelis was an “outsider”. He was the Minister of Internal Affairs in the cabinet of Algirdas Butkevičius¹¹ and was delegated to the office by PTT. He gained a reputation of being a trustworthy operator during his time as a police chief and was a popular minister. It seemed that he would be included in the electoral list of LSDP and had serious negotiations with Butkevičius, but Karbauskis suggested that he should be on the very top of LVŽS list. Until this suggestion Skvernelis had nothing to do with agrarian or ecological topics. On the other hand, despite the name of LVŽS, these topics were not the most important issues for this party.

The electoral slogan of LVŽS was – *Harmoniuos Lithuania*. It was psychologically attractive and had a minimal content so it was possible to speak about different things to different audiences.

LVŽS succeeded to attract the most conservative people by the promise to defend the values of a traditional family, to fight for sober way of living, to protect Lithuanian language from the attempts to introduce letters in Lithuanian passports not included in the Lithuanian alphabet.

On the other hand, they appealed to traditional electorate of left wing parties and promised to reduce social inequality, to make more investments in social sphere, and to increase minimal wages. The representatives of LVŽS criticized TS-LKD for anti-Russian sentiment and abandoned traditional political cleavage of “ex-communists and anti-communists”.

The greatest victory of LVŽS was the mobilization of “the protest voters”, angry and disappointed people who usually do not participate in elections or vote against the ruling party.

¹¹ Algirdas Butkevičius has served as a member of Seimas from 1996. He was SDP candidate in the 2009 Presidential election. After the elections he became the chairman of SDP (until the spring of 2017). He was Prime Minister after the elections of 2012. In the beginning of the term he was one of the most popular politicians, however his popularity decreased after various corruptional scandals and the passivity of Butkevičius himself. The elections of 2016 were unsuccessful for SDP and Butkevičius declared about the resignation from the chairman of the party.

Karbauskis, the leader of LVŽS, offered “protest voters” a new scapegoat. He declared that the main difference between his and other parties was that it did not try to be a political party, but rather a possibility for the professionals from various spheres, who do not want to have any affiliation to traditional politics, to get together and take part in the governing of the state¹². During the electoral campaign the representatives of LVŽS list insisted that they are professionals, not politicians.

What is the main difference between a politician and a professional? According to the classical book on the topic, politics arises from recognizing the need of restraint alongside opportunity, it is founded on the acceptance of difference and on the belief in conciliation (Crick 1962: 12). The technocrat (or the professional) rejects negotiations or deliberations, they use “true knowledge” to resolve the problem. A politician knows that pluralism of opinions is important and many different ideas require to look for a compromise, whereas, for a technocrat, there is only one most efficient solution in all cases, and those who suggest other solutions are people who are not competent, enough, people who try to “politicize” the problem.

The initiative of the *New Politics* in 2000 was an attempt to enrich very antithetical political life. Since 2004 it was common to challenge “systematic parties” as alienated from the society and corrupted. However, these actions aimed “to fix politics” not to replace it. The true novelty of LVŽS was the ideology of anti-politics. The main aim of Karbauskis was not only to win the national election but to change the rules of political life and implement radical opposition between “a subjective and bounded by ideology politician” and “a free and competent specialist”.

Various faces of anti-politics

Miloš Havelka, in an excellent analysis on the phenomena of anti-politics, reveals that the rejection of politics has different forms and each of them has its own reasons and roots. Havelka has no intention to create a comprehensive typology of anti-politics, however on the basis of his analysis it is reasonable to distinguish **technocratic**, **cultural** and **civic** rejections of politics (Havelka 2016).

¹² For example, Baltic News Service on March 23, 2016, published information about Skvernelis choice and revealed Karbauskis' plans to include as many as possible candidates from various spheres to LPGU list as possible. According to Karbauskis, the great number of candidates without any affiliations with parties would be the important trace of LPGU.

Already in 1920 Max Weber could sense social phenomena such as the breaking away of the private sphere, lowered interest in public affairs, the personalization of politics, the uprooting of social interests and growing tension between political conviction and political responsibility. Weber insisted on the importance of the pressure of capitalistic rational mode of living. According to him, economic rationality broke the unity of liberty and politics and the outcome was the economization of the ends.

Bernard Crick in 1962 warned: “There is a great danger to politics in the desire for certainty at any price” (Crick 1962: 87). This certainty is unrealistic and the paradoxical outcome of technocratic anti-politics – the increase of dissatisfaction with politics. The usual tactics of “neutral and scientific” technocrats is to blame the stubborn political opposition.

Matthew Flanders in 2012 presented the problem of anti-politics as the shift from a “citizen” to a “consumer” (Flanders 2012). The latter does not want to be responsible or to go deep into the political alternatives. The consumer strives to get “the best product for the lowest price” and always feels dissatisfied. Zygmunt Bauman reveals the reason: “While consumer society rests its case on the promise to gratify human desires to an extent which no other society in the past could reach or even dream of reaching, the promise of satisfaction remains seductive only as long as the desire stays *ungratified*; more importantly, as long as the client is not ‘*completely* satisfied’; that is, as long as the desires that motivated and set in motion the search for gratification and prompted consumerist experiments are not believed to have been truly and fully gratified” (Bauman 2007: 46).

The greatest paradox of the consumers’ society is that *objectively* it needs political not technical decisions, though the majority of its members are sure that the politics and politicians are the main source of their problems.

In the very beginning of the 20th century a very different conception of anti-politics emerged. In 1919 famous and influential writer Thomas Mann presented an interesting essay – “Reflections of a Non Political Man”. The impetus for the essay was the emerging mass society and mass culture.

Mann was dissatisfied with the fact, that political debates were narrowed to economic affairs and discussions on various short term actualities. Politics, according to this famous writer, became one-sided and politicians became barbarians who lack minimal competence and care only about elections. The writer was sure that it is important to turn away from the politics

and concentrate on spiritual acts. Nonpolitical man of Mann is not a politically irresponsible person without any interest in public affairs. He is not a passive one. He overcame the sphere of politics, because it became too narrow. According to Mann, we need order and decency, we ought to create the spiritual basis for the public sphere and this task is a responsibility of nonpolitical intellectuals. Culturally oriented anti-politics rejects the technocratic alternative: it is the medicine which is worse than the disease it tries to cure. We need to base our actions on culture in politics, not on new political techniques.

The roots of the last form of anti-politics can be traced to the 19th century. The term “non-political politics” was coined by the intellectuals from the stateless nations of the Central and Eastern Europe who were struggling for emancipation. Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk emphasized the party's transcending unity of civil interests and society values: education, responsibility, mutuality, honor and open-mindedness. At the same time, he viewed it as a means of cultivating the political sphere, as well as means for improving civic self-consciousness and political literacy. The main thesis of “nonpolitical politics” - there are historical situations, when the only way to change the sphere of politics is to use nonpolitical means.

The same motive can be found in the works of Hungarian writer and cultural critic Gyorgy Konrad. He advocated anti-politics and looked for radically different possibilities for action and decision making in the situation when we could not accept the official politics of a ruling party. Konrad rejected both – the possibility of political resignation and collaboration with non-acceptable political system. For him, anti-politics was the search for non conventional civic activity.

The journey to anti-politics and back?

In the book “Defending Politics” Flinders writes: “I am not arguing that democratic politics as we know is perfect. Politicians too often promise too much and deliver too little and some have abused their positions for personal gain but I will not let the behavior of a few destroy the achievements of the many. Although imperfect, we can do much worse than honor “mere politics”. Indeed, we must examine very carefully the claims of those who would do better or who would apparently turn their back on politics completely. We must also challenge those who bemoan politics but in the next breath demand than the institutions of the state do more and more. Politics can and does make a positive difference in people’s lives” (Flinders 2012: 10)

The healthy skepticism and critical challenging of politicians are sane for every

democratic society, but in the case of anti-politics we ought to speak not about healthy skepticism but about corrosive cynicism (Flinders 2012: 11). The former suggests a belief in the nature of regime alongside a large dose of caution about the risk that some individuals may be tempted to abuse the system for their own benefit rather than the public's. The latter, by contrast, suggests the toxic distrust which easily becomes the target of various manipulations and illusionary promises.

It would be unfair to demonize LVŽS and Karbauskis for the attempts to impose anti-political mode of thinking. All political organizations in Lithuania have a lot of problems and the gap between politicians and the rest of the society becomes wider and wider. In 2009 a group of Lithuanian scholars published an important study “Partinės demokratijos pabaiga?”¹³. In this book the scholars revealed the weakness of Lithuanian party system and speculated about the prospect of various civic movements. Can they replace the parties and foster stability of political life?

However, the national elections in 2016 introduced a lot of new important questions. It seems that those political parties, which have representatives in Seimas, do not care much about the future of politics. Most politicians look at the phenomena of LVŽS as the model of success, and try to learn the effective tools to attract people. Very likely, in the Municipal elections of 2019 a great wave of anti-politics will run through the country.

On the other hand, the first half of the year after the national election revealed the main problems of technocratic version of anti-politics in Lithuania. We can find all three versions of anti-politics in contemporary Lithuania. However cultural and civic anti-politics is still very weak. The version of anti-politics which was introduced by LVŽS was technocratic with some elements of cultural sentiments.

In theory it looked quite attractive, however tone encountered a lot of problems while implementing it.

The beginning was hopeful. The members of the new government, chosen by Skvernelis, were praised even by opposition. LVŽS nominated 12 members, including Prime Minister, while only 3 ministers represented the minor coalition partner LSDP. The key feature of the new government was that the majority of its members were formally independent politicians. It was

¹³ English translation of the title of the book – “The End of Democracy of Parties?”. The editor – a very skillfull scholar Ainė Ramonaitė.

one of the key pledges of LVŽS in the election campaign- to appoint the “government of experts” formed primarily on the basis of competence as opposed to party affiliation.

The dominance of independent politicians in the government, many of which were without experience of working in any political institutions and without comprehensive contacts with LVŽS, raised important questions whether it will be able to assure stable support in Seimas for such government suggestions and to keep the constructive relations with the LVŽS fraction. The government had problems in preparing the program and the plan of actions. The main reason was that agreeing on the preferences was not only a technical act. It is always based on the set of values and principles.

Prime Minister Skvernelis announced that he had no interests in the processes inside LVŽS. Such statements seemed not important until the first serious clashes between Karbauskis and Skvernelis¹⁴. Eventually the friction between Skvernelis as the Prime Minister and the fraction of LVŽS in Seimas became more and more evident.

On the one hand, it can be explained by psychological factors (Karbauskis and Skvernelis as very different personalities) and by the fact that the majority of ministers and many members of LVŽS fraction in Seimas have very little experience of work in political institutions. On the other hand, anti-political LVŽS “program” was an attractive document during elections, but it is a very fragile basis for the real solution of huge political problems.

For example, Karbauskis and Skvernelis communicated opposite opinions on the way to fight the reasons of intensive emigration. Karbauskis suggested to sign the national agreement of political parties and the leading scientists in order to improve the demographic situation in Lithuania. Skvernelis reacted with the statement that tackling emigration requires initiatives, which would be included in the plans of the government, rather than setting up new working groups or commissions. They are communicating like people from alternative realities and it seems that they do not seek agreement. Prime Minister is more likely to discuss the political situation with one of the leaders of opposition in Seimas, the chairman of TS-LKD, Gabrielius Landsbergis than with Karbauskis¹⁵.

14 The informative digest on the relations of Skvernelis and Karbauskis - <http://en.delfi.lt/corporate/what-is-the-real-reason-behind-skvernelis-and-karbauskis-squabbles.d?id=74321432> (seen April 10, 2017).

15 Prime Minister Skvernelis and the chairman of TS-LKD Landsbergis had at least three long talks face to face during the first quarter of 2017. Such meetings are an unusual practice in Lithuanian political culture and they increase the speculations that Skvernelis prefers Landsbergis to Karbauskis.

On the other hand, Karbauskis consciously failed to fulfill politically important functions other than becoming the head of the Committee of Culture in Seimas. He wanted to show that his authority is based on more firm basis than the political office. Karbauskis also wanted to maintain the opposition *culture/politics*. However, such tactics of Karbauskis has its weak points.

Skvernelis is not a member of LVŽS, so Karbauskis has no formal authority over him. Of course Karbauskis is still the head of LVŽS fraction in Seimas, though this fraction is not homogeneous.

LVŽS politics of culture raises many critical questions too. There were no essential changes in cultural politics of social democrats during the first half of the year. The most famous initiative of Karbauskis was an idea to give national costumes for children in 2018¹⁶. Karbauskis presented such an idea as the fostering of national identity, though it was not very popular and critics required more comprehensive initiatives in the cultural sphere.

During the campaign Karbauskis promised not to waste time in political discussions but to present the solutions of the political problems by the experts. However, the trap of technocratic anti-politics is that the consumer always wants more. So it is impossible to solve the problems of a consumer, because every solution creates new problems. It means that LVŽS has only two possible alternatives now. First, it will have to be transformed as new promise, new “commodity”. For example, it can be purified from the foes inside the organization or it can introduce new attractive political initiatives. Second alternative is that it has to find a political enemy which would be presented as the main obstacle to success. TS-LKD is one of the most convenient candidates to this role. However, after the opening the Pandora’s box of anti-politics there are no guarantees that other groups will not try to introduce new, more radical forms of anti-politics.

In 2009 sociologist Bauman published his book “Does Ethics Have a Chance in the Society of Consumers?”. He states: “We have created a society that is perpetuating selfishness to a degree so severe that there might not be a turning back point” (Bauman 2009: 231). This Bauman’s statement is not a capitulation, it is rather the requirement to be more responsible and to work harder in order to suggest real alternative for the current moral landscape. If we want to change something, we ought to face uncomfortable reality. The same thing can be said about the political situation in Lithuania as well as in all post-communist countries.

¹⁶ At the very beginning of April, 2017, Karbauskis publicly announced that the idea to give national costumes as presents for Lithuanian children would be postponed because of media hostility. This idea was one of the first initiatives of Karbauskis after his success in the national elections.

Homo sovieticus can easily transform into a consumer, who claims “bread and entertainment”. The aim of this article is not to state conclusions but to provoke reaction and questions. The most important one – *do we understand that the antipolitics promises a lot however gives very little?* The second one – how can we change the situation?

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**Does the U.S. Campaign Finance System Favor
Republicans?**

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Abstract:

There is a common belief that the pro-regulatory approach of Democrats, makes them more determined in the fight against big money in campaign elections, whereas Republicans, supporting recent Supreme Court decisions in *Citizens United v. F.E.C.* and *McCutcheon v. F.E.C.*, benefit from the system more than their political counterparts. The aim of the article is to analyze the real character of the U.S. campaign finance regulations, both from legislative and judicial perspective, and to determine which political party benefits from the system: Republican or Democratic? By underlining the Buckley rule that ‘money is speech’ the Author suggests that campaign contributions and spending are deeply rooted in the character of American political system determining the political future of candidates of both political parties. The article refers to election cycles since 1970s, but it mainly focuses on recent election cycles, including the 2016 presidential election.

Key words:

campaign finance, Republicans and Democrats, U.S. politics and law

Introduction

The system of campaign finance in the United States has been a subject of ongoing criticism, and many analysts argue that the current regulations favor the Republican candidates in federal elections, especially because of the uncontrolled flow of outside money (Gerken 2014; Smith, Powell 2014). Some argue that growing role of election money leads to ideological polarization of the parties (La Raja, Schaffner 2015), others, that the efforts to reform the system and diminish the impact of money in campaigns were unsuccessful (Samples 2008). The fact is

that the dispute between Democrats and Republicans over the election money was ignited by the U.S. Supreme Court (SCOTUS) decision in *Buckley v. Valeo*, which reduced the discussion about campaign finance to the clash of leading democratic values: equal representation and freedom of speech. According to the main argument raised by the *Buckley* majority, campaign contributions were a form of political speech which was granted First Amendment protection (424 U.S. 1, 1976). From that moment on the discussion about the proper scope of regulations of campaign contributions and expenditures became a dispute over the character of American democracy (Laidler, Turek 2016). The fact is, that even if the reforms of 1970s were aimed at limiting the amount of money in federal election campaigns, the *Buckley* precedent, confirmed in several subsequent SCOTUS decisions, hassled to the increase of political money, determining the final outcome of the races to the highest federal offices (Laidler, Turek 2016; Black 2015; Bell 2015; Mutch 2014; Abraham 2010; Hohenstein 2007). Commentators and researchers often argue that the system, redefined by recent SCOTUS decisions promotes Republican candidates, who are more successful in obtaining financial support from individual and corporate donations, as well as contributions from outside groups such as SuperPACs (Jones 2016; Gerken 2014; Oświecimski 2011).

The aim of the article is to analyze the real character of the U.S. campaign finance regulations, and to determine which political party benefits from the system: Republican or Democratic? The research is based on the analysis of 1. the data regarding the amount of money raised and spent in federal election campaigns, 2. the type of contributing subjects, and their political/ideological affiliation, and, 3. legislative acts and judicial decisions concerning campaign finance regulations. Despite necessary references to the history of federal election campaigns, the Author mainly focuses on recent election cycles, including the 2015-16 cycle. All the important data on campaign contributions and spending were based on the information from the Federal Election Commission (FEC), as well as the Center for Responsive Politics (CRP), and the Campaign Finance Institute (CFI).

Money in federal election campaigns

There is a popular cartoon showing a lawyer behind his desk discussing case strategy with his client and saying: ‘how much justice can you afford?’ (Handlesman). Similar cartoon could be drawn to present the real character of election campaigns and their final outcome,

however, the phrase would have to be replaced with ‘how many electoral wins can you afford?’. There is no other certain key in election campaigns opening the door to success as money. Of course, money itself does not win the election, but it is impossible to win in without a considerable financial support. The impact of dollars on American electoral process has always been visible, and especially since the beginning of the 20th century it has become a huge problem to control the flow of money in federal and state elections (Corrado 2005: 10-12). The ‘money factor’ seems crucial for contemporary election campaigns, forcing the candidates to initiate fundraising activities long before they start their official run for the office, which leads to a feeling that in the U.S. there is a “permanent campaign” (Blumenthal 1982). Money determines the course of the campaign, its language and form. It gives access to more effective campaign tools, and it helps to reach broader audience. And, above all, money becomes a legitimate end to both candidates and donors, who exert an significant influence on the substance of the election campaign.

The figures are shocking. The cost of federal election campaign in recent cycles has been counted not in millions, but billions of dollars spent by congressional and presidential candidates, political parties, political action committees (PACs) and independent interest groups. The data collected by CRP show what follows: 1. the last election cycle was the most expensive in history with expenditures of almost \$6.5 billion; 2. the cost of the last three presidential elections exceeded \$2 billion each; 3. the sum of the money spent during the last ten election cycles equals almost \$40 billion (CRP, *Cost of Election*). It is easy to estimate that the \$ 6.5 billion spent in 2015-16 election campaign means that each eligible American voter donated about \$28, which does not seem much. There are, however, two circumstances, which change that perspective. Firstly, the voter turnout was not very high, as almost 100 million eligible voters did not vote in the recent election (Regan 2016). Secondly, not every American contributes during the campaign, and as a matter of fact, the vast majority of them does not donate a cent. According to available data, only 0.4 percent of Americans made \$200 or higher contributions during the 2011-12 election cycle, and only 0.23 percent made such contributions in the next cycle (Mutch 2016: 6). One should not doubt that these figures would change dramatically in 2015-16 election cycle. Therefore, big money flows into federal election campaigns thanks to the support of a small group of donors, raising a problem of political participation and equal representation. That problem is not new to American democracy.

The uncontrolled flow of money into federal election campaigns forced Congress to initiate legislative process and implement regulations limiting the influence of certain subjects on the electoral process, or imposing restrictions on campaign contributions and spending. The broadest piece of legislation on campaign finance was introduced in the 1970s, with Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971 (FECA) and its 1974, 1976 and 1979 Amendments, regulating the flow of campaign funds, opening the opportunities for public financing of presidential campaigns, and creating a special administrative body, Federal Election Commission (FEC) in order to strengthen disclosure requirements (86 Stat. 3, 1971; 88 Stat. 1263, 1974; 90 Stat. 475, 1976; 93 Stat. 1339, 1980). The constitutionality of some of the FECA provisions was challenged in the courts resulting in the landmark SCOTUS decision in *Buckley v. Valeo* (424 U.S. 1, 1976). Although the Court upheld the majority of regulations, it decided that campaign spending is a form of political speech protected by the First Amendment, therefore spending limits introduced in 1974 FECA Amendments were unconstitutional. One of the phrases used by Justice Potter Stewart in his oral argument in *Buckley*, “money is speech, and speech is money” (Mutch 2014: 148) became the leading argument of the proponents of the concept that financial participation in election campaigns is a form of political speech. That concept became the core justification for Republican politicians and conservative Justices in their interpretation of the regulations imposed by Congress on the campaign finance issues. Starting from the late 1970s, the political money argument has been used to strike down several restrictions set out in FECA and its subsequent legislation, including Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002 (BCRA). The most controversial decision was made in *Citizens United v. F.E.C.* in which the Court determined unconstitutionality of the provisions restricting electioneering communications of corporations and labor unions. The conservative majority equipped corporations with First Amendment protection enabling them to make political expenditures (558 U.S. 310, 2010).

As a result, the contemporary campaign finance system is full of money, part of which is contributed by organizations and institutions banned from making direct donations to candidates in federal elections. Donations made by these subjects are called ‘dark money’, as the candidates are not obliged to reveal who contributed the funds used to support the election campaigns, most often by promoting negative electoral communication (Gerken 2014; Weintraub, Tausanovich 2013). In order to fully understand the American electoral process and political system, it is

important to determine whether one of the two major parties dominates in collecting and spending huge funds during political campaigns to the highest federal offices.

Political parties

For Europeans it may be a surprise to find out that American political parties are not very active in allocating large sums of money in campaigns of their representatives. It does not mean that the party leaders and committees do not play an important role in election campaign, still they are not among the top contributors. As Robert Mutch argues, “political parties may contribute money to their candidates and make expenditures on their behalf, but party money accounts for only small share of most candidates’ campaign funds” (Mutch 2016: 6-7). Of course Democrats and Republicans have several central institutions responsible for supporting political activities of their candidates in national elections. Every four years, national conventions choose official candidates of the party in presidential election, thus ending the primary stage and opening the general election phase, and they also create party platform determining future political goals of the party (Turek 2013a: 120). Other electoral issues are managed by party national committees which coordinate the support for candidates to certain offices, lacking direct authority over the candidates and their campaigns. The Democratic National Committee (DNC) and Republican National Committee (RNC) are engaged in building local party structures and supporting grass-root activities which lead to collection of campaign funds and planning of campaign strategies (Maisel 1991: 251-258, 943-951).

On the other hand, there are congressional campaign committees, controlling the political aspects of elections to the House of Representatives (Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, DCCC, and National Republican Congressional Committee, NRCC), and to the Senate (Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee, DSCC, and National Republican Senatorial Committee, NRSC) (Janda, Berry, Goldman 1995: 278). These institutions are responsible for supporting electoral activities of party candidates, but their direct contributions do not constitute a large amount of the funds collected by the candidates. Analysis of the activities undertaken by congressional committees proves that before the general election, they are involved in the independent expenditures for candidates, thus strengthening the political message supporting or criticizing concrete candidates (Maisel 1991: 249-250, 941-942).

Political parties have never been primary campaign contributors in contrary to private donations which were the main source of financial support coordinated with the candidates, constituting between 50 percent in early 1990s to about 75 percent in 2009-10 election cycle of all contributions collected by the candidates to the House of Representatives, and between more than 62 percent in 2000 to over 80 percent in 2013-14 election cycle of money collected by candidates in senatorial elections (Ornstein et. al. 2015). The same data show very low financial support of political parties for the candidates in direct contributions, ranging from 1 percent to 8 percent in elections to the House and 2 percent to 12 percent in Senate elections. Such figures mean, on the one hand, limited impact of political parties on campaign contributions of congressional candidates, and, on the other, a possibility that party establishment uses different forms of financial support for the campaigns of their candidates, such as indirect donations, called independent expenditures, which are not coordinated with the candidate.

Historically the problem of independent expenditures was a legitimate way to avoid the limitations set by 1970s campaign finance reform imposed by Congress. The necessity to limit the amount of contributions for candidates in federal elections, and the duty to report all donations over \$200 to FEC forced the Republican and Democratic Party to seek other ways of financial support to their candidates. That is how ‘soft money’ came into play. These were the funds collected mostly by state party committees in order to support the political infrastructure of the two main parties. The money donated for enhancing the quality of administrative and office activities of the party, as well as increasing citizens’ electoral awareness by registering voters or getting them to the polls, were used to support candidates for federal offices (Turek 2013b: 176-185). As Anthony Corrado argues, the main problem was that most of the money was contributed by corporations and labor unions which could not make official donations for election campaigns (Corrado 2005: 32). In such a way political parties became dominating actors in the process of financing campaigns, forcing legislators to impose a ban on the soft money contributions, which eventually happened after the implementation of BCRA (116 Stat. 81, 2002).

The analysis of the amount of money spent by political parties through soft money contributions shows their significant impact on the substance of the late 1990s federal campaigns (Mann 2003; Magleby, Squires 2004). The half billion dollars spent during the 2001-02 election cycle became the largest up-to-date contribution made by political parties through independent

expenditures. The decrease of financial influence of political parties on presidential and congressional campaigns became visible after 2002 (Toner, Trainer 2015: 119), however, RNC and DNC are still playing important role in collecting funds in order to support their candidates in federal elections (Garrett, Whitaker 2016: 7-8).

During the last ten election cycles the expenditures of political parties coordinated with politically affiliated candidates are similar for Republicans and Democrats. In the cycles in which national party committees made less coordinated expenditures, they were more active in the sphere of independent contributions. Not surprisingly, it happened during midterm election cycles, when the party did not have to focus on the race to the White House. It is important to acknowledge that among national committees Republicans are more active than Democrats, whereas the latter usually spend more funds through their congressional committees (FEC, *National Political Party*). Such situation may prove bigger determination of the Republican Party leaders to donate more money to their candidates, but it also means more centralized system of contributions made by Republican supporters. Still it does not change the general observation that the funds collected and spent by both parties are similar, therefore, from that perspective, the campaign finance system is not more favorable to Republicans than Democrats.

Individual donors

Contributions from individual donors constitute an important part of all private donations, which are the largest source of contributions to candidates in federal elections. Analyzing congressional and presidential elections, Republican candidates almost always received bigger support from individual donors than their Democratic counterparts, although differences were not substantial (Laidler, Turek 2016). It is important to acknowledge that individual donations may be given directly to the candidates, their committees, or political action committees as hard money, but also to outside groups which make independent expenditures. Sometimes a better result in raising funds from individuals does not mean election to the office, or even a chance to become a candidate of the party in presidential elections. Remarkable is the case of Jeb Bush, who was supported by Republican leaders in the beginning of 2016 presidential election primaries, when he collected most money from individual donors. The problem was that nearly \$100 million he raised went through his Super PAC and did not trigger enough support

from Republican voters, which forced Bush to suspend the campaign before it really started (Gold 2016).

Among individual donations coordinated with the candidates there are small donations which do not have to be reported to FEC because they do not exceed \$200 limit set out in FECA, and large donations which need to be disclosed by the candidates receiving the funding (Malbin 2009). Historically, Republicans were more successful in receiving small donations, but the amount of money raised in that way was rarely a major part of all individual contributions. An exception to that rule could be observed in the last election cycle during which Donald Trump collected numerous small donations which sum made almost 70 percent of the amount of money collected from individual donors (CFI 2017).

Despite Republican domination, there were election cycles during which Democratic candidates collected more money from small donations than Republicans (CRP, *Donor Demographic*). The best example is the 2008 presidential election during which Barack Obama collected \$181 million from less than \$200 contributions, proving that good public relations and effective strategy may lead to the final success, no matter the party affiliation. Four years later Obama was even more effective raising an unbelievable sum of \$219 million from small donations, leaving his Republican counterpart, Mitt Romney, far behind with his \$58 million. The Republican dominance in collecting funds from small donors was restored by Donald Trump in 2016 when he raised \$239 million in small contributions. It was not only more than Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders collected together, but also more than Obama's achievement in 2012 (CFI 2017). Trump's result is especially impressive when one realizes that the majority of the small donations came during the three months of general election, and that as a presidential candidate he did not receive much support from Republican leaders. But even if one agrees with the significance of small contributions, it is obvious that from the perspective of the amount of collected funds, rich donors make a difference. Is it true that, as in the case of small donors, the Republican Party may count on the majority of large contributions?

The analysis of the recent election cycles confirms that individuals give large donations to various candidates of one of the parties. In the 2011-12 cycle Sheldon Adelson contributed \$92 million for election campaigns of Republican candidates, three times more than the second largest contributor, businessman Harold Simmons, who also supported conservative politicians. Adelson gave huge donations to Republican presidential candidates, Newt Gingrich, during the

primaries, and Mitt Romney, during the primaries and general election (Laidler, Turek 2016: 162). Taking these figures into account it is obvious that during the 2011-12 election cycle top contributors supported mainly Republican candidates, donating four times as much as large donors of Democratic candidates (CRP, 2012 *Top Donors*). Although the next election cycle concerned midterm elections, the amount of money funded by rich Americans was close to the sums contributed two years earlier. The top individual donor, the hedge fund manager Thomas Steyer, spent more than \$73 million in contributions to liberal candidates, whereas the second-largest donor, Michael Bloomberg, “only” \$20 million. This time Democratic politicians were the main beneficiaries of the donations made by rich Americans, exceeding their Republican counterparts almost three times (CRP, 2014 *Top Donors*).

Both election cycles proved that top individual contributors did not support only one political party or candidates sharing one ideology, so one should not consider any advantage of Republican politicians in that perspective. Ideological pluralism may also be observed in the recent election cycle, during which the two already mentioned richest donors from 2011-12 and 2013-14 cycles open the list of the largest individual contributors. Thomas Steyer donated about \$91 million to Democratic and liberal candidates, whereas Sheldon Adelson supported Republican and conservative politicians with \$82.5 million. Analysis of the contribution of the next large donor indicates that the differences in funding of the richest contributors were not as big as in recent election cycles, but it is also clear that Democrats benefited more than Republicans (CRP, *Top Individual Contributors*).

The contention that the richest Americans support Republican candidates in federal elections may be a result of specially organized networks of individuals and institutions financing election campaigns. One of the most effective networks like that was created by the Koch brothers who are responsible for conveying millions of dollars to Republican candidates in every election cycle. The organization led by Charles and David Koch has been supporting conservative and libertarian candidates in U.S. elections since 1980s, but their intensified financial activity may be observed in the last four election cycles (Mann, Corrado 2014). But the same role as the Koch brothers network for Republicans is played by Democracy Alliance in case of Democratic Party. That consortium consists of more than a hundred companies, organizations and individuals sharing liberal views and donating significantly to campaigns of Democratic Party candidates. One of the most active supporter of political activities led by

Democracy Alliance is Thomas Steyer, top contributor to campaigns of Democratic politicians (Restuccia, Vogel 2015). The role of both institutions is similar, and during the election cycles it comes down to collecting money for conservative or liberal candidates, but it is difficult to estimate which organization is more successful, because even if the Koch brothers network is capable of raising more funds than Democracy Alliance, the figures from last election cycle show opposite results. The reason for that was the lack of agreement among the members of the network who they should support during the primaries against Donald Trump (Mutch 2016: 94).

Outside money

Apart from candidate committees, political parties, and individual donors participating openly in the process of campaign funding, but at the same time being subject to certain restrictions and control of the FEC, there are also other subjects having considerable influence on the campaign finance system. They are called outside groups, as they cannot coordinate with the candidates and give them direct contributions, but they can raise unlimited amount of money instead, in order to make independent expenditures (FEC, *Coordinated Communications and Independent Expenditures*). In most cases independent expenditures are aimed to support the candidates by preparing negative attacking ads at their campaign rivals. Therefore, outside money has significant influence on the content of the election campaigns, which could be especially visible in the last election cycle during which outside groups spent most of their funds on negative campaign against Trump or Clinton (CRP, *2016 Outside Spending*). Critics argue that the biggest problem of outside money is that they are raised and spent by subjects officially prevented from making contributions coordinated with candidates.

The issue of corporate money in elections became crucial after the SCOTUS decision in *Citizens United v. F.E.C.* (558 U.S. 310, 2010) and the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia decision in *SpeechNow.Org v. F.E.C.* (559 F.3d 686, 2010). Both precedents, referring to constitutional protection of political speech, invalidated various limits on independent expenditures allowing for uncontrolled contributions of individuals, organizations, and interest groups, among which were corporations. As a result, in the last three election cycles one could observe the growing role of independent expenditures, which especially was visible in the activity of newly-created organizations called Super PACs. These are special independent expenditure committees which can receive unlimited donations from individuals, corporations or

other organizations, and – in contrary to political action committees – are not restricted by spending limits. Among 240 such institutions which made independent expenditures in the 2015-16 election cycle, 110 were classified as conservative, which means they supported Republican candidates. On the other hand, only 52 Super PACs were defined as liberal, thus supporting Democratic politicians. Additionally, among 48 committees which spent more than \$1million during the campaign 32 were Republican-affiliated (*CRP, Super PACs*).

These figures indicate that Super PACs financially support Republican rather than Democratic candidates, especially when one realizes that among Super PACs actively participating in the 2016 presidential election, 25 supported Trump and only 15 Clinton. But the analysis of the amount of money contributed by these organizations leads to a contrary observation, as pro-Clinton Super PACs spent three times more during the campaign than their pro-Trump counterparts. Such a result could be obtained mainly due to expenditures made by Priorities USA Action Super PAC which raised 86 percent of all money that Clinton received through indirect support of Super PACs (*CRP, Super PACs*). Of course, as it is typical for outside spending, a lot of these funds were devoted to oppose Trump, but it does not change the conclusion that even if pro-Republican Super PACs are larger in quantity, they do not always provide for more funding than pro-Democratic Super PACs.

When a few weeks after the *SpeechNow.Org* decision, former Republican politician Karl Rove created a Super PAC called American Crossroads, which raised in 2010 election a record-breaking \$325 million in support of Republican candidates (*Mutch 2016: 76-77*), it seemed that the GOP politicians would dominate Democrats in the race for money from outside groups. Criticism of the post-*Citizens* reality came even from the White House, as President Obama used his state of the Union address to underline its bad influence on American campaign finance system and American democracy (*Remarks by the President*). Despite his critical approach, Obama soon supported creation of a pro-Democratic Super PAC Priorities USA Action which has been donating money in independent expenditures every subsequent election cycle. Similarly, many other Democratic politicians raised concerns over the outcomes of SCOTUS decisions, as they feared they may not be able to raise as much money as Republicans. The analysis of the data regarding money raised and spent in 2011-12 election cycle proves that both parties quickly adapted to the new reality. It seems obvious that among groups supporting Republican candidates there are more corporations, whereas labor unions are more likely to

convey money in support of Democrats. According to Robert G. Boatright, it is a prove of Democratic and Republican fundraising potential and the ability to gather around rich donors supporting both parties and providing for balance of the system (Boatright 2014: 167).

Apart from Super PAC's there are also other organizations actively participating in the campaign finance system as outside groups, such 527 committees (527s) and 501(c) organizations. The 527s are tax-exempt organizations under the Section 527 of the Internal Revenue Code (IRC), which do not make direct contributions for candidates in elections but they make issue advocacy expenditures, and are not bound by contribution or spending limits (Weissman, Hasan 2006: 79-80). Generally, 527s had broader impact on Republican campaigns to high federal offices, there were, however, election cycles during which these organizations raised considerable amount of money supporting liberal candidates, like the 2003-04 cycle in which they spent \$185 million on Democrats and only \$77 million on Republicans (Oświecimski 2012: 294). But starting with 2009-10 cycle the number of 527s supporting Republican candidates increased, and they were spending more money on independent expenditures than their counterparts financing Democrats (CRP, 527s). It does not change the fact, that among the current registered 527s there is a large group of labor organizations which, traditionally, support liberal candidates, therefore candidates of the Democratic Party are not on the losing end in their campaign duels with Republicans.

Similar conclusions may be derived from the analysis of the functioning of the 501(c)s. These are non-profit organizations, operating under a different Section of IRC, which goal is to promote certain issues, and by doing that, they cannot be fully involved in politics. In practice, these organizations are able to participate in the election campaigns by financially supporting issue advocacy, provided they use less than certain amount of their budget, and their primary purpose is not political activity (Drutman 2016). Depending on the issues they promote, 501(c)s can be listed as charity organizations (subsection 3), general welfare groups (subsection 4), labor organizations (subsection 5), or business organizations. Analysis of the recent election cycles proves bigger activity of the 501(c)(4)s and 501(c)(5)s in the process of issue advocacy leading to financing political ads supporting or criticizing candidates of both parties. But there is a visible growth in electoral activity of general welfare groups, which spent millions of dollars on independent expenditures in the 2011-12 and 2012-13 election cycles. Despite the fact that there are both liberal and conservative 501(c)(4)s, such as American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)

and National Rifle Association (NRA), the data clearly indicate that conservative welfare organizations are more actively supporting Republican candidates than liberal organizations Democrats. During the record-spending 2011-12 cycle, when the independent expenditures of 501(c)s exceeded \$329 million, 82 percent of money was used by conservative organizations and only 18 percent by the liberal ones (CRP, *Outside Spending*). The figures regarding outside money collected and spent in support of Republicans or opposing Democrats during the last election cycle confirms the advantage of GOP candidates in receiving financial support from outside groups. Therefore, ‘dark money’ seems to be used more often against Democrats than Republicans, and Trump’s example from 2016 is just the exception that proves the rule.

Are the regulations pro-Republican?

The often raised contention is that the Democratic Party supports broad regulation of the campaign finance by federal government, as well as contribution and spending limits, whereas the Republican Party stands against governmental interference in electoral process, allowing big money in election campaigns and promoting broad access of various subjects in the process of donating campaign funds. Republicans do not have a good press, as liberal media often state, that GOP politicians bear responsibility for imperfect functioning of the campaign finance system, by blocking various legislative initiatives which aim at ‘repairing’ the system (Farrar-Myers, Dwyre 2007). Others argue that the main source of controversy, which is the active participation of corporation in the system, is the outcome of the policy of Republican Party which candidates are the main beneficiaries of such donations (Jones 2016; Grossman, Hopkins 2016; Oświecimski 2011; Judis, Teixeira 2004; Malbin 2003).

The main reason for such contention seems clear: in the United States, especially in 20th century, the Democratic Party was more active in initiating legislation increasing the powers of federal government over campaign finance issues, which was criticized by the Republican Party supporting decentralization and deregulation. Therefore, it is obvious that one may find more advocates of broader regulation among voters of Democratic than Republican candidates. On the other hand, according to 2015 public opinion poll, almost 80 percent of voters of both parties oppose *Citizens United* decision and believe it should be overruled (Farias 2015). Does it really mean that the history of the evolution of campaign finance regulations is an ongoing battle of

two parties having opposite approach towards the flow of uncontrolled money and participation of interest groups in federal elections?

Since the beginning of the 20th century when first federal regulations of the campaign finance were introduced, politicians often participated in public discussion about the necessity of broader control of the growing funds in congressional and presidential election campaigns. But the voices supporting regulation from Congress and the White House came from both sides of the political spectrum. Among advocates of significant change of the way the system functioned were Democratic politicians Ben Tillman, Richard Neuberger and Russell Long, as well as Republicans Elihu Root, Theodore Roosevelt or H. Cabot Lodge (Corrado 2005; Mutch 2014; Laidler, Turek 2016). It was Republican initiative to introduce legislation preventing contributions from labor unions during the 1940s, as these organizations strongly supported Democratic candidates in congressional and presidential elections (Tyler 1999). During the legislative process in Congress concerning implementation of FECA and its Amendments there were also several Republican politicians supporting these initiatives (La Raja 2008: 75-78). Furthermore, the last vital reform of the campaign finance system was a result of bipartisan initiative of two Senators, Republican John McCain and Democrat Russ Feingold (Foerstel 1997: 95). From that perspective it is difficult to generalize about the reluctance of conservative politicians towards reform of the system and imposition of broader control of the flow of big money in election campaigns.

Other factor which could suggest bigger activity of Democratic politicians in initiating legislation limiting the role of money in federal elections could be the necessity to prevent corruption and financial scandals in which Republicans were involved. There is no doubt that the broadest campaign finance reform in the 1970s was a direct result of the Watergate scandal and its political outcomes, even if the events that took place during the 1972 election campaign did not directly concern campaign contributions and expenditures (Adamany, Agree 1975). There were also scandals of the 1920s in which Warren Harding's administration was involved, forcing Democrats to initiate legislation to prevent corruption (*Federal Corrupt Practices Act*, 43 Stat. 1070, 1925). On the other hand, one should remember that Democrats were also subject of investigations concerning unclear activities over campaign finance issues. In the 1960s there were two scandals involving politicians of the Democratic Party, who were accused of illegal financial operations: an aide of senator Lyndon B. Johnson, Robert Baker, and senator Thomas

Dodd (Bailey 1981; Alexander, Haggerty 1981). One of the reasons of congressional initiative regarding the campaign finance reform in the late 1990s concerned the way of collecting funds during the 1996 presidential campaign by Bill Clinton and Democratic Party committees (Hohenstein 2007: 244-245). The reality is more complicated and it proves that members of both sides of the debate over proper functioning of the campaign finance system were using the same crucial argument of limiting corruption which spoils the electoral process and, in broader perspective, American democracy.

Another argument raised in the discussion about beneficiaries of the campaign finance system is the amount of money raised and spent by candidates of both parties. Obviously, if the sums of money raised/spent by Democrats and Republicans were disproportionate, it could strengthen the contention that the system promotes candidates of only one side of the political scene. The comparison of data on campaign expenditures in congressional and presidential races in the recent election cycles reveals that Democratic and Republican candidates spend on average similar amount of money. The closest figures may be observed in congressional races, where domination of candidates from one of the parties is hardly visible. There are often differences between expenditures in campaigns to the House of Representatives and Senate, like in election cycle 2013-2014 when Republicans spent more for the campaign to lower house, whereas Democrats to the upper house (Ornstein et. al. 2015), but it does not change the fact, that overall expenditures of candidates of both parties were similar. The analysis of the spending in presidential elections proves that there are cycles in which the differences between Democratic and Republican candidates' spending were more considerable. Such situation occurred especially in the 2007-08 cycle in which one can observe financial domination of Democratic candidates. It was the effect of imposing different strategy of fundraising by Barack Obama (private funding and the use of social media) and John McCain (public funding program) (Corrado 2010: 105-107).

Even if there were election cycles, when conservative candidates raised and spent more money than liberal candidates, such tendency was temporary, and there is no basis to argue that Republicans benefited more from the system than Democrats. A single candidate who raised the most money in history of U.S. presidential election campaign was a Democrat, Barack Obama, who collected over \$750 million in the 2007-08 election cycle (Thurber 2010: 21). The 2008 campaign proved that Democrats have a huge fundraising potential, not only from small donors

but also from large contributors. Big money does not only characterize Republican campaigns, even if there are more corporations and big businesses supporting them, and even if historically small donors supported them more often. Furthermore, the last race to the White House between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump proves that Democrats are capable of raising and spending a lot more funds than Republicans (*CRP, 2016 Presidential Race*), even if financial domination does not mean presidential nomination. Of course one should not forget about the millions of dollars pumped into the campaign by Republican supporters of Jeb Bush, Marco Rubio or Ted Cruz. If GOP leaders and candidates would quickly agree for one representative of the whole party in general elections, that representative could have raised a lot more money than Clinton did.

Critics of contemporary campaign finance system often raise an argument of uncontrolled financial support of Republican candidates by corporations and other outside groups which contribute by making independent expenditures in federal election campaigns (*Whitehouse 2017; Jones 2016; La Raja 2008; Samples 2008*). As was mentioned before, one can observe a stable growth in the number of such organizations actively participating in independent expenditures, as well as in the amount of money raised by them. There is no doubt that the majority of Super PACs, 527s, or 501(c)s have Republican affiliation, and they are making significant independent expenditures, but their impact on the final outcome of the elections is not so obvious, as their counterparts supporting liberal candidates, although in minority, have also huge fundraising potential. The examples of Priorities USA Action Super PAC, ACLU and several labor organizations which made independent expenditures during several election cycles proves that Democrats do have a strong financial aid from outside groups. And, according to the data from the last election cycle, Democratic candidate to the White House is capable of collecting more funds from indirect support of outside groups than her Republican rival, even when he does not have full backing of his own party (*CRP, 2016 Outside Spending*). It would be unfair to admit, however, that the potential of Democratic candidates is equal to their Republican counterparts who can count on larger financial support from outside groups, especially in the post-*Citizens United* reality.

The Conservative coalition

In my opinion, the real source of the widespread conviction about the reluctance of conservative politicians to control the flow of money in federal election campaigns does not come from the analysis of congressional regulations but from SCOTUS adjudication. There are at least two crucial arguments in support of such a thesis. Firstly, almost all important legal suits challenging the constitutionality of campaign finance regulations were initiated by politicians of the Republican Party or individuals who supported them. Truman H. Newberry was a Republican candidate to Senate, who exceeded spending limits during his senatorial campaign which was the subject of *Newberry v. U.S.* (256 U.S. 232, 1921). Mitch McConnell, the current majority leader in Senate and a strong opponent of reforming the campaign finance system, filed a suit against certain provisions of BCRA which banned the use of soft money and limited the corporate participation in electoral process (*McConnell v. F.E.C.* 540 U.S. 93, 2003). Businessman Shaun McCutcheon, who supported Republican candidates, became a plaintiff in *McCutcheon v. F.E.C.*, in which SCOTUS invalidated aggregate contribution limits in election cycle (572 U.S. 12-536, 2014).

Furthermore, disputes *F.E.C. v. National Conservative Political Action Committee* (470 U.S. 480, 1985), *Colorado Republican Federal Campaign Committee v. F.E.C.* (518 U.S. 604, 1996) and *F.E.C. v. Colorado Republican Federal Campaign Committee* (533 U.S. 431, 2001) concerned electoral committees or political action committees representing Republican candidates. Similar connections occurred between the plaintiffs and Republicans in cases *F.E.C. v. Massachusetts Citizens for Life* (479 U.S. 238, 1986) and *F.E.C. v. Wisconsin Right to Life* (551 U.S. 449, 2007), where parties were pro-life organizations promoting conservative candidates, or *Citizens United v. F.E.C.* (558 U.S. 310, 2010), regarding a corporation which financed and published a movie criticizing Hillary Clinton during presidential primaries of 2008.

Secondly, the reason why some analysts argue that the Republican Party is responsible for the current status of the campaign finance system should be defined in the argumentation raised by certain Justices of SCOTUS. In the beginning of the 21st century a coalition of Justices critical towards congressional campaign finance regulations was established. Chief Justice William Rehnquist was the leader of that coalition which consisted of other Justices appointed by Republican presidents: Antonin Scalia, Anthony Kennedy and Clarence Thomas. For the first time that coalition appeared in *F.E.C. v. Colorado Republican Federal Campaign Committee*,

when four conservative Justices argued for abolishment of spending limits for coordinated expenses. Although the concept of sustaining the limits supported by liberal Justices prevailed, strong dissents underlined the necessity to protect freedom of speech of contributors and candidates in the process of financing election campaigns (533 U.S. 431, 2001). The same coalition voted against the constitutionality of certain provisions of BCRA in *McConnell v. F.E.C.* stressing that ban on soft money and limitations of ‘electioneering communication’ regulated by the 202 legislation violated freedom of speech of subjects financing election campaigns (540 U.S. 93, 2003).

The turning point in SCOTUS adjudication in campaign finance issues occurred in 2005 with the change in Court membership forced by the death of Chief Justice Rehnquist and the resignation of Associate Justice Sandra Day O’Connor. Rehnquist was replaced by John Roberts, jr. who shared similar views on the issue, but O’Connor’s replacement marked an important change in the approach of SCOTUS towards the control of money in election campaigns. President George W. Bush appointed Samuel Alito to the post, who was a supporter of the freedom of speech argument in campaign finance cases and quickly joined the conservative coalition (Laidler 2016: 495-498). Since that moment in almost all cases concerning financing federal election campaigns the conservative coalition outvoted liberal Justices consolidating antiregulatory and pro-free speech approach towards the issue. The approach could be observed in most important campaign finance cases like *F.E.C. v. Wisconsin Right to Life*, *Davis v. F.E.C.*, *Citizens United v. F.E.C.* and *McCutcheon v. F.E.C.*

For conservative Justices the freedom of speech argument is crucial for the integrity of the electoral process, therefore any effort to limit financial activities of individual or collective donors contributing in election campaigns is defined as unconstitutional. Even if these Justices do not fully neglect the idea of governmental control over campaign finance, some of them argue that any limits on contributions and spending should be abolished (Thomas dissent in *McCutcheon* 572 U.S. 12-536, 2014). The existing ideological division in SCOTUS strengthens the argument that liberal Justices are more willing to support broader control of the flow of money in election campaigns than their conservative counterparts. The change in the Court membership resulting from Justice Scalia’s death maintained the status quo, as Justice Neil Gorsuch seems to be a close follower of Scalia’s approach towards campaign finance with his negative approach towards regulating money in politics (Torres-Spelliscy 2017). Analysis of the

current ideological divisions in the Court it is hardly to imagine that the anti-regulatory direction of campaign finance issues would change. And if President Trump has a chance to appoint another Justice, the American campaign finance system will come closer to invalidating all other existing limits on contributions. Who shall benefit then? Obviously Republicans, but Democrats will quickly find a way to use the system for their own expenses.

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**The Overview of the Presidential Primary
Campaign of Bernie Sanders: the Analysis of his
Political Background and the Influence of Celebrity
Endorsement and Social Media on Voters**

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Abstract:

Bernie Sanders became the phenomenon of this year's Presidential Primary campaign in the Democratic Party. In order to analyse his road to success, I have decided to focus on three main factors, that helped him conquer on an equal level with Hillary Clinton: his political background, the social media activity of his campaign staff and the celebrity endorsement. The aim of this article is to show, how in the 21st century, the role of the traditional media during the campaign is weakened by the influence of the Internet 2.0 tools. The work also focuses on the behaviour of the American voters and what impact does the regular internet use have on them.

Key words:

Internet 2.0, political marketing, voter behaviour, celebrity endorsement, Democratic Party, social media, political campaigns

Introduction and the theoretical background

The last eight years have brought massive changes on the American political scene, considering the perception of its political marketing. The victory of Barack Obama during the presidential elections in 2008, was the first major political victory that based its success on the expanded use of social media. The equalization of the use of traditional sources and internet tools has allowed the candidates to reach more potential voters. This situation is related to the increasing strength of the Web 2.0. The initial function of the www (World Wide Web), was to gain the access to the information, that could be obtained with the help of the internet browsers

and websites – internet users were only the recipients of the content. The direction changed when internet portals began to emerge, which allowed the users to engage in the content – this is when the Internet 2.0 started. In addition to the previously mentioned functions of the internet, the user could interact with the uploaded content by commenting, sharing and moderating it (O'Reilly 2007). The role of the „creator of the content”, which was previously unavailable for the end-user, granted them the power to evaluate the media subjects and influence their work. This has opened a room for maneuver for the canvassing staff to transform the way political campaigns work – while the role of the marketing staff has begun to decrease in this process, the role of potential voters, who could engage more in the campaign, started to grow. As a result, politicians were able to use less money to generate more content and to reach more citizens who could help them in canvassing in comparison with the traditional media (Raouf et al. 2013). The development of the internet has perfectly fitted the specifics of the American political scene and its campaigns. In 1944, in his essay, Leo Lowenthal has managed to analyze the difference in how the biographies were written before and after the First World War – while the idols of the masses before 1914 were mainly the so-called „idols of production”, after 1919 most of the biographies started to focus on the „idols of consumption”, such as actors or sportsmen (Lowenthal 1944). This determines the specificity of the American society, which has always been fascinated by the pop culture and the celebrities. This led to an on-going diffusion of the world of politics and mass culture through the engagement of the celebrities in the social postulates or their endorsement for the candidates. The theory formed by Erica Austin acknowledges that the external celebrities (which are not physically involved in the election process) can attract the attention of the media and by that influence their followers in thinking positively about the political process, therefore having the potential to reach out and mobilize the apathetic public (Austin et al. 2008). Celebrities have even been actively taking part in the elections in the United States with the example of an ex-actor Ronald Reagan who later became the President of the United States. In order to win the elections the US candidates need to infiltrate the mass culture and show their ”celebrity” side, which may result in them becoming more popular amongst the voters and presenting their program to the wider audience. In addition to this, in the two-party system, the third-party candidates need to show their celebrity side to become popular in the media and gather the support of the undecided voters (Wheeler 2013). This theoretical approach confirms the results of the 2008 Presidential elections – Obama was

able to win them not only thanks to his experience as a U.S. Senator and his established position within the Democratic Party, but mainly because of his celebrity connections and the smart use of the social media marketing tools. With the charismatic and easy-going personality combined with the work of a PR specialist, Obama was able to let people believe that he is no different person from his voters. His mobilization of the undecided voters was influenced by the support of the celebrities, who were representing his ethnicity – that is why the hip-hop artists were able to let the black and Latino communities believe that their votes matter. What is more, Obama became attractive for the cultural elites – the endorsement of a candidate played not only the engaging role – it also became a part of a social fashion, which could allow the celebrities to appear in the political related media and re-establish their popularity.

Eight years later, this situation in the field of political marketing has only developed. Each of the most important candidates during the this year's primaries reflects the specificity of the campaign in the United States. On the Republican side, the primaries were won by Donald Trump, businessman and a political celebrity who played on the weakness of the other candidates and with his strong rhetoric was able to get to the conservative voters frustrated with their situation. He was able to access them not only with the use of the media, but also with his celebrity status. The Democratic Primaries were also based on the celebrity status of the candidates – Hillary Clinton became popular within the media as the First Wife and then established her position as a politician and a Secretary of State. That is why she was the most recognizable candidate within the party. On the other hand, Bernie Sanders, U.S. Senator from Vermont, who was until the start of the campaign rather unnoticed by the media, was able to engage young voters who use the internet on a daily basis, which led to him to gain a celebrity status among the Internet 2.0 society. In 2016 the Democratic Party is definitely facing a challenge – Obama is the most liked politician in the United States and a favorite of both traditional and internet media and such a strong persona will be hard to replace. At the very beginning of the Democratic Primary campaign, there were three candidates who mattered during the canvassing – Hillary Clinton, Bernie Sanders and Martin O'Malley who is the ex-governor of Maryland – but the eventual race went ahead between the ex-Secretary of State and the Senator from Vermont. With her party's support, Clinton was the favorite to become the Democratic candidate, but the growing popularity of Bernie Sanders was becoming a threat for her. From my scientific observation, Clinton could face the same problem as in 2008, when she

lost the primaries to Obama – her inability to reach out to the young voters combined with her approach based on the attacks on the opponent could determine her eventual failure. Although from the beginning she was winning in the opinion polls, she lost the Iowa caucus whose result usually determines who will eventually win the primaries – every candidate who won the first Democratic caucus since 1996 received later the nomination of the party.

Even though Hillary Clinton will be facing Trump in this year's elections, it can be easily established that the campaign of Sanders and his result will influence her political program and move it to more left-wing oriented issues. The aim of this research is to check how Sanders was able to compete with Clinton on an equal level and how he used the social media tools to achieve this result. Furthermore, this case can be used to determine how the modern marketing tools influence the decisions of the young voters – both from the perspective of the voter who can engage in the canvassing, and from the perspective of the campaigning staff which can use new applications to attract them. The main hypothesis that this research is supposed to follow is that new media are the most powerful ways of canvassing and reaching out to the youngest voters. At last, this article focuses on the celebrity aspect of the politics and how the mass culture icons can impact on the voting behavior of the social groups they come from, based on the Sanders case.

The political background of Bernie Sanders

Before analyzing Sanders' campaign his achievements as a politician need to be presented. Since his student years he engaged in the political activity. During studies he was active in the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and in January of 1962 he was one of the organizers of a strike which has been formed against the racial segregation at the University of Chicago. A year later, he attended Martin Luther King's speech in Washington, as a representative of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. These experiences and the influence of his socially-sensitive family have determined his political views.

His political career emerged in 1971, when he engaged in the activity of the Liberty Union Party, left-wing party that was formed in 1970 in Vermont. The party was formed by a group of political activists who met each other during the anti-war and anti-racist demonstrations during the 60's. Soon he was chosen to be a candidate to the Senate after a party meeting during which he presented his views regarding the Vietnam war and economic issues. As he mentioned in his autobiography „Outsider in the House”, he wanted to gain the trust of the voters who

neither have endorsed the Republican, nor Democratic candidates (Sanders, Gutman 1997: 15). In 1972 he was both canvassing for the Senate seat and for the position of the Governor of Vermont. With his personal beliefs, which differed from the political program of other candidates, he was able to attract the voters – he decided to teach them economics and to show them how decisions of the government and the companies influence their standard of living. After he left the party in 1979, he could face new challenges. He admitted that the political campaigns had taught him two lessons: first one was that the views he represents are indeed mainstream, because they were met with the voters' acclaim; the second one was that people need to realize that instead of fitting into the two-party system voting, they can choose someone who is not supported by them and may be able to destroy this monopoly (Sanders, Gutman 1997: 18). With such an approach Sanders won the city major elections in Burlington, defeating the Democratic candidate Gordon Paquette who was also supported by the Republicans. The key to his success was being able to approach the voters on an equal level – referring to the distinctive theories of Bourdieu, he decided to show the anti-distinction – by minimalizing the distance between the candidate and the voter, he was able to show his more personal side, which was also possible thanks to using the nickname Bernie. His slogan „Burlington not for sale”, which opposed the plans of the local politicians to build an exclusive subdivision with hotels, played an important part during these elections (Reynolds 1997: 152). Eventually he won by only 14 votes, which has disturbed the local political scene (Sanders, Gutman 1997: 44). Since the city council has been blocking all of his decisions, the citizens, who supported him, created a group called Citizens for Fair Play which has produced and handed out over 10 000 leaflets. This shows that from the very beginning he was able to engage his supporters when he needed them (Moberg 1983). Sanders, during his tenure not only focused on the local issues, he expressed his discontent on how American government interferes in the Nicaraguan conflict. The U.S. Administration was supporting the regime reign in Nicaragua in order to prevent the Sandinistas, the left-wing movement, to overtake the country. Sanders along with his supporters expressed his discontent and sent an official letter to Ronald Reagan reminding that instead of engaging in the conflict, the government should focus on the economic situation of U.S. citizens and the money that had been used for this cause should be rather spent on the housing market reform (Sanders, Gutman 1997: 67). Reagan's administration tried to form a counter-revolution in Nicaragua and in order to do so started to bombard this country with the economic sanctions – the strong

disapproval of such policies led Sanders to strengthen the ties with this country (Ipsen 2011: 4), which resulted in him visiting Nicaragua in 1985. He was invited by the Sandinistas for the commemoration of the 7th anniversary of the collapse of the regime. Since Sanders was the most engaged in this issue among the U.S. politicians, he gathered the attention of the media. Since this visit Sanders not only was seen as a local officeholder, but also a statesman who was representing his country abroad.

After successfully winning four consecutive elections in Burlington Sanders became the member of the U.S. House of Representatives in 1990. He has already taken part in two failed elections in 1986 and 1988 as an independent candidate, but the good results allowed him to think realistic about the win. The then-Representative, Republican Peter Plympton Smith has signed a legislative which included cuts in the medical care, which was met with the anger of his voters. Since Sanders was not serving anymore in the public office, he could fully focus on the campaign, while Smith had to attend the daily sessions in Washington, which did not allow him to canvas on a full-time basis. What is more, Smith was in conflict with the National Rifle Association, because he was planning to vote for the delegalization of the sport weapons. Because of these actions the Representative was facing a huge negative electorate among his voters – it is also worth mentioning, that he had not always followed the beliefs of the President Bush which led to the decrease of his position within the party. The Democrats, on the other hand, did not have a strong candidate – their candidate a professor at the University of Vermont, Dolores Sandoval, was rather unknown and did not have much support in the Democratic Party. In order to win, Sanders needed to secure over 50% of votes and he secured the seat by receiving over 56% of them, mainly because of the weaknesses of his rivals (Sanders, Gutman 1997: 86).

During his time in the House of Representatives one of the first moves of Sanders was the co-creation of the Congressional Progressive Caucus – the liberal left-wing organization within the Democratic Party. Starting with six founding members, the group has become the largest membership organization within the party with currently 76 members. The growing influence of this assembly has led them to prepare the project of a bill focusing on the equalization of the rights of Americans in the twenty-first century in 1997. The efforts of CPC were supported by the Democratic Socialists of America and the bill, which was called „Progressive Challenge”, was prepared in cooperation with the Institute of Policy Studies and over forty other left-wing organizations. The main objectives of this project were: establishing the equal state budget,

ensuring equal and decent work conditions for every citizen, fighting with the inequality, supporting the demilitarization and the criticism of U.S. involvement in armed conflicts, social welfare and reducing the influence of private interest groups on the policies within the country (DSA 1997). In 2006 Sanders decided to take part in the Senate elections – he won by the 33% margin with the Republican candidate while canvassing as an independent candidate with the support of the Democratic Party. This election shows Sanders's natural talent to engage his voters in fundraising – he gathered almost 5.5 million dollars and, while his opponent had more funds (7.5 mln), he was able to easily secure the win (Vermont Senate Race 2006).

The beginning of the race

The official start of the Presidential Primary Campaign of Bernie Sanders took place on the 26th of May, 2015 in Burlington. About a month earlier in the interview Sanders announced his main postulate which was the fight for the social and economic equality amongst American citizens (Kane et al. 2015). At the very beginning, six politicians have reported their willingness to canvass – in addition to Clinton, Sanders and O'Malley, the ex-governor of Rhode Island, Lincoln Chaffee, ex-Senator from Virginia, Jim Webb and the Harvard professor Lawrence Lassig also expressed their interest in the 2016 Democratic Primary Campaign. His first meeting with the voters that has been noticed by the media, was in Kensett, Iowa. At that time he already gathered volunteers who helped him to organize a meeting, which was attended by 300 people (the population of Kensett is 240) (Gabriel, Healy 2015). The location of the event was not a coincidence, as it had been aforementioned, the first primary caucus was set to traditionally take place in Iowa. From this moment, the popularity of Sanders started growing not only in the traditional media, but also in the internet, which was quickly engaged by his campaign staff. On the 29th of July an online event was organized, in order to show his power within this medium. According to various data, the multiple hosting events organized by his support groups gathered around 100 000 attendees, mainly young people representing the so-called Generation Y, Americans born during the demographic peak at the turn of 80's and 90's who were highly disappointed with their economic status and work conditions. At that time Sanders had already gathered 15 million dollars of funds from the volunteers with the average contribution of 44\$ - this had shown that Sanders represents the voters from all of the social backgrounds, in contrary to the average contributions for Hillary Clinton's campaign which were much higher (Davis

2015). This event, however, played another important role – until this day the campaign of the senator relied on 50 volunteers – ten times less than Clinton’s. Local rallies were also focusing on the engagement of the potential voters into personal canvassing for the candidate. It is worth noting, that Hillary Clinton organized a similar event in June, which resulted in 650 hosting events, five times less than Sanders managed to set up. After this event, public polls gave the Vermont senator 22% of votes, 35% less than Clinton had (Frizell 2015). From the political marketing's point of research, the start of the campaign could not have been better – the position in the primary race of Sanders and his recognition among the voters had quickly transformed into becoming an internet sensation, while a few months earlier he was just one of the Democratic Party's Senators. His social postulates approached two important groups – old, socially sensitive voters and young people from bigger cities who were using social media on a daily basis and could find more information about the candidate in the internet. As the underdog without the visible support from his party, Sanders had to focus on the non-traditional ways of reaching out to the voters. His staff, however, was not able to win the voters from the ethnic minorities – the accident with the Black Lives Matter representatives during his campaign trail, which took place in Seattle, had only worsened his position. The activists who are fighting with the police brutality towards the ethnic groups and for the equalization of the chances among American citizens, have interrupted his speech – mainly because Sanders was an easier target in comparison to Clinton's rallies which were characterized by the higher level of security during her events (RT.com 2015). After this incident, the meeting with the candidate was cancelled, which was not seen well by the voters, because it exposed Sanders's weakness. When the candidate tried to interact with the group and got interrupted, his staff decided to close the meeting, which was a terrible decision and definitely did not help him win their support. According to the scientific research, this situation has exposed what is called a New White Narcissism, a situation in which the left-wing oriented candidates focus on the social and economic matters that are only important for the white middle-class (Bouie 2015). For many specialists this was the moment on the campaign timeline, when Sanders lost the votes of the ethnic minorities to Hillary Clinton. This was a devastating failure of his campaigning staff, which was not able to show the voters the long history of Sanders fighting with the racial oppression. Shortly after the event, a hashtag #BernieSoBlack started trending on Twitter which was aimed ironically at the candidate's ignorance towards the sensitive ethnic issues. The supporters of Sanders started to attack the

organization, which led to the creation of the nickname of this community – the „Standers” which is a wordplay related to the term „Stan” which means a fanatic.

Despite the incident in Seattle, with every next month the popularity of Sanders amongst the voters was increasing. The candidate appointed an Afro-American spokeswoman, Symone Sanders, who during his meeting with the voters in Portland, which gathered 28,000 people, has forewarned the attendees, if a similar situation happened (Wagner 2015). The summer period of the canvassing advantaged the candidate in social media: his website, growing number of followers on Facebook and the skillful use of hashtags on Instagram allowed him to expand his reach in Internet 2.0 and increase the funds along with the number of the volunteers. In August, Sanders announced his plans for the change in the Presidential Campaign legislations: current law allows the candidate to receive up to 2700\$ funds from the supporter during the primaries and the same amount during the presidential elections. This legislative, however, is not applicable for the Super PAC's – the third-party organizations and interest groups who can fuel the campaign of the candidate and do not have to present where did the money comes from. This decision, made in 2010, disturbed the American political scene and created a situation in which not the voters, but the companies and the organizations could determine the amount of funds on the candidate's account. Sanders, who was not using the help of Super PAC's had been attacking Clinton for being dependent on her rich sponsors, while his funds were based on the voluntary payments (Murse 2016).

Before the first primary debates, which were supposed to take place in October, Sanders visited the conservative Lynchburg University, where he gave a highly acclaimed speech. Not only was he the only Democratic candidate to accept their invitation, but also he was able to engage in the discussion with the students, showing that he understands their values and is willing to find the issues on which they would mutually agree. During the meeting Sanders has been citing the Bible, which was a perfect marketing move and an act of respect (Zurcher 2015). The October debate has established the position of Sanders as the second favorite in the polls for the nomination of his party, while Lessig, Chafee and Webb had to drop off the race due to their low popularity among the voters. Since July the campaign of Sanders gained 26 million dollars and has changed the discourse within the primary campaign in his party, which now was focusing mainly on the economic and social issues. Even though the polls were still showing that Sanders would lose to Clinton by 20% of the votes, on the first of November his campaign staff

launched first of the video campaign spots, which were displayed in New Hampshire and Iowa. In the video, Sanders reinterprets the so-called „family values” – while his opponents understood them in a conservative way, he decided to present them as the social postulates, such as the freedom of choice for women or an increased family care for young parents. Autumn has also brought some pop cultural aspects to his campaign – Larry David was impersonating Sanders in Saturday Night Live, which quickly caught the attention of the candidate, who advised that the comedian should do it more often, because he does it better than Sanders himself. Furthermore, in the middle of November, Sanders was on the cover of the Rolling Stone magazine in which he presented his values and political program. He also started to receive the support from the world of hip-hop, which, what is worth mentioning, allowed Barack Obama in 2008 to connect to young voters and the minority groups. Killer Mike from Run the Jewels played the most important role in his campaign, which can be easily compared to the role Jay-Z played in Obama's canvassing process. In the times of the decreasing trust of the voters towards the politicians, the celebrities play the key role as the political actors who can influence the life decisions of their fans by presenting their personal beliefs and endorsing the candidates. The celebrities do not distance themselves that much from their fans like the politicians and are more likely to be seen as the representatives of the social groups. Killer Mike organized a popular among the media meeting with Sanders, during which he discussed the chances of Sanders becoming the next President of the United States and the policies he would like to follow. The end of the 2015 brought both a positive and negative attention to his campaign – on one hand, he held an acclaimed speech at the Georgetown University in which he re-defined the social democratic values, referring to Franklin Delano Roosevelt or Martin Luther King (Rolling Stone 2015), while on the other hand, his staff had been caught at obtaining the personal data of the potential voters of Hillary Clinton, which has been used by her surrounding as a proof of a foul play during the campaign.

The Primaries

The 2016 primary elections in the United States started on the 1st of February 2016 in Iowa and lasted until the 21st of July in the District of Columbia. In each of the states, a caucus is being held, during which the supporters of each party can vote for their candidates. The percentage of votes determines the amount of the delegates who are representing the candidate

during the congress of their party. The Democratic National Convention took place between the 25th and 28th of July in Philadelphia. The delegates were joined there by the superdelegates who are the members of the Democratic National Committee, distinguished party leaders, members of both the House of the Representatives and the Senate and the Democratic governors. This gives a total of 712 votes which are added to the result of the candidate during the primaries. The predicted number of the delegates oscillated around 4765 attendees, so in order to win the nomination of the party, the candidate needed to secure around 2383 votes. Hillary Clinton, who was one of the most important politicians within the party, had been the superdelegate favorite since the very beginning, which made the race for the nomination uneven – even though the superdelegates are undeclared and may change their mind, Sanders was not that influential in the party to secure the majority of their votes. Only a series of landslide victories during the caucuses could make them rethink their choice. In January, the reports showed that Sanders was able to collect another 20 million of funds. What is more, Sanders met with Barack Obama, who previously has been linked to the support for the ex-Secretary of State. This showed that the Senator from Vermont is seen as a serious candidate and that both of the candidates are treated equally by the President. The first primaries brought surprising results – Sanders almost tied with Clinton in Iowa and secured a 20% win over her in New Hampshire. This tactical and visual advantage led the supporters of Sanders to believe that the hype generated by them in the media can result in the positive outcome. It is also worth mentioning that at that time Martin O'Malley dropped of the race due to the unsatisfying results in the first caucus. In February, Sanders lost two of the primaries, but he accumulated 12 million more funds than Clinton with an impressive result of 42 million dollars. The most exciting moment of the primaries, Super Tuesday, which took place on the 1st of March and was followed by the primaries in eleven states and American Samoa, indicated the eventual win of Hillary Clinton, who had won in eight states, inter alia in Texas, which has a huge percentage of the voters representing the ethnic minorities which preferred Clinton. In his home state Sanders was able to collect over 86% of the votes, but from this moment the enthusiasm towards his campaign weakened. It became visible that with the additional support of the superdelegates, Clinton had nearly secured the win thanks to the political and party background. Even though he was losing, Sanders still was winning in the financial reports, mainly because his supporters were still able to engage in fundraising for him with the small amounts of money, while the supporters of Clinton reached the 2700\$ limit. The

staff of Sanders predicted the Super Tuesday loss, mainly because of the lack of the support for him among the voters from the ethnic minorities. This theory was also confirmed during the primaries in the Southern states where the Democratic voters represent these groups, such as Ohio, North Carolina or California. In comparison, Sanders was winning in the states dominated by the liberal, white middle-class, where he noted seven consecutive wins, including an impressive 45% win in Washington. With Trump nearly securing his win, Sanders decided to focus on the polls which gave him more chances with winning with the businessman than Clinton. This situation was mainly caused by the fact that the voters of Clinton were more likely to support the Vermont Senator, if their candidate lost. If Clinton won on the other hand, she could not fully rely on her opponents voters, who would rather prefer voting for the third-party candidates such as libertarian Gary Johnson or a Green Party candidate Jill Stein. The campaign staff of Sanders was doing its best to show that their candidate has better chances of winning with Trump, but the results of May and June caucuses have secured Clinton's win, which was already quite certain knowing the fact that Clinton would receive at least 80% of the superdelegates votes.

The use of social media during the campaign

As it has been established at the beginning of this article, with every new elections, the influence of social media during the campaign is increasing rapidly. For ten years now, the role of the traditional media in the canvassing process has been decreasing – the midterm elections in 2006 were the first case when the candidates started to use Internet 2.0 tools on a huge scale to reach the voters. The campaign of Barack Obama in 2008 acknowledged that new technologies allow citizens to connect with their representatives and help them out either with financial or human resources. Eight years later the use of social media is reaching its momentum – with the applications such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Periscope, Vine and many others, the candidates are more likely to show the voters their more human face and interact with them on a more personal basis. This re-defines the way door-to-door campaigning works – if we have established that each of the internet users has their own IP address which can be defined as „home”, then it can be seen clearly, that the candidate may access their „home” without spending money for the travel. The campaign of Bernie Sanders confirms this thesis.

Even though Sanders had around three times less followers on Twitter than Hillary

Clinton, his posts were more personalized. The main hashtag slogan of his campaign was #FeeltheBern, which in ideal way described the phenomenon of the candidate. The popularity of this hashtag, which has shortly become the part of everyday vernacular, shows how good decision it was. In comparison with Clinton, his hashtag was more attractive – her slogan #Imwithher more likely focused on her having chances to become the first female candidate, was more sensitive and calm – what is more she had to put up with the negative electorate (mainly the supporters of Sanders), who posted negative content about her on this platform – at the beginning of her campaign she had to struggle with trending hashtags linked to her profile such as #dishonest and #liar, while the trending hashtags linked to Sanders were #liberal, #good, #trustworthy (Gass 2015). The turning point of his campaign on Twitter was the aforementioned Democratic debate in October. The role of the hashtag #debatewithbernie was both: to show the number of the candidate’s followers on Twitter and to hijack other hashtags. Hashtag hijacking in this case means that the profile posting on this platform would use a #Demdebate or #GOPDebate hashtag, which was in regards to the debate, only to place a Sanders-related hashtag next to it, so it would start trending. Thanks to this move, Sanders was able to reach out to over 17 million users. This was the idea of Hector Sigala, 27-year old social media advisor of Sanders who was the head of his campaign on Twitter. What is more – the profile of Sanders has also been posting during the commercials – when the spot starring Tom Hanks was shown during the break, Bernie Sanders posted on Twitter „Tom Hanks. Finally. Somebody, who makes some sense”, which was an ironic comment on the postulates of his opponents (Fares 2016). Although on Twitter he was losing when talking about the number of the followers, on other platforms Sanders was able to gain more internet users engaging with his content. This is mainly because his relationship with the potential voter is more personalized which is very important for the youngest voters. Nowadays each of the candidates must know his social media – in 2008 the use of the Internet 2.0 was still seen as a catchy way to get to the voters – during current elections the candidate relies on these platforms and must focus on them and the traditional ways of canvassing on an equal level.

Apart from Twitter, Sanders was also focusing on the social media applications that are most likely to be used by the teens. In March, Sanders's campaigning staff decided to organize a last-minute rally while using only the social media tools. This has not been the first time they used new media to organize events. The Iowa Caucus campaign was supported by a nine-day

campaign on Snapchat, which is the most popular application amongst youngsters (Shields 2016). Since young, left-wing oriented voters are more likely to use the internet on the daily basis to share their political values and use social media, this was a perfect idea. On Facebook Sanders was able to assemble almost 4.5 million likes, but the engagement of his young followers, not the personalized posts, was his greatest weapon. Since he became the phenomenon amongst internet users, they have started to handle his campaign – an ideal example of such behavior is a Facebook group called „Bernie Sanders Dank Meme Stash”, where almost 500,000 users exchanged memes and virals linked to the candidate. The most popular one – Bernie or Hillary – became an internet hit that fueled the campaign amongst the Facebook users and had been a hot topic in traditional media. The meme displayed an infographic on which Bernie Sanders and Hillary Clinton shared their opinions on various matters (from political views to taste in music or memes), while obviously painting the ex-Secretary of State in the bad light. This was one of the topics of my analysis of the candidate engagement in social media during the Primary Elections of 2016. In order to attract the enthusiasts of new technologies, his staff also launched a chat on Slack platform where the specialists could advise about various technical matters of his campaign. These moves ease the campaign process for the candidate – since the good campaign relies on three variables: money, people and time, with the use of the internet the candidate is able to influence the decisions of the bigger amount of voters, in shorter time and with less money spent on this occasion (Grothaus 2016). In this context, when talking about the influence of the internet on the behavior of the voters, the information being posted on social media create the „filter bubble”. Internet users tend to follow the social media news and people who represent their values and beliefs. This situation creates an information bubble in which they are isolated from other points of view, which do not interest them. As a result, they feel that they confirm their beliefs, they do not need information from other sources and are more self-confident in expressing their values, which leads to the polarization of the opinion in the internet (Auerbach 2016). Even though Facebook denies creating the algorithms which work this way, the users create them themselves. Furthermore, the traditional media, which post the news in the internet, tend to relocate the real life emotions to their news, which results in the radicalization of the content and the receivers of the information. Especially young people are influenced by this direction – they tend to rely less on their cultural background and the values they learned from their social groups. This is the perfect solution for the campaign staff who can control the content

they are posting and have bigger influence on the decisions of their voters.

The celebrity endorsement

Nowadays, political campaign have also pop cultural aspects which influence the way the politician reach out to the voters. The decrease of trust towards the politicians, allows the celebrities to fulfill their roles as the people who are representing their society and fight for its rights and values. The aforementioned case of Killer Mike is only one of the moments, during which the campaign of Sanders crossed paths with the world of celebrities. The endorsement for Sanders usually comes from the celebrity left-wing activists like Mark Ruffalo, Susan Sarandon or Tim Robbins, while the support from Clinton usually comes from the female mainstream celebrities such as Katy Perry, Kim Kardashian or Lena Dunham – when analyzing this situation a conclusion comes to mind that the endorsement for the Vermont Senator is more substantive and is based on the political activity of the celebrity, whereas Clinton's celebrity fanbase is created by the pop cultural aspects. This, however, displays the weakness of the candidates on this field with Barack Obama being able to gather the support both from the mainstream world and more issue-oriented figures. One must not forget that the main power of Obama that came with the celebrity endorsement was the ability to approach the undecided voters from the minorities – thanks to the world of hip-hop. While Killer Mike became the right hand of Sanders and opened it for him during his Atlanta speech, his activity was followed by other famous rappers such as Lil B, T.I., Big Boi or Nas. The relationship of Killer Mike with Bernie Sanders also shows an interesting casus – the artists, who are rather known for their independent status, are more likely to vote for him. This can be explained by the fact, that most of indie artists live normal lives and are facing the problems that every citizen is facing, such as for example weak medical care. It does not, however, prove that the mainstream artists in 100% turn to Clinton – Red Hot Chili Peppers bassist Flea gave a complex interview in Rolling Stone in which he explained why he supports the candidate with mainly focusing on how Sanders relied on the funds sent by average citizens and refused to use the help of Super PAC's (Flea 2016). At the end of the campaign, in order to get the votes of the minorities, Sanders released series of video spots on Facebook, first one addressed to the LGBTQIA+ community and second one which was made to reach out to the ethnic minorities, especially the black community, starring Danny Glover who expressed his support for him and compared their life paths, during which they were fighting for the equality. It also needs to be mentioned that the cult director Spike Lee, whose

films are very important in terms of black identity, engaged in canvassing for Sanders by directing ads for him and by encouraging to vote for him in a special spot called „Wake Up”. During the GOP Convention it became, however, clear that there is one person who will become the celebrity symbol of his campaign – comedian Sarah Silverman was representing the certain group of Sanders fans who were disappointed with his loss, but understood that and decided to move their support to Clinton in order to stop Donald Trump. In the opposition there are celebrities who refused to vote for Clinton and were fighting outside of the convention for the nomination of Sanders – the most popular celebrities taking part in this protest were actresses Susan Sarandon and Rosario Dawson.

Conclusions

When analyzing the campaign of Bernie Sanders, the first issue that becomes interesting is how the main power of the 74-year-old can come from the young people and how he was able to attract them. Sanders appeared to them as an anti-establishment candidate, fighting with economic inequality which has become one of the top problems of the modern life in the United States. His biggest achievement was the ability to compete with Hillary Clinton on an equal level; when talking about the crowdfunding – small donations were the key to maintaining in the rivalry, and the refusal of using the help from the Super PAC's had proven that during his campaign he did not rely on the financial help from the organizations. Thanks to this move he established himself as a people person who redefines the term of democracy as the power given to the people.

His activity in the social media gave him the important recognition, which allowed him to become almost as popular as his main rival. Hillary Clinton had already established her status as an important figure of American pop culture and then transformed her popularity into the political career, while Sanders first became a politician in order to become a political celebrity. The way he interacted on social media was the key to his success – while Obama in 2008 highlighted his rather young age, which allowed him to reach out to the youngest voters, Sanders was simply natural and did not hide the fact, that he is in the rather advanced age and he is learning how to use new technologies. With the help of his campaign staff and his supporters engaged in the campaign, he became the social media favorite – his postulates and persona became one of the hottest topics in the media and his popularity amongst the internet users

ensured that he did not have to put up with the negative content. What is more, his fanbase was the one handling the negative campaign towards Clinton with the series of memes and virals, which shows how the internet can be a powerful weapon that can create a backlash when needed. The campaigns of Sanders and Clinton were focusing on different issues – while the postulates of the Vermont Senator were mostly economic issues aimed at the left-wing oriented youth and people disappointed with their current economic status, Clinton tried to reach out to everyone and her manifesto was rather mainstream and focused on the most popular topics. Sanders's voters were more politically oriented, but his proposals could not compete with the catch-all tactics of Clinton. This analysis can be confirmed by the celebrity endorsement of both of the candidates – while Sanders was publicly supported by the famous celebrity activists, Clinton focused on pop culture icons, especially the ones who were women – that is why her hashtag #Imwithher was so powerful, because she appeared to the crowd as someone, who is changing the game by eventually becoming the first female candidate taking part in the presidential elections as a representative from one of the two most popular parties. In current situation, the campaign staff of Clinton is facing a huge challenge – it has already been established that the ex-Secretary of State is rather seen in a bad light by the supporters of Bernie Sanders and her rhetoric needs to turn to the left in order to win their votes. This will be a hard task – the campaign of Sanders and his persona is seen by the citizens as the revolutionary, while she is seen as the part of an establishment that had been ruling the Democratic Party for years. The support of Super PAC's and superdelegates was not helping to cover this bad impression – even when Sanders himself endorsed Clinton during the GOP Convention, many of his supporters were disappointed with such an outcome and attacked him suggesting that he simply sold himself out. Current opinion polls show that the only way Donald Trump could win the elections, would be when the supporters of Sanders declined voting for the „lesser evil” within their party and would turn to the third-party candidates, which are currently in the spotlight and with the negative electorate on the both sides of the fight, could reach their momentum that would be a fundament for the eventual destruction of the two-party system in the United States. What is interesting, this has caused the decrease of the amount of the undecided voters in the US. The campaign itself has once again proven that the role of the traditional ways of canvassing is decreasing and now the voters appear to play a new role in this process – instead of receiving the information regarding the candidate, by the means of the Internet 2.0 resources they can create

them and engage in canvassing on a new level, both by using their financial resources and by spreading the information about the campaigning events. Internet has an influence on every day activities of the citizens, so nowadays it is easier to reach out to them through this particular medium, than through more traditional ways. With the transfer of the content from the media to the internet, the polarization of the opinion appears which creates an opinion bubble, thanks to which the candidate can depend on his supporter, because he will be surrounded by the content that represents the values he follows. This situation is especially specific for the American political scene, which has always been a precursor of the transformation of how we see the political marketing and has always been connected to the pop culture. That is why in the USA the celebrities can become political actors between the voter and the candidate, by representing the characteristics of these two groups which makes it easier for them to connect with both. What could be the most visible outcome of the campaign of Bernie Sanders? Definitely the growing influence of the left-wing politics and issues within the Democratic Party which can be already seen by the postulates Clinton is currently forming, and which are inspired by his campaign. With the upcoming Congress elections which will probably be won by the Democrats, comes the chance, that the major candidates endorsed by Sanders can strengthen the position of the Progressives within their party and start the revolution Sanders had been dreaming of.

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**„Zjednoczeni dla Śląska” - Support of Upper
Silesians for Regional Initiative**

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Abstract:

The region of Upper Silesia is recognised as a particular due to the forms of social and political behaviour of a part of its population. Upper Silesians, as ethnic group, are convinced about their separateness. Due to that fact, they are, at least to some extent, an example of a group in which voters' alignments are based on the opposition centre-periphery. This is certainly true for the protagonists of Silesian regional movement, however, this article deals with the problem whether average voter acts similarly. Moreover, the article is a study of a possibility to create an ethnoregionalist party in the future and of consequences that it may have on the politics in the region.

Key words:

regionalist party, ethnoregionalist party, proto-party, Upper Silesians, Upper Silesia

Introduction

“Zjednoczeni dla Śląska” [ZdŚ] (United for Silesia) was an initiative of two minorities living in the region of Upper Silesia. The idea came from German minority associations: Towarzystwo Społeczno-Kulturalne Niemców Województwa Śląskiego (Social and Cultural Society of Germans in Silesian Voivodship) and Niemiecka Wspólnota „Pojednanie i Przyszłość” (German Community “Reconciliation and Future”). Upper Silesians from these associations backed by the Upper Silesian Council became the main force in the project. Zjednoczeni dla Śląska was registered on 13 August 2015 as an Electoral Committee of Voters for Parliamentary Elections, which were to take place the same year.

Germans are recognised as a national minority by Polish law under Art. 2 Para. 2 of Ustawa o mniejszościach narodowych i etnicznych oraz języku regionalnym (National and Ethnic Minorities and Regional Language Act). Silesians are not recognised as minority by Polish law, though some scholars argue that they shall be. One of the examples is E.U. Network of Independent Experts on Fundamental Rights which stated that: “(...) the other Member States, some of which, while accepting that minorities exist on their territory, restrict the notion only to certain groups (...) while other groups are being excluded from that notion which, arguably, should be recognized as applicable to them (for instance (...) the Silesian minority in Poland)” (*The Protection of Minorities in European Union...*:10-11). Silesians are recognised as an ethnic group by many Polish scholars (Nijakowski 2004: 155; Szczepański 2004: 114; Wanatowicz 2004: 212; Kijonka 2016: 8). The names Silesians and Upper Silesians will be used alternatively as names of the people declaring themselves as belonging to ethnic group (subjective identification).

Despite efforts and positive reactions to ZdŚ initiative it failed to gain any mandate in the Parliamentary Elections in 2015, and in the matter of fact, was not even close to that. The aim of this article is to study determinants of ZdŚ initiative electoral results and to present a possible future for a Silesian ethnoregionalist party, if it was to arise. To achieve that the issue will be examined whether specific ethnic identity determines voters behaviour. It will be assumed, that for some voters, who identify themselves as Silesians, this auto-identification determines to some extent their voting behaviours. In order to examine the hypothesis, quantitative research – the questionnaire – was conducted from July till October 2016 in district bieruńsko-lędziński, district mikołowski, the city of Piekary Śląskie, district rybnicki and the city of Rybnik. It was conducted mostly among population with high rate of Silesian auto-identifications, due to the fact, that this group was in the centre of the interest of the study. The questionnaire was created having in mind two general questions: what it means to identify oneself as Silesian and whether this identification influences voting behaviour (it was examined *post factum* – a year after relevant elections took place).

Zjednoczeni dla Śląska – an ethnoregionalist proto-party?

The idea of creating “regionalist party”, which will be able to compete in the state-wide elections was not a new one, the leader of Ruch Autonomii Śląska [RAŚ] (Silesian Autonomy

Movement) – Jerzy Gorzelik, had announced the will to create a Silesian Regional Party already in March 2015 (Domagała-Szymonek 2015), but it was to take place rather closer to year 2020. Probably due to that fact, the best-known politicians from RAS were not candidates for 2015 election. Instead, on electoral lists were placed mostly well-known Silesian activists and members of German associations.

Regionalist and ethnoregionalist parties are today recognised as a family since they have been distinguished by Lieven de Winter. He defined them as stating the claim for political reorganisation of the existing Nation–State power structures (1998: 204). The ethnoregionalist parties may be also defined as “referring to the efforts of geographically concentrated peripheral minorities which challenge the working order and sometimes even the democratic order of a nation-state by demanding recognition of their cultural identity” (Müller-Rommel 1998: 19). Some scholars make a distinction between regionalist and ethnoregionalist parties, defining the former as „formations with region–based electorate and mobilisation resources, or as formations representing sub–national (regional) interest communities exercising party functions to the full extent in a regionally defined operating space (...)” (Strmiska 2002). Definitions of a regionalist and an ethnoregionalist party may be found also in Polish literature, for example in the works of Sobolewska-Myślik (2012: 22-23). As far as ZdŚ is concerned, the initiative was not registered as a party pursuant to the Polish law¹ and it was registered for the elections as a committee of voters. On the other hand, it took part in the elections, which usually is an activity of political parties, due to that fact, the author of this article believes, that some analogies to the ethnoregionalist parties can be made at this point. Also, the name “regional party” can be found in literature, but for the purposes of this article no distinction between regional and regionalist party is made.

The political program of ZdŚ was presented in two documents: “Mission” and “12 points”. The former starts with enumerating problems of the Upper Silesia region: crisis of coal mines, social protest, strikes and degeneration of the region. Then it states that there is no will in the central Polish administration to solve problems of Upper Silesia and the lack of commitment to the region among Silesians elected to Parliament from the state-wide parties can be observed. Because of that, it announces the will to take responsibility for the region by all Silesians (also with German or Polish national identities). The way of achieving this is providing Silesian representation composed of different Silesian societies, because the change may only be made by

¹ Dz.U. 1997, nr 98, poz. 604, Act of 27 June 1997 on Political Parties.

the people with strong connections to the region (*Zjednoczeni dla Śląska – Misja*). The latter document states that the people are the greatest asset of Upper Silesia. Its culture and tradition are still undervalued which could only be changed by regional education, right to use minority language and the right to cultivate its own collective memory. Silesians shall have real possibilities in education and career. Silesia needs the long-term strategy of development. Post-industrial heritage shall be considered as an asset and shall be used for diminishing unemployment and deepening social integration. The existing industry shall thrive and it shall be based on new technologies and knowledge-based economy. The degradation of natural and social environment shall be stopped. The way of achieving these goals is by developing a policy made for the region in order to promote its economic and social growth. Upper Silesia needs broad political consensus in order to implement long-term development policies (Jodliński 2015). From these documents stems the conclusion that ZdŚ was invented to be a regional and ethnic representation, based in Upper Silesia and if it was a political party it could be categorised as ethno-regionalist.

The political program of ZdŚ is far from being radical. In de Winter's classification it would be categorised as protectionist (Winter 1998: 204). This category was divided by Régis Dandoy into two: protectionist conservative and participationist (2010: 207). In this case ZdŚ is a participationist one, with its goal to establish Silesian representation in the Polish Parliament and present some ideas for the development of the region. Two groups of demands in ZdŚ program can be clearly pointed out: most of them are connected to the development of the single region – Upper Silesia – and a few are based on promotion of ethnic identity of the population of the region – Silesians. The specific feature of the initiative is the cooperation between Silesians having Polish, German and Silesian national identities, which is the heritage of a complicated history and location of the Upper Silesia as a historical borderland. Studies show that this kind of region is often a location, where conflicts between periphery and centre occur, becoming a ground for ethnoregionalist movements and establishing ethnoregionalist parties (Seiler 2005: 46).

Parliamentary elections 2015 – estimations and results

Historically, only once regional organisation was able to get seats in Sejm – the Lower Chamber of Polish Parliament. It happened in 1991, when Ruch Autonomii Śląska gained 2 mandates with 40,061 votes. Moreover, Niemiecki Komitet Wyborczy Regionu Katowickiego

przy Niemieckiej Wspólnocie Roboczej „Pojednanie i Przyszłość” (German Electoral Committee of Katowice Region by German Community “Reconciliation and Future”) got in the same elections 6,108 votes. To sum up, in 1991 both organisations gained more than 46,000 of votes. In the following elections the support for regional and minority organisations was decreasing gradually in the state-wide elections. Still, RAŚ become the regional phenomenon during the elections to the regional council and local authorities in 2010 and 2014. During the elections to decentralised bodies, particularly to Sejmik Województwa Śląskiego (Silesia Voivodship Council), in districts creating the constituency of Katowice for the purposes of Parliamentary Election (bieruńsko-lędziński, Chorzów, Katowice, Mysłowice, Piekary Śląskie, Ruda Śląska, Siemianowice, Świętochłowice, Tychy) RAŚ received 49,183 votes and in districts creating the constituency of Rybnik for the purposes of Parliamentary Election (Jastrzębie-Zdrój, mikołowski, raciborski, Rybnik, rybnicki, wodzisławski, Żory) RAŚ gained 24,886 votes. Summarising, Ruch Autonomii Śląska got its support from 74,069 voters from these two constituencies and farther 23,062 from other areas, mostly in the communities creating the constituency of Gliwice – created for the purposes of Parliamentary Election – (Bytom, Gliwice, gliwicki, tarnogórski, Zabrze) – 17,699 votes ([Results 2014...](#)). Moreover, another Committee – Mniejszości na Śląsku (Minorities in Silesia) received in two constituencies mentioned above – 5,796 votes. This Committee was also founded by regional association – Stowarzyszenie Osób Narodowości Śląskiej (Association of People of Silesian Nationality).

Pursuant to Art. 196 §1 of Kodeks wyborczy (Electoral Code) every committee needs to achieve 5% electoral threshold in the state-wide scale in order to have a chance to gain a mandate. The exception is a committee of a national minority which does not have to achieve that score (Art. 197 §2). These rules are obviously not in favour of regional committees ([Myśliwiec 2015](#)), but ZdŚ as a committee of national minority was not bound by the limitation of the electoral threshold. Due to that fact, pre-electoral estimations predicted that to gain 1 mandate circa 25 thousand of votes would be enough. It seemed likely that at least 3 mandates may be achievable for the ZdŚ Committee, estimations were based on the support for RAŚ and other associations presented above.

Furthermore, the situation in Polish politics in 2015 on the state-level seemed to be in favour. Two main parties did not have a stable support and party governing in the time of elections – Platforma Obywatelska (Civic Platform) – was clearly at the crossroads, losing support and without a clear vision as to its future. The initiative referred to Silesian identity

which has become popular in last few years. One of the latest examples of that fact was the success in 2014 of the civil initiative which collected the support for the changes of the Ustawa o mniejszościach narodowych i etnicznych oraz o języku regionalnym (Act on Ethnic and National Minorities and Regional Language) and introducing Silesians as an ethnic minority in the Polish law. ZdŚ was as well a manifestation that people can unite for the common good, in this case – Upper Silesia Region, regardless of their differences. Moreover, it reminded people that no one will care for their needs, if they cannot do it themselves and that no one understands their needs better than they do. This idea was present in the metaphor of “Silesia – our home” by Zbigniew Kadłubek (Tomaszewski 2015).

In the end, however, the results of the elections were not in favour of previous estimations. The Committee presented its candidates in two constituencies. In the constituency of Katowice (no. 31) the Committee achieved the result of 10 740 votes and in the constituency of Rybnik (no. 30) it got 7,928 (Results 2015...). Respectively 2.61% by a voter turnout 53.92% and 2.73% by a voter turnout 51.82%. The first person on the list in the constituency no. 31 – Zbigniew Kadłubek – got 5,010 votes (46.7% of votes for this committee). Second person – Dietmar Brehmer got 1,284 votes (11.9%). The first person on the list in the constituency no. 30 – Anna Ronin – got 2,758 votes (34.8% of votes for this committee). While the second person – Marek Polok – got 1,829 votes (23.1%). These numbers did not give ZdŚ any mandate and they were called a “failure” of the initiative in the local press (Zasada 2015).

Study

Upper Silesia was already called as “an exception” in the case of social and political patterns of behaviour of its population (Wódz 2010: 41). This is connected to the strong regional and ethnic identity of Silesians and to growing feelings of separateness present in the region that lead to particular political needs and activities. The theory of cleavages (socio-political divisions) recognises the conflict between centre and periphery as one of the conflicts shaping political loyalties of people belonging to the territorial minorities in opposition to the centralised national culture and politics (Lipset, Rokkan 1967: 11). It is relevant for the voters' behaviour in a simple way: the criterion of voters' alignments is the commitment to the locality and its culture (Lipset, Rokkan 1967: 13). Theory of conflict, also studied in Polish literature by Radosław Markowski, identifies methods for studying socio-cultural element of the conflict (2009: 14-15). According to Markowski the researcher shall:

1. identify two groups with opposite interests,
2. recreate the way in which the resources are used by individuals in the conflict,
3. analyse the attitude of each group taking part in the conflict based on realisation of their interests.

On the theory of an opposition of cleavages the idea of creating ethnoregionalist party is based. The conflict between centre and peripheries has already been recognised in the Polish literature as an important factor for development of political systems in the contemporary Europe and for creating political parties (Myśliwiec 2014: 23).

In the case of ZdŚ results in Silesia in 2015 this theory needs a verification. Furthermore, other possible reasons for the failure of this initiative shall be considered and researched. The study presented below is based on the questionnaire carried out from July till October 2016 on the group of 398 people residing in five communities with the highest rate of Silesian nationality declarations in the region within the constituencies, where the ZdŚ Committee took part in the elections. According to the National Census 2011: 41.5% of 76,367 residents of rybnicki district and 27.9% of 140,924 residents of the city of Rybnik, 40.5% of 94,661 residents of mikołowski district, 36.9% of 58,057 residents of bieruńsko-łędziński district and 36.5% of 57,745 residents of the city Piekary Śląskie declared Silesian nationality (*Wybrane tablice...tab.55; Województwo Śląskie...111-117*). In each of districts, where the questionnaire was carried out, the number of participants was as follows:

1. residents of rybnicki district and the city of Rybnik: 272 (68.3%),
2. residents of mikołowski district: 41 (10.3%),
3. residents of bieruńsko-łędziński district: 48 (12%),
4. residents of the city Piekary Śląskie: 37 (9.3%).

More men (53.9%) than women (46.1%) took part in the study. Furthermore, the dominant age group was 51-69 years old (29.1%), while others were: 31-50 years old (28.1%), 19-30 years old (27.1%), 70 and more years old (11.5%), 15-18 years old (4.3%). More people residing in cities (71.4%) than living in the country (28.6%) took part in the questionnaire. As to the education, 53.2 % finished high school or equivalent, Master's degree was held by 16%, Bachelor degree by 15.4%, primary school graduates totalled 11.2%, while middle school (Gymnasium) 4.5%.

Results

In the case where the answers from more than one question are studied together other configurations than the agreement or disagreement in both are not considered. In the tables there are presented only situations in which the same answers were given to the both questions, in descriptions there are also considered situations when the respondents agree or disagree in both questions regardless of the strength of declaration.

Table 1. The share of answers to the questions: “Did you vote for the Zjednoczeni dla Śląska in 2015?” and “Did you vote for Ruch Autonomii Śląska in 2014?”

	Yes	No
Did you vote for the ZdŚ Committee in 2015?	14.3%	85.7%
Did you vote for Ruch Autonomii Śląska in 2014?	25.3%	74.7%
Both	12.7%	87.3%

Source: own construction based on conducted research

During the Parliamentary Elections in 2015 14.3% of respondents voted for ZdŚ, while during the Elections in 2014 to the decentralised bodies (local or regional authorities) 25.3% of respondents voted for Ruch Autonomii Śląska. Among the respondents who voted on either of the mentioned Committees only 12.7% voted for both of them in both elections.

Table 2. The attitude of respondents toward the statement: “Voting in parliamentary elections have different priorities than in elections to decentralised bodies.”

	Definitely agree	Agree	Do not know	Disagree	Definitely disagree
Voting in parliamentary elections have different priorities than in elections to decentralised bodies	18.1%	27.1%	30.2%	18.6%	6.0%
Among ZdŚ voters	17.5%	8.8%	15.8%	29.8%	28.1%
Among non ZdŚ voters	17.9%	30.2%	32.9%	16.7%	2.3%

Source: own construction based on conducted research

Some respondents – 45.2% – agree or definitely agree that while voting in the Parliamentary elections they have different priorities than in the elections to decentralised bodies (local or regional authorities), whereas 24.6% disagree or definitely disagree.

There is a clear difference in the answers to this question among ZdŚ voters and respondents who did not vote for the Committee. Among ZdŚ voters: 26.3% agree or definitely agree with the statement, while 57.9% disagree or definitely disagree. Among respondents who did not vote for ZdŚ: 48.1% agree or definitely agree with the statement, while 19% disagree or definitely disagree.

Table 3. The attitude of respondents toward the statements: “I am Silesian.” and “Silesians are strongly bond to their region.”

	Definitely agree	Agree	Do not know	Disagree	Definitely disagree
I am Silesian	38.1%	35.3%	7.3%	15.3%	4.0%
Silesians are strongly bond to their region	31.1%	42.9%	18.9%	5.6%	1.5%
Among ZdŚ voters	63.2%	12.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Among non ZdŚ voters	18.2%	22.0%	4.7%	0.9%	0.3%

Source: own construction based on conducted research

Most respondents 73.4% agree or definitely agree, that they are Silesians, while 19.3% disagree or definitely disagree. Also, 74% of respondents believe that Silesians are strongly bond to their region, while 7.1% think otherwise.

Among ZdŚ voters: 87.7% agree or definitely agree with both statements, while non Zdś voters disagree or strongly disagree with both statements. On the other hand, among respondents who did not vote for ZdŚ: 52.2 % agree or definitely agree with both statements and 1.2% disagree or definitely disagree with both statements.

Table 4. The attitude of respondents toward the statements: “Politicians on the central level do not understand the needs of Silesia.” and “I would vote for a regional party.”

	Definitely agree	Agree	Do not know	Disagree	Definitely disagree
Politicians on the central level do not understand the needs of Silesia	44.9%	21.1%	26.8%	5.5%	1.8%
I would vote for a regional party	28.9%	27.6%	22.4%	13.6%	7.5%
Among ZdŚ voters	60.0%	5.3%	1.8%	0.0%	0.0%
Among non ZdŚ voters	16.7%	6.5%	10.6%	2.3%	0.3%

Source: own construction based on conducted research

Most respondents believe, that politicians on the central level do not understand the needs of Silesia region – 66%, only 7.3% respondents answered otherwise. However, the number of respondents who would vote on a regional party is 56.5%. 21.1% of the respondents would not do it.

Among ZdŚ voters: 77.2% respondents agree or definitely agree with both statements, only 1.8% respondents disagree or strongly disagree with them. Among non ZdŚ voters: 39% respondents agree or definitely agree with both statements, while 5.3% disagree or definitely disagree.

Table 5. The attitude of respondents toward the statements: “German minority is significant for Silesia.”

	Definitely agree	Agree	Do not know	Disagree	Definitely disagree
German minority is significant for Silesia	7.5%	19.1%	44.2%	20.1%	9.1%
Among ZdŚ voters	14.0%	36.8%	33.4%	12.3%	3.5%
Among non ZdŚ voters	6.5%	16.2%	45.9%	21.4%	10.0%

Source: own construction based on conducted research

More respondents do not agree or definitely do not agree – 29.2%, that German minority is significant for Silesia region, while 26.6% agree or definitely agree with that statement.

Among ZdŚ voters it is different. 50.8% of them agree or definitely agree that the German minority is significant for Silesia region, while only 15.8% do not agree or definitely do not agree. Among respondents who did not vote for ZdŚ more respondents do not agree or definitely do not agree – 31.4%, that the German minority is significant for Silesia region, while 22.7% agree or definitely agree with this statement.

Table 6. The attitude of respondents toward the statements: “I believe that cooperation with Germans is a bad idea.”

	Definitely agree	Agree	Do not know	Disagree	Definitely disagree
I believe that cooperation with Germans is a bad idea	6.0%	14.3%	32.3%	25.6%	21.8%
Among ZdŚ voters	1.8%	1.8%	10.4%	22.8%	63.2%
Among non ZdŚ voters	6.7%	16.4%	35.8%	26.1%	15.0%

Source: own construction based on conducted research

More respondents disagree or definitely disagree that the cooperation with German minority is a bad idea 47.4%, while 20.3% agree or definitely agree with that statement.

Among ZdŚ voters: 86% disagree or definitely disagree – that the cooperation with German minority is a bad idea, while 3.6% agree or definitely agree with that statement. Among non ZdŚ voters 41.1% disagree or definitely disagree with that statement, while 23.1% agree or definitely agree.

Table 7. The attitude of respondents toward the statements: “I believe that pro-Silesia attitude is damaging.”

	Definitely agree	Agree	Do not know	Disagree	Definitely disagree
I believe that pro-Silesia attitude is damaging	2.8%	6.8%	16.8%	31.4%	42.2%

Source: own construction based on conducted research

Most respondents – 73.6% disagree or definitely disagree that pro-Silesia attitude is damaging, while 9.6% believes otherwise.

Table 8. The recognition of Zbigniew Kadłubek and Anna Ronin among all respondents

	Yes	Do not know	No
I recognise Zbigniew Kadłubek	34.9%	12.0%	53.2%
I recognise Anna Ronin	21.4%	11.9%	66.8%

Source: own construction based on conducted research

Table 9. The recognition of Zbigniew Kadłubek and Anna Ronin among ZdŚ voters

Among ZdŚ voters	Yes	Do not know	No
I recognise Zbigniew Kadłubek	89.5%	1.8%	8.7%
I recognise Anna Ronin	68.4%	10.5%	21.1%

Source: own construction based on conducted research

Among respondents 34.9 % recognise the leader of electoral list in the constituency of Katowice – Zbigniew Kadłubek. Among ZdŚ voters more than twice as many respondents recognise him (89.5%). The same situation can be observed in the case of the recognition of the leader of electoral list in the constituency of Rybnik – Anna Ronin. Among all the respondents she was recognised by 21.4%, while among ZdŚ voters the number is thrice as big (68.4%).

Commentary

The estimations of the results of ZdŚ were based on electoral results of RAŚ from 2014. There are similarities which allowed that estimations: RAŚ supported ZdŚ and its campaign, some politicians from RAŚ were candidates on ZdŚ lists, both RAŚ and ZdŚ presented ethno-regionalist programs. Still, only 12.7% of respondents voted for both Committees respectfully in 2014 and 2015. In 2014 RAŚ gained 25.3% votes from the respondents, while in 2015 ZdŚ got 14.3%.

There may be a few explanations of that fact: different candidates, different programs and different kind of elections. The last possibility was studied in the questionnaire. In public opinion the role of elections to decentralised bodies is different from the role of elections to the

Parliament. This thesis was studied by Waldemar Wojtasik (2011: 217, 222). Most respondents in the research carried out in 2011 answered that the elections to decentralised bodies have the biggest influence on their everyday life, while at the same time, many respondents pointed out that they have a little role in the political system of the country and the most important decisions are made elsewhere. As to the parliamentary elections, according to the same study, they have the biggest influence on the governing in the country, while their influence on everyday life is smaller. In 2016 in the study carried out by the author of this article some respondents (45.2%) agree or definitely agree that voting in the parliamentary elections they have different priorities than in elections to decentralised bodies (local or regional authorities). While 24.6% disagree or definitely disagree. There is a clear difference in the answers to this question among ZdŚ voters and respondents who did not vote for the Committee. Among ZdŚ voters: 26.3% agree or definitely agree with the statement, while 57.9% disagree or definitely disagree. Among respondents who did not vote for ZdŚ: 48.1% agree or definitely agree with the statement, while 19% disagree or definitely disagree. It may suggest, together with the electoral results of ZdŚ, that regional and ethnic problems are the problems of everyday life for voters, rather than the issues connected to the system of governance in the country. This attitude is radically different in the case of ZdŚ voters who see this problem as one of the issues, which shall be considered while making the most important decisions in the State.

The role of the ethnic identity and the expressed bond to the region may play an important role in the case of voting for ethn-regionalist party. Existence of a strong Silesian identity and its growing popularity have already been observed by scholars (Gerlich 2004: 170). Political claims are present since the beginning of Silesian (Upper Silesian) regional movement. They are mostly based on resentments and claims based on the harm, perceived as such by indigenous population, made to Silesians during Polish Peoples' Republic times and previously emerging after 1989 (Wanatowicz 2004: 150-151). In the study the connection between ethnic identity, regional bond and voting for ethnoregionalist party was reaffirmed. Among ZdŚ voters: 87.7% agree or definitely agree that they are Silesians and that Silesians have strong bond to their region, while none disagree or strongly disagree with both statements. On the other hand, among respondents who did not vote for ZdŚ: 52.2 % agree or definitely agree with both statements and 1.2% disagree or definitely disagree with them.

On the left-right axis Silesians are believed to be centre-orientated (Turska-Kawa, Wojtasik 2010: 127). This leads to the situation, when many state-wide political parties also

claim to be representatives of the Silesians interests. This situation shall not be considered as a surprise, taking into consideration the fact, that a political popularity of representatives of Silesian regional movement was to be observed at the beginning of the 90., but then fell, only to rise again in 2010 and following years. Moreover, the State-wide political issues are a part of the programs of State-wide parties rather than of ethnoregionalist ones, which is confirmed in the political program presented by ZdŚ. The place, in which regionalist and ethnoregionalist parties may fit, is the politics in the region and the policy for the region. This problem was studied in the questionnaire by the author. Most respondents believe that politicians on the central level do not understand the needs of the Silesia region – 66%, only 7.3% respondents answered otherwise. However, the number of respondents who would vote on regional party is 56.5%, while 21.1% would not choose it. Among ZdŚ voters 77.2% respondents agree or definitely agree that politicians on the central level do not understand the needs of the region and they would vote for a regional party, only 1.8% respondents disagree or strongly disagree with both statements. Among non ZdŚ voters: 39% respondents agree or definitely agree with both statements, while 5.3% disagree or definitely disagree. The study shows, that not only more than 2/3 of the ZdŚ voters, but also more than 1/3 of the respondents who did not vote for the Committee, connects the problem of the lack of understanding of particular problems of the region on the state-level and the need for a new political representation of Silesian interests in politics, also the state-wide politics.

ZdŚ was the initiative of a Silesian cooperation, regardless of the national identity of people taking part in it. This way not only Silesian who claim to be just Silesians, but also the ones claiming to be Polish-Silesians or German-Silesians were invited. The inclusion of German minority was, however, seen as a risky move. It was mostly so due to the fact that the idea of a creation of tolerant, multi-ethnic and multi-nation society in the region is still not a popular one. It could be seen in existence of tension connected to the restoration of German culture and efforts towards commemoration of the German activist living and acting in Upper Silesia (Cybula, Majcherkiewicz 2005: 151). The risk connected to cooperation with German minority was pointed out by Krzysztof Kwaśniewski, suggesting that this kind of cooperation may seriously weaken Silesian movement, even if Germans were, are and presumably will be part of the Silesian social landscape (2004: 89). The significance of German minority and the evaluation of the cooperation with them in public opinion was studied by the author. More respondents do not agree or definitely do not agree – 29.2%, that German minority is significant for the Silesia

region, while 26.6% agree or definitely agree with that statement. Among ZdŚ voters the attitude is different: 50.8% of them agree or definitely agree that German minority is significant for Silesia region, while only 15.8% do not agree or definitely do not agree. Among respondents who did not vote for ZdŚ more do not agree or definitely do not agree – 31.4%, that German minority is significant for Silesia region, while 22.7% agree or definitely agree with that statement. More respondents disagree or definitely disagree that the cooperation with German minority is a bad idea 47.4%, while 20.3% agree or definitely agree with that statement. Among ZdŚ voters 86% disagree or definitely disagree that the cooperation with German minority is a bad idea, while 3.6% agree or definitely agree with that statement. Among non ZdŚ voters: 41.1% disagree or definitely disagree with that statement, while 23.1% agree or definitely agree. These two problems show difference in attitude of ZdŚ voters and respondents who did not vote for ZdŚ towards German minority question. The number of respondents who believe that German minority has a significant role in Upper Silesia is twice as big in the case of ZdŚ voters. The same is true for the evaluation of the cooperation with German minority, twice as many respondents disagree with the opinion, that it was a bad idea.

There are many attitudes present in the Silesian society. Some of them are controversial or even radical, some of them are seen as such. Due to that fact, it has become interesting for the author to find out the attitude of the respondents towards actions which were called “pro-Silesian”. The term itself is not a clear one, though it was to cover the actions promoting interests of the region and its inhabitants in general. Most respondents – 73.6% disagree or definitely disagree, that pro-Silesian attitude is damaging, while 9.6% believe otherwise. As the study showed almost $\frac{3}{4}$ of respondents were in favour (or at least not against) of promoting the activities and attitudes which aimed at serving the population of this particular region.

In the Polish elections the phenomena of voting for the leaders of the lists was observed. It can be explained in two ways: as a way to support the party as such, but also as a way to support the particular candidate (personalisation of voting decisions). In the second case the person of the leader of the list is highly important for a success of the party (Peszyński 2011: 245). In the study the problem of recognition of the leaders was researched. Among the respondents 34.9 % recognise the leader of the electoral list in constituency of Katowice – Zbigniew Kadłubek. Among ZdŚ voters more than twice as many respondents recognised him (89.5%). The same situation can be observed in the case of the recognition of the leader of electoral list in constituency of Rybnik – Anna Ronin. Among all the respondents she was

recognised by 21.4%, while among ZdŚ voters the number is thrice as big (68.4%). The study shows that more ZdŚ voters recognise leaders of electoral lists than the average for respondents in the study. It does not, however, answer the question to what extent the decisions about voting for leaders of ZdŚ electoral lists was based on choosing the candidate or the Committee.

Conclusions

The ZdŚ Committee did not meet expectations as to its electoral result. One of the reasons of that was the fact, that voters expected from regional party clear economic and social program, which would fill the need of representatives of regional interests on the State level. Its program was based on the ethnic identity and bond to the region, but these problems, however important for many, are seen as regional or everyday life issues. For many, they are not the most important factors in a process of making the decision in the parliamentary elections. Still, it does not mean, that they do not have their place in the minds of electorate, they are important especially for people who voted for ZdŚ during the elections in 2015.

The study shows that not only more than 2/3 of the ZdŚ voters, but also more than 1/3 of respondents who did not vote for the Committee, connect the problem of the lack of understanding of particular problems of the region on State-level to the need for a new political representation of the Silesian interests in politics, also state-wide politics. Due to that fact it may be stated, that there is a place in the Polish political landscape (especially in Silesia region) for regionalist or ethnoregionalist parties.

The attitude to German minority and cooperation with it is diverse within the Silesian population. The quarter of respondents believe that German minority has a significant role in the region and almost half of them saw the possibility to cooperate. It seems that the idea of cooperation of all Silesians, regardless of their differences, is not unfamiliar to respondents.

It shall be noted that 3/4 of respondents were not against “pro-Silesian” attitudes and actions. This shows the attitude of the inhabitants of the region, which is positive for the possibility of creation of an organised political representation in the region.

Summarising, the ideas raised by the Electoral Committee of Voters “Zjednoczeni dla Śląska” has a support from the part of Silesian population. The need for a political representation of the interests of ethnic group of Upper Silesians and the regional group of the inhabitants of the Upper Silesia region – part of Śląskie Voivodeship – can be seen in the results of the study. The biggest problem of the initiative seems to be rather its execution than the idea itself.

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