

After the fall of communism in East Central Europe many countries introduced, during the transitional period, the direct election of the president. This represents a solid reason to consider them being semi-presidential, since popular election of the head of state is a main component in all of the definitions of this regime type. The shape of institutions and internal logic of semi-presidentialism differs more or less from presidential or parliamentary systems. Alike presidentialism, semi-presidential type of government is also based on dual legitimacy – both executive (at least its part, the president) and legislative are elected by people and can call for democratic legitimacy – while parliamentarism is chiefly based on dominance of the legislation and lacks the separation of powers.

This diploma work, titled *The position of the presidents in political systems of Poland, Lithuania and Romania*, tries to underline main aspects of role of the presidents in three East Central European countries. These countries have been chosen for several reasons: all of them had at least short historical experience with democracy, adopted the direct election of the president during transition toward democracy and are similar to each other concerning parameters of economic and democratic development (Poland and Lithuania are members of European Union since 2004 and Romania is expected to enter in near future). First part of the work, however, is devoted to discussion about concept of semi-presidentialism. Almost each author developed his own approach which causes serious problems with inability to compare outcomes of their studies. A number of approaches is discussed in the first part, for example founding work of M. Duverger, Sartori's concept of semi-presidentialism as an oscillation of power between the prime minister and the president, Shugart and Carey's approach dividing this regime type to two categories – premier-presidentialism and president-parliamentarism – and finally innovative attempts to define semi-presidential system by dispositional rather than relational properties. For the purpose of this diploma work, I have opted for one of Elgie's definitions, stating that "a semi-presidential regime may be defined as the situation where a popularly elected fixed-term president exists alongside a prime minister and cabinet who are responsible to parliament". Furthermore, for making possible to describe and judge the role of the president in aforementioned countries I have developed a new method, combining the relation of the head of state to parliamentary majority with level of his constitutional powers.

Second part focuses on institutional framework and functioning of Poland, Lithuania and Romania. The creation of presidential office, its delimitation in constitutions and changes in the presidential powers are described. An attention is also paid to way in which certain political system operates and to performance of different politicians holding the office.

The conclusion drawn from the analyses is following: presidents of Poland, Lithuania and Romania possess similar powers and compared to other semi-presidential systems, they seem to be medium-powerful presidents (their quantified constitutional powers are similar to those of presidents in France and Finland); the most weak are the Lithuanian presidents. Greater differences are found in political practice of these systems. In Lithuania presidents usually are not affiliated with major political parties (and their real position is weaker than constitution provides, as a result), while in Poland and especially Romania emerged a model of alternating presidents, coming up from two main political blocks. The concurrent-like elections of president and parliament (and equal term of office of both branches) led to absence of divided majorities in Romania, but this will change according to the lengthening of tenure of the president. In Poland the position of the president in practice is changing more frequently thanks to cohabitation of president and prime minister of different parties.

Despite the lack of sufficient ability to express all possible situations the method composed of combination of presidential attitude toward parliamentary majority and his powers given by constitution seems to be suitable for describing the functioning of semi-presidential political system, especially if there will be future effort to improve this approach.