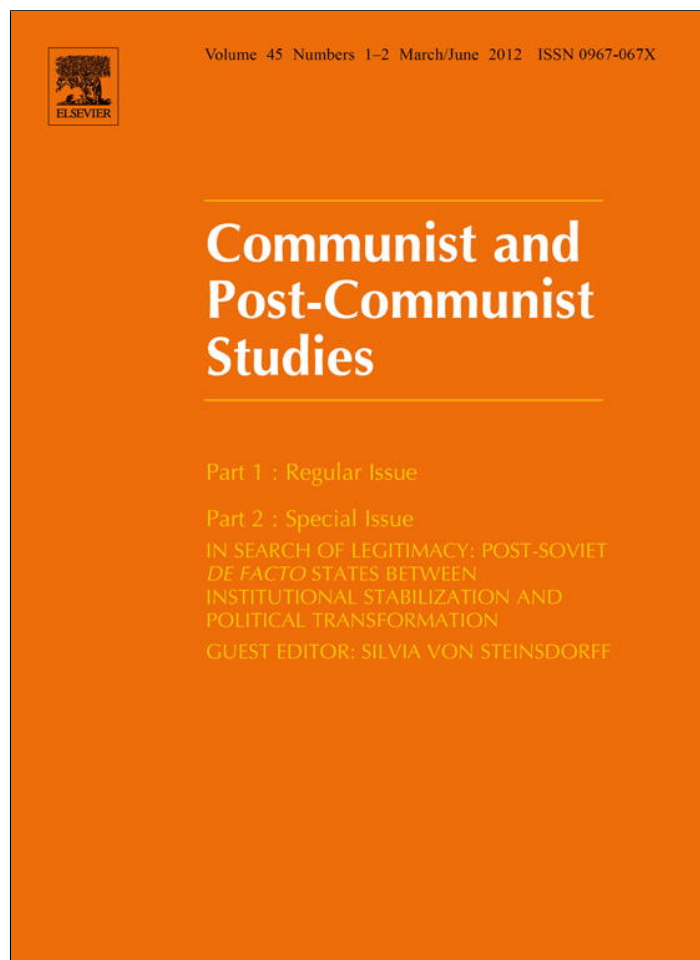


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# The Nationalization of political parties and party systems in post-communist Eastern Europe

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## ABSTRACT

Party system nationalization is a crucial aspect of political competition. The territories of Eastern Europe have often been characterized by outstanding levels of territorial heterogeneity. However, during and after World War II ethnic cleansing and forced migration resulted in more homogeneous nation states, and these trends were significantly reinforced by bureaucratic, centralized communist rule. I present a systematic empirical assessment of party and party system homogeneity or heterogeneity in post-communist Eastern Europe and will discuss some major macrosociological and institutional factors determining the degree of party and party system nationalization such as the political consequences of social diversity and political cleavages, legacies of the communist regimes, electoral systems, and federalism.

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## 1. The nationalization of politics

Party system nationalization is a crucial aspect of political competition. By highly nationalized party systems, I am referring to those in which the significant parties' vote shares do not differ much from one regional area, notably an electoral district, to another. In contrast, regionalized party systems are characterized by a substantial variance of the major parties' vote shares across the various regions constituting the respective national polities.

From a historical perspective, Eastern Europe has often been characterized by a striking level of territorial heterogeneity. Numerous weak national states were created from the ruins of the Habsburg Empire following World War I. Many of these states were ethnically and socially diverse. Consider, for instance, the Hungarian minorities spread all over the region after the Trianon Treaty. While Central and Eastern Europe were some of the most diverse regions in ethnic, social, religious, and linguistic terms, the picture dramatically changed with the outbreak of World War II. Above all, ethnic cleansing and expulsion resulted in more homogeneous, yet still weak and dependent, nation states. Furthermore, the territories of Eastern Europe succumbed to bureaucratic, centralized communist rule. The peoples of Eastern Europe were confronted with centralizing communist political systems that aimed at radically leveling and standardizing their societies.

In political science, the territoriality of politics has been a cornerstone of historical assessments of nation-building and the development of mass democracy in Western Europe.<sup>1</sup> Party system nationalization as a dependent variable has been explored by students of the historical evolution of political cleavages (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967), of electoral systems (Cox, 1999), or of

<sup>1</sup> Most important were the seminal contributions by Lipset and Rokkan (1967) and Rokkan and Urwin (1982). However, with the exception of some studies focusing on spatial issues in U.S. party politics, for instance the concept of "sectionalism" Schattschneider (1960), very little systematic empirical work has been published. Stokes (1965, 1967) was the first to analyze the nationalization of the U.S. party system applying sophisticated methodological and statistical tools ("the variance components model").

federalism (Chhibber and Kollman, 1998, 2004). Scholars observing political transitions of the “third wave” have defined nationalization and institutionalization as major criteria of party system consolidation (Mainwaring and Scully, 1995). As an independent variable, the nationalization of party systems structures national political competition, determines the government’s ability to pursue collective policy goals, is a catalyst for secessionist tendencies, and exerts a significant influence on the impact electoral systems may place on party systems (Sartori, 1986).

In this article, I focus on the first perspective, the analysis of nationalization issues as a dependent variable. Regarding the empirical basis of the analysis, I have selected eleven post-communist countries guided by the principles of a “most similar systems design” (Lijphart, 1971, 1975): Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, and Ukraine. Conceptually, my focus on Eastern Europe is justified by the peculiarities of the “double” intertwined transition in the political sphere and in “stateness” that they display. Empirically, the degree of party system nationalization exhibits considerable variation across the selected countries and time periods under analysis.

The subsequent line of arguments proceeds in three successive steps: First, I review some major historical, sociological, and institutional arguments (Section 2). Having clarified my theoretical assumptions, I turn to a discussion of the issue of proper empirical measurement of the nationalization/regionalization issue. Moreover, I comment on the data and sources while providing descriptive empirical information on the nationalization of party systems in eleven selected East European countries (Section 3). The ensuing section systematically presents evidence on the empirical links between party and/or party system nationalization and the major explanatory variables (Section 4). The final section concludes and outlines some promising avenues for further research (Section 5).

## 2. Theoretical arguments on party and party system nationalization

In the theoretical section, I review four major theoretical strands that may be employed as explanations for the nationalization or regionalization of party systems in post-communist Eastern Europe: (i) I argue that the cleavage-driven explanation that has been cogently argued and empirically shown by Caramani (2000) cannot be applied to the analysis of post-communist politics. (ii) Instead, I show that post-communist party systems are still predominantly affected by communist *Anciens Régimes* and their historical legacies. (iii) I also control for electoral coordination within and linkage across electoral districts formalized by Cox (1999), and (iv) the political consequences of federalism as proposed by Chhibber and Kollman (2004).

### 2.1. Cleavages and voter-party linkages

To date, Caramani (2000, 2004) has provided the most extensive analysis of party system nationalization. Both his theoretical argument and empirical research are deeply rooted in the long-term historical developments of West European electorates. Caramani builds upon the historical, comparative analysis of political cleavages. Essentially, preindustrial cultural cleavages, such as the instance of religious, ethnolinguistic, and urban–rural cleavages, are supposed to be principal causes of fragmented, regionalized party systems. In contrast, political cleavages that originated from industrialization, most notably the conflicts between labor and capital, liberal and conservative world-views, and the overarching left–right dimension, exert a homogenizing influence on party systems. As a consequence, the general trend toward the emergence of nationalized party systems in the early twentieth century is explained by the shift from territorial toward functional cleavages, while remaining differences in the degree of party system nationalization are attributed to persistent distinctions between the major countries of Western Europe. Empirically, Caramani (2000, 2004) builds upon an unparalleled wealth of comparative information on district-level electoral returns taken from seventeen West European countries. The period of time covered by his analysis includes more than 180 years, beginning with the first fully documented election in Norway in 1815, and ending with the most recent elections up until 1998.

However, only part of the argument can be fruitfully applied to the analysis of party system nationalization in Eastern Europe (for a systematic account cf. Mair, 1997). I briefly review some major contextual differences which set apart established democracies and post-communist countries: First of all, in comparison to established democracies, the electorate of newly democratized countries are far more open and more available for political competition; they also tend to be more volatile and more uncertain. These differences are in many respects due to discrepancies in the mode of democratization in West and East European countries. In Western Europe, democratization meant the extension of the right to participate in regimes in which the principle of political contestation had already been established. However, in Eastern Europe democratization meant establishing the principle of contestation in systems that had already introduced formal elements of public participation. I argue that these differences in the mode of transition prevent a substantial, long-term “freezing” of party alternatives comparable to Western European experiences and the hypothesis presented by Lipset and Rokkan (1967).

Secondly, these differences in the mode of transition also lead to unstable electoral constituencies and shaky party foundations. Post-communist party systems are less likely to be underpinned by strong political cleavage structures. This is, however, not to say, as suggested by some “tabula rasa hypotheses” (Evans and Whitefield, 2000), that East European electorates are totally homogeneous or that they lack any differentiation based on social stratification, ethnicity, religion, *et cetera*. There are many lines of social division and/or political conflict that are (or may become) the basis of programmatically

structured conflict.<sup>2</sup> But regarding the long-term organization of political conflict and its “exploitation” by political entrepreneurs, post-communist party systems are still very weakly institutionalized, even in comparison to other third wave democracies, for example, in Southern Europe or Latin America. By far, the level of electoral volatility is the highest in Eastern Europe and all parties, even the ones referring to historic labels, are in fact “new” parties without any established organizational or parliamentary record. Recent elections in post-communist Eastern Europe again underscore that the formidable volatility and instability of East European electorates have not yet been overcome. Concerning the eleven post-communist countries in the analysis, there is, in absence of solid and temporally stable political divisions which deserve to be labeled “cleavages”, and in absence of a more or less continuous, longstanding historical process toward the evolution of competitive mass democracy, no option of focusing on the political consequences of a long-term, cleavage-driven evolutionary process, as Caramani (2000, 2004) did for the established democracies of Western Europe.

With these caveats in mind, I include the cleavage-driven argument as a control variable. While the original concepts suggested by Lipset and Rokkan (1967) are almost impossible to operationalize, I follow conventional practice and use a weighted count of social groups, the Effective Number of Ethnic Groups, as a simple proxy for social diversity and heterogeneity, that is,  $N_{\text{eth}} = [\sum g_i^2]^{-1}$  with  $g_i$  denoting group  $i$ 's proportion of the overall population in a country. Empirical data on ethnic fragmentation is, for instance, provided by Anckar and Eriksson (1998).

Hypothesis 1: The impact of social diversity

While the legacy-based argument cannot be fully applied to post-communist Eastern Europe, one may expect socially heterogeneous countries, as indicated by a higher Effective Number of Ethnic Groups, to be associated with territorially heterogeneous party systems.

## 2.2. Communist legacies and transformation issues

Having discussed the cleavage-driven argument, I now turn to the peculiarities of transitions from communist rule and the current context of post-communist politics in Eastern Europe. So far, I have *grosso modo* drawn some distinctions between “established” democracies and newly democratized countries. But there are also vast differences in the contextual factors which significantly affect the options to build representative democratic structures among the post-communist countries in Eastern Europe. For instance, Kitschelt et al. (1999, 21–42) distinguish between three different types of socialist *Anciens Régimes* that are in turn connected to the preceding economic and political realities in inter-war Europe and to the divergent pathways of postcommunism:

- (1) *Bureaucratic-authoritarian communism* corresponds to the ideal type of totalitarian systems (Linz and Stepan, 1996, 40–51; Linz, 2000). The party state is organized by an all-powerful, rule guided bureaucratic machine; at its core a disciplined, hierarchically stratified communist nomenklatura governs and controls the political process and the economy. Bureaucratic-authoritarian rule occurred in countries with considerable liberal-democratic experience in the inter-war years and in which early and comparatively advanced industrialization took place. This specific legacy type is presumed to provide the most favorable conditions for the emergence of stable, programmatic party competition and thus for the nationalization of party politics.
- (2) In the second type, *national-accommodative communism*, the state apparatus and governance structures are less developed and professionalized. This regime type is likely to prevail in countries that emerged from semi-democratic or semi-authoritarian inter-war politics with a rather vibrant political party mobilization. Economically, there had been steps toward industrialization, but by and large the basis remained in the agricultural sector. The legacies of national-accommodative communism are expected to lead toward a mixture of programmatic (as opposed to personalistic, charismatic, or clientelist) linkages of parties and voters and thus to medium levels of party and party system stability and nationalization.
- (3) Finally, *patrimonial communism* relies on vertical chains of personal dependence between leaders in the state apparatus and their entourage. The state apparatus remains in a very low state of bureaucratic professionalism, and politics is dominated by patronage and clientelist networks (Eisenstadt and Roniger, 1984; Kitschelt and Wilkinson, 2007). In extreme cases, these regimes are dominated by “sultanistic” rule of an individual and his family (Linz and Stepan, 1996, 51–54). Legacies of patrimonial communism regularly undermine the chances for the emergence of programmatic linkage structures; rather, they lead to personalistic, or clientelist linkages, to weakly institutionalized political parties, and to low degrees of party and party system nationalization.

Behind the three principle regime types there are varying configurations of economic development and political mobilization which constitute the dimensions of the path-dependent model. Table 1 reviews the eleven countries under analysis with respect to (1) the social and historical legacies of the communist *Anciens Régimes*, (2) the timing of industrialization, (3) political stability in the inter-war years, and (4) the mode of transition.

<sup>2</sup> For an overview of political divides in post-communist countries (Kitschelt et al., 1999, 64–69) who delineate five major “party divides”: (1) “political regime divide”, (2) “economic-distributive divide”, (3) “socio-cultural divide”, (4) “national-cosmopolitan divide” and (5) “ethnic divides”.

**Table 1**

Communist legacies and the potential for nationalized party competition.

Country	Communist legacies <sup>a</sup>	Timing of industrialization <sup>b</sup>	Democratic quality in inter-war Europe <sup>c</sup>	Mode of transition <sup>d</sup>	Σ <sup>e</sup>
Czech Republic	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	8.0
Hungary	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.5	4.5
Poland	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	4.0
Slovakia	0.5	1.0	2.0	0.5	4.0
Estonia	0.5	1.0	1.0	1.0	3.5
Latvia	0.5	1.0	1.0	1.0	3.5
Lithuania	0.5	0.5	1.0	1.0	3.0
Bulgaria	0.0	0.0	0.5	0.5	1.0
Romania	0.0	0.0	0.5	0.5	1.0
Russia	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Ukraine	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Notes: adapted from Kitschelt (1995).

<sup>a</sup> *Communist legacies* (ordinal); 0 = patrimonial communism; 1 = national-accommodative communism; 2 = bureaucratic-authoritarian communism.<sup>b</sup> *Timing of industrialization* (ordinal); 0 = late industrialization; 1 = transition to industrial society in inter-war Europe; 2 = early industrialization.<sup>c</sup> *Democratic quality in inter-war Europe* (ordinal); 0 = no or only limited democratic experience in inter-war Europe; 1 = liberal-democratic intermezzo followed by internal breakdown; 2 = liberal democracy without internal breakdown.<sup>d</sup> *Mode of transition* (ordinal); 0 = preemptive reform; 1 = negotiated transition; 2 = implosion of party bureaucracy.<sup>e</sup> Sum of individual scales; composite index (*Legacy*) = sum of the individual scales.

The index derived from these four dimensions is a revision of the proposals developed by Kitschelt (1995, 457). Rather similar classifications are to be found in Evans and Whitefield (1993), Whitefield (2002) and Klingemann (1994). Regarding its principle impetus, the index is embedded within the broader class of arguments concerning modernization theory by capturing various historical stages of both economic and political development and links these modernization levels to the actual post-communist pathways taken by the respective countries. Note that the index presented here closely follows the work by Kitschelt et al. (1999) and allows countries that were part of a shared state under communist rule, for example, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, to be placed in different legacy types. This typology has received substantial criticism, but results from and is justified by the contextual differences that existed well before communism.

Empirically, among the eleven post-communist countries in the analysis, the single pure case of bureaucratic-authoritarian communism is the Czech Republic. In the category of national-accommodative systems, there are Hungary and Poland. However, there are some countries that do not unambiguously fit into a clear-cut category. Slovakia and the Baltic States are classified as a mix of national-accommodative and patrimonial communism. Finally, the remainder of the Soviet successor states, Russia and the Ukraine, alongside with Bulgaria and Romania belong to the clear-cut category of patrimonial communism.

Social scientists have employed legacy-related arguments to account for the diverse pathways to democracy and for the diverse patterns of post-communist democratic governance among the East European countries. Most significantly, Kitschelt et al. have linked communist legacies to the emergence of, alternatively, programmatic vs. personalistic, clientelist linkage mechanisms of parties and voters (Kitschelt, 1995; Kitschelt et al., 1999; Kitschelt and Smyth, 2002). My principle argument builds upon this literature and the related empirical findings. I argue that programmatically structured, temporally stable party systems which followed *bureaucratic-authoritarian communism* are associated with high levels of party and party system nationalization. In contrast, personalistic, clientelist linkage of parties and voters, which occurred following *patrimonial communism*, allows for, and leads to, the regionalization of political interests, clientelist networks, and thus to territorially heterogeneous parties and party systems.

Hypothesis 2: The impact of transformation issues and communist legacies

The hypothesis consists of two complementary perspectives: From a structural point of view, I expect homogeneous party systems to be positively related to the *legacy index*. Adopting a more dynamic perspective, I hypothesize the levels of party system nationalization to increase with system time ( $t$ ).

### 2.3. Electoral systems and electoral districts

In the following section, I will elaborate on the institutionalist arguments. Analyzing the political consequences of electoral systems, the major point of departure is Duverger's analysis of the effects of electoral systems on party systems, that has been dubbed "Duverger's Law" and "Duverger's Hypothesis" by Riker (1982). The "Law" states that "the simple-majority single-ballot system [=plurality] favors the two-party system" (Duverger, 1954, 217); the "Hypothesis" proposes that "the simple-majority system with second ballot [=majority] and proportional representation favors multipartyism" (Duverger, 1954, 239).

However, at the country level, the association of electoral systems and party systems is nothing but an empirical generalization, while the true causal effect resides at the district level. Building both on classic statements of formal theory and on the inductive tradition of data analysis in comparative political science, Cox (1997) was able to strengthen the causal argument, broaden its applicability, and to attach conditions to its functionality. Formal modeling restricts the causal argument to

the district level and posits that in each single-member plurality district there will only be a maximum of two viable candidates in a game-theoretic equilibrium. Next, Cox extends his argument to multi-member districts. As a “direct generalization of Duverger’s Law”, he suggests that there may be no more than  $M + 1$  viable candidates in each district of the magnitude of  $M$  seats (Cox, 1997, 99).

The argument formalized by Cox comes in the two successive steps of strategic coordination within the electoral districts and across these districts. Scholars concerned with the national-level quantities of substantive interest have thus begun to address the “linkage of viable competitors” across electoral districts. “Linkage” or, in other terms, the “nationalization of party systems”, should become considerably more complicated when there are many electoral districts and, hence, many distinct local electoral races. In addition, majority and plurality systems that tend to consist of many single-member districts are more likely to be affected by the “personal vote”, rendering the local election a special case and seriously hampering the emergence of nationalized political competition (Carey and Shugart, 1995).

Electoral systems are thus another key factor for explaining the nationalization of party systems. First, “strong” electoral systems, that is, some version of majority or plurality, are generally expected to erect high thresholds of political representation. The higher these entry barriers, the more one might expect the party system to be dominated by the more significant political parties that command sufficient organizational capacities and a country-wide political infrastructure. However, on the contrary, in the post-communist context of rather unstructured political competition, the various districts of majority/plurality systems tend to offer special opportunities for locally based candidates. In this perspective, a high degree of heterogeneity may be produced when certain candidates base their appeals on the peculiarities concerning the electoral race at the local level so that a considerable degree of heterogeneity may creep into the respective party systems. As a result, concurring with established hypotheses, majority and plurality systems tend to erect high thresholds of representation at the country level, while they tend to establish low entry barriers at the district level (Taagepera, 2001, 2002).

Regarding the measurement of electoral system “strength” on a single dimension, the dominant approach has been to “broaden” the concept of magnitude to not only include the (average) district magnitude but also the effects of legal thresholds, adjustment seats, and remainder transfers, as suggested by Taagepera and Shugart (1989, 127–155):  $M_{\text{eff}} = \min [M; 100\%/T_{\text{leg}}]$  with  $M_{\text{eff}}$  denoting the *Effective Magnitude* at the country level,  $T_{\text{leg}}$  denoting the legal threshold, and  $M$  denoting the average district magnitude.

Hypothesis 3: The impact of electoral systems

Permissive electoral systems characterized by high *Effective Magnitudes* ( $M_{\text{eff}}$ ) tend to be associated with homogeneous, nationalized party systems, while “strong” electoral systems are supposed to preserve inter-regional diversity in electoral competition.

#### 2.4. Federalism, centralization, and decentralization

From an institutionalist perspective, federalism exerts a major impact on basic features of political competition and, as well, on the nationalization of political parties and party systems. Among others, Chhibber and Kollman (1998, 2004) suggest a link between federalism and the formation of nationalized or regionalized party systems and imply that centralized states also tend to have centralized political parties and party systems. Before I provide a more detailed outline of the theoretical argument, I will briefly turn to the content of federalism. According to the well-established definition by Riker (1964), I consider a political system “federalist” if

- (1) Two levels of government rule the same land and people,
- (2) Each level has at least one area of action in which it is autonomous,
- (3) There is some guarantee (even though merely a statement in the constitution) of the autonomy of each government in its own sphere.

(Riker, 1964, 11).

However, with this definition in mind, it is almost impossible to classify empirical cases into the clear-cut, distinct theoretical categories of federal and unitary states. Moreover, from an empirical point of view, the concept of federalism does not strictly apply to Eastern Europe. The three ideal types of federalism in the region, the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia, broke apart following the collapse of communist rule while their successor states and the “old” national states are substantially marked by the legacies of bureaucratic centralism and hence organized as central states. While the Russian Federation remains the sole remaining case of a formally decentralized system, there is considerable evidence of the ongoing forceful expansion of the authority of the Kremlin relative to Russia’s regions. As a result, there is unfortunately not much variance in the degree of federalism among the East European countries covered in the analysis.

Filippov et al. (2004) highlight the crucial role of nationalized political parties for stabilizing the sometimes complicated federal polities. Nevertheless, in all countries under analysis political power is naturally divided to some extent between central and non-central authorities. National governments, even in formally “centralized” states, have to negotiate and share political power with lower-level political entities. Due to the multilevel structure of political authority, Chhibber and Kollman (2004, 79) suggest that “as national governments increase their authority over policies that voters care about, voters and candidates will become increasingly concerned with having a voice in national legislatures”. Hence, parties and party systems

will become nationalized if most matters of public concern are decided by the central state, while they will be more regionalized when considerable political authority rests at the state or regional levels. This argument does not only apply to a cross-national, static perspective, but also concerns the evolution of modern government. As the powers of central governments have increased in almost every country during the twentieth century, it might be utilized as an explanation for the historical process of party system nationalization and is thus a rival hypothesis to the historical, cleavage-driven approach supported by Caramani (2004).

Both Chhibber and Kollman (2004, 233–237) and Filippov et al. (2004, 5–11) have suggested applying the degree of fiscal autonomy by subnational levels as a proxy for empirical decentralization. In principle, a larger role for the central government should make party systems more national, while substantive influence of regional or state levels should preserve territorial heterogeneity. If, for instance, political decision-making grows more and more centralized and political authority is transferred from the lower to the higher levels of government, voters and parties face additional incentives to coordinate with these higher levels. In simple terms: The larger the role of the national government, the more nationalized political parties and overall party systems are expected to be. However, as I have shown, it is almost impossible to typologically disentangle the various “layers” of political authority which might be established in any federal system. In this analysis, I have opted to take empirical information as a yardstick. Data on the subnational governments’ revenues share of the total government revenues will serve as a proxy for fiscal decentralization. On a yearly basis, these data are provided by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), as part of the Government Finance Statistics (<http://www.worldbank.org/>).

#### Hypothesis 4: The impact of federalism

Fiscal centralization tends to promote the emergence of homogeneous, nationalized party systems, while high degrees of fiscal decentralization encourage heterogeneous, regionalized party systems.

### 3. Descriptive evidence on the nationalization of parties and party systems

In this section, I will elaborate on conceptual perspectives with a focus on measurement issues, indices of party nationalization, and descriptive inferences.

- (i) I first discuss alternative ways to distinguish between territorial homogeneity and heterogeneity.
- (ii) Following this, I provide detailed information on the data and data sources that have been used in the analysis.
- (iii) I finally present some systematic descriptive evidence on party nationalization across different party families and across the different countries selected for the analysis.

#### 3.1. Measuring the nationalization of political parties

There is considerable consensus regarding the appropriate operationalization of party and party system homogeneity or heterogeneity. Most indices are based upon some measure of the dispersion of votes received by a certain party across various regional entities.<sup>3</sup> For instance, Jones and Mainwaring (2003, 139) define nationalization as “the extent to which a party receives similar levels of electoral support throughout the country”. Thus, a considerable degree of nationalization refers to party systems in which the significant parties’ vote shares are more or less stable from one geographical region to the other. On the other hand, in weakly nationalized party systems these vote shares differ widely across the various geographical entities. Indices of party system nationalization are meant to assess the extent to which subnational units, for instance electoral districts, do in fact approximate national vote patterns.

In general, empirical research has settled on a consensus regarding the measurement of party or party system nationalization. Any established indicator focuses on aggregate electoral returns and assesses the variation of the vote shares obtained by candidates or political parties from one geographical unit to the other, most frequently these units are electoral districts. However, specific statistical issues of which index is the most appropriate have been at the center of tough disputes.<sup>4</sup> In a systematic review, Caramani (2004, 58–70) has empirically evaluated the statistical properties of several nationalization indices. His assessment is especially concerned with two major sources of systematic bias: (1) indices are substantially influenced by the size of electoral parties, that is, the magnitude of the parties’ vote shares; (2) indices are systematically linked to the number of regional entities, that is, the number of electoral districts. Methodological approaches which fail to account for these influences therefore tend to yield misleading and sometimes bluntly wrong results. The remainder of this section carefully introduces indices and measures to assess the degree of homogeneity or heterogeneity of distinct political parties and, most importantly, overall party systems, as well as reviewing their statistical properties:

<sup>3</sup> An alternative operationalization strategy could focus on the temporal change or persistence of party systems in various regions. These measures do require data on at least two elections. However, analyzing data from Eastern Europe, the overall instability of party systems and the frequent reforms of electoral rules render this approach fairly impractical (Caramani, 2004, 59–60).

<sup>4</sup> These conceptual issues are not a special feature of or limited to the nationalization of political parties or party systems. Measuring and distinguishing equality and/or inequality has been a major issue in recent discussions about social or income inequality and on electoral research. For instance, Taagepera and Grofman (2003) have reviewed a “zoo of indices” measuring electoral volatility and the disproportionality of electoral systems and rated 19 indices on 12 criteria. Although they deal with substantially different topics, their insights in the appropriateness of various indices may well be transferred to the nationalization topic at stake, as these indicators share one common property: they deal with the conceptualization of equality and inequality.

- (1) *Territorial Coverage* ( $Cov_j$ ): The first measure regarding the nationalization of politics is territorial coverage. This quantity resembles the share of electoral districts in which a certain party  $j$  is able to present candidates or party lists. Hence,  $Cov_j$  is an indicator of the spread of political parties across electoral districts. Specifically, there is a significant advantage of  $Cov_j$ . While the other indicators put an emphasis on the inter-regional stability of voting patterns, territorial coverage relates more directly to the behavior of political parties and their decision either to enter local political competition in a certain district or to abstain from it. Hence, considering  $Cov_j$  a dependent variable helps to shed some light on the supply side of the “electoral market”.
- (2) The *Standard Deviation* ( $SD_j$ ): The other indices are more concerned with the demand side of elections. Variance and standard deviation are basic measures of descriptive statistics and the most commonly used indices of statistical dispersion. The variance of a variable, in this case of the vote shares  $v_{ij}$  by a certain political party across the various electoral districts, is revealed by summing the squared differences of the actual values from their respective overall mean and then dividing the sum by  $N - 1$ ; subsequently, the standard deviation is computed as the square root of the variance:  $SD_j = [(1/N - 1)(\sum(v_{ij} - \bar{v}_j)^2)]^{0.5}$  with  $v_{ij}$  denoting share of the vote obtained by a party  $j$  in the electoral district  $i$  and  $\bar{v}_j$  the respective party's mean vote shares across all districts. High values of  $SD_j$  indicate the territorial heterogeneity of party  $j$ , while low values flag a more constant political support across various regions. There are also certain problems with employing the standard deviation as an empirical estimator of party system nationalization. In particular, the standard deviation varies with the mean of the variable at stake. Hence, I expect  $SD_j$  to take on considerably higher values for larger parties than for smaller ones.
- (3) The *Variability Coefficient* ( $CV_j$ ): As a solution to numerical dilemmas of the standard deviation, the variability coefficient has been forwarded. This measure is based on the same substantive reasoning as variance and standard deviation, but corrects for the abovementioned bias when the standard deviation is divided by the parties' mean vote shares:  $CV_j = SD_j/v_{ij}$ . High values of  $CV_j$  signify territorial heterogeneity of party  $j$  while low values flag more constant political support across various regions. In contrast to the standard deviation, the variability coefficient  $CV_j$  controls for party size and assigns equal weight to each party regardless of its specific vote share. There are also some conceptual problems with  $CV_j$ . The variability coefficient assigns substantial importance to often very insignificant, small, regionalized or regionalist political parties. Moreover, the index is supposed to be heavily influenced by the number of regions, in this case electoral districts, included in the sample (Caramani, 2004, 62). Thus,  $CV_j$  proves to be a somewhat problematic measure for cross-national comparisons when there are distinctly different numbers of electoral districts employed by different electoral systems in divergent countries.
- (4) The *Gini Coefficient* ( $G_j$ ): An alternative index of vote dispersion, the Gini Coefficient, builds upon a somewhat different concept of statistical dispersion, that is, the homogeneity or heterogeneity of partisan vote shares across electoral districts. Unlike  $SD_j$  and  $CV_j$ , it is not based on the concept of mean squared deviations, but defined as a ratio of the areas of the Lorenz curve:  $G_j = \sum(\delta Y_{i-1} + \delta Y_i)(\delta X_{i-1} + \delta X_i)$ . The Gini Coefficient provides a standardized, bounded measure ( $G_j \in [0,1]$ ) and ranges from 0 in the case of perfect homogeneity of electoral support for party  $j$  to 1 in the case of maximal heterogeneity. Technical details regarding the computation of the index are provided by Gini (1912), while Bochsler (2010) offers some suggestions for constructing a Gini coefficient which is corrected for the number of units, that is, electoral districts, and Jones and Mainwaring (2003) apply the index to the analysis of party nationalization.

### 3.2. Data and data sources

For the empirical analysis, I concentrate on a set of “most similar systems” (Lijphart, 1971, 1975). My selection criteria are twofold. First, I opted to include only countries that attained a basic degree of electoral democracy in the period under analysis, 1990–2002, and thus selected countries that scored at least “partly free” on the respective Freedomhouse-Scales throughout this period (<http://www.freedomhouse.org/>). My second criterion for case selection is “stateness” (Rustow, 1970). I include only sovereign countries that had consolidated territories throughout the period. Thus, I come up with an extensive dataset of district-level electoral returns for Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, the Russian Federation, Slovakia, and the Ukraine.

#### 3.2.1. Data at the national level

In the eleven post-communist countries selected for the analysis, I gathered data on a total of 37 elections to national parliaments (in case of bicameral systems, to the decisive lower houses) from 1990 up until 2003. Note that I include only elections to national parliaments in the selected countries so that competitive “pre-founding elections” at the subnational level, either the Soviet Union or in Czechoslovakia, were not entered into the analysis. In line with theoretical demands, I compiled a large database of district-level electoral returns, which allows for a thorough test of the context-sensitive propositions. The dataset comprises electoral returns from a total of 3218 electoral districts.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> The database was compiled from various sources: in the first place, collaboration of the research project “One Europe or Several? The Electoral Process in Eastern Europe” needs to be mentioned. Actually, part of the data, at the national as well as at the district level, is accessible via the internet: <http://www.essex.ac.uk/elections/>. Another primary data source on national-level electoral returns was collected by Thomas Mackie and Richard Rose at the “Centre for the Study of Public Policy” (CSPP), University of Aberdeen: <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/cspp/>. These collaborative efforts were thoroughly checked and supplemented by information and several datasets drawn from official election statistics. Currently, a new and extensive dataset is being put together by the “Constituency-Level Elections Archive” (CLEA; <http://electiondataarchive.org/>). To date, the holdings for post-communist Eastern Europe are still incomplete.

Thus, my unit of observation is the vote share  $v_{ij}$  received by party  $j$  in district  $i$  in a particular election. I include countries and elections that employ various local electoral districts of varying magnitude, while I exclude countries that establish a single, nationwide electoral district. However, my unit of observation is not my unit of analysis, since I exclusively focus on the distribution of vote shares across electoral districts for individual parties and overall party systems.

### 3.2.2. Data at the party level

At the level of individual parties, I utilize a somewhat reduced dataset. I systematically collected empirical data on a total of 152 “party-years” comprising 82 distinct political parties from the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, and Russia over repeated elections. In the second step, I assign the identification numbers assigned by the “Comparative Manifestos Project” (henceforth: CMP) to the individual political parties (Klingemann et al., 2006, 195–235). By joining the data on party system nationalization with the CMP database, I identify the parties’ affiliations to programmatic party families as assigned by the CMP project<sup>6</sup> and also augment district-level electoral returns with information on the policy positions taken by principal political parties on a number of issues. For the empirical analysis I will consider CMP estimates of the alternative party’s left–right positions and party placements on a centralization vs. decentralization scale. Moreover, I generate an index for ideological extremity by centering and squaring the left–right scores.

While this extension of the dataset allows for the inclusion of additional controls in the statistical analysis, this decision also comes with certain costs. Most significantly, it may be questioned whether typologies of party families that have been modeled to fit parties in established democracies may easily be applied to post-communist politics. This is especially problematic when political parties have still not developed programmatic linkages with their respective electorates and thus continue to lack cohesiveness and consistency as, most notably, in Russia or in Ukraine.<sup>7</sup>

### 3.3. The empirics of nationalization and regionalization

The remainder of this section is primarily concerned with providing a descriptive overview of similarities and dissimilarities among the eleven post-communist countries in the analysis. East European parties and party systems vary significantly in terms of their degree of regionalization or nationalization. It is the goal of this section to provide a systematic overview and comparison of these features both in the cross-national and temporal dimension.

#### 3.3.1. Descriptive evidence at the party level

Table 2 provides some univariate, descriptive indices capturing the nationalization of post-communist political parties. Even a brief inspection of the aggregated empirical data reveals the excessive overall level of party heterogeneity in post-communist Eastern Europe. Since the party families differ considerably regarding their strength, I employ an index controlling for party size, the coefficient of variation ( $CV_j$ ), as my primary yardstick, while the other indicators are included for reference. The values of  $CV_j$  post-communist party families range from 0.44 for social democratic parties up to 6.94 for regionalist parties. The respective values for Western Europe from World War II to 1998 reported by Caramani (2004, 158–159) are considerably lower.

A more fine-grained overview focusses on the average level of homogeneity or heterogeneity by party family. Among the party families discerned by Klingemann et al. (2006), regionalist parties (almost) by definition receive the most sectional and heterogeneous support in any member state and across time. Nationalist and (former) communist parties also reveal a high degree of territorial heterogeneity, while liberal and, above all, social democratic parties are characterized by greater territorial homogeneity.

Thus, an inspection of the raw data at hand reveals vastly different strategies of electoral contestation taken by party families that are based on sectionalized political support, for instance, peasant parties or minority parties, and party families who may rely on some national appeal, for instance, social democratic or liberal actors. Switching to the supply-side perspective, in early electoral contests territorial coverage ( $Cov_j$ ) unambiguously shows the organizational advantages of established communist parties and their respective satellites.

#### 3.3.2. Descriptive evidence at the national level

Table 3 presents some univariate, descriptive indices capturing the nationalization of post-communist party systems. Again, a brief inspection of the data illustrates both the excessive overall degree of territorial heterogeneity of post-communist political parties and the substantive differences among the East European countries. Taking the average standard deviation ( $SD_j$ ) as a yardstick, two successor states of the Soviet Union, Russia and Lithuania, are characterized by possessing the most significant levels of territorial heterogeneity. Among the “old” national states, Romania’s party system, which originated from the sultanistic variation of patrimonial communism (Linz and Stepan, 1996, 344), is clearly the most regionalized.

<sup>6</sup> The assignment of empirical parties in post-communist Eastern Europe to the various party families is documented in the appendix (Klingemann et al., 2006, 208–234).

<sup>7</sup> A more exhaustive application of the party family concept to post-communist politics has been presented by Hloušek and Kopeček (2010).

**Table 2**

Party nationalization across party families.

Party family	SD <sub>j</sub>	VAR <sub>j</sub>	CV <sub>j</sub>	G <sub>j</sub>
(Former) Communist	8.84	111.52	0.70	0.22
Social Democratic	4.02	22.08	0.44	0.17
Liberal	4.96	31.06	0.51	0.20
Christian Democratic	6.00	64.28	0.52	0.23
Conservative	7.48	76.06	0.51	0.26
National	4.59	31.98	0.91	0.25
Agrarian	4.96	29.32	0.61	0.27
Ethnic and Regionalist	12.09	191.90	6.94	0.58
Σ	6.23	61.33	1.03	0.24

In the traits of national-accommodative communism, the party systems of Estonia, Latvia, and Poland reveal, in comparison to the remaining post-communist countries, rather moderate levels of party heterogeneity. Regarding the temporal dynamics, Poland and Estonia started with very high levels of territorial heterogeneity at the outset, while there was a constant trend toward party system nationalization in the subsequent elections. The situation is somewhat different in Latvia which is characterized by more or less temporally stable levels of party system nationalization.

Finally, the two countries under analysis with the most consolidated and temporally stable party systems, the Czech Republic and Hungary, also attain by far the highest levels of party system nationalization. In the Czech Republic, representing the sole successor of bureaucratic-authoritarian communism, the party system is characterized by the highest level of territorial homogeneity among all post-communist countries in the analysis. Regarding the Hungarian party system, the empirical picture is distinctively more complicated. The majority tier of the Hungarian mixed-member electoral system exhibits substantial degrees of territorial heterogeneity, though the overall level is far lower than in Lithuania or Russia. However, in the P.R. tier, there is only a very moderate extent of regionalism and heterogeneity across the electoral districts to be discerned.

#### 4. Determinants of party and party system nationalization

This section aims at providing systematic explanations for the cross-country and temporal variations of territorial homogeneity or heterogeneity in post-communist Eastern Europe. I proceed in two successive steps: (i) first, I provide systematic evidence regarding the determinants of party nationalization. (ii) Following this, I bring contextual effects back in and explore systematic empirical variation among the partisan and national contexts.

##### 4.1. Determinants of party nationalization

Impacts on the nationalization of political parties originate at two different analytical levels. First, the territorial homogeneity of a partisan support base might be influenced by idiosyncratic factors, that is, independent variables which affect a single political party such as its overall programmatic orientation, the homogeneity of its core support, the administrative resources and skills of the party administration and leadership.

Secondly, there are contextual effects emanating from the polity level which may affect any political party that contests a national election, such as cleavage structures, the legacies of the communist *Anciens Régimes*, federalism or, the electoral system *et cetera*.

Table 4 presents the results of several models that focus on sociopolitical and institutional factors which originate at the idiosyncratic party level and the contextual national level. Moreover, these models include a couple of additional control variables which capture programmatic party profiles, party family affiliations, and others. Given that the individual observations, that is, the “party-years”, are nested in their respective national and temporal contexts, I control for the clustered

**Table 3**

Party nationalization across post-communist countries.

Country	SD <sub>j</sub>	VAR <sub>j</sub>	CV <sub>j</sub>	G <sub>j</sub>
Czech Republic	2.88	10.91	0.21	0.10
Estonia	5.57	34.41	0.45	0.24
Hungary	2.99	10.82	0.22	0.11
Latvia	4.14	24.72	0.29	0.12
Lithuania	8.80	97.03	1.69	0.33
Poland	4.52	26.36	2.06	0.23
Romania	9.69	138.81	0.96	0.36
Russia	11.17	146.98	1.34	0.39
Σ	6.23	61.33	1.03	0.24

Notes: Bulgaria, Slovakia and Ukraine have been excluded due to gaps and missing data which would distort the empirical picture.

**Table 4**  
Determinants of Party Nationalization (dependent variable =  $SD_j$ ).

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
<i>Structural Variables</i>			
$N_{eth}$	0.23 (0.82)		0.43 (0.81)
<i>Legacy</i>	-1.16*** (0.16)		-1.82*** (0.33)
$T$	-0.08 (0.10)		-0.65*** (0.17)
<i>legacy</i> × $t$			-0.13** (0.04)
<i>Institutional context</i>			
$lgM_{eff}$		-2.55** (0.86)	-2.50*** (0.68)
Fiscal decent. ( <i>dec</i> )		0.02 (0.05)	0.01 (0.05)
<i>Control Variables</i>			
<i>Programmatic Positions</i>			
Left–right position			0.02 (0.02)
Left–right extremism			-0.00 (0.00)
Centr./decentr.			-0.16* (0.06)
<i>Party Families</i>			
(Former) communist			1.32 (2.51)
Social democratic			2.68 (2.55)
Liberal			2.42 (2.41)
Christian democratic			0.66 (2.48)
Conservative			1.30 (2.63)
Nationalist			2.86 (2.45)
Agrarian			0.59 (2.54)
Ethnic or regional			7.16** (2.73)
<i>Controls for Stat. Bias</i>			
Nat. vote share			0.17*** (0.03)
No. of elect. districts			-0.02 (0.02)
Constant	11.11*** (1.39)	8.38*** (1.65)	15.27*** (3.29)
$N$	152	152	152
Adj. $R^2$	0.27	0.09	0.58
AIC	834.74	866.88	767.97

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses; (\*)  $p < 0.05$ ; (\*\*)  $p < 0.01$ ; (\*\*\*)  $p < 0.001$ .

structure of the data by computing cluster-corrected standard errors.<sup>8</sup> In substantive terms, Model 1 focusses on the structural and historical predictors and evaluates the impact of social diversity and communist legacies (as spelled out in Hypotheses 1 and 2). In contrast, Model 2 adopts an institutional perspective and concentrates on the effects of alternative electoral systems and federalism (as presented in Hypotheses 3 and 4). In turn, Model 3 evaluates a comprehensive, unified perspective which covers both structural and institutional variables as well as some additional controls.

Neither the simple nor the more encompassing models presented in Table 4 provide any empirical support for the alleged effects of social heterogeneity, since there is no meaningful association between the level of ethnic fragmentation and the homogeneity or heterogeneity of the post-communist parties. Sound empirical evidence points to robust linkages of the legacies of the communist *Anciens Régimes*, the diverse post-communist pathways, and party system nationalization. Higher scores of the *legacy index* (read: path-dependent options for the emergence of programmatically structured party competition) are associated with lower levels of territorial heterogeneity, while lower scores of the index (read: the danger of personalistic or clientelist linkages between parties and voters) are empirically connected to excessive territorial heterogeneity.

The empirical findings shed some light on dynamic developments. Generally, support for political parties tends to become more homogenous and nationalized as time goes by. However, the significant coefficient on the interaction of communist legacies (*legacy*) and the time which expired after the first free elections ( $t$ ) clearly shows that these trends toward consolidation and nationalization are significantly more effective in the traits of bureaucratic–authoritarian than in patrimonial communism.

There is also somewhat mixed evidence regarding the institutional variables. Permissive electoral systems (read: P.R. systems with low entry barriers and closed party lists) do contribute to structured, rather homogeneous party competition across the polity, while “strong” electoral systems (read: majority or plurality in single-member districts) allow for very significant regionalization of political parties. However, the empirical analysis does not reveal any robust evidence for observable impacts of unitary vs. federalist arrangements on party nationalization.

Finally, some comments on the control variables are in order. As illustrated in Model 3, the analysis does not refer to any statistically significant or substantively meaningful association of party nationalization with the overall programmatic positions, the degree of ideological extremism, or specific party policies regarding the centralization vs. decentralization issue. While dummy variables which indicate specific party families are jointly significant, only electoral support for ethnic and/or regional parties is substantively more regionalized. There is, however, no reliable and robust evidence that the regionalization

<sup>8</sup> Specific political parties that are taken from the nested higher-level contexts of certain parliamentary elections and countries vary partially according to idiosyncratic impacts, but are also partially duplicates of one another and thus affected by causal impacts originating at the polity level.

**Table 5**  
The hierarchical structure of the data (dependent variable =  $SD_j$ ).

	Model 1	Model 2
<i>Fixed effects</i>		
<i>legacy</i>		-1.67** (0.37)
<i>t</i>		-0.55** (0.17)
<i>legacy × t</i>		-0.11* (0.04)
$lgM_{eff}$		-1.79* (0.88)
Constant	6.11** (1.11)	14.42** (1.47)
<i>Random effects</i>		
$\sqrt{\psi^{(3)}}$	2.96** (0.89)	0.77* (0.78)
$\sqrt{\psi^{(2)}}$	2.19** (0.35)	2.27** (0.36)
$\sqrt{\theta}$	3.04** (0.23)	2.97** (0.23)
<i>N</i>	152	152
log. lik.	-418.62	-399.62
AIC	845.24	815.24

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses; (\*)  $p < 0.05$ ; (\*\*)  $p < 0.01$ ; standard deviations of the random intercepts at the country and party levels are denoted by  $\sqrt{\psi^{(3)}}$  and, respectively, by  $\sqrt{\psi^{(2)}}$ ; the standard error at the “party-year” level is given by  $\sqrt{\theta}$ ; AIC denotes the “Akaike Information Criterion” which is a relative indicator for goodness of fit.

or nationalization of alternative party families differ substantively when the abovementioned predictors are controlled for. The two remaining variables control for statistical bias. As expected, the selected index of territorial heterogeneity, the standard deviation across regional electoral districts, tends to be influenced by the respective party’s vote share at the national level. Everything else being equal, standard deviations for small parties tend to be small, those for larger parties tend to be larger. However, the principal dependent variable is not affected by the number of local electoral districts in the computation.

#### 4.2. The party level and the national level

So far, the empirical analysis has, apart from the calculation of cluster-robust standard errors, ignored the layered structure of the data. However, individual political parties are embedded to the systemic, historical, and institutional contexts of specific party systems and national states. Since the observations on individual parties are nested within countries, the dataset is characterized by a multilevel structure. Parties that compete within the same country are affected by constant, country-level effects regarding the nationalization/regionalization of political competition. As repeated observations of the same party are also serially nested within the national and, in turn, the party-specific contexts, the dataset also reveals a time-series-cross-section structure so that repeated observations of the same parties will exhibit serial autocorrelation.

Table 5 presents empirical evidence regarding the layered structure of the data that consists of (1) the observation level (“party-years”), (2) the party level, and (3) the national level. The table presents some basic analysis of variance (ANOVA) and analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) specifications that aim at decomposing the variance of the dependent variable  $SD_j$  attributing the respective variance components to the hierarchically ordered levels

$$E[SD_{ijk} | \zeta_{jk}^{(2)}, \zeta_k^{(3)}] = \beta_{jk} + \epsilon_{ijk} = (\beta_0 + \zeta_{jk}^{(2)} + \zeta_k^{(3)}) + \epsilon_{ijk}$$

We assume the random intercepts and the residual error term to be independently normally distributed:  $\epsilon_{ijk} \sim f_N(0, \theta)$ ;  $\zeta_{jk}^{(2)} \sim f_N(0, \psi^{(2)})$ ;  $\zeta_k^{(3)} \sim f_N(0, \psi^{(3)})$ . Here  $\beta_0$  indicates the average extent of territorial homogeneity or heterogeneity across the diverse parties and polities (the “grand mean”), while  $\epsilon_{ijk}$ ,  $\zeta_{jk}^{(2)}$  and  $\zeta_k^{(3)}$  signify the respective variance components at the election, party, and country levels. Essentially, the equations resemble a simple, “empty” multilevel model without covariates at any level of the hierarchy that can be estimated by (restricted) maximum likelihood (Bryk and Raudenbush, 2002; Snijders and Bosker, 1999). The empirical results in Model 1 clearly underscore the multilevel structure of the data, because variation of  $SD_j$  occurs at about equal shares at the election level ( $\theta$ ), at the party level ( $\psi^{(2)}$ ), and at the national level ( $\psi^{(3)}$ ).

While these findings clearly reinforce the validity of the multilevel perspective, the ANCOVA perspective in Model 2 inserts causal factors so as to substantively account for the diversity. As in the simple linear models, the analysis distinctly highlights the possible impact of diverse communist pathways as captured by the *legacy index*, the consequences of different electoral systems, as well as the dynamic development over time. A comparison of the estimated variance components in Models 1 and 2 unequivocally illustrates that these contextual factors account for a very significant share of the estimated cross-sectional heterogeneity ( $\psi^{(3)}$  in both models).

### 5. Conclusion

The nationalization of party systems is one of their truly crucial features. However, in Eastern Europe one finds considerably lower degrees of territorial homogeneity than in the established democracies of Western Europe. This may be due to

a number of reasons. From a historical point of view, for instance, the weakness of East European states is regarded as a longstanding certainty. East European countries are expected to be considerably more heterogeneous regarding their degrees of ethnic or overall social diversity.

In this paper, I have concentrated on major political science arguments which may relate to party system nationalization. While there is only little evidence for the explanatory force of factors idiosyncratic to each party, the analysis points to the imminent significance of national-level contexts. At this level of abstraction, theoretical arguments and empirical evidence clearly refer to the necessity of a multi-dimensional approach for explaining the regionalization/nationalization of post-communist party systems. Except for the proxy for social diversity, the Effective Number of Ethnic Groups, I found considerable and rather robust evidence regarding the effects of the transformational context and the political consequences of diverging institutional arrangements. First, options for the emergence of nationalized political competition seem to be path-dependently embedded in the structural constraints provided by the various post-communist pathways. Second, electoral systems do significantly influence the chances for political parties to coordinate across districts and to establish a truly nationalized political party. On the other hand, with consideration of the 12-year period in the analysis, there is only mediocre evidence for the emergence of a general historical trend toward more nationalized party systems. Finally, the federalism argument, put forward most prominently by Chhibber and Kollman (2004), does not apply to the analysis of post-communist Eastern Europe and fails to provide significant explanatory leverage.

However, there still remain certain problems concerning the analysis of party system nationalization. First of all, the measurement issue regarding territorial homogeneity or heterogeneity still cannot be resolved. Consider, for instance, the “battery” of various indicators reviewed and applied by Caramani (2004). Much more will have to be done to systematically analyze the statistical features of various competing indices. Most importantly, a suitable indicator has to be chosen in light of the research question at stake. In this analysis, the influence of the number of entities, in this case electoral districts, over which an index is computed, is of outstanding importance. As I have shown, all indices do – sometimes strongly – correlate with the number of electoral districts, so that the effect of electoral districts has to be carefully separated from potential measurement bias.

The second caveat deals with the operationalization of social heterogeneity. Until today, there is not any clear and empirically testable proposition regarding the consequences of cleavage structures or political alignments. The Effective Number of Ethnic Groups is of course a very poor proxy for the complex cleavage-driven approaches introduced most notably by Lipset and Rokkan (1967). As a matter of fact, ethnic groups constitute only one possible source of social heterogeneity that could be easily overestimated when applied to post-communist Eastern Europe. The social composition of a society makes up only one part of the cleavage definition; any collective action problems are completely omitted from the analysis. Hence, there are many reasons for a systematic endeavor by political scientists and sociologists to develop a more sophisticated quantitative measure of social or cleavage-driven diversity.

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