

Polish political system as of Oct, 2004

This is a very short description of the Poland's current political system. I hope this can be helpful to anyone that is not very familiar with whats going on here.

1. Parliament, government and president

Poland's centers of power are: two houses of Parliament (which is called "Sejm" [pron. SEYM] and "Senat"), government ("Rada Ministrow" which means "Council of Ministries") and the president (currently Aleksander Kwasniewski, chosen by all adult citizens). In the country's legal system, most power come to parliament and government (in opposition to, for instance US model). The lower house of parliament consists of 460 deputies ("poseł" in Polish), while higher house is made of 100 senators. Polish parliament system is impressively old and dates from 15th century, but the roots of a support given to the ruler by a kind council is even older (Poland never established absolute monarchy like France or Russia). The most important legal act is a Constitution, which is the second written constitution act in the whole world (03 May 1791)!

2. Current situation in the Parliament

The current parliament is probably to be self-dismissed in the spring of 2005. There are four major factions (left, right, centre and populist) in the current lower house (Sejm), while Senat is almost complete dominated by SLD. The main boundary in Polish parliament are still based on opinion on modern history (communist regime). The second criteria is on economic issues: should there be a free or state-driven market. Last major line of battle lies in the role of Catholic religion.

2.a. Left side parties

The ruling government is supported by two closely cooperation parties. They are: **SLD** (Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej or Left Democracy Alliance) and relatively small **UP** (Unia Pracy or Labor Union). Both parties are typical of left origin, and SLD roots are in communist parties of Russian stron influence (1945-1990). However, SLD todays opts for close cooperation with NATO and western countries. UP There is also a thrid left party **SDPL** (Social Democracy of Poland) which departed recently from SLD after some spectacular corruption cases. SLD won last election with tremendous advantage over right and center parties basing on criticism of unfortunate reforms from center-rights parties. Enjoy of the success bring SLD to postion of a party-of-power, many criminal and corruption affairs emerged. SDPL tries to build its electorate on criticism of selfishness of SLD, yet is still percieved as closely related their former comerades.

2.b. Centre

The main party on the center is still **PO** (Platforma Obywatelska or Citizens' Platform). This party now holds 1st place in election forecasts with c.a. 30%) and will make the next government. The PO's program is a free-market economy with "stable and cheap republic".

The **PSL** (Polski Stronnictwo Ludowe or Polish Peasants Party) is known for cooperate-with-everyone behaviour. They went into a coalition with SLD after last election but decided to withdraw its support after decrease of people's acceptance of the government. PSL now struggles with decreasing popularity as Samoobrona is pulling their populist supporters, while LPR - takes nacionalists.

2.c. Right parties

The **PiS** (Prawo i Sprawiedliwosc or Law and Justice) is a moderate right party. Led by charismatic yet some controversial leader (who is also Warsaw president) is strictly anti-communist, but its vision of state is not a free market. The PiS is not sure whever it should cooperate with strong, but not so ideologicistic PO or smaller, but radical LPR (they would need some other party to make an alliance).

The **LPR** (Liga Polskich Rodzin or League of Polish Families) is an ultra right organisation, taking much from Polish nacinalists from early 20th century. This party is very closely related to ultra conservative stream of Catholic Church and is supported by activists youth from Młodzież Wszechpolska (All-Polands Youths, extreme radical movement, know for many hooligan actions).

2.d. Populists

Samoobrona (Selfdefence) evloved from peasants prostes groups. Under the charismatic leader, who become a symbol of enfant terrible of Polish parliamentary system they surprisingly quickly established a strong position in election forecasts, gathering support from peoples' opposition to whatever is "political". Samoobrona's leaders accuse everyone of theft and corruption, even though it is they who have the highest number of deputies claimed guilty (!).

2.e. Lesser parties

A few other parties and groups exists as during last parliament period many deputies fled from their home

parties (or were banned). The only real power is (was?) represented by **FKP** (Federal Parliament Club), which consists of so called "refugees".

SUMMARY

Party	Type	Economy	Foreign Policy	Europe (UE)	Catholic Church position in the state
SLD	left	state-oriented	open, western	OK	against
UP	left	social	open	OK	ultra against
SDPL	left	state-oriented	open, western	OK	rather against
PO	centre	free market	open, western	(enthusiastic)	neutral
PSL	centre	rather state-oriented	neutral, western	cautious	rather supporting
LPR	ultra right	state oriented	rather closed, balanced east/west	anti	ultra supporting
Samoobrona	left populist	ultra social	rather east, anti-US	ultra-anti	?
PiS	right	social	neutral, western	cautious	supporting