

Whither Eastern Europe? Changing Political Science Perspectives on the Region

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EASTERN EUROPE PARTY SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT AS A LABORATORY

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"The future has arrived. It's just not evenly distributed yet"
William Gibson, 1992

It has been a long time since western Europeans searched east for signs of their own future, but now might be a good time to start again. The sometimes tendentious and too-often speculative arguments that follow lay out a framework for understanding the political party systems of Eastern and Central Europe that calls attention to underlying dynamics which are not specific to any region and bear at least superficial resemblance to developments emerging on every continent.

To balance out the sections near the end which may say too much, we will offer a preliminary section that says far too little, distilling findings that could (and will) fill a book into just a few pages on the key categories of the region's political party systems. By the standards of Western Europe, those systems are somewhat more fragmented, less anchored and organized and less stable, but not usually to an extent that would threaten democracy. We then return to those same categories at the level of the individual party and identify key irregularities that are obscured by the aggregation and averaging of system-level analysis. Some of these internal differences differ from country to country and from time to time, but others are more widespread and fit together in a coherent pattern, a self-replicating subsystem based on the rapid birth and death cycles of leader-driven political parties emphasizing corruption issues. We devote the remainder of the paper to exploring this subsystem, assessing its internal dynamics, its possible causes, its prospects and possible mechanisms for softening its impact.

"ALL [NOT UN]HAPPY FAMILIES ARE [NOT UN]ALIKE"

ADEQUATE PERFORMANCE ON AGGREGATE PARTY SYSTEM MEASURES

When we look at party systems in any region there are certain things we immediately want to know: how many meaningful competitors are there, what are their relative positions, what do they compete about, with whom do they cooperate, how do they organize themselves, and how they win their voters. We also want to know whether any of these have changed over time. The standard roster of party system characteristics worth looking at differs from some degree from one author to the next but the basic categories include the number and relative strength of competitors, the nature and breadth of their competition, the connection to society, and the nature and level of internal party organization and decision-making.

We want to know these things because we have good reason to think that these—as opposed to the many other things we could look at—offer the best insight into the functioning of the system. With newer democracies, or those about which the future is uncertain, these become diagnostic tools for the future of the democratic system. With more established democracies, or at least those about which we have fewer fears, we use many of the same tools to investigate whether the system is operating as it should, whether it is achieving the magic balance of representation and responsibility, of diverse voices and concentrated power.

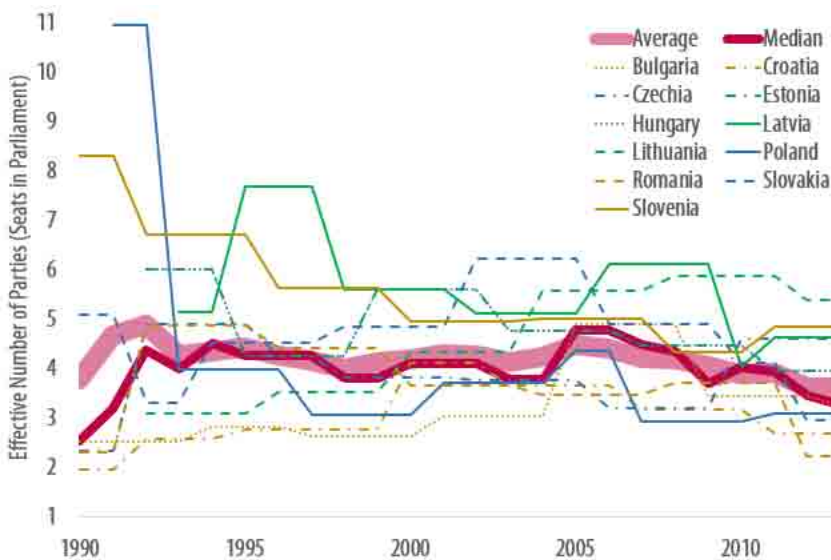
In one sense it is surprising that there are any region-wide patterns at all since there are so many countries, differing widely in geography, ethnic composition, and level of economic development

it is striking that there should be any similarities: Tallinn is closer to London or Paris than to Sofia; Slovenia's per capita GDP is closer to that of France than that of Romania; Church attendance rates in Poland are closer to those of the Netherlands than to those of the Czech Republic. On the other hand, the countries included in the sample here are those that have succeeded in entering the European Union, and while it may or may not be true that all happy families are alike, countries could not easily secure accession to the EU without more or less meeting certain basic preconditions related to political systems and political parties..

Competitors

The number and relative sizes of political parties are the first things that most professional observers of party systems ask about, a tendency deepened by Sartori's emphasis on these questions, though Sartori did not use the measure in isolation. While there certainly is no single right answer, systems with the number of effective parties below two and above five or six become topics of concern (albeit for different reasons). As Figure 1 shows, On the upper end of the scale, the political party systems of Eastern and Central Europe have not risen to the level of concern since the more than a decade ago when Poland and Slovenia and Latvia experienced limited periods above the upper bounds (Gallagher, 2013). Even with those high points, both the mean and median for the region have remained in a narrow range just above four, and both summary measures have shown a slight decrease over time. Nor have any countries fallen below the two on the lower end.

Figure 1. Effective number of relevant parties in Eastern and Central Europe over time



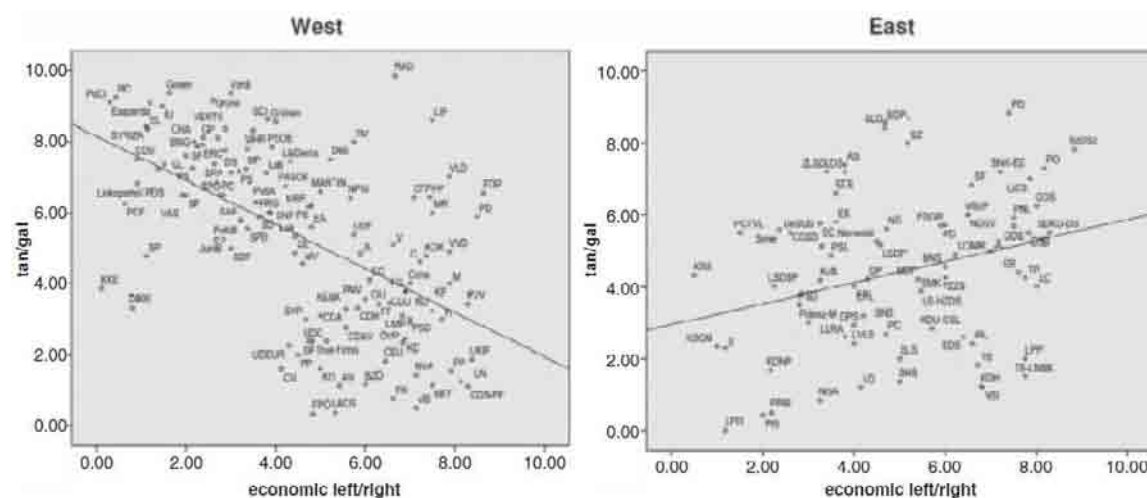
Source: Gallagher 2013, supplemented by Berglund et al, 2013

Competition

It is no easy task easy to discern what political parties actually compete about, and there is no consensus on any single set of categories or a single best method. There is often considerable

disagreement between the reasons that party voters give for their votes, the reasons that their votes seem to indicate, the ways that elites differentiate themselves from competitors, the actual differences in their political positions, the amount to which they talk about those positions, and the views of experts looking on. Nevertheless the past twenty years have seen a wide range of innovative methods and meticulous scholarship that attempts to narrow down assessments of political competition. Between the expert surveys of Rohrschneider and Whitefield, and the Chapel Hill Surveys begun by Hooghe and Marks, attitudinal surveys, manifesto analyses, and a wide variety of country-level studies, we can find a degree of coherence (Rohrschneider and Whitefield 2012, 15-18). The general findings do not vary by significantly within individual countries and together we get a relatively coherent picture of the main dimensions of competition. The expert surveys in particular produce extremely similar results even though they use different question methodologies and (at least potentially) different expert cadres. Factor analysis of both datasets finds quite similar relationships among the party positions on various political issues in public discourse: a strong factor linking questions about the role of the state in the economy, and a second strong factor linking questions related to lifestyle and culture (along with questions about immigration, and foreign policy in the Chapel Hill survey). Analyses of the two datasets differ slightly in their findings and interpretations on the degree of dimensionality, but both that the economic and cultural dimensions are distinct, though not completely orthogonal, and both find the same pattern of relationship: preference for government intervention in the economy tends to appear together with a more restrictive view of cultural freedoms. In this alignment, the Eastern and Central European region differs from Western Europe, where economic left tends to correspond instead with cultural liberalism, and this difference may help to explain the findings of Rohrschneider and Whitefield and that “left-right orientation on the whole provides less explanation for party positions in the East than is the case in the West” (2012, 57). Figure 2, borrowed from Rovny and Edwards, shows the overall patterns which are quite similar to those found in Rohrschneider and Whitefield and a variety of similar analyses.

Figure 2. Rovny and Edwards findings regarding Political Space and Axes of Party Competition in Europe

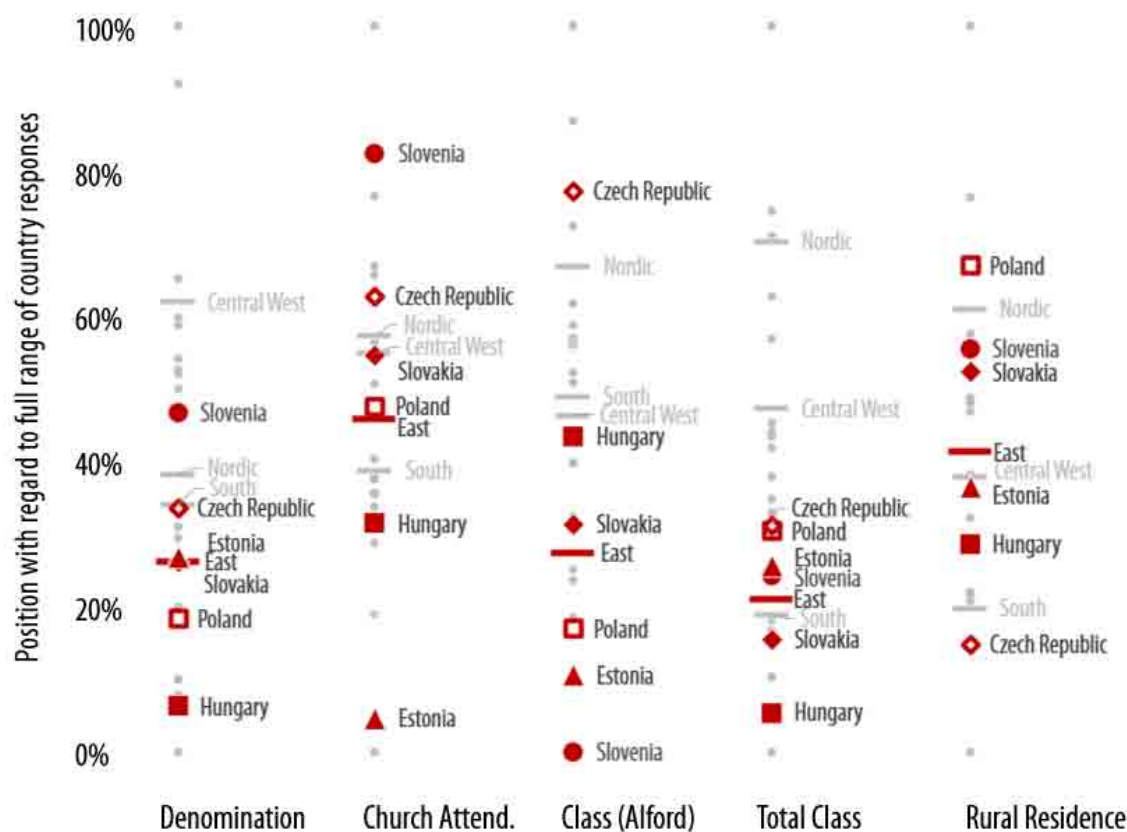


Source: Rovny and Edwards, 2012, 64

Roots

To the extent that the party systems of Eastern and Central Europe demonstrate a reasonably strong political competition on economic and cultural questions, it is possible to ask about the degree to which those conflicts are linked to underlying characteristics of social class, denomination and religiosity, age, and other socio-demographic characteristics. A large number of studies have dealt in one form or another with this question, and with a few exceptions (Innes nearly all have agreed in rejecting the early ‘null hypothesis’ that the post communist-era party systems of Eastern and Central Europe would start afresh without the socio-demographic linkages that rooted Western European political parties. Both Rohrschneider and Whitefield (2012) and Knutsen (2013) find a relatively small but not insignificant relationship between socio-demographic characteristics and political preferences. Rohrschneider and Whitefield party support finds statistically significant relationships between social groups and related political attitudes and policy preferences (working classes and income redistribution; churchgoers and imposition of cultural norms) and find relationships with party support as well. Knutsen finds party choice in much of Eastern and Central Europe (his sample omits Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Bulgaria and Croatia) linked to religious denomination and church attendance, and certain measures of class (but not the “working class versus all others” measured in the Alford index) and rural residence.

Figure 3. Knutsen findings regarding Party Choice and Religious Variables, Strength of Class Voting, and Party Choice and Urban-Rural Residence



Source: Knutsen 2013, 183, 188, 191

Both sets of findings also identify a significant variation among the kinds of rootedness in individual countries, but Knutsen's findings, presented in condensed form in Figure 3, are notable to the extent that each of the listed countries is above average in at least one of the categories, suggesting that in none of the countries is political competition without some degree of connection to societal structures. Knutsen's disaggregation by regional sub-averages also suggests that while Eastern and Central Europe's party systems may have weaker roots than in Western Europe as a whole, they are more strongly linked to religion and class than Southern Europe and to urban-rural divides than in non-Nordic or Southern Europe.

Organization

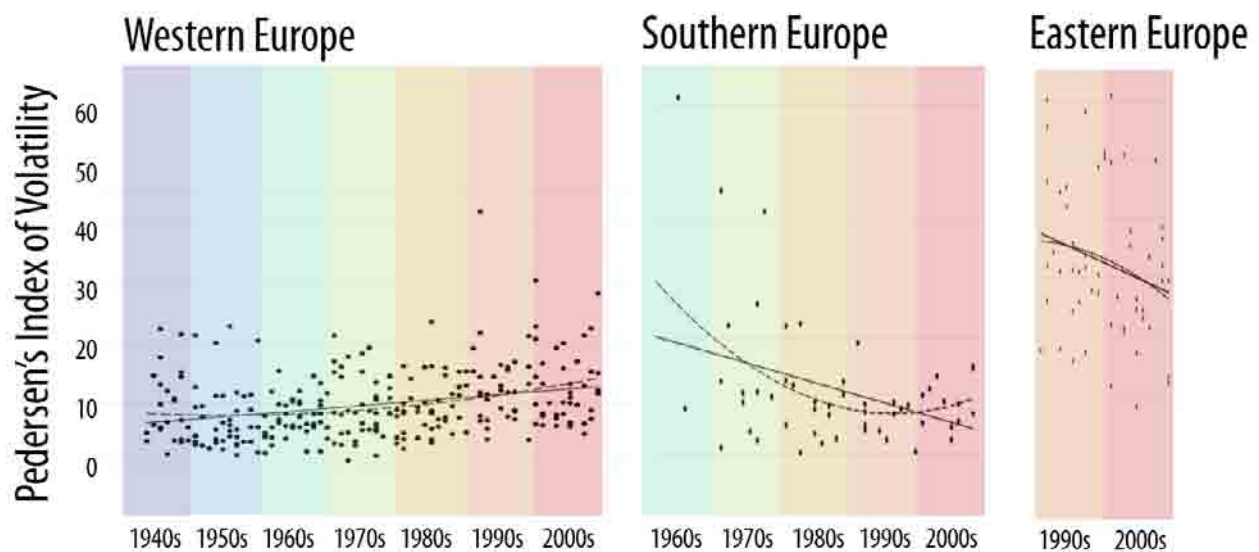
Internal party dynamics is the area of the least systematic research, primarily because it simply cannot be studied well from the outside. Such data requires on-the-ground study and data-gathering of the kind that has not been attempted frequently outside of the work of Van Biezen and Tavits and a few others. The little systematic work that we have suggests that parties maintain a certain degree of institutional presence with a limited number of active members and offices at the national and regional levels, though sometimes not at lower levels (Tavits 2013). Whether these are appropriate levels is an extremely difficult question to answer since there is little consensus about how much party organization is really necessary for a successful democracy. In comparison to the Western European frame of reference, evidence indicates that Eastern and Central European political parties have fewer members and do less organizing. Van Biezen, Mair and Poguntke (2011) find that membership rates in Eastern and Central Europe vary wildly from an average of six members per hundred voters in Slovenia to less than one member per hundred voters in Poland and Latvia. Rohrschneider and Whitefield's expert survey question on the produces both a different order of countries and a much smaller range but a similar small gap between the importance of membership to Western and Eastern and Central European parties. On other questions of internal party operation, we are only now in the process of gathering systematic data on party. The question of internal-party democracy has been intermittently and incompletely addressed, and in fact there is no clear consensus about the mode or degree of difference, though the Rohrschneider and Whitefield database suggests that in comparison to members and party apparatuses, leaders are somewhat more important to Eastern and Central European parties than to their Western counterparts. Party finance is even more difficult to assess since parties have a vested interest in concealing their financial sources. There is a range of party finance options in the region from no state funding to extensive funding. The general consensus, however, appears to be that parties are highly permeable and that in addition to state funding, private, especially corporate finance plays a significant rule (Smilov 2007; Casal Bértoa & Spirova 2013).

Persistence

Of course each of these general characteristics above is also subject to change which in turn produces a fifth general category of party system characteristics. It is technically possible to look at change in terms of all of the categories discussed above, but most of these categories are hard enough to do in a snapshot much less to get a moving picture. For the nature of competition and the number and identity of the players, we have a better view. The dual iterations of both the Rohrschneider and Whitefield and Chapel Hill data during the most of the 2000's suggest that

the axes of competition have changed little over time in most countries. The main source of extensive time-series data on party system change focuses on changes in the roster of parties. The more sophisticated of these looks at a variety of kinds of change including change among existing parties and change related to entries and exits. Here, perhaps more than in any other category, Eastern and Central Europe differs from its Western counterparts. Recent work by Dassonneville and Hooghe (2011, reprinted in Figure 4 below) and Ersson (2012) confirms numerous other studies showing high rates of volatility in Central and Eastern Europe, a level more than three times higher than in Western Europe and twice as high as the average rate in the newer democracies of Southern Europe. Indeed even the lowest volatility rates in the Eastern and Central European region are higher than all but the highest volatility rates in Western Europe.

Figure 4. Dassonneville and Hooghe findings regarding Pedersen Index in Parliamentary Elections in [western/southern/eastern] Europe adapted to a single horizontal and vertical scale



Source: Dassonneville and Hooghe 2011, 18, 21, 23

Scholars debate whether the rates are increasing or declining (Dassonneville and Hooghe [2011] and Powell and Tucker [2012] find trend lines pointed downward but recent high-volatility elections in Slovenia, the Czech Republic and Romania among others points to a flat or slightly increasing trajectory in the past 15 years), but there are few scholarly arguments that the current level in Eastern and Central Europe is beneficial, a topic that we will revisit in detail below.

Assessing the systems

The picture that emerges from these general summaries is, by the current standards of political analysis, a source of neither joy nor consternation. If Western political party systems are understood as a model for party systems as paradigms of the necessary underpinnings of a successful democracy (a questionable assumption but one whose time comes later in this paper), then the party systems of central and eastern Europe are not *too* far from the mark and, despite persistent weakness in almost every category, at least fall into the same broad category as their neighbors to the west. The party systems of Eastern and Central Europe exhibit relatively high fragmentation and frequent change, with few outright winners and competition occurring

primarily on a combination of economic and cultural questions relying on weak but not inconsequential organizational structures and to socio-demographic roots. The countries in the region show a fairly high degree of diversity on these measures, but the variations are not systematic, and none of the countries is unambiguously at the top or bottom of every measurement.

There is some justifiable doubt whether the measurements above, however widely used, tell the whole story. Even in those systems that most resemble their western counterparts there has been a growing concern about whether party systems function in ways that sustain a high-quality democracy. Among the most frequently voiced concerns involve fears of rudderless political drift (especially after EU accession) and a political class dominated by business interests. Of course on such questions—and indeed on almost all of the other party system measures described above—both Eastern *and* Western European party systems of today fall short of the now-idealized Western European party systems that feature so prominently in many classic works in the field.

“[NO] MASTERY OF ANY ART AVOIDS [DISCUSSING] EXCESS AND DEFECT”

UNMEASURED VARIABLES AND PARTY-LEVEL OUTLIERS

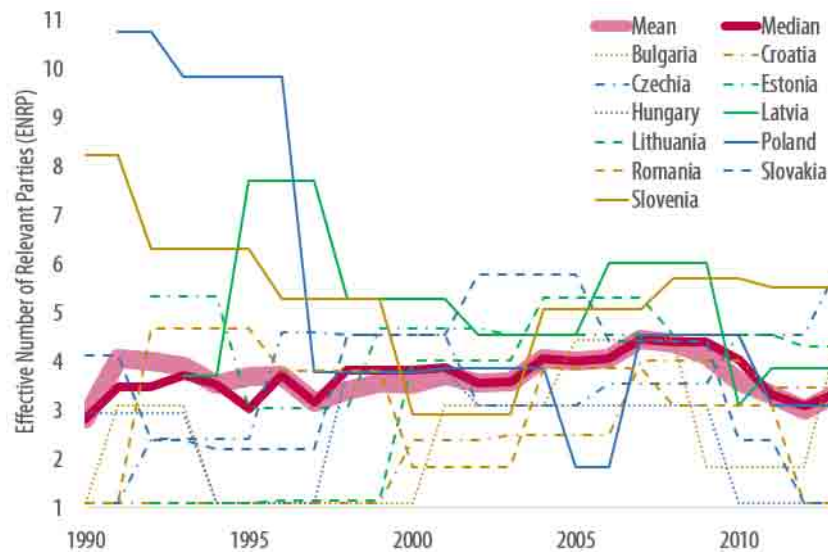
Even if the above list of general categories were sufficient to capture all key variables (and even if the list of participating countries were more broadly balanced than it is in this paper), the broad sweep of aggregates may still miss important differences below the system level that shape party-related outcomes. Party-level differences matter in Eastern and Central European politics, and the evidence suggest that some of these differences overlap in such a way as to create new and significant patterns.

Competitors

Measures of party system size are, by their mathematical nature, system wide. The Taagipera-Laakso index used above attempts to account for the relative size of the parties in a system, but it does not address the issues arising when large party in a multi-party system is so large as to so outweigh the others as to create a virtual one-party system, at least with relation to decision-making during its tenure in office. Dumont and Caulier’s method for calculating the effective number of relevant parties, while not useful as a stand-alone indicator, offers a supplemental diagnostic tool in such cases by counting parties according to the number of combinations in which they have the decisive vote. As Figure 5 shows, in the period between 1992 and 2000 single-party majorities occurred only for brief one-term periods (under communist successor parties) in Lithuania, Hungary, Bulgaria and for a much longer period only in Croatia (under the Croatian Democratic Union). After 2000 no party even came close to mathematical one-party dominance until the 2009 elections in Bulgaria. Single parties subsequently achieved majorities in Hungary in 2010, and in Slovakia in 2012 (though in Romania the electoral party achieving a majority was composed of two quite distinct party entities). Although a single party’s possession of a parliamentary majority was neither a necessary condition for weakened democracy (Slovakia in 1994 and perhaps Poland in 2005) or a sufficient condition (Hungary, Bulgaria and Lithuania

in the mid-1990's), the parliamentary overreach associated with developments in Hungary raised concerns across the region in relationship to shifts in competition that were occurring at the same time.

Figure 5. Effective number of relevant parties in Eastern and Central Europe over time



Source: Political Data Yearbook: Interactive, 2013; Berglund et al, 2013

Competition

Deviations in the axis of competition are difficult to measure because they often tap into precisely the kind of idiosyncratic local issues that are not measured on system-wide surveys such as those conducted by Rohrschneider and Whitefield and the Chapel Hill team. Such surveys are not easily equipped to address competitive dimensions that do not have convenient cross-national explanations or are themselves system-wide. The finding of one- or two-dimensional conflict on economic and cultural issues may miss types of competition that fell under or outside of the survey radar:

- *Ethnicity.* In some countries the national and cultural issues escape notice because although they are of intense concern only to a limited portion of the population and although the advocates have formal political representation, the population and the representation are relatively small. The conflicts may be clear and intense, but with an intense one-sidedness that keeps it from registering in mass or expert surveys in the same way as more symmetrical conflicts about economics or broad cultural questions. This dynamic emerges in particular in especially countries with distinct but relatively small ethnic minorities groups such as Hungarians in Slovakia and Romania, and Turks in Bulgaria, Poles in Lithuania and Serbs in Croatia. It may also emerge with a lesser degree of distinctiveness among strong religious believers particularly in countries with a moderate Roman Catholic population.
- *Authority Dimension.* Other dimensions may be hard to measure because they lack a common definition or an open acknowledgement of goals by the advocates themselves.

Questions related to democracy are included in this category, since competition related to democracy may be more veiled and difficult for outsiders to parse than those based on economic or cultural questions (though these, too, may be less transparent than they seem from the outside). Institutional rules, however, can form an important basis of competition even when they do not take the obvious form of a “regime divide.” Leaders and voters may sometimes take sides on the basis of their willingness to surrender the basic principles of democratic competition in the interest of a higher goal (thus far primarily national or cultural). The infrequent major threats to the democratic systems of the region have coincided with these kinds of alignments (Haughton 2005, Deegan-Krause 2006, Fisher 2006): Croatia under Tuđman and Slovakia under Mečiar in the 1990’s and Hungary under the Orbán government in the 2010s. Romania and Bulgaria have also occasionally evoked a degree ongoing of concern in this regard as well as did Slovakia under Fico and Poland under Jarosław Kaczyński.

- *Corruption.* Other issues may also appear which do not seem to qualify as competitive dimensions at all because they lack key characteristics. Key among these is the question of corruption, which dominates political debate but poses a difficult classification challenge. Although it has become a ubiquitous issue in the Eastern and Central European region, it does not play a part of many surveys (especially expert surveys) because it closely resembles a valence issue: the question of corruption is something on which every party appears to agree. On the other hand, it is not a valence issue in the commonly used sense of “idiosyncratic” and randomly distributed. The valence issue of corruption has systematic characteristics. The question of leader competence may be simply based on leader personality and qualifications, but it may also depend on whether a party has been in a position to carry out (or fail to carry out) its political program. A party’s plausible position on corruption depends even more strongly a party’s position vis-à-vis government, with “out” parties and—to an even greater extent—“new” parties better able to take advantage of the issue.

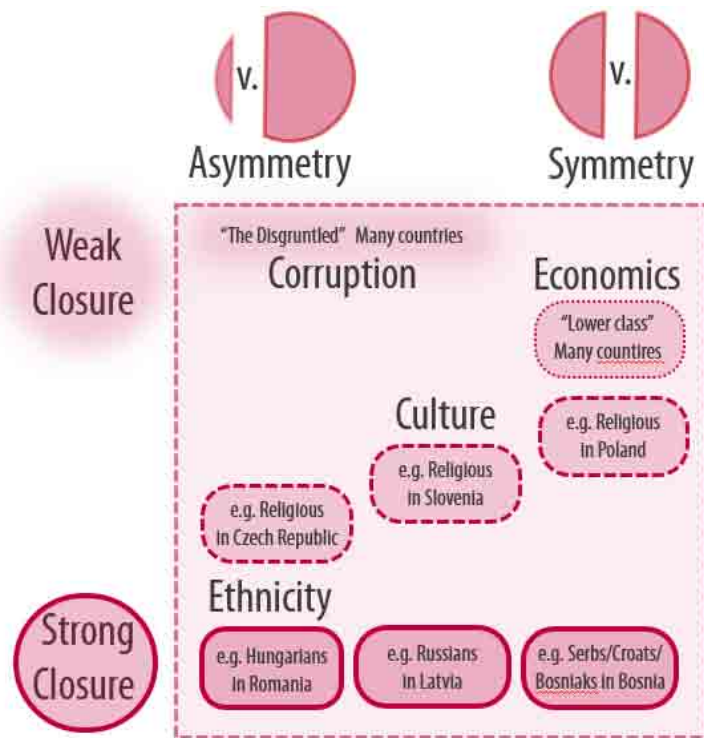
While these obscured competitive dimensions may not play a significant independent role, they can thoroughly reshape a country’s politics when they emerge in parallel with other configurations described here. The coincidence of a low number of relevant parties in Hungary and an apparent authority divide has profoundly affected Hungary’s domestic and international trajectory, and as the sections below indicate, the same can be true for the ethnic and corruption dimensions.

Roots

The previous section’s discussion of asymmetrical competition in the previous section proves particularly useful when combined with a discussion of the degree to which those differences are deeply rooted in society and correspond to a distinct population group. In general the main divides identified in the big expert surveys correspond to categories used in mass survey analysis, and the result is the evidence of broadly symmetrical issue divides that are rooted in societal differences but only weakly: workers are somewhat more likely to vote for the economic left; those who attend church are somewhat more likely to support the cultural right. Other divisions may become obscured by large multi-national surveys because, unlike questions of social class,

religious attendance, or rural residence, the nature of the ethnic categories is different in each country. Intense but small socio-demographic categories—ethnic, religious or occupational—may also escape simply because of their notice or because they do not fit well into a one- or two-dimensional framework.

Figure 6. Examples of Eastern and Central European political divides according to degree of symmetry and closure



Source: Adapted from Deegan-Krause 2013, 831

Before performing the quantitative analysis—or before even devising the questions used to gather the data—it is useful to look at societal divisions across the board in light of the interaction between depth and distinctiveness of the social roots and degree to which a question divides societies into roughly even sides. Figure 6 lays out the positions and examples in graphic form. Most commonly analyzed are the obvious society-wide conflicts in the upper right quadrant that provide the basic content national politics but do so on the basis of relatively weak and fluid support bases: the haves and the have-nots, the strict and the permissive. In the diametrically opposite corner, the lower left, are small groups with distinct political positions and closure around strong core of stable voters. It is important not to ignore such groups and the asymmetrical competitive dimensions they help create, both because such groups may hold the political balance and because folding such groups into calculations involving the broader society may incorrectly suggest a moderate overall rate of rootedness rather the actual distribution into small high-closure groups and others with little or no cohesion. The asymmetry between the sides in such cases is actually relatively fortunate, since symmetrical conflict among groups with such high closure, as found in the lower right quadrant, is hard to reconcile with persistence of the political system as a whole (at least without the risk of conflict or dissolution). The final quadrant, the upper left, involves amorphous concerns such as corruption which neither motivate

a large share of the population nor have roots deeper than a general dissatisfaction with those in power. But as the sections below indicate, the lack of closure and symmetry does not make such conflicts irrelevant, at least in cases when the parties that use such issues also differ in other significant ways from the rest of the party system.

Organization

The absence of systematic data here is always a problem, but it is quite apparent that in addition to the internal differences among parties within systems over what they compete about and how deeply rooted they are in demographic population bases, there are also significant differences in the levels of organization, such aggregates may mislead. Country-level surveys find that parties exhibit far less organization than others in a variety of areas, and the Rohrschneider and Whitefield surveys regarding the role of party membership and party apparatus find respondents giving almost 100% more weight to the role of membership in some parties than in others, and 50% more weight to the party apparatus. This is significant because country-level surveys also find a strong tie to the questions of competitive dimensions and rootedness above and questions of party birth and death discussed below. Respondents also tend to ascribe to those same parties an extremely high role for the individual leader (and, on party appeals, to the leader's charisma). Preliminary results from the Rohrschneider and Whitefield data suggests that new parties and notably anti-corruption parties tend to fit this pattern more closely than the older parties with other programmatic emphases which produced higher scores for the role of membership and apparatus.

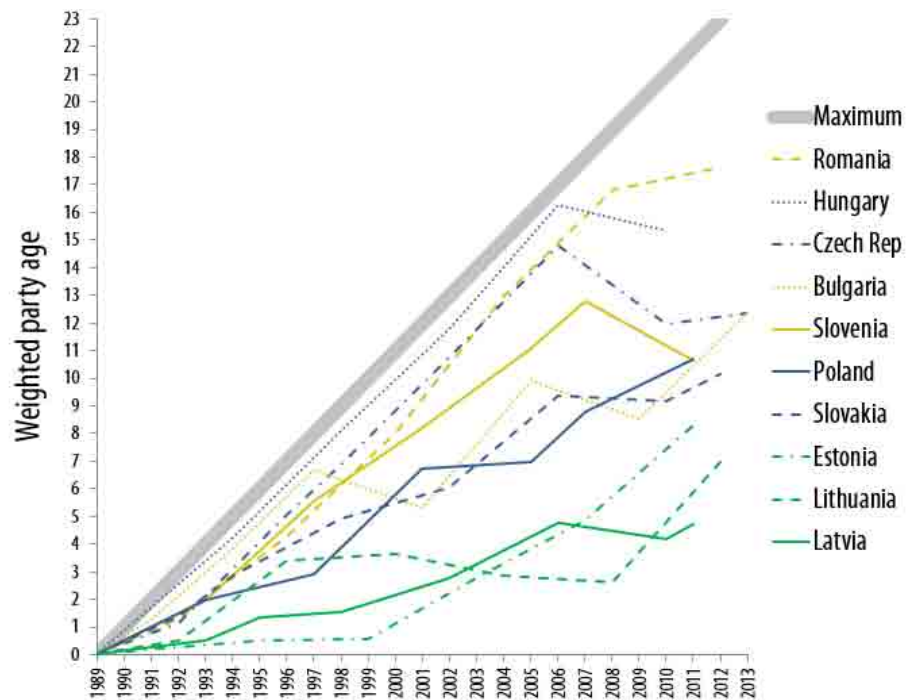
Persistence

As Powell and Tucker (2009) and Mainwaring, Espana and Gervasoni (2009) have noted, assessments of volatility hide two arguably different phenomena. One of these involves transfers within a stable core of party institutions while the other involves a fundamental degree of *institutional* change with comings and goings by various parties. Recent data by Powell and Tucker (2013) shows the range of intra-system volatility in Eastern and Central Europe to be relatively low in comparison to the extra-system volatility created when parties appear or leave.

Kreuzer and Pettai (2011) go one step further to measure this institutional novelty with a weighted average of party age. Applied to Central and Eastern Europe as a whole in Figure 7, this yields an extremely wide range—between five and eighteen years as of 2010, that correlates positively with the Powell and Tucker's volatility calculations for the same countries ($r=0.66$). But while these two measures must agree at the top and bottom of the range, (all new parties mean wide extra-system volatility; all old parties mean low extra-system volatility), they do not provide a sufficient picture of the middle realm where most parties lie. Toward this end, it's necessary to add an additional measure that looks at the actual distribution of party age. This reveals immediately (as close observers already knew) that the configuration of parties producing Bulgaria's eleven year average age is very different from that which produces the nearly identical figure for Poland. Whereas the Polish party system now consists largely of parties created in the early 2000's, Bulgaria's party system has no such parties and instead contains a bimodal distribution that combines parties created in the late 2000's with those that have existed largely unchanged since the beginning of the post-communist era. The dynamics here are strikingly

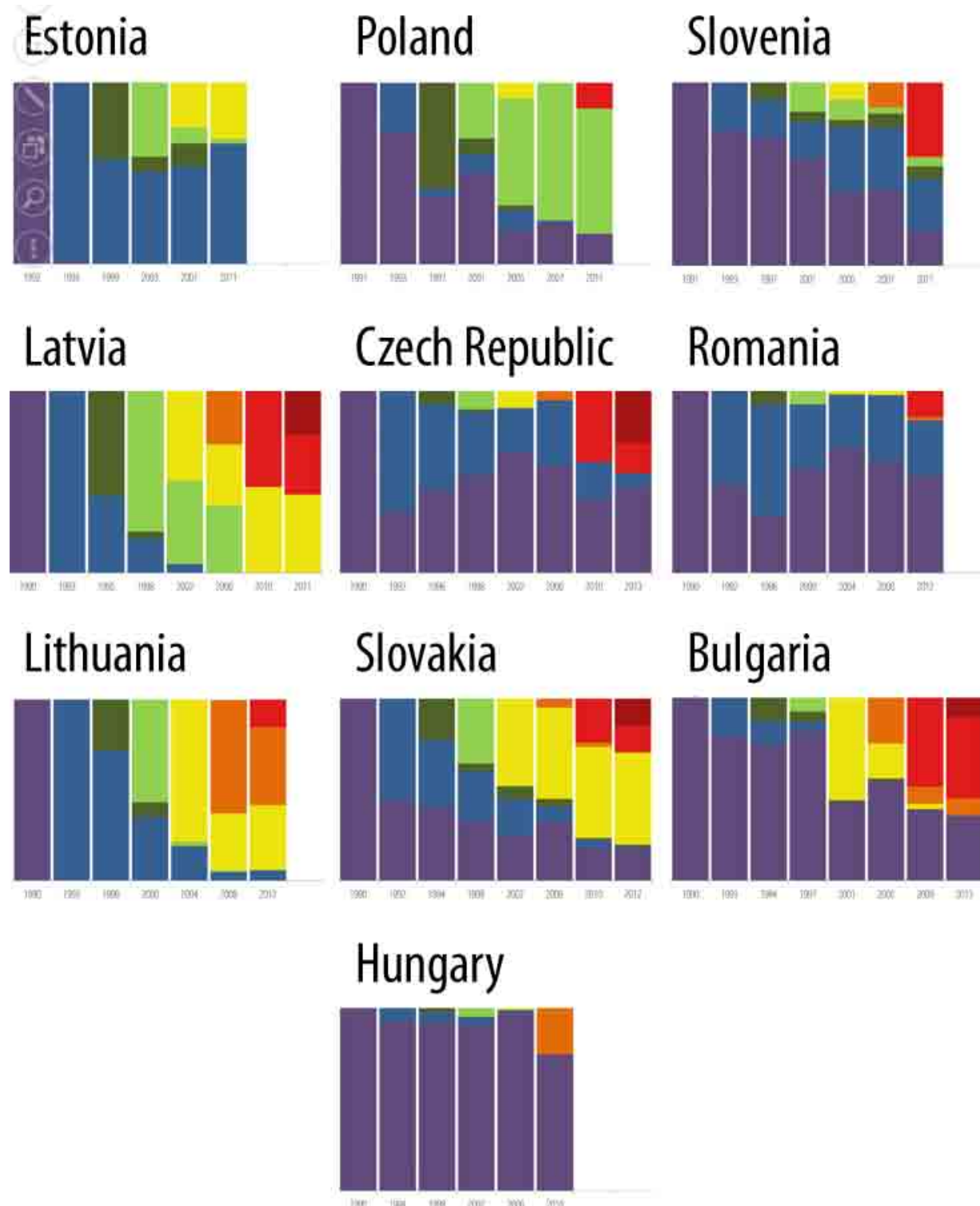
different. In one, case half the party system has remained stabile while the other has gone through continued churn. In the other, the entire party system changed radically and has since developed a degree of renewed stability. The color coded system in Figure 8 shows the share of votes in each election as a function of the period in which a party first appeared. An entirely blue band represents a party system in which all parties receiving votes were founded in the first election under consideration. An entirely red band represents a system in which all parties receiving votes were making their first appearance.

Figure 7. Weighted party average age for Eastern and Central Europe, 1990-2013



Source: Authors calculations based on Kreuzer and Pettai 2011, Berglund et al 2013 and Political Data Yearbook: Interactive, 2013

Figure 7. Party age diagrams for individual Eastern and Central European countries, 1990-2013

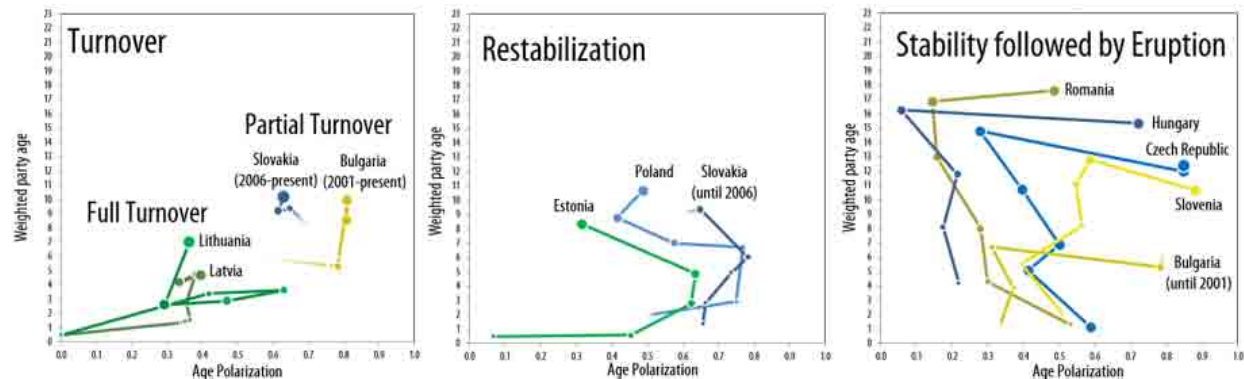


Source: Authors calculations based on Kreuzer and Pettai 2011, Berglund et al 2013 and Political Data Yearbook: Interactive

While the visual distribution is a useful technique for quickly grasping the differences, it is not an effective tool for comparing party systems to one another, and so we adapt a summary measure

from related fields and use Esteban and Ray's (1994) measure of distribution developed for income distribution (it is related to less sophisticated measures of polarization but slightly more responsive in its sensitivity to the relative weights and distances of all data points). This measure is highly responsive to widely spaced peaks (bi- and multi-modal distributions) and produces a higher value as the peaks move away from one another. Combining the measure of party age over time with measures of polarization produces several clear patterns, particularly in the middle realm of age where the weighted age category alone is most likely to obscure differences.

Figure 8. Weighted party system age and age polarization over time in Central and Eastern European party system



Source: Authors calculations based on Kreuzer and Pettai 2011, Berglund et al 2013 and Political Data Yearbook: Interactive, 2013

Figure 9 provides data for the region. The first panel, shows the stable aging of the Romanian party system thanks to the absence of any major new entrants: it progresses almost straight upward from the first elections to the most recent ones, its average party system age increasing by about four years during every four year election period, and, because of the absence of new entrants, developing a system in which all parties stand at the “old” end of the spectrum. The panel also indicates that at least until recent elections, Hungary, the Czech Republic and (to a slightly lesser extent) Slovenia followed a similar upward path, with systems composed almost entirely of old parties. The eruption of new parties—the Popular Party of Dan Diaconescu in Romania; Jobbik and Politics Can Be Different in Hungary; Public Affairs and Tradition, Responsibility, Prosperity 09, ANO 2011 and Usvít in the Czech Republic; Positive Slovenia and Virant's List in Slovenia—disrupted the uniform aging of the party system and split the party system into a substantial but diminished group of old parties and a smaller but significant group of new parties. The graph represents this as a sharp horizontal move to the left: the weighted average system age stops growing (or even falls) as very new parties displace some quite old ones, and the degree of age polarization increases sharply. As the panel shows, the patterns of Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovenia are not dissimilar to the pattern faced by Bulgaria in 2001 with the emergence of the Movement of Simeon II (NDSV). Whether they continue to follow the Bulgarian pattern is perhaps the key question for these systems.

The countries in the second panel offer one possible scenario for stabilization. The panel shows the paths of Poland, Slovakia and Estonia which experienced similar eruptions and displacements in the early 2000s but in which the average party age began to grow again in the

latter half of the decade as some the parties founded in the 2000s survived and even grew. The third panel shows alternatives in which stabilization either did not take place or stalled. In the previously discussed Bulgarian example, the eruption of NDSV pushed the party system into a situation of lower age and bi-polar distribution between old and new. Had Simeon's party flourished, Bulgaria's party might have again moved toward the upper left in the pane, but its support gradually evaporated over two election cycles and other new parties emerged to replace it, and so Bulgaria hovered in the middle right of the panel, with the average age of the party system remaining constant and the bipolar age distribution unchanged. Slovakia's political party system after its 2006 stabilization shows some of the same pattern, with new parties emerging to supplant old ones on the country's right and in its Hungarian minority, but Slovakia occupies a different position than Bulgaria on the polarization axis: whereas Bulgaria's party system is split between parties that first campaigned either in 1990 or 2009, Slovakia's system is more unipolar, dominated by parties that first campaigned in 2002, with smaller shares for parties beginning earlier and later. In Latvia and Lithuania each election saw the new parties of previous elections displaced by even newer entrants, resulting in almost complete party system turnover every four-to-eight years. These countries also hover in one quadrant of the graph, with an even lower average age than Bulgaria and with no polarization between young and old because parties simply have not survived to enjoy old age.

Assessing the parties

Revisiting the overall party system assessments does not completely undermine the marginally positive evaluation of the first section, but it does begin to point out patterns and potential sources of difficulty and begins to put a conceptual framework around the most disconcerting phenomena. The first important combination of party-level traits is the linkage between an authority-based issue divide and a low number of relevant parties (as long as the authority-based parties are among the few relevant ones). This pattern, repeated in several countries, should be a source for immediate concern by those concerned with the endurance of democracy, but these combinations are usually most apparent only once the elections have happened and the winners have demonstrated their willingness to usurp power. The second, less dangerous combination relates to the deep-rootedness support for parties representing minority ethnic concerns (and sometimes religious ones) arrayed against a range of political parties representing the majority that are at best unconcerned and at worst actively hostile. These deep but asymmetrical conflicts are significant in many countries in the region and may spark the creation of a much shallower and more symmetrical debate about the role of identity within the majority community that can, in some circumstances, contribute to the creation of the authority-based issue divide. The third and most ambiguous combination is the broad the confluence of a number of characteristics including a particular emphasis on corruption, weak rootedness, weak organization and leader-focused parties, and recurring novelty which has been a feature in nearly every country in the region, and has recently come to play a role even where few expected it (the Czech Republic and Slovenia). The next section of the paper looks in particular at this combination of elements, and argues that it reflects something more than a coincidence and has the potential in some cases to become a stable and recurring set of patterns.

“[NEW] IS THE NEW [OLD]”

THE “NEW PARTY DYNAMIC” AS PARTY-LIKE SUBSYSTEM

That many of the “deviating” characteristics of individual parties described above tend to go together is cause for further investigation. The phenomena of high extra-system volatility—high age polarization, eruptions and partial or total turnover—combined with emphasis on corruption issues, low organization and leader-driven, low rootedness characterize not all parties in these systems but only a limited and distinct party of the party systems. The tendency of the patterns to endure and to recur across the region (popping up suddenly even in party systems once thought immune (Casal Bértoa 2012) suggests that this is more than an accident. Nor is the instability random, but instead continue for at least several election cycles and involves the apparent replacement of some new parties by similar but even newer ones. As Kreuzer and Pettai astutely observe, “[i]nstability can have patterns just as distinct as those of stability” (2003, 78). Further work, however, is necessary to understand the shape of instability (95). The instability of Eastern and Central European party systems appears to have a fairly consistent shape, and it is one that that is itself fairly stable over times and contains discernible mechanisms for its own replication.

Conceptualizing the sub-system

The patterns found in the previous suggestion offer at least a preliminary indication that many countries in the region have been developing two competing and only occasionally intersecting sets of parties, one in which a relatively stable number of long-standing parties compete along socio-economic or cultural lines, build organizations and build some degree of structured links to voters. The first set on their own could be seen as comprising a coherent party system that looks very much like the model predominant in the west. The second set could likewise be seen as comprising a party system consisting of an ever-shifting list of newcomers. It is therefore a useful exercise to explore whether these two sets represent relatively independent sub-systems of a single overarching party system.

In such cases Sartori provides a useful starting point. Sartori’s work describes systems as “bounded, patterned and self-maintaining interdependencies” (1976, 39) and defines two basic conditions: “(i) the system displays properties that do not belong to a separate consideration of its component elements and (ii) the system results from, and consists of, the patterned interactions of its component parts, thereby implying that such interactions provide the boundaries, or at least the boundedness, of the system.” (39). He further understands such systems as nested, such that he often refers to the party system as the “party subsystem” of the broader political system. While he does not refer to subsystems *within* a particular party system, his definition creates the grounds for such entities, as long as they fulfill the conditions of significant relational elements (which make the whole greater than the sum) as well as patterns and boundedness. Within the literature on political parties, the notion of a “sub-system” has made occasional appearances to describe the regular interactions among groups of parties sharing a common programmatic (and fairly distinctive) ideology and voting base. Hanley uses it to describe the “semi-permanent constellation of parties” around the French Socialist Party which he refers to as the “plural left.” (2003, 87). Strmiska introduces the concept to describe regard to parties in distinct ethno-regional enclaves such as Euskadi/Pais Vasco and Catalonia in Spain, Sardinia and South Tyrol in Italy, and Montenegro in the former Yugoslavia which

compete primarily with one another and without much reference to the party system of the rest of the country (1997). These usages fit nicely into Sartori's framework and they actually help to illuminate several instances discussed above, particularly the phenomenon found in the deep, asymmetric divides inhabited by ethnic minorities in which parties compete, merge, split and remerge without fundamentally altering the overall position of the minority group.

The use of "subsystem" to describe the new-party phenomenon described above is a bit more unusual. It pushes the boundaries of the party subsystem concept but does not (I hope) break them. Subsequent sections of this paper show that on many of the "system" characteristics it performs quite well: it is a realm of party competition that is in many countries sharply bounded by programmatic desires for a replacement of the existing power elite and its corrupt practices and by a bloc of voters and leaders who stand apart from that system. It also exhibits clear patterns of party emergence, success, cooptation and decline, its programmatic and electoral space filled by the emergence of another party that follows the same trajectory. Unlike, the "plural left" or "ethnonational" subsystems, however, the parties in question often do not compete directly against one another, since new parties often do not emerge in the space until a previous incarnation is in severe decline. The patterns of competition are thus occur over-time rather than across a geographical or ideological landscape, but the relationship between the decline of one party and the emergence of another means that there is a whole which is greater than the parts. The phenomenon described here is not merely a series of unrelated parties or a continuation of the same party "in-name-only." The notion of a "new party subsystem" combines aspects of the "minority" subsystem discussed above—multiple parties sharing a common and distinct pool of ideas, voters and elites—but understands these along an inter-temporal dimension that has more in common with "system" as used, for example, in discussions of "systems of succession" which establish patterns by which political offices change hands (Goody 1996; Przeworski 2009).

The use of the subsystem concept is particularly useful because the inter-temporal change of names and personalities obscures certain fundamental continuities that help make sense of how these systems operate. Treating the succession of such parties as a subsystem is a way of capturing the elements that resemble elements of single party (Sartori himself notes that "each party can be perceived ... as a 'system', meaning that each party is as such a microcosm of its own and indeed a miniature political system.") without making the conceptual stretch of actually treating the string of new players as an undifferentiated party. It thus nicely fills the role intended for "system" of describing something that is neither a unitary actor nor a random collection.

Use of the "subsystem" concept is also useful because it creates expectations and frameworks for defining the patterns and measuring the boundedness. The phenomena discussed above can be considered to form a coherent subsystem only if there is a specific pattern of party interaction and succession and only if parties actually do occupy a distinct demographic and programmatic space and attract a coherent set of voters (and sometimes leaders) who shift from to the next. The next two sections lay out the framework and offer some initial evidence.

This change has been noted in a variety of places. What has not been studied in depth is the degree to which these various phenomena intersect, and the degree to which they have the capacity to reinforce one another over time.

Hypothesizing the pattern

Aside from party billboards during election season, one of the most beautiful sights in the sky of Eastern and Central Europe is the flocking of the common starling (delightfully called murmurations, <http://www.theepochtimes.com/n3/275964-starlings-paint-pictures-in-fascinating-facts/?photo=1>), but since the mid-1980's computer modelling specialists have argued that the birds' ever-changing and intricate patterns can be explained by a multitude of individual actors using a very small number of simple rules (Reynolds 1987). The complicated patterns of new party replacement in the region appear to have a similarly condensed set of underlying principles. While the rules are not sufficient to explain every aspect of the subsystem described here, three basic dynamics can produce results indistinguishable from the volatility diagrams cited above—not only volatility but also party age and even distribution of party age:

1. Parties sometimes suffer rapid, significant losses of support
2. Supporters leaving parties opt for new parties instead of established ones
3. The newer a party is, the more likely it is to suffer rapid, significant losses of support.

Figure 10 presents these three rules as a flowchart showing the cascade effect created when all three rules are in operation. When they are not all in operation, the result is extremely different. Omission of dynamic 1 leaves the flowchart static at E1. Omission of dynamic 2 sends voters from E1 to E2 (and perhaps at some future point from E2 back to E1). Omission of dynamic 3 leaves the flowchart static at N1 at least for some time. All three together produce the full effect described above.

Figure 10 Flowchart of support flows according to new-party subsystem dynamics 1-3.

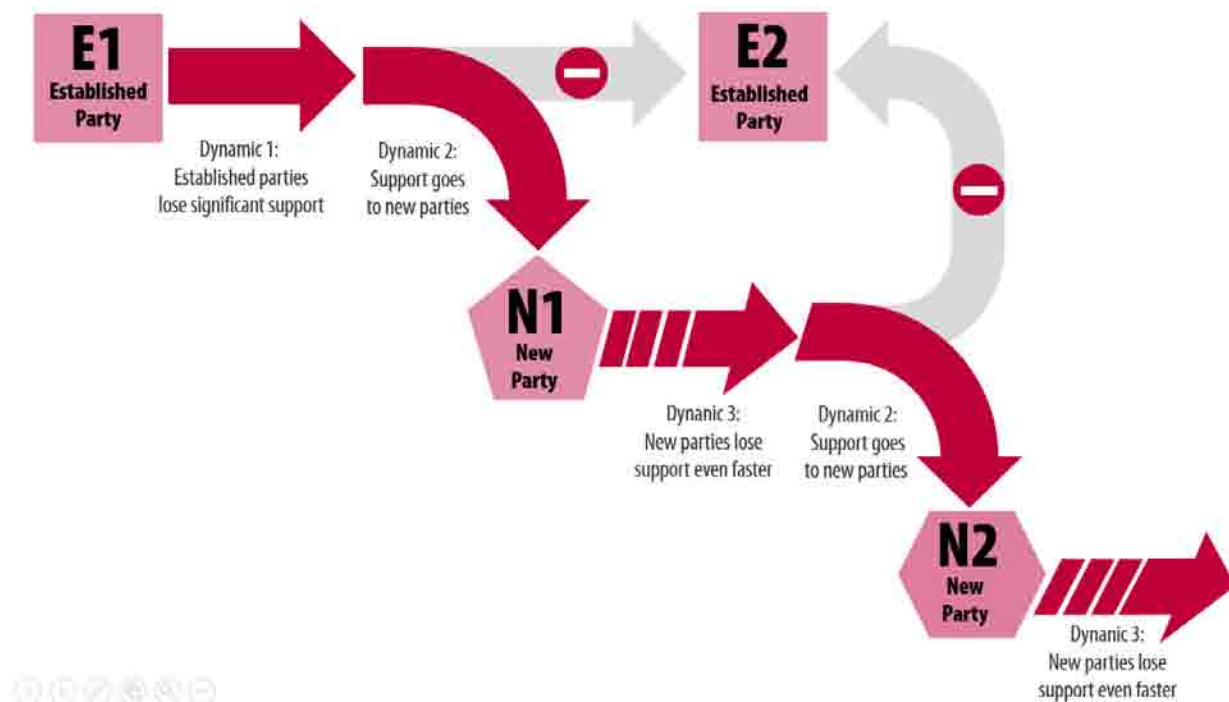
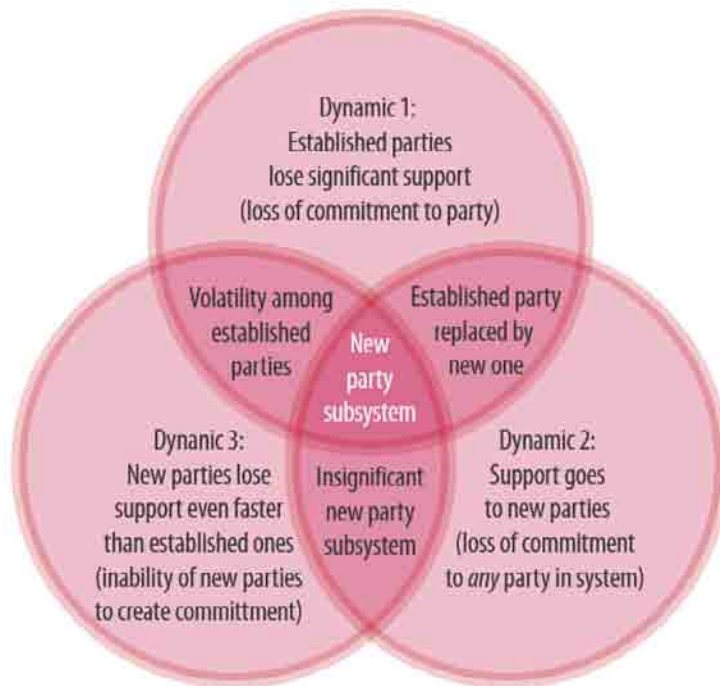


Figure 11 presents the same dynamics in an alternative form that addresses in greater detail the consequences of any one of these dynamics alone and in tandem with any of the others. Only all three together produces the full subsystem effect described above.

Figure 11. Relationships among new-party subsystem dynamics 1-3.



It is a simple matter to use these three dynamics to create a basic computer model of the emergence of a new-party subsystem that exists parallel to (but distinct from) the established parties (which together could be conceived of as an alternate subsystem (albeit one whose parties have little in common except their greater age and reluctance or inability to use the appeals based on corruption). Introducing a small amount of random chance into the birth and death, growth and decline of individual parties (but without altering the model at all) produces graphs that are indistinguishable from the party age distribution diagrams for actual countries presented above. Figure 12 presents results from four randomly chosen simulations.

Not only do the simulations in Figure 12 closely resemble the general pattern, but each comes quite close to resembling a particular country. The dominance of 3rd election parties in Simulation A (while some 1st election parties endure and new parties continue to replace one another) bears a striking resemblance to Poland and to Slovakia, as does Simulation B (though the major eruption of a new party in the 8th election bears closer resemblance to recent developments in Slovenia and the Czech Republic. The rapid decline of 1st and 2nd election parties and subsequent periodic replacement of much of the party system in Simulation C resembles Latvia and Lithuania. Simulation D, produced with the exact same dynamics, gives evidence of what can happen when the 1st generation parties do not give way; it presents a picture nearly identical to Croatia's and similar to Romania's.

Figure 12. Simulations of party system age distribution using new-party subsystem dynamics 1-3 (dynamics held constant, specific party birth, death, growth and decline subject to randomization, first four simulation results chosen, none excluded)

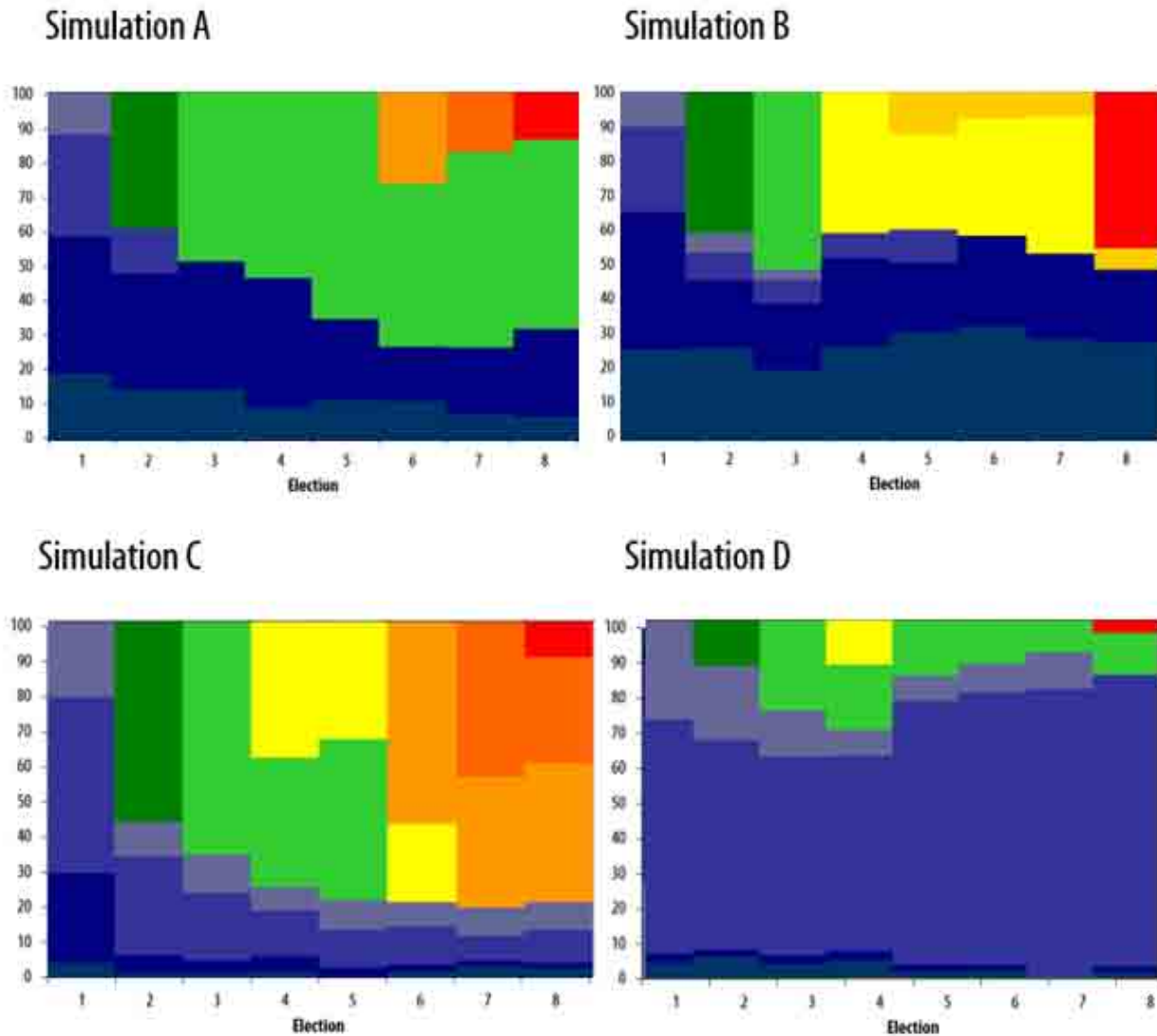
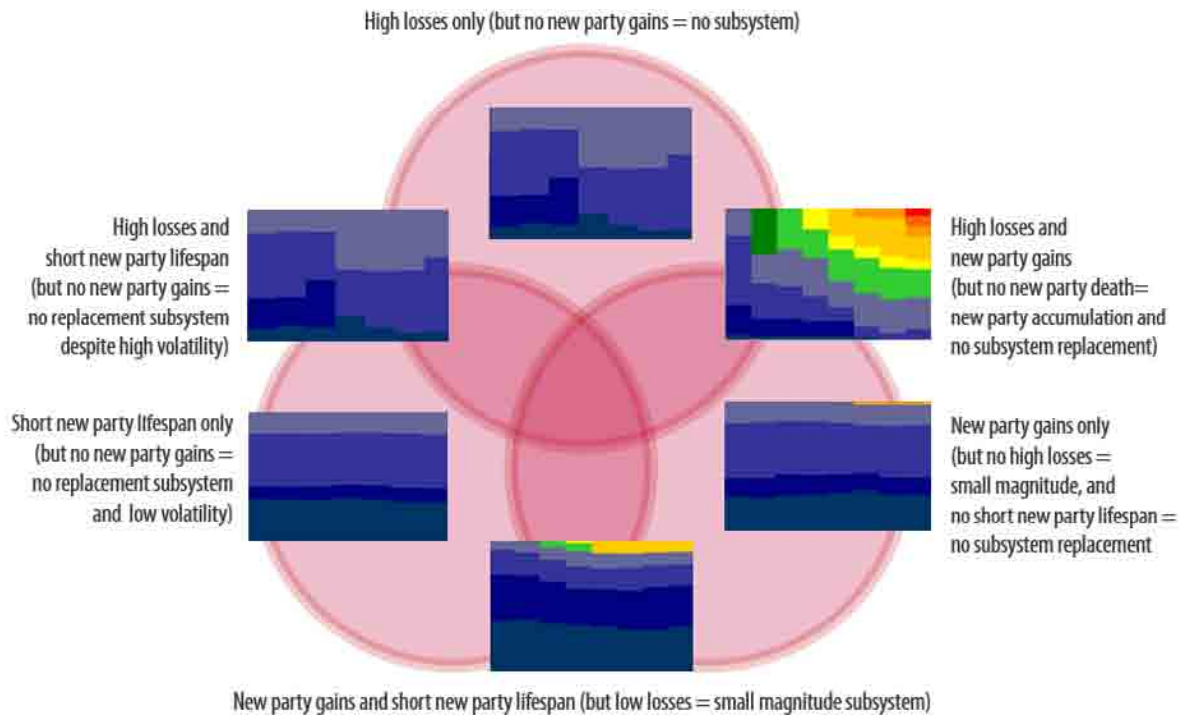


Figure 13 Simulations of party system age distribution using subsets of new-party subsystem dynamics (dynamics held constant, specific party birth, death, growth and decline subject to randomization, first simulation results chosen, none excluded)



Not only do the rules above produce strong facsimiles of actual party systems, but any alteration in the rules produces quite different results. Figure 13 shows the patterns that emerge when only one or two of these conditions is in place, again using randomly chosen simulations.

As the lower half of the diagram suggests, if parties maintain their support levels, there is little or no chance for the cycle to start or to grow beyond a sliver of the overall party system. As the top left and center of the graph shows even big losses by established parties will not lead to the cycle unless those losses accrue to the benefit of new parties. Finally, even if established parties lose significant votes to new parties, a true subsystem will not emerge unless new parties have shorter lifespans. In that case, new parties accumulate over time, and the system will lack the high polarization characteristic of the new party subsystem described here.

These six variants suggest that the “ideal-type” party system model of Western European countries during the second half of the twentieth century (and continuing in some countries to the present day) depended on the presence of low volatility (though sometimes new parties gained a small foothold) or low new party gains (though sometimes established parties lost significant support to *other* established parties). Only the combination of high losses and new party gains produces the basis for the patterns found in Eastern and Central Europe and only the shorter life-span of new parties produces the hypothesized new-party subsystem based on replacement rather than an accumulation of parties from every election.

Exploring the preliminary evidence

The subsystem dynamics go beyond empirical patterns found at the party level. There are also traces of strong, mutually-reinforcing that help to explain the patterns found in the parties of the new-party subsystem. Considerable research remains on the strength and causal direction of these relationships, but the initial case appears to be a strong one:

- **Competition.** Parties in new-party subsystem are more likely to compete on anti-corruption issues. Sikk observed that for these parties, “newness” was itself a kind of programmatic appeal in the face of perceived corruption by those who had been in power (2012). The anti-corruption appeals on which these parties compete tend to have a relatively short shelf life compared with other issues, however, because those in a position to do anything about corruption are likely themselves to face the suspicion (and often the reality) that they have become corrupt themselves.
- **Roots.** Voters for parties in new-party subsystems tend to be younger and are more likely to be first-time voters. Other voters for these parties are also—by definition—those who have chosen to switch their party preference and those who are dissatisfied with existing offerings. There is therefore good reason to believe that many voters for such parties are already disinclined to cast repeat vote and others have no prior experience at all. If dealignment is understood not as a process affecting all voters equally but one that affects certain segments of the population more than others, then parties in these new-party subsystems are most likely to attract the voters with the loosest possible connections to parties, and each subsequent iteration of the subsystem cycle will create more voters who have made multiple changes of party preference. To the extent that habit-based theories of voting apply in such cases, the dominant habit in such a subsystem will be *change*. It is not unjustified in this context to replace notions of “dealignment” with “dealignability.”
- **Organization.** Parties in new-party subsystems are less likely to engage in traditional large-scale organizational development. Tavits (2013) finds significant differences in organizational capabilities among different kinds of parties, and the Rohrschneider and Whitefield survey finds that in nearly every country in the sample, parties created within the past 10 years were less likely to be associated with membership and party apparatus than were older parties. While new parties frequently engage in extensive use of social media and other online mechanisms (whose effects are only now becoming the subject of careful investigation), Tavits’ finds conclusive evidence that strong *traditional* organization is closely associated with a party’s ability to retain its voters.
- **Leadership.** According to the Rohrschneider and Whitefield survey, parties created in the past 10 years were considerably more likely to be associated with their leaders than were older parties. They newer parties were also more likely than older ones to be associated with a leaders’ charismatic appeal and less likely to be associated with programmatic or solidaristic appeals. This of course could be simply a reflection of parties becoming more programmatic as they get older (the life-cycle effect discussed by Van Biezen, 2005), but it is still relevant if leadership dominance makes parties more vulnerable. The research on this question is inconclusive, but anecdotal evidence suggests that strong leadership is associated with steeper support trajectories, both positive and negative.

The stronger these relationships are, the more likely they are to reinforce one another and the more likely that such parties will form a distinct subsystem rather than blending and merging into the broader party system by adapting, building organizations, choosing other issues. The porosity of the system, the degree to which parties can and do make alternative choices is part of the utility of the subsystem concept which is intended not as a universal description of what all new parties do, but as a set of dynamics that can be used to assess the cyclical and self-reinforcing nature of these parties' inter-temporal relationships.

"A [LESS THAN] WISE PERSON'S QUESTION CONTAINS [LESS THAN] HALF THE ANSWER."

WHAT WE STILL NEED TO KNOW?

The arguments above raise more questions than answers. Those questions in turn provide a useful guides for the next step in our research.

Why only now?

The previous section offers an account of the confluence of changes that help to account for the emergence of new-party sub-systems, but these do not explain why the cycle started in the first place. Haughton argues that none of the "traditional" explanations—underlying structures, prior regime type, mode of transition, societal divides—helps explain the emerging dynamic (2014). Moisés Naím's *The End of Power* (2013), a book currently making the rounds in the circles of policy and punditry, makes the more general argument that power has become "easier to get, harder to use and easier to lose." He sees this as a worldwide phenomenon covering virtually all aspects of life, but some of his most specific claims concern changes in political parties. He argues that "Across Europe, an array of left-wing, right-wing, ecologist, regionalist, single-issue, and in some cases, downright eccentric parties like the Pirate Party International have taken advantage of new arenas to gain respectability and take votes away from traditional players.... The small "pirate" parties have always existed but nowadays there are more of them and their ability to limit the choices of the megaplayers is felt in most of the world's democracies." Naím's mechanisms, however, are far from standard and in a way not entirely useful for social scientists. They include two structural changes that he labels "more" and "mobility", which by which he means that "there are more people today, more of whom live fuller and healthier lives" and that "they move around a lot more" making them "harder to control and coordinate" and removing the potential for a "captive audience." The third shift Naím sees is a cultural change by which "people look at the world, their neighbors, employers, clergy, politicians and governments with different eyes than their parents did" and therefore take "nothing for granted." While these general mechanisms are not directly useful, they (and other explanations offered in similar works) help to focus attention to more specific changes that have occurred over the last decade related to communication (social media, ubiquitous media, economies of attention), finance (the concentration of wealth and the awareness of corruption), psychology (individualization and dealignment). While the task is not an easy one, it is possible for the scholars in the discipline to explore the role played by each of these at the macro-level in political outcomes and at the micro-level in accounts of political party development.

Why only here?

If this phenomenon has global causes, why is it only happening in Eastern and Central Europe? The answer is that it is not. Party systems across the world suggest evidence of similar subsystems (Latin America, Asia). But they should also be happening in Western Europe and there the evidence is mixed. There are certainly cases in Western Europe that show some signs of this dynamic, but it certainly does not rise to the level of Eastern and Central Europe. The answer—and one of the strengths of this model—lies in its understanding of the interaction between broad forces and existing institutions.

The process affects party systems only insofar as it affects individual established parties. The full effects of the forces producing party change will not be felt until events that significantly weaken an established party or significantly strengthen a new one, and these will not happen in every country at the same time (and may not happen at all). A certain threshold thus governs the beginning of the process, and it is likely to differ significantly from country to country based on system-level protections and on individual party strength. Where established parties are strong or can restrict new party entry (bolstered by institutions such as electoral systems or party finance laws) and where they can avoid accidental losses, an opening simply may not appear, or it may not be big enough to create a self-sustaining subsystem. It is notable that in many established democracies countries where there has been a major party collapse or the intrusion of a new party—such as Netherlands, Greece, Israel, Japan or Italy—the system has not returned “to normal” but has experienced relatively higher levels of subsequent volatility, particularly extra-system volatility.

Should we worry?

There are a number of ways to look at this emerging subsystem, but the first reaction of many experts is that the constant emergence of new parties, either in part of the system or in full, poses a threat to democracy. The arguments are straightforward. Vertical accountability in democracy depends on the ability of voters to reward or punish elected officials for their behavior in office. If officials do not intend or do not expect to have a chance of re-election under the same electoral label, they will not expend energy or take risks to fulfill their promises or pursue their voters' preferred policies. Horizontal accountability depends to some degree on long-term interaction and elites who have less expectation of remaining on the political scene may also have less incentive to play by the established rules of the political game. Long term public policy success, it may be argued, also depends on long-time horizons, and officials without the expectation of longevity in office will pursue short-term, immediate gain over long-term investment in public goods that will produce eventual electoral reward. Each of these arguments needs long-term consideration, but there are several fairly strong counterarguments, some of which relate to the impermanence of subsystem and others of which relate to the lack of danger should it persist.

New party subsystems are not inevitable?

The countries of Eastern and Central Europe themselves provide a series of examples of countries in which the major political parties have avoided death and excluded competitors. Even with changes of name, new electoral coalition partners and the emergence of the Popular Party of Dan Diaconescu, the Romanian party configuration remains relatively intact. The same is true for the

political party system of Croatia, though the new Labour Party experienced a minor breakthrough in the most recent election. It could of course be that these systems have not *yet* experienced the eruptions/extinctions that have affected other cases (and much the same could have been said of the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia in late 2009). But established parties are capable of learning, and by combining the strengths in organization and rootedness that can be enhanced by longevity with new communication techniques and perhaps a degree of celebrity leadership, such parties may be able to continue their domination of the system.

New party subsystems are not irreversible because new parties can change?

Parties can change. There is a whole area of parties that have restored. The stabilization dynamic in the second panel of Figure 8 above provides direct evidence from Slovakia, Poland and Estonia that political parties within an emerging new-party subsystem *can* break the cycle. A closer look at those particular cases—a subject we address in a different article (Haughton and Deegan-Krause 2014)—suggests that new parties with longer time horizons are able to build relatively strong party structures and persuasively position themselves on more enduring axes of competition, particularly socio-economic and cultural questions. Anecdotal evidence further suggests that parties are best able to make these transitions when they have the leisure to do so *outside* of government. Rapid entry by new parties into government may provide them with access to resources but it may do more harm than good by exposing them to opportunities for corruption, to voter hyperaccountability and to the overstretch of small organizations that must staff both party offices *and* ministerial posts. Strong personal leadership is less unambiguously harmful, but the positive role that a charismatic individual may play in starting a party can be outweighed even in the medium term by the baggage of the same individual (particularly when there is suspicion of personal corruption) and by the lack of internal accountability mechanisms and of outlets that might defer splits by ambitious junior members.

New party subsystems are not irreversible because new party voters can change?

If voters opt for new parties because they will be less corrupt and more honest than established parties, it should theoretically follow that multiple experiences with new parties that fail to deliver and become corrupt themselves might discourage voters from trying yet another new option, but on this the possibility the evidence is weak and there remains much work to be done. We lack the longitudinal panel data to test this hypothesis at the voter level, but election-level case studies suggest that the new party dynamic tends repeat itself over at least two election cycles and can continue considerably longer in some contexts. Even in countries where the competition has stabilized after a second or third cycle, certain vulnerabilities of the second-generation established parties such as Smer in Slovakia and Platforma in Poland threaten a repeat of the cycle.

New party subsystems are not dangerous because systems adapt?

The first is that new-party subsystems may not sever the links any more completely than existing party and party system relationships. In the first place, coalition governments already obscure lines of responsibility that allow voters to hold parties fully accountable and yet the existing efforts made by some voters to reward or punish appear sufficient to maintain at least a degree of restraint by political leaders, as do the expectations of the leaders themselves. The success of lotteries and casinos provides rather strong evidence of an innate belief in personal luck, and to

the extent that new party founders believe in their own exceptional skill and good fortune, they will not abandon all attempts to mollify supporters just because other new parties have failed. And while some may think that they can remain in the political game under some other guise, even this escape plan entails the fairly high risk that the subterfuge finds its way into the headlines.

The last decade provides the basis for empirical tests, since we can compare new party emergence patterns with externally derived scores for governance and other measures. While these require full multivariate treatment and comparison across various measures, it is worth initial assessment of the data shows no relationship between the presence of a new-party cycle and a variety of accountability and governance measures in the region, either in terms of absolute level or change over time. (World Bank 2013). On a more concrete level, significant new-party subsystems in the Bulgaria do not appear to have produced markedly more dissatisfied voters or notably worse public policy than in neighboring (and similar) Romania, for example, and the eruptions of new parties in Poland and Slovakia during the early-2000s did not appear to produce worse results than in Hungary or the Czech Republic. On the other hand, intra-country analyses in specific areas offer some evidence of specific negative effect of new parties on effective policy and representation.

If we *are* right to be worried, what can we do?

Those who do not see the new-party subsystem as an enduring problem are fortunate in at least one sense because they do not need to search for potential solutions. Although the prevention of party system entrances and exits is one of relatively few areas where leaders from existing parties on all sides of various political divides might reach consensus, there are few options that offer much hope for success. The best options involve stopping one of the three underlying dynamics or mitigating the outcome.

Keep established parties alive? On this score there seems little hope for a policy-based solution. The use of all possible means to stay viable in the electoral realm is one area where parties do not need encouragement. Parties in the region already engage in a certain amount of life-support by using the resources of the state, but deliberate use of this method is questionable not only in terms of ethics but also in terms of effectiveness since association with the state and its policies also has a political cost that may be greater than the benefit (See Roberts). Extension of benefits across coalition-opposition lines might improve the chances for success and deflect accusations of self-dealing, but here there is little incentive for those in power since they may (often incorrectly) perceive a newcomer as a weaker adversary.

Keep new parties from forming? There is considerable research on new party formation, but the cycle described above is much more closely related to the small subset of new parties that win big. More research on these parties might help reveal mechanisms that would keep energy, money and votes within the existing party system, but if established parties have not already acted in their own interests to do this, it is difficult to imagine how it might be done. Furthermore it is essential that such efforts not remove the opportunity for new parties as a genuine safety valve against increasingly oligarchic systems. It might be more appropriate, therefore, to address the reasons why breakthrough new parties start in the first place including involve encouragement of

intra-party democracy, or at least the rotation of party leadership might help to prevent splintering. But there are few effective models for imposing this responsibility from outside or for other effective mechanisms to keep leadership rivals from jumping ship to create their own new entities.

Keep new parties accountable?

The biggest potential danger of new parties lies not in their newness but in their lack of incentive to behave as if they will be around for a long time: to undertake policy efforts with long-time horizons, to listen, to remain uncorrupted. The challenge for the next decades may not be to keep old-timers alive or to keep new parties out but to create structures that *compensate* for party weakness. Indeed if conjectures such as Naím's are correct, the same structures that erode parties will also erode all sustained public policy efforts and even established civil society groups. But the same underlying societal changes also produce new resources for organization and information. These tend to be less institutionalized, but they bring capabilities of their own, and perhaps if there is a concerted effort to emphasize long-term goals it may be possible to use the new capabilities to achieve some of the same goals. Perhaps.

What else do we need to learn?

Each of the sections above points directly to a new set of questions that will need more research and additional evidence. In addition to everything discussed above, there are also some additional questions that need to be made explicit:

We need to understand the role of money in these interactions. The last ten years have produced a strong shift in public opinion and academic research toward the view that the economic and political interests are inextricably bound together (Innes 2013), and for some the only real question is simply which one predominates. This changing environment is clearly has an effect on questions of corruption, new party breakthrough and party survival, but untangling the threads is difficult, particularly because there is a vested interest by all sides in hiding the political-economic relationships

We need new approaches to study causality in an environment *extra*-system volatility? The causes of party decline and new-party emergence are particularly difficult to study and difficult to disentangle from one another, since the choice of a political party is almost always intrinsically related to the availability of alternatives, and now the alternatives include not only existing parties but also new entrants and even hypotheticals poised to enter.

We need to understand whether there is an underlying similarity between volatility patterns in Eastern and Central Europe and in Latin America, Africa and Asia where party systems seem even more fluid and for which Sanchez has even suggested the category of the "non-system". We would also profit from understanding why some systems—particularly those in the former Yugoslavia and parts of the former Soviet Union—have demonstrated such *low* degrees of instability.

Finally, we need to understand whether the changes we are seeing in the West—the emergence of parties such as the List of Pim Fortuyn and the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy in the Netherlands, the Five Star Movement in Italy, the creation of small new parties and the

breakthrough of SYRIZA in Greece, the emergence of Kadima and Yesh Atid in Israel, the Restoration and Tomorrow parties in Japan---are following the same patterns for the same reasons or whether these are actually phenomena that are distinct from those in Eastern and Central Europe (and potentially distinct from one another).

“TO ARRIVE WHERE WE STARTED AND KNOW THE PLACE FOR THE FIRST TIME”

WHY WE STUDY EASTERN EUROPE

We cannot understand politics in Eastern and Central Europe if we do not understand the region's political parties. Both the near collapses of a few democracies, and the survival of the rest amidst grumbling and dissatisfaction are the direct result of how parties interact. Whether as autonomous actors or as channels for other forces—and there is evidence that parties play both roles (Enyedi 2008)—parties and the systems they comprise are an obvious place to begin. Those parties and their new-party subsystems may also be the place where we begin to emerging trends in parties and politics in the rest of Europe and the rest of the world. Eastern and Central Europe now faces the same headwinds as the rest of the world, and its loosely anchored political institutions have been blown further and faster. New, short-lived parties have been part of Eastern and Central European politics for well over a decade and if short-lived political institutions driven by money and charisma and anti-establishment rage are here to stay, then Eastern and Central Europe is the place to start studying them. In habitants of Eastern and Central Europe may be surprised to find that for once they have gotten a share of the future ahead of everybody else. They will probably not be surprised that their reward contains such mixed blessings.

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