

Lithuania

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COW codes Lithuania as an independent country from February 16, 1918 to June 15, 1940. For the 1919-1926 periods, Lithuania was a democracy. POLITY gives score of 7 for the period from November 11, 1918 to December 17, 1926. From 1926 until 1940 Lithuania had been considered as an authoritarian regime. Lithuania became independent state again since 1991, and Lithuania is coded as a mixed presidential-parliamentary democracy from then until 2008.

A regional expert confirms that Lithuania should be coded as a parliamentary for this period. However, given the several facts that we found in our additional research, we decided to follow Archigos (Goemans et al. 2009) and code the president as the effective leader for foreign policy making. First, while it was constitutionally a parliamentary system, the parliament was not effective. Several sources indicate that the parliament was often dissolved because of the lack of agreement, and was not involved in making foreign policy because it was often in crisis (see Gerutis 1969, 214; Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania n.d.). Second, since no party could hold a majority in the Seimas (except for 1924-1925), coalition governments were formed with nearly equal representation: Christian Democrats (LKDP), Liberals, Social Democrats, and National Peasants (Pakštas 1947, 20). This suggests that basically no party could get anything done in the legislature, so they kept changing PMs and coalitions, with many of the coalitions including rightists and leftists.

On the other hand, throughout the period, the president of Lithuania came from the LKDP. In addition, the PMs were also affiliated with the LKDP for about 2/3 of the time (and from June 18, 1924 to September 25, 1925, the LKDP had a single party majority) during this period. This suggests that the president might be the one who had to conduct foreign policy under the domination of the LKDP (Indeed, the president eventually lost power when the LKDP lost control in the parliament). These facts lead us to code the president as an effective leader, while we do believe the country was a parliamentary system.

Antanas Smetona, party unknown, ruled as acting president from independence in 1918. In 1920 Aleksandras Stulginskis of LKDP became “the first president of the Republic of Lithuania elected by the Assembly according to Constitutional provisions” (Eidintas et al. 1999, 44). This is a SOLS change. The 1926 election was won by coalition of LVLS (Lithuanian Peasant Populist Union; Liaudininkai) and LSDP (the Social Democratic Party of Lithuania). Grinius as president and a center-left government under Slevevicius was formed. This is a SOLS change.

For the period 1926 to 1940, Lithuania was an authoritarian regime. “In [December] 1926 the Socialist-Populist coalition government was removed by a military coup. Antanas Smetona [of the Lithuanian Nationalist Union (LTS)], a former president, was elected to the presidency by a rump parliament. Within three years, he established an authoritarian regime” (US Library of Congress 1995). This is a SOLS change.

While the military engineered Smetona’s assumption of power, it did not want to get involved in day-to-day governance and left this to Smetona. Smetona closed the parliament,

dismissed his allies, the Nationalist, from the cabinet, and put in place a new institution in 1928. While Smetona initially was involved in a power struggle with Voldemara, a Nationalist and his brother in law, he eventually prevailed. Smetona based his power on LTS, the Army and a prosperous middle class of farmers, business interests, and professionals (Sužiedėlis 1997, 274). He banned all parties other than LTS which essentially established a single-party state where the people were supposed to follow the party “Or rather, not the Party’s position, but Smetona’s, because the party had more of an advisory than a deciding role in the power structures then in place” (Kiaupa 2002, 354). Gerutis (1969, 227) said: “In a sense there was no official party in Lithuania because the LTS, though it supported the regime and tried to assume the role of a state party, was only considered a handmaiden and helper of the regime of President Smetona, who considered it to be the link between state and society.” Further evidence of Smetona having put in place a personalist system is the personality cult around him and his title as “Father of the Nation”.

In 1940 Lithuania was occupied by the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union “dispatched the deputy chief of the People’s Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, Vladimir Dekanozov, to supervise the process of the annexation of Lithuania” (Clark and Pranevičiūtė 2008, 446). This marks the beginning of Soviet occupation. This is not a SOLS change.

Lithuania gained its independence in 1991. Vytautas Landsbergis of the Sajudis party (conservative) was serving as president at the time of independence. There is no SOLS change at independence. In 1992 Algirdas Brazauskas of the Democratic Labor Party of Lithuania (LDDP) (labor, former communist) became president. This is a SOLS change. In 1998 Valdas Adamkus, Non-Party but considered center-right (The Economist 2004), became president. Adamkus was a non-establishment politician who had been living in the United States as a US citizen until his election (The Economist 2000). This is a SOLS change because his predecessor was a leftist soviet-era leader whereas he was a government outsider and claimed to be a reformer (The Economist 1998).

In 2003 Rolandas Paksas of the Lithuanian Liberal-Democratic Party (LLP) became president. Paksas was “a populist who won the loyalty of rural voters... by promising to stand up against elites in the cities and thieves in the government” (The Economist 2004). This represents a break with Adamkus, and thus is a SOLS change. Paksas “was ousted in April [2004] over his alleged links to influence-peddling cronies apparently behoven to Russian crooks and spooks.” Arturas Paulauskas, NS, became acting president (Worldstatesmen.org, NYTimes 2004). This is not a SOLS change. In 2004 Adamkus, Non-Party, once again became president. This is a SOLS change.

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- Pre-1945 coded by Anna Carella in May 2011
 Post-1945 coded by Anna Carella (Vanderbilt) on October 5, 2010
- Pre-1945 reviewed by Michaela Mattes February 10, 2012
 Pre-1945 revised by Naoko Matsumura July 30, 2013
 Post-1945 checked by Michaela Mattes on November 02, 2010
 Post-1945 updated by Matt DiLorenzo on July 20, 2012
- Combined by Ahra Wu (Rice) on August 21, 2013
 Edited by Andrew Wood (Rice) on May 23, 2014