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## The balance of the political forces in the podkarpackie voivodship in the light of the parliamentary elections of 2001 and 2005

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**Małgorzata Macialek**

**THE BALANCE OF THE POLITICAL  
FORCES IN THE PODKARPACKIE VOIVODSHIP  
IN THE LIGHT OF THE PARLIAMENTARY  
ELECTIONS OF 2001 AND 2005**

It is assumed that in terms of their political attitudes, inhabitants of the podkarpackie voivodship demonstrate political sympathies which are skewed more to the right than those exhibited by the remaining population of the country. The paper aims at verifying this hypothesis by bringing forth regularities which emerge from an analysis of the parliamentary elections held, respectively, in 2001 and in 2005. Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe (PSL – Polish Peasant Party) also enjoys a relatively stable electorate in the podkarpackie voivodship. Despite a considerable decrease in the share of voters supporting PSL in the scale of the whole country, it still could count on a more or less 10-percent support in Podkarpacie. While the 2001 election resulted in an unquestionable victory of a coalition created by Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej (Left Democratic Alliance) and Unia Pracy (Labour Union), the victory was conspicuously less significant in Podkarpacie than in the other regions of Poland. The results of the 2005 election turned out to be an exact reverse of the results obtained four years before.

Starting from the 2001 election, there have been established two constituencies in the podkarpackie voivodship: rzeszowsko-tarnobrzeski and krośnieńsko-przemyski. The rzeszowsko-tarnobrzeski constituency allows for the election of 15 deputies and 3 senators, while the krośnieńsko-przemyski – 11 deputies and 2 senators.

## Voting preferences of the podkarpacki electorate during the parliamentary election of 2001

By the 23<sup>rd</sup> of September in 2001, 14 electoral committees had been registered in Poland to take part in the coming election. 9 of the committees had their lists registered in the podkarpackie voivodship. The parliamentary election, which took place on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of September in 2001, was held according to electoral rules which had been adopted by the parliament on the 12<sup>th</sup> of April in 2001. The electoral rules were more favourable to medium size political parties at the expense of big political parties. In accordance with the electoral rules, the number of constituencies was diminished from 52 to 41 as of 2001. Simultaneously, the number of seats available in each of the constituencies was increased. The change was based on the adoption of the so called Sainte-Lague method which is recognized as a method to attain more precise proportionality in the interpretation of voting results. By logical extension, it should lead to a lesser degree of deformation of election results. The abolishment of the national list was also intended as a move to avoid the deformation of election results since the national list had also been more beneficial to the biggest political parties, increasing the degree of their over-representation (*Partie...* 2003: 125). The so far obtaining procedure to cast ballot was maintained, enabling voters to mark on electoral lists these names of candidates whom they wanted specifically to vote for. The procedure, combined with the abolishment of the national lists, limited the influence which leaderships of political parties had exercised so far on the structure of representations which political parties introduced to the Sejm. Also, a threshold clause (*klauzula zaporowa*) was sustained at the so far obtaining level, that is 5% in the case of political parties and 8% in the case of political parties' coalitions.

Resulting from the election held on the basis of the changed electoral rules, quite significant changes occurred in the political structure of the new Sejm. Parties governing between 1997 and 2001, did not manage to win a single deputy seat. Out of the 6 successful parties (the German Minority was the 7th with two deputy seats granted by law), 4 parties were represented in the Polish parliament for the first time. These were: PO (Platforma Obywatelska – Civic Platform), PiS (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość – Law and Justice), Samoobrona (Self-Defense) and LPR (Liga Polskich Rodzin – League of Polish Families). The election of 2001 resulted in a political party system which could be

described as unbalanced (*system niezrównoważony*<sup>1</sup>), since it was clearly dominated by one political grouping, that is by the coalition of SLD-UP. The coalition of the left won 41% of the deputy seats in the Sejm, whereas the second most successful party in the elections – Platforma Obywatelska won only 13% of the seats. A decreased level of political rivalry on the Polish political scene was a side-effect of the election results.

Comparing the voter turnout in Poland as a whole and in the podkarpackie voivodship as regards the parliamentary election, it could be noticed that the share of attendant voters in Podkarpacie was bigger (48,35%) than the national average (46,29%) ([www.pkw...](http://www.pkw...)). The parliamentary election in Podkarpacie aroused then apparently a relatively big interest in the population of the region.

The 2001 election resulted in the following distribution of the deputy seats among these political parties which were elected to the Sejm: Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej – Unia Pracy: 216 of the deputy seats (41,04%); Platforma Obywatelska: 65 of the deputy seats (12,68%); Samoobrona: 53 of the deputy seats (10,20%); Prawo i Sprawiedliwość: 44 of the deputy seats (9,50%); Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe: 42 of the deputy seats (8,98%); Liga Polskich Rodzin: 38 of the deputy seats (7,87%); Mniejszość Niemiecka: 2 of the deputy seats.

The candidates running for the election in Podkarpacie altogether won in the two constituencies 26 seats in the Sejm of the IV term. The coalition of the SLD-UP managed to be represented by 9 deputies from the podkarpackie voivodship. Liga Polskich Rodzin, Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe and Samoobrona won each 4 seats from the region. Platforma Obywatelska was represented in the voivodship by 3 deputies, whereas Prawo i Sprawiedliwość by 2 deputies.

LPR, similarly as PSL and AWSP (Akcja Wyborcza Solidarność Prawicy – Electoral Action Solidarity of the Right) certainly achieved in the podkarpackie voivodship results much better than the results reflected by the national average. LPR, whose national average was estimated at 7,87%, which made it the weakest political party in the then newly elected Sejm, ranked as the second strongest party in the rzeszowsko-tarnobrzeski constituency – supported by 15,78% of voters (3 deputy seats). In the krośnieńsko-przemyski constituency it

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<sup>1</sup> The unbalanced political party system is produced by an emergence of a dominating political grouping which is able to govern either on its own or as a majority component of a coalition which manages to remain in government for a long period of time (see: Chmaj, Sokół, Żmigrodzki 2001: 156).

was supported by 11,89% of voters (1 deputy seat) and ranked there as the fourth strongest supported party. The situation of PSL was similar. The party, enjoying a long political tradition in the region of Rzeszowszczyzna, received in the 2001 election 8,98% of votes as the national average. By contrast, in the krośnieńsko-przemyski constituency it ranked as the second strongest party supported by 15,90% of voters (2 deputy seats), whereas in the rzeszowsko-tarnobrzeski constituency it ranked as the third strongest party supported by 13,78% of voters (2 deputy seats). The national average of Akcja Wyborcza Solidarność Prawicy (5,60%) was not sufficient to pass the 8-percent threshold required from electoral coalitions. However, in the podkarpackie voivodship, the coalition received a significantly bigger support, which would make it pass the required threshold. In the rzeszowsko-tarnobrzeski constituency, 9,90% of the registered voters decided to cast a ballot in favour of the coalition of AWSP, whereas in the krośnieńsko-przemyski constituency, the share was even bigger and reached as many as 10,29%. In spite of the nationwide disappointment in the government by the Right, a considerable proportion of the podkarpackie voters decided thus to cast a ballot again in favour of the right wing AWSP. So high a level of the voter support for this political party seems to signify that the Right can count on the support of the so called „iron electorate” in Podkarpacie, which, incidentally, was also confirmed during the election of 2005 by results achieved by PiS which is a right wing party as well.

The less than satisfactory results, if compared to the national average, were obtained in Podkarpacie by the coalition of the parties of the Left, that is SLD-UP. In Poland generally, the coalition of SLD-UP won in 2001 41,04% of votes, whereas in the podkarpackie voivodship, despite the fact that it won the whole election, it got a support smaller by more or less 10 percent than the nation-wide support. The Left received 31,62% of votes (4 deputy seats) in the krośnieńsko-przemyski constituency and 31,19% (5 deputy seats) in the rzeszowsko-tarnobrzeski constituency. The liberal political groupings, such as Platforma Obywatelska and Unia Wolności (Union of Freedom) fared also less well in Podkarpacie than nation-wide. PO, which finally ranked as the second strongest party in the Sejm (12,68%), in terms of the number of deputy seats won, in the rzeszowsko-tarnobrzeski constituency ranked only as the fifth party, receiving 8,86% of votes (2 deputy seats), whereas in the krośnieńsko-przemyski constituency it ranked as the last in the list of the parties which managed to get their

representation to the Sejm from the constituency, receiving only 7,02% of the voter support (1 deputy seat). UW recorded a failure nation-wide, especially when taking into consideration the fact that the party – similarly as AWS – co-constituted government during the preceding term of the Sejm. Unia Wolności managed to exceed the required 5 percent threshold only in 4 constituencies: in Wrocław (Breslau) – 5,00%, in Kraków (Cracow) – 5,84%, Warszawa (Warsaw) – 6,58% and Gliwice – 5,33%. The national average for Unia amounted to barely 3,10%. In the podkarpackie voivodship the results were visibly worse. In the krośnieńsko-przemyski constituency, UW got as little as 1,75% of the voter support, whereas in the rzeszowsko-tarnobrzeski constituency – solely 1,36%. Political slogans smacking of liberalism clearly do not manage to get home as far as the political awareness of the residents in the podkarpackie voivodship. This might be explained by factors such as the lack of big cities in the region. The region's inhabitants are more tuned to the reception of political slogans which address issues related to the countryside and social policy. The attitude changes very slowly, which is evidenced by the results which PO recorded in the election of 2005. Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, a newly formed political party, received a slightly lesser share of the voter support in the Podkarpackie as compared to its nation-wide support. Lech and Jarosław Kaczyńskis' party got the national average of 9,50% of the votes. In the krośnieńsko-przemyski constituency it recorded 8,79% support, whereas in the rzeszowsko-tarnobrzeski constituency – 8,41%. A negligible number of ballots were cast in the podkarpackie voivodship – just as in the whole Poland – in favour of Alternatywa Ruch Społeczny (Alternative Social Movement), which excluded the party from the new parliament. The support for the grouping was estimated at only 0,42% of all of the registered voters. In Podkarpackie the support was, again, slightly bigger – 0,48% in the krośnieńsko-przemyski constituency and 0,58% in the rzeszowsko-tarnobrzeski constituency. The remaining parties, which had not registered their electoral committees in the constituencies of the podkarpackie voivodship, did not manage to be represented in the new parliament at all. The support for them never exceeded 1% (*Państwowo...*, part I, 2001: 6–7).

In the election to the Senate of the V term, the coalition of the SLD-UP was an undisputable winner, getting 75 seats. An alliance of centre-right political parties using the name of „Blok Senat 2001” was ranked second – it won 15 seats. The other political parties won in the

Senate, respectively: PSL – 4 seats, LPR – 2 seats, Samoobrona – 2 seats and independent candidates – 2 seats. The podkarpackie voivodship was represented in the Senate by 3 successful candidates of the SLD-UP coalition and 2 successful candidates of Blok Senat 2001.

### **The results of the election to the Sejm of the V term and the Senate of the VI term in 2005 as recorded in the podkarpackie voivodship**

22 electoral committees took part in the election of 2005 to the Sejm of the V term, grouped on 19 electoral lists<sup>2</sup>. In the podkarpackie voivodship, there were registered 17 electoral lists. The voter turnout, as compared with the previous elections, was slightly lower and reached in Podkarpacie 42,91%, whereas the national average for Poland was 40,57%. The election was organized on the basis of new electoral rules passed by the parliament on the 26<sup>th</sup> of July in 2002, into which a method of d'Hondt to count votes was inscribed. The method favours big parties. After the election, deputies of six political parties were present in the new Sejm (not taking into account the two deputies of Mniejszość Niemiecka). Each of the six parties managed to have been represented from the constituencies of the podkarpackie voivodship. The distribution of the deputy seats in the Sejm of the V term was arranged as follows: Prawo i Sprawiedliwość – 155 of the seats (26,99%); Platforma Obywatelska – 133 of the seats (24,14%);

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<sup>2</sup> For the election to be held on the 25<sup>th</sup> of September 2005, candidates were registered by the following electoral committees: Ruch Patriotyczny (Patriotic Movement), Polska Partia Pracy (Polish Labour Party), Liga Polskich Rodzin (League of Polish Families), Partia Demokratyczna (Democratic Party), Socjaldemokracja Polska (Polish Social Democracy), Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (Law and Justice), Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej (Left Democratic Alliance), Platforma Obywatelska (Civic Platform), Polska Partia Narodowa (Polish National Party), Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe (Polish Peasant Party), Centrum (Centre), Platforma Janusza Korwina-Mikkego (Platform of Janusz Korwin-Mikke), Ogólnopolska Koalicja Obywatelska (All-Poland Civic Coalition), Polska Konfederacja – Godność i Praca (Polish Confederation – Dignity and Labour), Samoobrona Rzeczpospolitej Polskiej (Self-Defense of the Polish Republic), Partia Inicjatywa RP (Party Initiative RP), Dom Ojczyzny (Motherland Home), Narodowe Odrodzenie Polski (National Rebirth of Poland), Stronnictwo Pracy (Labour Party), Społeczni Ratownicy (Social Rescuers), Mniejszość Niemiecka (German Minority), Mniejszość Niemiecka Śląska (Silesian German Minority) – based on: [www.pkw.gov.pl](http://www.pkw.gov.pl)

Samoobrona – 56 of the seats (11,41%); Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej – 55 of the seats (11,31%); Liga Polskich Rodzin – 34 of the seats (7,97%); Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe – 25 of the seats (6,96%) and 2 seats of the aforementioned Mniejszość Niemiecka.

The distribution of the seats won by the parties from the podkarpackie constituencies looked as follows: in the rzeszowsko-tarnobrzeski constituency PiS – won 7 seats, PO – 3 seats, LPR – 2 seats, PSL – 1 seat, Samoobrona – 1 seat, and SLD – 1 seat, whereas in the krośnieńsko-przemyski constituency: PiS – 4 seats, PO – 2 seats, LPR – 2 seats, Samoobrona – 1 seat, PSL – 1 seat, and SLD – 1 seat.

After the elections, held on the 25<sup>th</sup> of September in 2005, the existence of a right wing bias in the attitudes of the population of Podkarpacie was confirmed. Parties such as the right wing PiS got in the voivodship support bigger than nation-wide. PiS received in the rzeszowsko-tarnobrzeski constituency 38,2% of the votes, in the krośnieńsko-przemyski constituency – 33,78%, whereas the national result of the party approached only 26,99%. LPR fared in a similar way – the party received in the rzeszowsko-tarnobrzeski constituency 13,09% of the votes, in the krośnieńsko-przemyski constituency 13,63% as compared to its national average of merely 7,97%. The results attained by both of the parties firmly evidence that the political attitudes and sympathies of the electorate in the discussed region are skewed to the right when compared to the remaining regions of the country. The 2005 election proved that PSL indeed enjoyed a stable electorate in the area of Podkarpacie as well. The electoral results of the party were much better in the analyzed region than nation-wide. PSL got 10,24% of the votes in the rzeszowsko-tarnobrzeski constituency and 9,56% in the krośnieńsko-przemyski constituency. Taking into account the share of votes that the party received nation-wide, that is 6,96%, it might be stipulated that PSL indeed has in the region an „iron electorate” who have been loyal to the party since the beginning of the systemic changes.

Samoobrona recorded results comparable to its national average in the krośnieńsko-przemyski constituency, where it got 11,83% of the votes as compared to 11,41% of the national average. In the rzeszowsko-tarnobrzeski constituency, the share of people voting for Samoobrona was, however, smaller – 7,89%.

PO faced in Podkarpacie results decidedly worse than its national average. The grouping, which lost to the victorious PiS only by 2,85 percent nearing 24,14% nation-wide, in Podkarpacie managed to get



only 16,25% of the votes in the rzeszowsko-tarnobrzeski constituency and 15,44% in the krośnieńsko-przemyski constituency. SLD also received in the region lower than average support, getting 7,89% of the voter support in the rzeszowsko-tarnobrzeski constituency and 9,16% in the krośnieńsko-przemyski constituency. The rapid decrease in the support for this particular party was no surprise, however. Leszek Miller's cabinet was extremely poorly evaluated by the public opinion, being accused of, *inter alia*, „lack of qualifications, partitocracy, shady arrangements fixed by politicians with businessmen, corruption” (Migalski, Wojtasik, Mazur 2006: 196).

The dissatisfaction led to an internal fragmentation of the SLD as well. In consequence, another political party was formed – Socjaldemokracja Polska (SdPI – Polish Social Democracy) with Marek Borowski as its leader. The grouping did not, however, succeed in persuading a sufficient part of the electorate to vote for itself as an alternative party of the Left. SdPI played thus a minor role in the election. Receiving 3,89% of the voter support nation-wide, it did not manage to exceed the required threshold of 5%. In the region of podkarpackie, the electoral results of this particular party proved to be even worse: in the rzeszowsko-tarnobrzeski constituency the party got 2,16% of the votes, whereas in the krośnieńsko-przemyski constituency – only 2,28%. An equally serious defeat was suffered by Partia Demokratyczna (demokraci.pl – Democratic Party), which replaced Unia Wolności (Union of Freedom) under the leadership of Władysław Frasyniuk, Jerzy Hausner and Marek Belka. The party obtained 2,45% of the voter support in the whole of Poland. In the rzeszowsko-tarnobrzeski constituency the support for Partia Demokratyczna was only 0,85%, whereas in the krośnieńsko-przemyski constituency – as little as 1,07%. The party did not play any considerable role. All of the remaining political parties, which registered their candidates for the 2005 election, were of a decidedly marginal importance (www.pkw...).

Generally, the results accomplished by the particular parties in the podkarpackie voivodship, clearly differed, however, from the ones expected on the basis of a survey published in a local (Rzeszów) edition of *Gazeta Wyborcza* as of the 21<sup>st</sup> of September in 2005. Judging from the survey data, PiS was to be a decisive winner in Podkarpacie with a support of about 39% of voters in the krośnieńsko-przemyski constituency and 32% of voters in the rzeszowsko-tarnobrzeski constituency. It was also predicted that PO would receive a share of 30% in the krośnieńsko-przemyski constituency and 32% in the

rzeszowsko-tarnobrzeski constituency, which in reality turned out to be much overrated. According to the survey, Samoobrona was to fare the worst of the parties, which eventually were elected to the parliament. Samoobrona was predicted to get only 2% of the votes in the krośnieńsko-przemyski constituency and 4% in the rzeszowsko-tarnobrzeski constituency). However, the results that Samoobrona really achieved in the election were much better<sup>3</sup>.

20 candidates ran for the elections to the Senate of the VI term in the rzeszowsko-tarnobrzeski constituency and further 14 candidates in the krośnieńsko-przemyski constituency. Generally, after the 2005 election, the new Senate structure was composed of 49 senators representing PiS, 34 senators representing PO, 7 senators representing LPR, senators representing Samoobrona, 2 senators representing PSL, 1 senator representing Komitet Wyborczy Wyborców Nowy Senat 2005 (Electoral Committee of the Voters New Senate 2005), 1 senator representing Komitet Wyborczy Wyborców Kazimierza Juliana Kutza (Electoral Committee of the Voters of Kazimierz Julian Kutz), 1 senator representing Komitet Wyborczy Wyborców prof. Mariana Miłka (Electoral Committee of the Voters of Professor Marian Miłek), 1 senator representing Komitet Wyborczy Wyborców Macieja Płażyńskiego (Electoral Committee of the Voters of Maciej Płażyński), and 1 senator representing Komitet Wyborczy Wyborców Bogdana Borusewicza (Electoral Committee of the Voters of Bogdan Borusewicz). The podkarpackie voivodship was represented in the Senate by 3 senators of PiS and 2 senators representing LPR and PSL, respectively.

### **Trajectories of the development of political awareness of the inhabitants of Podkarpacie**

The election held on the 25<sup>th</sup> of September in 2005 revealed a strong tendency to electoral volatility of the Podkarpacie region inhabitants. The volatility is not, however, by any means restricted to the electorate residing in the analyzed region. The nation-wide electoral

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<sup>3</sup> According to the survey presented by *Gazeta Wyborcza*, the remaining groupings, which eventually reached the parliament, were to expect in the krośnieńsko-przemyski and rzeszowsko-tarnobrzeski constituency respectively, the following support: LPR: 11% and 7%, SLD: 7% and 8%, PSL: 7% i 12% – based on *Gazeta Wyborcza*, Rzeszów, no. 220.4923, 21.09.2005.

results prove that already since the first free elections held after the systemic transformation, Polish society has been characterized by political opinions which are elaborated only to a limited degree. The results of the elections depend most often on the current situation in the country. The governing parties are changed every time an election takes place. The political parties which stayed in government in a previous term experience, as a rule, a difficulty in gaining enough support of the voters to be represented in the next Sejms. During the 2001 election, the support for the then governing parties of AWSP and UW was so small that neither of them managed to exceed the required electoral threshold. In 2005, SLD was affected by a similar disappointment of the voters when it turned out that after the four years of its staying in government, the electorate's support for the party fell by more or less 30 percent points. The results ultimately achieved by SLD in 2005, that is 11,31% of the votes nation-wide, pushed the political party down the ranking of political parties as low as Samoobrona, which after all, with the result of 11,41% of the votes nation-wide, turned out to improve its previous electoral result by barely 1,21 percent.

In terms of electoral preferences of its inhabitants, the podkarpackie voivodship differs from the other regions in Poland. Parties of the Right and/or of the Centre-Right play a big role in the region. The bigger support for the right wing of the political arena in the region is well reflected in the results obtained by AWSP in 2001 and by PiS in 2005, which were much better in Podkarpacie than the results achieved by the two parties nation-wide. A support bigger than the national average was also enjoyed by LPR. This particular party got equally bigger support in the discussed region in two consecutive elections. Nevertheless, it is prematurely to speak of a stabile electorate in this case taking into account that so far LPR has run for two series of elections only. Nonetheless, it needs to be noted that a nation-wide decrease of support for LPR in 2005 did not affect the party's standing in the analyzed voivodship. It seems thus that the confirmation of the stability of the electorate ready to vote for this party is only a matter of time. However, there is also a danger of failing to maintain such a high support by LPR due to the ever weaker support it has been receiving from the Radio Maryja political milieu. The Radio has decidedly started to promote the party of the Kaczyński brothers through its broadcasting channels. On the other hand, PSL may still enjoy a stable electorate in Podkarpacie, which is proved by consecutive elections during which it turns out that the political party still counts in the

region despite the fact that it loses voters' support nation-wide. A long history of the party, which was first founded in this very region (Rzeszowszczyzna) is not without a significance in this case.

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