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IRISH PARTY SYSTEM AFTER 2011:
CHANGE OR REVOLUTION?

INTRODUCTION

Research on political systems and their subsystems (electoral systems, party systems, government systems) are no longer as popular as they used to be in the second half of the 20th century. One of the reasons for the decline in the importance of these – still one of the most fruitful in the 1990s – analyzes was their concentration on static elements of the system, which set the framework for empirical research. Within them, authors have recognized elections as the most important determinant of changing party systems and constitutions, electoral laws and other legal acts as the most important determinants of the political regimes. Currently, political scientists turned to the analysis of much more dynamic political phenomena, which consequences became visible in the first and second decade of the 21st century, such as populism, globalization or the crisis of political representation.

This article aims to strengthen arguments against the use of system analysis for the static determination and classification of specific party systems. Considering the case of Ireland, we verify the hypothesis that the classical parameters, which measure the dynamics of changes in the party system, do not show significant political changes described not only in journalism, but also in scientific texts as revolutionary. It is only the supplementation of the system analysis focused on the

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elections with: a) socio-cultural aspects, b) the indication of the dynamics of party systems between the elections, what reflects the actual picture of the political change that took place in Ireland between 2011 and 2016.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

The Irish political system has been and it still is of interest to political scientists all around the world. It will not be an exaggeration to say that in the world literature, analyzes devoted to Ireland are even over-represented when compared to the number of publications devoted to other countries with similar population (according to the last census from 2016 the population of Ireland was estimated to 4.7 million people[1]). It consists of several substantive factors. These include great interest of researchers in the causes and the course of the conflict in Northern Ireland, which ended in 1998 with signing of the Good Friday agreements. The result of this interest is the analysis regarding progress of the peace process and adherence to contracts concluded at the end of the 20th century, as well as – especially in recent times – the potential impact of the UK exit from the European Union on the border issue between Ireland and Northern Ireland[2]. Another substantive circumstance for the scholars to discuss the problems of Ireland was its above-average economic success achieved after joining the European Communities in 1973. Both journalists and scientists have begun to refer to Ireland as a "Celtic tiger", which did not protect it from the effects of the global economic crisis at the end of the first decade of the 21st century, which was the subject of many in-depth studies[3]. Because of the ease of access to English-written sources, the political system of Ireland is also often used in comparative politics.

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[1] CENTRAL STATISTICS OFFICE, IRELAND, *Census of Population 2016*, Central Statistics Office & Government of Ireland 2017, https://static.rasset.ie/documents/news/census-2016-summary-results-part-1-full.pdf, accessed April 13, 2018.

[2] Artur AUGHEY, "Northern Ireland: 20 Years On", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 37(9)(2014); Jonathan TONGE, "The Impact of Withdrawal from the European Union upon Northern Ireland", *The Political Quarterly* 87(3)(2016).

[3] TOM BOLAND, "Critical Discourse in the Media: The Liminaiity of Ireland's 'Celtic Tiger'", *Irish Journal of Sociology* 18(1)(2010); Eva PAUS, "The Rise and Fall of the Celtic Tiger: When Deal-Making Trumps Developmentalism", *Studies in Comparative International Development* 47(2)(2012); Stephen KINSELLA, "Was Ireland's Celtic Tiger Period Profit-led or Wage-led?", *Review of Political Economy* 25 (4)(2013); Road HICK, "From Celtic Tiger to Crisis: Progress, Problems and Prospects for Social Security in Ireland", *Social Policy & Administration* 48 (4)(2014).

However, in Polish literature, the Irish case was not comparable to the world interest. Only Wawrzyniec Konarski has undertaken this kind of analysis systematically in many of his works[4]. Nevertheless, these publications were created more than a decade ago and partly lost their validity. The research gap in the field of system analysis was fulfilled by Jarosław Płachecki's monograph, but it also concerned the period before 2010[5], so there are no considerations regarding dynamic changes in the Irish political system in the second decade of the 21st century. An article written by Andrzej Bisztyga, who thoroughly analyzed the development of the Irish party system until 2007[6], would require a similar update.

It is worth noting that in addition to extended analyzes of various aspects of the Irish political system, Polish authors also dealt with the Northern Irish conflict and its impact on the security of Great Britain[7], political thought of the Irish republican movement[8], the history of the Irish political system[9], local self-government in Ireland[10], determinants of Irish economic success[11], biography of the President Éamon de Valera[12] or even Polish immigrant communities[13]. However, it is difficult to consider this number of analyzes as giving a full picture of the complicated political reality of Ireland.

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[4] Wawrzyniec KONARSKI, *Z problematyki systemu politycznego niepodległej Irlandii* (Warszawa, 1988); Wawrzyniec KONARSKI, *Pragmatycy i idealiści: rodowód, typologia i ewolucja ugrupowań politycznych nacjonalizmu irlandzkiego w XX wieku* (Warszawa, 2001); Wawrzyniec KONARSKI, *System konstytucyjny Irlandii* (Warszawa, 2005).

[5] Jarosław PŁACHECKI, *System polityczny Irlandii. Ewolucja i współczesne wyzwania* (Warszawa, 2010).

[6] Andrzej BISZTYGA, "System partyjny Republiki Irlandii", *Studia Politicae Universitatis Silesiensis* 3(2007).

[7] Grzegorz MATHEA, *Bezpieczeństwo Wysp Brytyjskich w kontekście procesu pokojowego w Irlandii Północnej* (Warszawa, 2017).

[8] Szymon BACHRYNOWSKI, *Między angielskim lwem a irlandzką harfą: myśl polityczna irlandzkiego ruchu republikańskiego* (Kalisz, 2009).

[9] Stanisław GRZYBOWSKI, *Historia Irlandii* (Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków, 2003); Sławomir KLIMKIEWICZ, *Republika Irlandii* (Warszawa, 1979); Jarosław PŁACHECKI, "Kształtowanie się zrębów państwowości Irlandii: od osadnictwa celtyckiego do Unii z Wielką Brytanią w 1801 roku", *Rocznik Żyrardowski* 6(2008).

[10] Jerzy SUPERNAT, "Samorząd terytorialny w Irlandii", in *Z problematyki prawnej samorządu terytorialnego: księga dla uczczenia 70. rocznicy urodzin oraz 45. rocznicy pracy naukowej Profesora Zbigniewa Janku*, ed. Marek Szewczyk (Poznań, 2017).

[11] Małgorzata SZCZEPANIAK, *Irlandia – przemiany gospodarcze* (Warszawa, 2015).

[12] Paweł TOBOŁA-PERTKIEWICZ, *De Valera. Gigant polityki irlandzkiej i jego epoka* (Warszawa, 2015).

[13] Agnieszka PĘDRAK, "Język polskich zbiorowości emigracyjnych w Wielkiej Brytanii i Irlandii: procesy adaptacji i derywacji", *Acta Universitatis Lodziensis. Folia Linguistica* 51(1)(2017), 77-91.

2. AN OVERVIEW OF THE IRISH PARTY SYSTEM

The party system of Ireland seemed to be frozen for many years[14]. Regardless of the economic situation and foreign policy (also in relation to the conflict in Northern Ireland and relations with the United Kingdom) conservative and republican Fianna Fáil has won most of the elections[15]. Nonetheless, these were not always victories allowing participation in forming the majority government, and the reluctance to enter into alliances meant that until the end of the 1980s the governments appointed by the victorious party were of a minority character. For the first time Fianna Fáil decided to join the coalition alliance only in 1989[16]. One of the reasons for the long-term domination of this party in the Irish party system was the use of the catch-all party strategy while maintaining the conservative party's brand[17].

The freezing of the Irish party system is also demonstrated by parameters such as the least squares index or the coefficients of the effective number of parties at the electoral and parliamentary levels (see Table 1).

The rivalry between Fianna Fáil and the Christian-democratic Fine Gael has been determining a debate in the Irish political system for many years. This feature also clearly distinguished the Irish party system from other European (especially Western European) party systems: the non-liberal and non-leftist parties dominated in the process of formation and functioning of government coalitions. In the years 1945–2005, Fianna Fáil received on average 44.7% of votes in the election, while Fine Gael – 30.3% of support, which made these parties relevant subjects in the process of forming cabinet coalitions[18].

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[14] Shaun BOWLER and David M. FARRELL, "The Lack of Party System Change in Ireland in 2011", in *A Conservative Revolution? Electoral Change in Twenty-First-Century Ireland*, eds. Michael Marsh, David M. Farrell and Gail McElroy (Oxford, 2017); *A Conservative Revolution? Electoral Change in Twenty-First-Century Ireland*, eds. Michael Marsh, David M. Farrell and Gail McElroy (Oxford, 2017).

[15] Bruce ARNOLD and J. O'TOOLE, *The End of the Party. How Fianna Fail Lost its Grip on Power* (Dublin 2011); S. McGRAW and Eoin O'MALLEY, *One Party Dominance. Fianna Fail and Irish Politics 1926-2016* (London–New York, 2018).

[16] Peter MAIR and Liam WEEKS, "The Party System", in *Politics in the Republic of Ireland*, eds. Janson Coakley, Michael Gallagher (London–New York, 2005), 148-149; Gary MURPHY, *Electoral Competition in Ireland Since 1987. The Politics of Triumph and Despair* (Manchester, 2016), 32.

[17] Gail McELROY, "Party Competition in Ireland: The Emergence of a Left-Right Dimension?", in *A Conservative Revolution?*, 80.

[18] DAVID M. FARRELL and JANE SUITER, "The Election in Context", in *How Ireland Voted 2016. The Election that Nobody Won*, eds. Michael Gallagher and Michael Marsh (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 278-280.

Table 1. Irish Election Indices Between 1922 and 2016

	Least squares index	Effective number of parties at the electoral level	Effective number of parties at the parliamentary level
1922	5.54	4.03	3.39
1923	3.25	3.95	3.55
1927 Jun	3.94	5.73	4.85
1927 Sept	3.29	3.49	3.09
1932	3.97	3.04	2.65
1933	2.08	2.84	2.68
1937	3.30	2.97	2.64
1938	3.20	2.56	2.41
1943	5.29	3.80	3.24
1944	5.18	3.33	2.83
1948	5.59	4.10	3.66
1951	2.60	3.37	3.26
1954	2.35	3.25	3.01
1957	4.40	3.16	2.72
1961	4.46	3.23	2.78
1965	2.17	2.72	2.61
1969	5.38	2.83	2.46
1973	2.40	2.81	2.59
1977	4.91	2.75	2.36
1981	2.73	2.87	2.62
1982 Feb	1.69	2.69	2.53
1982 Nov	2.74	2.72	2.52
1987	5.14	3.47	2.89
1989	3.85	3.38	2.94
1992	3.10	3.94	3.46
1997	6.55	4.03	3.00
2002	6.62	4.13	3.38
2007	5.85	3.77	3.03
2011	8.69	4.77	3.52
2016	5.62	6.57	4.93

Source: MICHAEL GALLAGHER, "Election Indices", [Database] Department of Political Science – Trinity College Dublin 2018, https://www.tcd.ie/Political_Science/people/michael_gallagher/ElSystems/Docts/ElectionIndices.pdf, 21, accessed April 13, 2018.

What is interesting, the patterns of coalition behaviour were not parallel to the program affiliation of both political groups. Taking into account the fact that Fianna Fáil is qualified to the family of conservative parties, and Fine Gael – to the family

of the Christian democrats[19], one would expect – according to the policy-seeking model of government formation – these parties as natural partners in the case of the formation of many governments.

Meanwhile, it turns out that since the early 1990s both parties commanded their own coalition base, which were political parties belonging to the families of leftist parties. For Fianna Fáil, it was Green Party (GP), and for Fine Gael – Labour Party (LAB). Outside the government, however, the Sinn Féin party was always present, mainly due to its history (relations with the Irish Republican Army) and radicalism in the reunification of Ireland and Northern Ireland as well as its impossibility to create any coalitional potential[20].

This configuration of the Irish party system was also undoubtedly influenced by the original and globally rarely used electoral system. It has already had an exhaustive elaboration[21], which is why it is worth mentioning only its specificity. The Irish electoral law assumes the use of a proportional STV (single transferable vote) system[22]. According to Dieter Nohlen, STV is the most elaborate electoral system enabling voters to classify candidates and express their preferences if the initial preference did not become reflected in the procedure of the first seats' allocation[23].

3. IRISH 2011 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION

The year 2011 is an important caesura for the analysis of the Irish party system[24]. This is because in the parliamentary elections organized at this time Fianna Fáil for the first time, since 1932 (*sic!*), did not win the majority (see Table 2). The defeat of the so far dominant party was very painful[25]. It even failed to exceed the 20% of votes, and in addition – the voters gave more votes to the Labour Party, what predestined the configuration of the future government (as mentioned above, the Labours were an expected coalition partner for Fine Gael). However, if one would like to remain with some static determinants of the party system' de-

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[19] Ryszard HERBUT, "Rodziny partii politycznych", in *Demokracje zachodnioeuropejskie. Analiza porównawcza*, eds. Andrzej Antoszewski and Ryszard Herbut (Wrocław, 2008), 150-156.

[20] Gary MURPHY, "The Background to the Election", in *How Ireland Voted 2016*.

[21] Michał URBAŃCZYK, "Alternatywne ordynacje wyborcze. Przykład Australii i Irlandii", *Opolskie Studia Administracyjno-Prawne* 14(3)(2016).

[22] Richard SINNOTT, "The Rules of the Electoral Game", in *Politics in the Republic of Ireland*.

[23] Dieter NOHLEN, *Prawo wyborcze i system partyjny* (Warszawa, 2004), 351.

[24] Michael MARSH, David M. FARRELL and Gail MCELROY, "Introduction: The 2011 Election in Context", in *A Conservative Revolution?*, 1-10.

[25] ARNOLD and O'TOOLE, *The End of the Party. How Fianna Fail Lost its Grip on Power*, 218-236.

velopment, it would be difficult to notice this significant change[26]. The two dominant political parties have jointly obtained over 50% support, which – at least in theory – confirmed the state of freezing of the Irish party system[27]. When it comes to the classical system analysis, there is no great difference in the fact that so far the dominant political parties (one Christian democratic and the other conservative) have "changed" in places. For the Irish party system, it was actually a revolutionary change[28].

Table 2. Irish 2011 and 2016 Parliamentary Elections Results

	2011		2016	
Fine Gael – FG	36.1%	76	25.5%	50
Fianna Fáil – FF	17.5%	20	24.3%	44
Sinn Féin – SF	9.9%	14	13.8%	23
Labour Party	19.5%	37	6.6%	7
Anti-Austerity Alliance – People Before Profit – AAA–PBP	2.2%	4	3.9%	6
Social Democrats – SD	–	–	3.0%	3
Green Party – GP	1.8%	–	2.7%	2
Independents for Change – I4C	–	–	1.5%	4
Independents	12.5%	15	15.7%	19
Others	0.5%	–	3.0%	–
SUMMARY	100%	166	100%	158

Source: https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/elections/, accessed May 13, 2018.

It was primarily the result of the sharp deterioration of the Irish economy, which was triggered by the economic crisis in 2008. Considered so far a "Celtic tiger", Ireland had to face an unprecedented fall in GDP and the danger of serious social problems (rising prices, unemployment, risk of bank insolvency). Despite the fact that the crisis began in the United States and had a global reach, it was the government of Brian Cowen, representing Fianna Fáil, who was accused of bringing about the economic collapse of the country[29]. While the polls have been indicating defeat of the government, the Green Party with the government coalition withdrew from the cabinet and B. Cowen's cabinet survived the election as a minority government. After the expected Fianna Fáil's election failure B. Cowen was replaced by Micheal Martin.

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[26] BOWLER and FARRELL, *The Lack of Party System Changre in Ireland in 2011*.

[27] Michael MARSH, "After 2011: Continuing the Revolution", in *A Conservative Revolution?*, 198.

[28] Eoin O'MALLEY and Roland K. CARTHY, "A Conservative Revolution? The Disequilibrium of Irish Politics", in *A Conservative Revolution?*

[29] Gary MURPHY, *Electoral Competition in Ireland Since 1987*, 138-142.

4. IRISH PARTY SYSTEM BETWEEN 2011 AND 2016

The victory of Fine Gael was evident and not subject to discussion. This political party lacked eight mandates to obtain an absolute parliamentary majority and it resulted in the need to form a coalition[30]. Bargaining with representatives of the Labour Party, with whom Fine Gael has already formed government five times in history, went without major obstacles. The coalition agreement reached at a quick pace strengthened the significance of huge success, which was the déclassé of the long-time republican rival. Other coalition variants were not an option, mainly because of the fact that a very good result was due to the harsh criticism that their leader, Éamon Gilmore, subjected to the policies of the incumbent prime minister, B. Cowen. What is more, the coalition negotiations concerning budgetary resources were dictated by the representatives of the International Monetary Fund, the European Central Bank and the European Union, the so-called Troika[31].

Without visible impediments the coalition has supported the government, which was led by Fine Gael leader, Enda Kenny. Already at the turn of 2011 and 2012 ruling politicians had to face a wave of criticism caused by the budget proposal, which once again envisaged raising some tax rates and continuing the austerity policy calculated to reduce public debt. This was a clear denial of election pledges made especially by the Labours[32]. Nevertheless, by the end of 2013, Ireland managed to implement the recovery plan imposed by Troika, and for the first time in many years there were positive symptoms of economic recovery. A year later, the government faced a scandal related to irregularities in the Garda police (*Garda Síochána*), which main consequence was resignation of the Minister of Justice, Alan Shatter[33].

The lack of improvement in country's economic situation felt by many Irish people (additionally strengthened by the government's information about the planned introduction of fees for free water), political scandals affecting the coalition party's public image and the government's lost referendum in 2013 on the dissolution of the Senate, have led to a failure of Fine Gael and Labour Party in local elections in 2014 (see Table 3)[34]. At the same time, elections to the European Parlia-

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[30] MARSH, "After 2011: Continuing the Revolution", 192-193.

[31] MURPHY, "The Background to the Election", 2.

[32] Rory COSTELLO, Paul O'NEILL and ROBERT THOMSON, "The Fulfilment of Election Pledges by the Outgoing Government", in *How Ireland Voted 2016*, 41.

[33] MURPHY, "The Background to the Election", 11-12.

[34] Robert THOMSON, "The Malleable Nature of Party Identification", in *A Conservative Revolution?*, 123-142; James TILLEY and John GARRY, "Class Politics in Ireland: How Economic Catastrophe Realigned Irish Politics", in *A Conservative Revolution?*, 11-27.

ment were held, but – unlike the elections in Poland – in Ireland they are considered as a reliable touchstone for the popularity of individual political parties (mainly due to the small number of seats to be filled – Ireland has eleven of them in the EP). Fine Gael won the elections, gaining four seats. Three mandates were obtained by Sinn Féin and independent candidates and one mandate was given to Fianna Fáil's candidate[35].

Table 3. Irish 2014 local election results

Party	Seats	Comparison with the 2009 results	Percentage of the firs preferential votes	Comparison with the 2009 results
Fianna Fáil	266	+49	25.3	-0.1
Fine Gael	235	-105	24.0	-8.2
Labour Party	51	-81	7.2	-7.5
Sinn Féin	159	-105	15.3	+7.8
People Before Profit	14	+9	1.7	+0.9
Alliance Against Austerity	14	+10	1.2	+0.3
Green Party	12	+9	1.6	-0.7
Independents	193	+71	22.5	+7.6
Others	5	-2	1.2	-0.2
SUMMARY	949		100%	

Source: MURPHY. "The Background to the Election", 15.

After the electoral defeat of the Labour Party, its leader É. Gilmore decided to resign. He was replaced by a recent rival, J. Burton. The direct consequence of the elections result was also a kind of "reorganization of forces" and an attempt to develop an electorate that has not been fully satisfied with the election campaign offer. In 2015, two new parties were formed: Renua Ireland, founded

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[35] Interestingly, the MEP has left the ALDE faction, at which Fianna Fáil has been so far affiliated, and joined the factions of the Conservatives and Reformists. He is not able to use Party affiliation (next to the ECR he is affiliated as an independent), but he has not been deprived of membership in Fianna Fáil.

by the secessionist from Fine Gael, Lucinda Creighton, and Social-Democrats as a joint project of independent politicians. The first group was to be a reference to the centre-right Progressive Democrats formation, which in the 1990s was such a relevant political force that it participated in the formation of two coalition cabinets. The aim of the second party was to direct its program to left-wing voters, who were not satisfied with the previous proposals of the Green Party or Sinn Féin.

One of the most important events that showed the unreliability of classical system analyzes was referendum organized in 2015. The purpose of the legislator was to introduce the thirty-fourth constitutional amendment that would allow marriage to same-sex couples[36]. After the elections in 2011, the Constitutional Convention was established in Ireland, which included 66 citizens, 33 politicians and the chairman (100 people in total), whose task was to prepare recommendations regarding possible changes to the Irish Constitution. In the end, the commission recommended a few matters related to the Irish legal system, which should be submitted to a referendum resolution. The government decided to include two of them. Citizens were asked questions about the possibility of introducing an article enabling same-sex couples' marriages and the possibility of changing the age census for the presidential candidates from 35 to 21 years old[37].

The referendum campaign, which was scheduled for 22 May 2015, has focused on the first of the issues raised. The representatives of all relevant political groups, regardless of their political affiliation, and numerous non-governmental organizations encouraged voters to support the introduction of the constitutional amendment. Strong objection was expressed by representatives of the Irish church and religious organizations[38]. Ultimately, 62.1% of those taking part in the referendum opted for the amendment and 37.9% opposed it. The turnout in the referendum was high and amounted to 60.5%. Members of Labour Party hoped that the referendum success in their flagship issue let them make up government's popularity loss, related to negative response to budget savings enforced by exter-

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[36] Johan A. ELKINK et al., "Understanding the 2015 Marriage Referendum in Ireland: Context, Campaign, and Conservative Ireland", *Irish Political Studies* 32(3)(2017).

[37] Johan A. ELKINK et all., "Understanding the 2015 Marriage Referendum in Ireland: Constitutional Convention, Campaign, and Conservative Ireland", in *UCD Geary Institute for Public Policy Discussion Papers*, http://www.ucd.ie/geary/static/publications/workingpapers/gearywp201521.pdf, accessed April 13, 2018.

[38] Julie CLAGUE, "Irish Families Vote for Marriage Equality: Big Tent Catholicism Confronts Rome's Narrow Gate", *Concilium* 2(2016); Conor O'MAHONY, "Marriage Equality in the United States and Ireland: How History Shaped the Future", *University of Illinois Law Review* 2(2017), 696-700.

nal institutions. Nevertheless, results of the polls did not show any significant changes in the electoral preferences after the referendum[39].

5. IRISH 2016 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION

An interesting touchstone of electoral opportunities and a measure of media popularity, was the participation of leaders of particular political groups in television election debates. The number of party representatives and the key to selecting them is usually the subject of disputes between the representatives' staff and the organizers of the debates. In 2016, in Irish debates on February 11 at TV3 and February 24 at RTE, participated leaders of Fine Gael, Fianna Fáil, Labour and Sinn Féin. On February 16 – also AAA-PBP, Social Democrats and Greens' leaders. The media therefore decided that these parties would count in the electoral game, although they clearly divided them into important and niche ones[40].

The essence of the STV electoral system was perceived in the campaign by the leaders of Fine Gael and Labour Party, who signed the official "transfer agreement" the day before the election. The aim of the document was to call their voters to give "lower" preferential votes to the candidates of these parties[41]. It was an indirect confirmation that if there was a need to create a coalition cabinet after the elections, the Irish Christian democrats and Labour Party would be political partners. For the sake of complicating the system of converting votes into mandates only on March 3, just a few days after the election (February 26), official results were published with the allocation of mandates to individual candidates.

The results of the election created a stalemate. First of all, the two dominant political parties – Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil – have not been jointly supported by more than half of all voters. Supposing the parliamentary election of 2011 could be treated as a change syndrome or a deviation from the norm, the 2016 elections clearly indicate the tendency of the Irish party system to shift from a two-block towards a multi-party system. However, this does not change the fact that two groups with Christian-conservative political program still dominate in Ireland. The second important fact to note is the very poor performance of the Labour Party, which significantly reduced the level of its relevance, especially

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[39] Susan PARKER, *The Path to Marriage Equality in Ireland. A Case Study*, The Atlantic Philanthropies 2017, 16, https://www.atlanticphilanthropies.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Marriage_Equality _ Case_Study.pdf, Accessed 13 April 2018.

[40] MURPHY, "The Background to the Election".

[41] Michael GALLAGHER, "The Results Analysed: The Aftershocks Continue", in *How Ireland Voted 2016*, 146-147.

with regard to the issue of government formation. Finally, the third factor that decided on the huge difficulties in the process of forming the cabinet was a great success of independent candidates, who gained over 15% of votes, which translated into 23 seats[42].

The pre-electoral calculations assuming the creation of the Fine Gael and Labour Party coalition, as one of the probable cabinet variants, had no chance for realization[43]. There were several attempt in the Irish parliament (on March 10, April 6 and April 14) to vote a candidate into prime minister office, but each time the election ended in a fiasco. The two largest parties have started negotiations on the possible support of Fianna Fáil for the minority government formed by Fine Gael. In this situation, Christian Democrats assured of providing support for the minority government from the deputies, who did not belong to Fianna Fáil, so that the Republicans could abstain from voting or not take part in the vote at all[44]. Such support was provided by some independent deputies and at the beginning of May Enda Kenny was re-elected as a prime minister, receiving the support of 59 deputies with 49 votes against[45].

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the changes in the Irish party system after 2011 proves strong institutionalization of the largest Irish political parties – Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil. These parties managed to survive crises without major internal perturbations, Fianna Fáil's fail in 2011 was significantly more serious challenge than the unsatisfactory Fine Geal result of 2016 leading to the inability to form a one-party majority cabinet. The reaction of both groups to crisis events was the alternation of power and the replacement of unpopular leaders with other politicians, whose task was to rebuild the undermined reputation of the political groups. In both cases, this process of replacement ended with relative success – Fianna Fáil within five years managed to double its support among voters, while Fine Gael still (first quarter of 2018) remains in power despite the minority character of the government.

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[42] Liam WEEKS, "Independents and the Election: The Party Crashers", in *How Ireland Voted 2016*, 219.

[43] Eoin O'MALLEY, "70 Days: Government Formation in 2016", in *How Ireland Voted 2016*, 255-256.

[44] O' MALLEY, "70 Days: Government Formation in 2016", 264.

[45] MURPHY, "The Background to the Election".

One of the reason why both parties maintain significant support and are still able to effectively mobilize voters is the transformation of their program profile, which is ideologically close to the so-called modern conservatism or "enlightened" conservatism. Likewise the British conservatives led by David Cameron, Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil politicians have unambiguously espoused constitutional amendments allowing same-sex marriages. Similarly, most of the political leaders of both Christian-conservative parties are in favour of removing from the constitution article eight point four. That would mean the liberalization of anti-abortion law. Both issues, ultimately subject to a referendum, are indeed a symbolic, but still significant, touchstone of the program changes in Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil. These changes also include other issues, such as consent to the state's support for social services or increased attention to ecology issues.

However, it should be noted that currently the domination of both parties is not as significant as it has been in the 20th century. The Irish party system evolves slowly but steadily towards a multi-party, but non-polarized system. The lack of polarization is evidenced by the nonconcurrent coalition between the Christian Democratic and conservatives as well as the left-wing parties, i.e. between Fine Gael and the Labour Party; Fianna Fáil and the Green Party. The existence of minority governments and their accurate functioning also proves the stability and moderate polarization of the party system. In the future, the growing number of independent candidates and the emergence of new parties on the political scene, such as Renua Ireland, founded by Lucinda Creighton, former minister and deputy Fine Gael, or the leftist „Solidarity: The Left Alternative", may become a new challenge.

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IRLANDZKI SYSTEM PARTYJNY PO 2011 ROKU:
ZMIANA CZY REWOLUCJA?

S t r e s z c z e n i e

Irlandzki system partyjny był traktowany do niedawna jako bardzo stabilny. Dominowały w nim dwie rywalizujące ze sobą konserwatywne partie polityczne, które dopiero w latach 90. dopuściły moż-liwość tworzenia koalicyjnych rządów z innymi partiami. W roku 2011 doszło do historycznej zmiany – wybory parlamentarne po raz pierwszy od 1932 roku przegrała Fianna Fáil, która uzyskała najgorszy wynik w historii. Klasyczne parametry pomiaru dynamiki systemów partyjnych nie odzwierciedlały jednak w sposób odpowiedni tej transformacji. W artykule staramy się wykazać, że bez uwzględnienia istotnych zmian społeczno-kulturowych metoda analizy systemowej skoncentrowana na danych uzyskiwanych na bazie rezultatów wyborczych pozostaje niewystarczającym narzędziem opisu irlandzkiego systemu partyjnego. Dokonujemy rekonstrukcji najistotniejszych wydarzeń związanych z ewolucją tego systemu w latach 2011-2016 i staramy się odpowiedzieć na pytanie, jak relewantne partie polityczne zareagowały na zmianę wzorców rywalizacji.

Słowa kluczowe: Irlandia; wybory; system polityczny; system partyjny.

IRISH PARTY SYSTEM AFTER 2011: CHANGE OR REVOLUTION?

S u m m a r y

Until recently the Irish party system has been considered as very stable. It was dominated by two rival conservative political parties, which only in the 1990s allowed the possibility of forming coalition governments with other parties. In 2011 there was a historical change – for the first time since 1932 Fianna Fáil lost the parliamentary elections with the worst result in history. However, the classical parameters of the dynamics of party systems did not adequately reflect this transformation. In the article, we argue that without taking into account significant socio-cultural changes, the method of system analysis, focused on data obtained on the basis of election results, remains an insufficient tool to describe the Irish party system. We reconstruct the most important events related to the evolution of this system between 2011 and 2016 and try to answer the question of how relevant political parties reacted to changing patterns of competition.

Key words: Ireland; election; political system; party system.