

Coalitional Behavior in the Lithuanian Parliament The First Four Years

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Since 1990 we have witnessed the emergence of legislative systems in the post-Communist states of east-central Europe and the former Soviet Union. Despite the presence of an elected assembly in virtually all of these states, the prospects for democracy are not particularly bright in many of them, particularly in Romania, Albania, Russia, Ukraine, most of the Caucasus, and Central Asia. Nonetheless, where prospects are more optimistic the new parliaments are playing an important role in the development of political democracy. The most optimistic cases have adopted parliamentary instead of presidential systems.¹ As a consequence, the policymaking role of the assembly as well as executive accountability to the legislature has been enhanced.

Since some variant of proportional representation for determining assembly seats has been adopted in the majority of these new political systems; legislative politics is the politics of coalitions. Scholars have long argued that coalitional government in multiparty systems is not conducive to government stability. The difficulties of maintaining coalitions leads to more frequent changes of government than in single party majority or presidential systems.²

One of the poorest records of government stability in east-central Europe and the former Soviet Union is that of the Republic of Lithuania. From March 1990 to September 1993, there have been six Lithuanian governments. Even if we were to consider that two of the six were basically a continuation of their predecessors (Abisala's fourth government retained the ministers of those of Vagnorius' third and the present government of Slezevicius has largely retained those of Lubys' fifth government), the new state has experienced a relatively low level of cabinet durability.

How are we to explain this phenomenon? This article describes the history of cabinet government in Lithuania from 1990 to 1993 within a loose framework derived from coalition theory. The descriptive section is quite important as it advances our understanding of the unique experience of a particular post-Communist state. Further, it allows us to comment on the policy implications of Lithuania's experience with democracy, which we will do in the concluding portions of this essay. However, a focus on theory is equally important.³ While we need to know more about the particulars concerning developing legislatures in the former Soviet Union, equally important is the need to test existing frameworks in the laboratory provided by this part of the world. Failing to do so, this author will only fall into the trap of believing that we have found something unique and hitherto undiscovered, an historical failing of Communist studies in general. In light of existing theory, I will argue that the history of coalitional behavior in post-Communist Lithuania largely corroborates the theoretical generalizations derived from the literature on cabinet government formation and duration.

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Coalition Theory

A brief consideration of coalition theory reveals two distinct sets of hypotheses concerning legislative coalitions' behavior.⁴ At the center of concern for the first of these is the size of the legislative coalition. Governing coalitions bringing together a number of political parties and independent legislators are necessary when no one political party commands an absolute majority. The resulting coalition may be far more than an absolute majority (in which case it is called an oversized coalition), the minimum necessary to assure a majority in the assembly (a minimum winning coalition), or in some cases even less than a majority (a minority coalition). Theorists of coalition size have postulated that (1) minority coalitions are more likely to form when there is a high degree of polarization on policy issues, (2) minority coalitions are more likely when there is a high degree of fragmentation in the assembly, and (3) oversized coalitions are more likely when the parties are unsure of their strength.

A second set of concerns focuses on factors involved in forming cabinet duration. Here theorists have argued that minimum winning coalitions will endure longer than either minority or oversized coalitions but less than single party majority governments, and economic and political crises shorten the duration of coalitions, regardless of their size. This article will describe the Lithuanian experience with coalitional government in light of the five theoretically derived propositions enumerated above. The analysis will rely partially on rollcall data to help establish the size of coalitions. While the use of these data has

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been questioned,⁵ This author will not employ them to predict voting outcomes. Nor does this article focus on the impact of constituency demands on roll-call votes. What concerns this study is the relative size of the governing coalitions within the Lithuanian parliament which for reasons of poor party discipline cannot be captured merely by resorting to formal membership in legislative factions. Further, the use of roll-call votes is justified in the Lithuanian case by the fact that such votes in the national assembly are taken on the most contentious political issues. Consequently, these votes comprise a measure of the political loyalties of the deputies.

Coalition Size

In March 1990, candidates backed by Sajudis won 100 of the 141 seats in the newly constituted Supreme Council. The Communist Party of Lithuania (CPL) took the majority of the remaining seats. The assembly lasted until the election of a new legislature, renamed the Seimas, in October 1992. During this period there were four governments, three of which were supported by minority coalitions. Only one had the backing of a minimum winning coalition. Coalition theory posits that a large number of parties (fragmentation) and a high degree of policy distance (polarization) between the parties makes this outcome more likely. As will be demonstrated, the Supreme Council was indeed highly polarized. This together with fragmentation of the deputy corpus into several small factions worked to impede the formation of a majority coalition.

Policy distance precluded the emergence of a more stable government comprising CPL and Sajudis deputies. While the two were united in their call for the restoration of the republic's independence, they were deeply divided over the means for achieving this goal as well as the form which the Lithuanian economy should take. Arguing that Lithuania's dependence on the Soviet Union as a market and a source of cheap energy and raw materials required the country to retain existing economic ties, the CPL envisioned a slow, negotiated transition to independence which would not endanger those ties and which would allow for the maintenance of a large public sector and an economy integrated with that of the Soviet Union. In contrast, the Sajudis majority in the Supreme Council argued for measures quickly reestablishing the country's independence, to include the breaking of economic dependence on the East and the reorientation of the economy to the West.

Despite the CPL's minority status, Kazimiera Prunskiene, one of the party's deputies, was elected the prime minister of the first government. While she was nominated by President Vytautas Landsbergis and resigned her party membership to accept the position, she put together a cabinet of "experience and competence," dominated by CPL ministers. If the composition of the new cabinet was not sufficient to alienate it from the Sajudis majority in the assembly, its policies were. Within a few months any pretense of consensus between the legislative majority and the government was dead as the two were locked in policy disputes which would culminate in Prunskiene's resignation in January 1991.

Efforts to create a Sajudis Deputies' Bloc under the leadership of Virgilijus Cepaitis and its control of the majority of seats in the new assembly notwithstanding, Sajudis was not able to form a governing coalition owing to fragmentation of the movement's deputies in the Supreme Council. While possessing a more than two-to-one majority in the Parliament, the Sajudis deputies comprised a highly amorphous group. In fact, their numbers included a number of CPL members who had run with the movement's support. As a result, the movement quickly fragmented. This was reflected in the existence within one year of nine factions in the Supreme Council, eight of them drawing members from among Sajudis-backed deputies.

Evidence of polarization between the CPL and Sajudis and fragmentation of the latter is provided by a consideration of the average roll-call vote by faction during the tenure of the first legislature (March 1990 to September 1992) is shown in Table 1. A vote in favor of legislation supported by Sajudis was assigned a value of +1, a vote against was assigned a value of -1. The closer that the factional average approaches +1, the more closely its members are aligned with the policy of Sajudis; the closer the factional average approaches -1, the more opposed.

Intuitively there appear to be three major blocs of factions. That supporting the Sajudis position on issues before the Supreme Council comprised the Unity Faction of Sajudis, the United Sajudis Faction, the National Patriots, and the Moderates. In opposition were the Left Faction, Liberal Faction, and Polish Faction. Between them is a group of centrist factions (the Center Faction and National Progressives).

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Neither of the three blocs held a majority in the Supreme Council, the Sajudis coalition accounting for forty-eight deputies, the CPL bloc comprising thirty deputies, and the centrist bloc having twenty-six. Since policy distance between the CPL and Sajudis

blocs—an argument borne out in the average roll-call vote for the factions of each respective bloc—precluded them from forming a minimum winning coalition of seventy-eight deputies, the Prunskiene government (first government) had to try to gain support among the centrist bloc and uncommitted deputies. This held the potential for a minimum winning coalition of seventy-six deputies. However, as will be demonstrated, the Prunskiene government gained the support of far fewer deputies.

Determining the strength of possible coalitions within the Supreme Council based on a formal count of factional membership assumes factional discipline, an assumption not warranted by the relatively high standard deviations about the mean reported for several of the factions in the legislature on roll-call votes. Therefore, an analysis of individual deputies, not factions, is the basis upon which coalition strength is best judged.

TABLE 1
Average Roll-Call Vote by Faction, March 1990 to May 1992

<i>Faction</i>	<i>Members in Faction</i>	<i>Average Roll Call Vote</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>
Left Faction	12	-.141	.070
Liberal Faction	10	-.125	.128
Polish Faction	8	-.063	.128
Center Faction	18	.030	.138
National Progressives	10	.259	.110
Non-factional group	20	.273	.270
Moderates	16	.410	.122
National Patriots	9	.525	.153
United Sajudis Faction	13	.584	.087
Unity Faction of Sajudis	10	.619	.070

Grouping the deputies into two groups based on their voting behavior during the Prunskiene administration using cluster analysis, groups of thirty-nine and eighty-seven are obtained (fifteen deputies were not included in the analysis as they did not vote in the Supreme Council owing to their involvement in the government). Deputies clustered into the larger group have an average roll call vote of .589; those in the smaller group have a -.162 average. That the larger group is associated with the Sajudis coalition is demonstrated by a positive correlation at the .000 level of significance between membership in the faction of the coalition and being clustered into the larger group. Further, the Cramer's V of .602 indicates that the great majority of the members in the factions of the Sajudis coalition are in this voting group. Thus, based on voting behavior, the Prunskiene government was supported by a minority coalition with only nine deputies more than the number contained in the opposition CPL bloc.

One of the reasons for poor factional discipline in the assembly was the absence of a strong party system. The only party with a strong organizational base was the CPL. The Social-Democratic and Christian Democratic parties were small parties of the educated classes lacking any meaningful popular base of support; and Sajudis was a broad-based popular movement. As a consequence, there was great uncertainty concerning the strength of each bloc at the beginning of the legislature's first session. In such conditions, coalition theory would lead us to expect the emergence of oversized coalitions. The election of the Prunskiene government and its subsequent attempt to create a grand coalition in fact may have been a consequence of neither side being aware of its exact strength. It is more probable, however, that each side was well aware of its relative position vis-à-vis the other following the failed bid of CPL leader Algirdas Brazauskas to become chairman of the Supreme Council, an event taking place before the election of the government. In any event, any uncertainty in factional strength was no longer the case several months later when the Parliament began severely curtailing the government's freedom of action.

Thus, as anticipated by coalition theory, policy distance precluded the formation of a majority coalition between the two major political forces in the Supreme Council. Further, polarization on policy issues combined with fragmentation of the deputy corpus resulted in the formation of a minority government. Finally, despite early uncertainty about the relative strength of the political forces in the assembly, an oversized coalition did not emerge. These patterns were repeated following the collapse of the

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Prunskiene government. Another minority government, under the premiership of Albertas Simenas, was formed in January 1991. However, the effort by Moscow to forcibly reimpose Soviet rule in the republic shortly after his election substantially facilitated the unity of Sajudis deputies and resulted in the formation of a minimum winning coalition supporting the first Sajudis government, that of Gediminas Vagnorius.

While virtually the entire tenure of the Prunskiene government was marked by conflict with the legislature, the struggle over proposed price rises eventually forced its resignation in January 1991. Seeking a center-right coalition excluding the CPL, the Supreme Council's majority elected a centrist, Albertas Simenas, to replace Prunskiene. If Prunskiene's core support consisted of the three factions of the CPL bloc, Simenas' potential support would have been provided by the Center Faction with only eighteen members. However, by moving closer to Sajudis on policy positions, some coalition theorists argue for a greatly increased probability that a stable minimum winning coalition could be formed between the Sajudis and centrist blocs.⁶ Such was not to be the case. Not only did the Center Faction abstain on the vote for Simenas, seeing in the nomination an obvious effort by Landsbergis to create such a coalition, but subsequent events greatly eroded Sajudis' support for the idea.

The bloodshed which occurred during the Red Army attempt to reimpose Soviet authority in the republic within days of Simenas' election unified the Sajudis majority in the assembly and totally discredited any effort to seek a negotiated compromise with Moscow, a central tenet of both the CPL bloc and the centrists. United by the threat of forced reassimilation

into the Soviet Union, Sajudis deputies coalesced in a minimum winning coalition to elect Vagnorius to head the third government.

Cluster analysis of deputy voting from March 1990 to the fall of the Vagnorius government reveals the Sajudis-backed government enjoyed a seventy-two to fifty-four advantage. The larger group, containing the members of the Sajudis bloc, has an average vote of .470; the smaller group has a -.065 average. Therefore, the government coalition had two votes more than necessary to secure an absolute majority within the Supreme Council.

Despite its advantage in the assembly, the government collapsed eighteen months later. However, following formal recognition of the country's independence in September 1991, the strength of the Sajudis coalition was significantly reduced. Locked in a stalemate and lacking an absolute majority by summer 1992, the Vagnorius government was forced to resign.

Cluster analysis based on deputy voting behavior from formal recognition of the republic's independence in fall 1991 to the fall of the Vagnorius government in summer 1992, demonstrates that a substantial shift in deputy alignment occurred. A pro-Sajudis group with a voting strength of sixty-four deputies (having an average vote of .358) and an opposition group of sixty-two deputies with an average vote of -.109 are obtained.

The deputy alignment following formal independence returned the legislative body to the conditions which had prevailed before the events of January 1991. Once again highly fragmented and deeply polarized on policy issues, the chamber could no longer sustain a minimum winning coalition. Indeed, the Vagnorius cabinet essentially became a minority government. With no clear majority for any government, the Supreme Council elected a Sajudis deputy, Aleksandras Abisala, to manage a caretaker, minority government until the fall elections to the Seimas.

The fall 1992 elections gave the Lithuanian Democratic Labor Party (LDDP), the renamed CPL) a majority of the deputies in the new legislature. Given the relatively greater cohesiveness of the LDDP, a single party majority became a real possibility. Despite this, it sought to create a consensual government inviting centrists and Sajudis coalitional elements to participate. However, its invitation to form an oversized coalition failed and the party was forced to rule by itself, although individual members of the Social Democratic Party and Centrist Movement without their party's support did accept cabinet positions. Thus, the new prime minister, Bronius Lubys, headed a LDDP government.

While Lubys resigned following Brazauskas's assumption of duties of the presidency in early 1993, he did not do so under legislative pressure. The LDDP majority continued, and Lubys was replaced by another LDDP member, Adolfas Slezevicius.

That the LDDP is indeed a single party majority in the Seimas is demonstrated in the factional alignment and the average roll-call vote from October 1992 to September 1993 is shown in Table 2. A +1 is assigned for each vote in favor of the LDDP position and a -1 for each vote against. The closer the factional average roll-call approaches +1, the more the faction's members support the LDDP; the closer the average approaches -1, the more the faction's members oppose the LDDP.

Not surprisingly, the LDDP faction is the most supportive of the policies of the party leadership, followed by the Polish Union, the non-factional group of deputies and Social Democrats. Five factions are clearly in opposition: Sajudis, Christian Democrats, Citizen Charter, Democratic Party, and Political Prisoners/Freedom. The same five factions

formally declared their opposition with the joint creation of the Fatherland Union coalition in early 1993.

Just as was the case for the Supreme Council, however, the factions of the Seimas are not highly disciplined, as demonstrated by the relatively high standard deviations. Consideration of deputy voting behavior instead of factional membership suggests that the government is backed by a minimum winning coalition, not a single party majority. A cluster analysis of the deputies into two groups results in two clusters: one of ninety-three deputies with an average vote of .465, the other of forty-five deputies with an average of -.454.⁷ The larger group contains all the LDDP and Polish Union deputies, four of the eight members of the Social-Democrat faction, three of the four independent deputies, and ten members of the Sajudis coalition.

TABLE 2
Average Roll-Call Vote by Faction, October 1992 to September 1993

<i>Faction</i>	<i>Members in Faction</i>	<i>Average Roll Call Vote</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>
LDDP	76	.594	.200
Social-Democrats	8	.125	.102
Polish Union	4	.250	.100
Sajudis	14	-.441	.171
Citizen Charter	9	-.412	.144
Christian Democrats	10	-.471	.263
Political Prisoners/Freedom	12	-.554	.151
Democratic Party	4	-.529	.127
Non-factional group	4	.206	.341

This gives the LDDP government an overwhelming majority in the Seimas and argues that it is underwritten by an oversized coalition. However, such a conclusion is questionable given that the actual vote outcomes are somewhat closer. This is partially explained by the relatively low average vote for the LDDP faction (under .500, indicating the average deputy votes in favor of the party's position less than half the time, not voting at all on the remaining occasions).

However, a closer approximation of the strength of the LDDP and the Sajudis coalition (opposition) is provided when deputies are clustered into five groups based on their voting behavior. The results are shown in Table 3.

The core of the LDDP support consists of fifty-four deputies, fifty-three of whom are members of the LDDP (the other member being an independent). The LDDP can generally count on the support of an additional twenty-one deputies (sixteen LDDP members, one

Social Democrat, three members of the Polish Union, and one independent). Five members of the Social-Democratic faction comprise a centrist group which also occasionally supports the LDDP leadership. In opposition are forty deputies, thirty-nine of whom are drawn from the members of the Sajudis coalition and one member of the Center Movement. Eighteen deputies are noted for high absenteeism: ten from the Sajudis coalition, four members of the LDDP, two Social Democrats, one member of the Polish Union, and a deputy from the Center Movement.

If the members of the first two groups comprise the support base in the Seimas for the LDDP government, then the cabinet rests on a coalition of seventy-five deputies. This is clearly a minimum winning coalition with four votes necessary for a majority. However, of the seventy-five deputies, seventy are members of the LDDP and its faction in the assembly. The party is only one vote shy of full control of the Seimas. Not to consider the LDDP a single party majority appears to be a mere technicality. In essence, the party constitutes a single party majority, whether factional lists or deputy voting behavior are considered.

TABLE 3
Average Vote for Five Groups of Deputies Based on Voting Behavior

<i>Voting Group</i>	<i>Number of Deputies</i>	<i>Average Vote</i>
one (Left)	54	.671
two (absentees)	18	-.108
three (Center Left)	21	.426
four (Center)	5	.176
five (Right)	40	-.532

Coalition Duration

Coalition theory postulates that, in general, there is a correlation between coalition size and duration of the government. Single party majority governments will last longer than minimum winning coalitions which will out last either oversized or minority coalition governments. Table 4 lists the governments of the Republic of Lithuania in order of duration. The Lubys and Slezevicius governments formed by the LDDP are listed as one. As previously discussed, Lubys agreed to temporarily hold the position of prime minister until Brazauskas assumed the presidency; Slezevicius essentially continued the programs of the LDDP. Therefore, the replacement of Lubys with Slezevicius did not mark the fall of the government based on failing support in the legislature as had been the case for the four previous changes of the cabinet.

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Coalition theory provides substantial explanation for cabinet duration in Lithuania. While the country's only minimum winning coalition supported a government which has thus far lasted longer than any other, the current cabinet, supported by a single-party majority, shows no sign of collapsing in the near future. All three minority governments have been far less durable.

Cabinet type alone, however, does not fully explain duration. The Prunskiene government had a remarkably long life for a minority government and the Vagnorius government collapsed after only eighteen months in office. As argued by those focusing on random events, political and economic crises provide further explanation for the duration of a given government.

In each case, the collapse of a Lithuanian government is associated with such a crisis. The first government, that of Kazimiera Prunskiene, left office in the face of rising public and legislative opposition to proposed price increases which culminated in a growing conflict between her government and the Supreme Council. While Prunskiene managed in May 1992 to gain the grudging acquiescence of the legislature to her proposals for negotiations with Moscow, including a suspension of acts passed having to do with the restoration of the republic's independence, by late summer the Supreme Council had established procedures for dissolving the government; and Prunskiene was openly complaining that the assembly was over-managing and seriously disrupting the activities of the government. The confrontation came to a head over the government's decision in December 1990 to raise consumer prices in response to higher wholesale costs being charged by Moscow. Responding to the public's decidedly negative reaction, the Supreme Council annulled the planned price increases. The crisis resumed with the 7 January 1991 announcement of the government's attempt to once again raise consumer prices.

TABLE 4
Lithuania Governments in Order of Duration

Government	Type Coalition	Duration
Vagnorius (third)	minimum winning	18 months
Lubys/Slezevicius (fifth/sixth)	single party, majority	> 12 months
Prunskiene (first)	minority	10 months
Abisala (fourth)	minority	3 months
Simenas (second)	minority	< one week

As public protest grew, the CPSU organized its affiliates in the republic in a bid to restore Moscow's control. Yedinstvo, a popular organization claiming to represent the Russian-speaking population, attempted to heighten the public protest and direct it against the Supreme Council, at one point storming the legislative building. Concurrently, a self-proclaimed National Salvation Committee emerged and demanded the restoration of the primacy of the Soviet Constitution and the annulment of the act of the restoration of independence.

As the crisis mounted, public opinion turned decidedly against Prunskiene and her government, the activities of Yedinstvo and the National Salvation Committee serving to

increase the perception that the price changes were part of a coordinated plan to destabilize the republic in order to restore Soviet rule. With her public approval rating falling precipitously and lacking support in the Supreme Council, Prunskiene tendered her resignation on 8 January.

The fall of the second government under Albertas Simenas is directly attributable to the Soviet coup in the republic which followed Prunskiene's resignation. The subsequent annulment of the government's planned price increases should have ended the crisis; however, the actions of the CPSU over the next several days further exacerbated the situation. Citing calls by Yedinstvo and the National Salvation Committee for the imposition of direct presidential rule in the republic, Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev issued an open demand for the immediate revocation of the acts restoring the republic's independence. He further stated that he was considering dissolving the republican legislature and imposing direct presidential rule. The next day, 11 January, the National Salvation Committee announced that it was assuming all political authority in the republic. Simultaneously, the Soviet army surrounded the press center and the radio and TV tower, and threatened to seize the Supreme Council building.

The public response was immediate. Tens of thousands of citizens surrounded the legislature in an act of defiance which may have dissuaded the military from an assault. However, crowds surrounding the radio and TV tower failed to deter its seizure; fourteen people lost their lives in the effort. The Soviet army also seized the press center. However, following the violence, Moscow decided to pursue less forceful means to bring the republic to heel.

During the escalating crisis, the Supreme Council elected Albertas Simenas to replace Prunskiene as prime minister. A moderate deputy from neither the CPL nor Sajudis factions, it was hoped he would bring consensus in the relations between the legislature and government. However, at the peak of the crisis, on the night of the assault on the radio and TV tower, Simenas mysteriously "disappeared." Not to be found in the Parliament, he later claimed that he had been working at another location to ensure the proper functioning of the government. Whether his story is true or he panicked, the Supreme Council voted only a few days after his confirmation as prime minister to replace him with Gediminas Vagnorius.

The fate of the fourth government of Aleksandras Abisala was predetermined by that of Vagnorius, whose government collapsed when it engaged in a series of post-independence efforts which alienated broad sectors of the public and fragmented the government's support in the assembly. By May 1992 the situation reached crisis proportions when the legislature was deadlocked for several weeks on government-proposed legislation, during which time the two sides refused to sit together in joint session, each holding separate plenary sessions. The impasse was overcome only after a referendum to establish a presidency failed⁸ and all parties agreed to hold elections to a new assembly (renamed the Seimas) in October.

Opposition to the Vagnorius government focused on two administration efforts: de-Sovietization and privatization. Having obtained the goal of uniting virtually the entire deputy corps within the Supreme Council, the attainment of independence, Vagnorius diverted his attention toward these highly contentious social and economic issues over which there was little consensus or room for compromise.

The government launched a campaign following independence to nationalize the property and assets of the former Communists, to include that of the LDDP. Among the assets seized were two newspapers. The LDDP protests drew support from much of the republic's independent press which feared that the confiscations could be ultimately directed against all opposition media. Moreover, many of the deputies in the Sajudis coalition had ties with the Communist Party. Consequently, they viewed the government's efforts with alarm. Their alarm increased when the legislative leadership sought to broaden a law which had been passed in the fall, banning all former informants and co-workers of the KGB from government service for five years, in order to include all former members of the Communist Party who had held positions of responsibility at virtually any level. While legislation to return land and property to pre-War ownership had been passed in summer 1991, formal opposition did not emerge until the government began implementing the bill in the fall, following independence. By November, the LDDP formally declared itself in opposition to the government's program, arguing that the legislation encouraged land speculation and that only those farming the land should be permitted to own it. By spring the Sajudis coalition had seriously fragmented over both the de-Sovietization and privatization efforts, and the Supreme Council had moved to severely curtail government efforts to undertake both.

Faced with a deadlocked assembly Vagnorius eventually resigned. The Sajudis coalition demanded that the opposition form a government until the election of the new parliament. When it refused, Aleksandras Abisala was elected prime minister of the fourth government. Essentially a provisional government lacking majority coalition support in the Supreme Council, the Abisala cabinet avoided any new initiatives and attempted to defend the Vagnorius economic reforms against legislative cutbacks until the promised fall elections.

The LDDP has faced several scandals which it has managed to weather thus far. Among these have been the resignation of the head of the Central Bank on charges of corruption, the dramatic rise in mafia-related crime, a scandal arising over the government's participation in a conference of former Soviet states on investment and access to Russian energy resources, and a mutiny of a voluntary defense force unit. The most pressing crisis, however, continues to be the worsening state of the economy which has begun to strain the party and has led to the formation of an "Initiative Group" within the LDDP faction which is calling for abandonment of a commitment to free-market reforms. While the group has presently pledged to work within the LDDP faction, it holds the potential for fragmenting the party's majority.

Conclusions and Implications

This essay has argued that polarization on policy issues has been compounded by fragmentation within the assembly with the result that minority governments dominated the early history of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania. These problems appear to have been overcome with the emergence of a single party majority in the Seimas following the fall 1992 elections. However, such may not be the case. The electoral rules which provide for seventy of the one hundred forty-one deputies of the new legislature to be elected according to proportional representation will continue to ensure both a relatively high degree of fragmentation and polarization. Were a winner-take-all, single-member district system to be adopted as in the United States or the United Kingdom, the number of parties represented in the legislature would likely be reduced to three or four. Further,

parties would be forced to moderate their differences in order to attract the larger numbers of voters necessary to win in such elections. The proportional representation system, on the other hand, rewards smaller parties and therefore increases their numbers and the likelihood that they will represent relatively more extremist political positions. It is, therefore, highly probable that the LDDP dominance in the current Seimas is a temporary phenomenon, not likely to be repeated. Subsequent elections will once again produce the need for coalition government, and government stability will suffer as a result.

Nonetheless, the emergence of a minimum winning coalition supporting the Vagnorius government at the end of the history of the Supreme Council may suggest that the tendency toward minority government has been overcome and that at least the greatest degree of cabinet stability possible will be achieved. Minority governments occurred largely in the first years of the reconstituted republic. Politicians and the public were habituated to a single-party system in which the virtues of consensus over conflict were touted. Further, it is a fact that the majority of competent and certainly experienced administrators must be drawn from the ranks of former Communists. These two factors combined to create governments with substantial Communist participation. However, paralysis of the government from recurring political disagreements with the legislature as well as crisis situations eventually led the Sajudis coalition to reject consensus and the argument of Communist competence. Whether the former Communists have arrived at a similar transition in attitudes is not clear given their invitation to all political movements to join in a single parliamentary coalition, an invitation rejected by the Sajudis coalition.

The fact that oversized coalitions have not been formed in Lithuania requires comment. None of the former Communist states have yet developed a strong party system. This is particularly true in the states of the former Soviet Union, including Lithuania. One of the consequences is that deputies lack discipline, making it difficult for brokers of coalitions to judge the relative strengths of formally declared factions. While some coalition theorists have argued that this facilitates the emergence of oversized coalitions, such has not been the case in Lithuania.

Policy differences have made it impossible for the Sajudis and LDDP factions to enter into a grand coalition, their stated intentions to the contrary. The desire to form oversized or "grand" coalitions in Lithuania is a phenomenon noted in other post-Communist states as well. While such coalitions have not been durable, coalition theory's explanation for their emergence, which rests on uncertainty of calculations about the relative strengths of contending parties, does not provide an adequate explanation for their occurrence in post-Communist states. Indeed, factors peculiar to these newly emerging political systems may provide better explanation. Among such explanations are the residual effects of Soviet-style Communist rule, in particular the emphasis on consensual politics and collegial responsibility. A further explanation may revolve around a rational calculus by the larger parties upon whom the responsibility for governing is likely to weigh most heavily that the political and economic crises facing the country are not likely to be quickly overcome. Therefore, to reduce their losses in the next election, it would be best to share the blame by entering into an oversized coalition containing all the major players.

Cabinet duration in Lithuania thus far has been short. While there is some indication, as discussed previously, that Lithuanian legislative politics may have overcome the tendency toward minority government (and never suffered from the tendency of oversized coalitions), cabinet instability is likely to remain high owing to recurring political and

economic crises. Given the difficulties of the economic and political transformation facing the Lithuanian state, these crises will not abate any time in the near future. Consequently, coalition governments will remain unstable.

What effect will this have on the future of democracy in Lithuania? There appears to be considerable room for debate on this question. A majority of scholars argue that high government turnover undermines public trust in political institutions and is therefore not conducive to the development of democracy. Hence the phenomenon is to be avoided.⁹ However, Juan J. Linz has more recently argued that the opposite is true for newly democratizing systems, such as Lithuania. To build public acceptance for the new democratic rules of the game, governments must be responsive to public demands. Therefore, institutions should be designed so as not to allow governments to remain in office long after they have lost public support.¹⁰ The clear implication of the argument is that in such systems cabinet duration is not an indicator of the strength of democracy. Whether or not low cabinet durability is healthy for a newly democratizing system, it is surely the case that cabinet dissolution in Lithuania has indeed been in response to public demands which have, in turn, been affected by economic and political events. It remains to be seen whether this responsiveness to the public will help to consolidate democracy in the face of the continuing poor performance of the economy.

APPENDIX A COALITION THEORY

William H. Riker argues in his 1962 seminal work that the size of legislative coalitions in multiparty systems is affected by a rational actor calculus. In order to maximize the payoffs from their participation in a government, parties enter into coalitions with the smallest number of deputies necessary to ensure a majority. As a consequence, these "minimum winning size" coalitions are highly stable as parties will seek to retain them to ensure continued benefit from their participation.¹¹

Noting the rather frequent phenomenon of governments formed on the basis of less than the minimum winning principle (minority coalitions) or greater (oversized coalitions), other scholars argue that the size of a coalition is affected by the policy preferences of the parties in the legislature. While Riker's "size principle" might dictate the formation of a particular minimum winning coalition, in fact, policy differences may make it impossible for some parties to coalesce. As a consequence, minority coalitions are likely to form, particularly when there are large differences on policy between potential coalition partners.¹² The tendency toward minority cabinet government is further increased with the presence of large numbers of parties in the legislature, it being more difficult to negotiate the participation of a greater number of potential players. John D. Robertson (1986) adds that economic performance also influences coalition size, minority coalitions being more likely when economic crises create a highly charged and polarized political environment. However, Lawrence C. Dodd (1976) argues that when parties are not sure of their actual strengths, oversized coalitions are more likely to result.

A number of scholars have turned their attention from the factors accounting for coalition size to those impeding and/or facilitating the maintenance of coalition cohesion. Many postulate that cabinet characteristics are directly correlated with cabinet duration.

The most common thesis is that a minimum winning coalition is more durable than a minority or oversized coalition but less so than a single-party majority.¹³

Other scholars have concluded that coalition size alone is not sufficient to explain cabinet durability; other characteristics of the coalition and the party system are equally salient. Among those which have been identified are the number of parties in the coalition, ideological and policy cleavages, the policy orientation of the primary party in the coalition, and the degree of fragmentation of the party system.¹⁴ It is generally hypothesized that the greater the degree of policy polarization and party fragmentation, the less durable are the resulting coalitions. These arguments, however, are closely tied to those related to the durability of coalitions based on size, minority governments being more likely under the same conditions.¹⁵

Finally, rejecting the argument that coalition or party system characteristics offer a strong explanation for cabinet duration, some observers have more recently contended that these factors only make it more or less likely that a cabinet will endure to the end of its term. More critical are random events which undermine the cohesion or commitment of the parties to maintaining a government.¹⁶ Included among such events are negative economic trends such as rising unemployment or inflation.¹⁷

Notes

1. See Juan J. Linz, "Transitions to Democracy," *The Washington Quarterly* 13 (Summer 1990): 143-64 and Juan J. Linz, "Perils of Presidentialism," *Journal of Democracy* 1 (Winter 1990): 51-69 for a consideration of the reasons why parliamentary systems may be more conducive to the emergence of democracy in political systems transitioning from authoritarian rule. The Russian Federation which has a presidential system has witnessed the encroachment on legislative prerogative by the executive and the inability to peacefully change political programs in the face of failing public support which Linz argues are inherent weaknesses in presidential systems.

2. Maurice Duverger, *Political Parties: Their Organization and Activities in the Modern State* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1967); Jean Blondel, "Party Systems and Patterns of Government in Western Democracies," *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 1: 180-203; Robert Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press).

3. The need, particularly in post-communist studies, to focus on the advancement of theory has been most eloquently stated by Alexander J. Motyl in *Thinking Theoretically about Soviet Nationalities: History and Comparison in the Study of the USSR* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992) and "The Dilemmas of Sovietology and the Labyrinth of Theory," in *Post-Communist Studies and Political Science: Methodology and Empirical Theory in Sovietology*, edited by Frederic J. Fléron, Jr. and Erik P. Hoffmann (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993).

4. Appendix A of this paper contains a short review of coalition theory.

5. See for example Peter M. Vandoren, "Can We Learn the Causes of Congressional Decisions from Roll-Call Data?" *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 15 (August 1990): 311-40.

6. Abram De Swaan, *Coalition Theories and Cabinet Formations* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc., Publishers, 1973); Peter Van Roozendaal, "The Effect of Dominant and Central Parties on Cabinet Composition and Durability," *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 17: 5-36; Ian Budget and Michael Laver, "The Policy Basis of Government Coalitions: A Comparative Investigation," *British Journal of Political Science* 23: 499-519.

7. Three deputies were excluded from the analysis as they were not seated in the Seimas until they had won the right to take their places in a lengthy legal proceeding. As a consequence, they did not participate in early voting in the Seimas. The Electoral Commission, dominated by the Sajudis coalition, had declared them losers in very close races, owing to voting technicalities. The new

Seimas and ultimately the Supreme Court overrode the decision of the Electoral Commission and ordered that they be awarded the seats.

8. It was later agreed that a new referendum on a presidency would be held at the same time as the elections. The referendum passed in October.

9. Robert A. Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1971). G. Bingham Powell Jr., *Contemporary Democracies: Participation, Stability, and Violence* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982). Lawrence C. Dodd, *Coalitions in Parliamentary Governments* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976).

10. Juan J. Linz, "Perils of Presidentialism," *Journal of Democracy* 1: 51-69, 1990a. Juan J. Linz, "Transitions to Democracy," *The Washington Quarterly* 13: 143-164, 1990b.

11. William H. Riker, *The Theory of Political Coalitions* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1962).

12. Robert Axelrod, *Conflict of Interest: A Theory of Divergent Goals with Applications to Politics* (Chicago: Markham Publishing Company, 1970). Abram De Swaan, *Coalition Theories and Cabinet Formations* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc., Publishers, 1973). Lawrence C. Dodd, *Coalitions in Parliamentary Governments* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976).

13. Michael Taylor and V. Herman, "Party Systems and Government Stability," *American Political Science Review* 65: 28-37, 1971. Lawrence C. Dodd, *Coalitions in Parliamentary Governments* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976). Lawrence C. Dodd, "Party Coalitions in Multiparty Parliaments: A Game-Theoretic Analysis," *American Political Science Review* 68: 1093-1117, 1974. Manus I. Midlarsky, "Political Stability of Two-Party and Multiparty Systems: Probabilistic Bases for the Comparison of Party Systems," *American Political Science Review* 78: 929-51, 1985. Paul Warwick, "The Durability of Coalition Governments in Parliamentary Democracies," *Comparative Political Studies* 11, 1979.

14. Michael Taylor and V. Herman, "Party Systems and Government Stability," *American Political Science Review* 65: 28-37, 1971. Paul Warwick, "The Durability of Coalition Governments in Parliamentary Democracies," *Comparative Political Studies* 11, 1979. Eric Browne and John Dreijmanis, eds. *Government Coalitions in Western Democracies* (New York: Longman, Inc., 1985). Michael Laver, "Dynamic Factors in Government Coalition Formation," *European Journal of Political Research* 2: 259-270, 1974. Amnon Rapoport, and Eytan Weg, "Dominated, Connected, and Tight Coalitions in the Israeli Knesset," *American Journal of Political Science* 3:577-96, 1986. Bernard Grofman, "The Comparative Analysis of Coalition Formation and Duration: Distinguishing Between-Country and Within-Country Effects," *British Journal of Political Science* 3: 291-302, 1989. Peter Van Roozendaal, "The Effect of Dominant and Central Parties on Cabinet Composition and Durability," *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 17: 5-36, 1992.

15. Paul Warwick, "The Durability of Coalition Governments in Parliamentary Democracies," *Comparative Political Studies* 11, 1979. Arned Lijphart, *Democracies: Patterns of Majoritarianism and Consensus Government in Twenty-One Countries* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984). Bernard Grofman, "The Comparative Analysis of Coalition Formation and Duration: Distinguishing Between-Country and Within-Country Effects," *British Journal of Political Science* 3: 291-302, 1989.

16. Claudio Cioffi-Revilla, "The Political Reliability of Italian Governments: An Exponential Survival Model," *American Political Science Review* 78: 318-337, 1984. Eric Browne, John P. Frendreis, and Dennis W. Gleiber, "An 'Events' Approach to the Problem of Cabinet Stability," *Comparative Political Studies* 17: 167-197, 1984. Eric Browne, John P. Frendreis, and Dennis W. Gleiber, "The Process of Cabinet Dissolution: An Exponential Model of Duration and Stability in Western Democracies," *American Journal of Political Science* 30: 628-50, 1986.

17. John D. Robertson, "The Political Economy and the Durability of European Coalition Cabinets: New Variations on a Game Theoretic Perspective" *The Journal of Politics* 45: 932-57, 1983. John D. Robertson, "Toward a Political-Economic Accounting of the Endurance of Cabinet Administrations: An Empirical Assessment of Eight European Democracies," *American Journal of Political Science* 28: 693-709, 1984.