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Sources of Party System Institutionalization
in New Democracies: Lessons from East Central Europe

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Abstract

Building on Casal Bértoa and Mair's (2010) work on the institutionalization of post-communist party systems and as a response to their uneasiness with the failure of the party politics literature to determine what causes party system institutionalization in the first place, this paper addresses the following question: what are the sources of party system institutionalization in post-communist East Central Europe? In particular, what is it that explains the institutionalization of the Hungarian and Czech party systems in clear contrast to those of Slovakia and Poland, which are considered weak and under-institutionalized, respectively?

Keywords

Party system institutionalization; East Central Europe; parliamentary fragmentation; type of regime; cleavage

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Introduction

Party system institutionalization has been traditionally viewed as a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for the healthy functioning of democracy. Mainwaring summarizes the common agreement among scholars when he states that “democracy is likely to have shortcomings if a moderately institutionalized party system does not emerge after democratic government has been in place for some time” (1999:6; see also, Morlino, 1998; Pridham, 1990). However, and notwithstanding the burgeoning interest in the consequences of party system institutionalization, little has been done to discover what is that institutionalizes party systems in the first place.¹

This paper aims at providing an answer to the question of how such institutionalization occurs and why it varies so much across countries through a comparative analysis of the process of party system institutionalization in East Central European democracies, defined for the purposes of this study as the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia. Both the obvious similarities in their democratic transition and consolidation as well as the mere contemporaneous of these processes invite comparison. Moreover, the common situation of these countries within the “Visegrad” region considerably reinforces the argument for treating them together as a compact case-study of party system institutionalization.²

Given the increasing interest in the degree of party system institutionalization in new democracies, this paper seeks to enhance the literature in two different ways. First of all, building on the theoretical approach proposed by Mair (1996, 2001) and empirically developed in Casal Bértoa and Mair (2010), it aims to provide an answer to the following question: what is it that explains party system institutionalization in the first place? In this sense, this paper complements a previous paper published in these series (Casal Bértoa and Mair, 2010) which, focusing more on the level to which post-communist party systems had institutionalized, provided no answer for the variance observed within the region. Secondly, and bearing in mind that scholars tend to explain party system formation and development using an institutional or a sociological approach, this analysis constitutes a serious attempt to bring these two approaches together.

The first part of the paper develops an analytical perspective on the conceptualization of party system institutionalization. In the second part, I introduce some improvements to the operationalization of Mair’s framework, as already suggested in Casal Bértoa and Enyedi (2010). Part three captures the degree of party system institutionalization in East Central European democracies. Part four reviews the literature on the different sources of systemic institutionalization as well as discusses the methodology applied. Part five looks at the impact of institutions and cleavages on partisan competition as more or less successful inducements to institutionalization. Finally, part six concludes with a summary of the “causal mechanisms” found when analysing the process of party system institutionalization in East Central Europe.

¹ Horowitz and Brown (2005), Tavits (2005), or Mainwaring and Zocco (2007) are clear exceptions.

² If, as Macridis and Cox once stated, “the concept of area is to be operationally meaningful for the purpose of comparison, it should correspond to some uniform political patterns against which differences may be studied comparatively and explained” (1964:102-103), it seems obvious that a comparative analysis of the East Central European party systems, itself a sub-region (area) of one of the most widely recognized “world” regions (i.e. post-communist Eastern Europe), fits the pattern.

Party System Institutionalization: Conceptualization

Any scholar studying the institutionalization of party systems faces the problem of the unit of analysis: political parties, party systems, or both? Surprisingly enough, and notwithstanding an ever growing number of systematic comparative works and countless case-studies, most scholars approach the institutionalization of individual parties and party systems as two interchangeable and synonymous concepts,³ “the implication being that [since individual political parties constitute integral parts of the whole party system] the institutionalization of the party system directly depends on that of individual parties” (Meleshevich, 2007: 16).

The relationship between these two notions is, however, not nearly so “simple and deterministic” (Markowski, 2001:56): while individual political parties may be institutionalized, their operation in a party system may not be. In this sense, Randall and Svåsand are correct when they argue that, although closely related, “individual party institutionalization and the institutionalization of the party system are neither the same thing nor necessarily and always mutually compatible” (2002:6). Moreover, they “could be at odds” (2002:8), particularly in the case of young democracies.⁴ In other words, for a party system to be considered institutionalized it is not enough that all individual political parties become institutionalized; the important thing is that they function and interact in a predictable/stable manner. For all these reasons, in approaching the level and sources of party system institutionalization in East Central Europe, it is necessary to first put some flesh on the bones of the concept per se before going on to operationalize it.

Although it may be difficult to believe given its central importance, the concept of party system institutionalization has no established definition. The concept was first introduced by Mainwaring and Scully in their classic *Building Democratic Institutions: Party Systems in Latin America* (1995). There, the authors defined the institutionalization of a party system as:

[The] process by which a practice or organization becomes well established and widely known, if not universally accepted. Actors develop expectations, orientations, and behaviour based on the premise that this practice or organization will prevail into the foreseeable future (1995: 4).

According to the two authors, institutionalized party systems are characterised by four different dimensions: regular patterns of inter-party competition, strong party roots in society, electoral and partisan legitimacy, and solid party organizations. While their discussion of the four dimensions is insightful, Mainwaring and Scully fail to provide objective measures for the last two dimensions (i.e. legitimacy and party organization).

Most authors follow Mainwaring and Scully’s pattern of proposing a series of “dimensions” of party system institutionalization (table A1 in the appendix). Morlino (1998) claims that “structured” party systems must be stable in terms of electoral behaviour, partisan competition and political class; Bielasiak (2001), who is interested in the institutionalization of party systems in Eastern Europe and post-Soviet States, distinguishes three dimensions of stability: electoral democracy, political contestation, and political representation; Kreuzer and Pettai assert, from a different perspective, that systemic institutionalization “is ultimately shaped by the interaction of both politicians’ organizational

³ See, among others, Kreuzer and Pettai (2003), Lewis (2006), Mainwaring and Scully (1995), Mainwaring and Torcal (2006), Mainwaring (1998, 1999), Meleshevich, (2007), Morlino (1998), Rose and Munro (2003), Shabad and Słomczyński, 2004), or Tóka (1997). Exceptions to this general rule are Lindberg (2007), Mair (2001), Stockton (2001), Markowski (2001), and Randall and Svåsand (2002).

⁴ Randall and Svåsand (2002:9) point here to the so-called *unevenness* of party institutionalization (i.e. the party system might consist of individual parties at drastically different levels of institutionalization).

affiliations and voters' electoral choices" (2003:81);⁵ and, even more explicitly, Meleshevich (2007) conceives of it as involving both (external) autonomy and (internal) stability. More recently, Lindberg (2007) simply puts institutionalization on a level with stabilization. Interestingly enough, there is only one exception to this principle of simply enumerating dimensions (i.e. Randall and Svåsand, 2002) but by and large and notwithstanding its originality, such exception constitutes no more than a thoughtful theoretical model, as it does not provide us with any means of operationalization.⁶

It follows from this brief analysis, then, that political scientists have conceptualized systemic institutionalization in numerous ways. Most agree on some dimensions of the notion but not many arrive at the same final combination. Criticism of the conceptual and operational approaches of these studies appears elsewhere (Casal Bértoa, forthcoming), but the fundamental problem running through all these works is that, more preoccupied with an empirical assessment of institutionalization, they tend to pay very little attention to conceptualization per se. However, as we know from the literature, for an empirical analysis to be valid it is essential first to establish a sound conceptual base (Della Porta and Keating, 2008). Only then, scholars can take care of matching such conceptual framework with the most appropriate measures (Adcock and Collier, 2001). How, then, can we define the concept of party system institutionalization?

Strictly speaking, we can only speak of institutionalization when we are able to define what it is that has been institutionalized. Our first task then is, perhaps, insurmountable to specify the "essence" of what constitutes a given party system. Sartori offers the clearest definition of a party system as "the system of interactions resulting from inter-party competition" (1976:44).

This definition has three main different implications. First, a party system must consist of more than a single party (otherwise there is no inter-party competition). Second, a party system clearly involves something more than the sum of its component parts (i.e. political parties). This way it incorporates some element of understanding of the mode of interaction between the latter. Third, the notion of "system" implies some degree of regularity, suggesting some continuity of inter-party interactions between elections (Sartori, 1976:43).

Once the nature of what constitutes a party system has been established, it becomes possible to define party system institutionalization and, hence, to specify the dimensions which can determine whether any given system is already institutionalized or still remains weakly institutionalized.

As is clear from table A1, all meanings of the conception of institutionalization contain the idea of stability and persistence (Riker and Ordershook, 1973; Stinchcombe, 1968; Scott, 1995). In fact, if we take into consideration that the core of a party system is to be found in the patterns of interaction among its units, that is, political parties (Mair, 2006), it seems clear that the most important and necessary attribute of party system institutionalization is stability in the rules and nature of inter-party competition (Lindberg, 2007; Przeworski, 1975). Indeed, as Mainwaring and Scully stated in their seminal analysis of Latin American party systems, "where such stability does not exist, institutionalization is limited" (1995:4-5). Therefore, the more stable the system, the more institutionalized it becomes (Mair, 2001:35).

Bearing in mind all what has been said, and drawing on Huntington's (1968: 12) original definition of institutionalization as the "process by which organizations and procedures acquire value and stability", I define party system institutionalization as the process by which the patterns of interaction among political parties become routine, predictable and stable over time (Bakke and Sitter, 2005;

⁵ Similar logic is followed by Shabad and Słomczyński (2004) in their study of the institutionalization of the Polish party system.

⁶ A first attempt to operationalize Randall and Svåsand's theoretical framework (in relation to "party institutionalization") can be found in Tomsa (2008).

Mair, 2001).⁷ In other words, a system of parties can be said to be institutionalized when political parties cooperate, collaborate and colligate in a standardized and structured way - a way that is independent of the relevant issues in each moment and which random shocks cannot alter (Mainwaring, 1998). On the contrary, in under-institutionalized party systems political parties are incapable of interacting in any patterned manner, failing to present voters with clearly stable political alliances and, therefore, predictable governmental alternatives (Rokkan, 1970; Mair, 2001:39).

Party System Institutionalization: Operationalization

The task of finding reliable and precise operational indicators for the empirical assessment of the conceptual scheme displayed above proves to be anything but easy, particularly when, as we have already seen, there is a great deal of disagreement among scholars about how party system institutionalization should be defined. In this paper, and in order to analyse the institutionalization of party systems in new East Central European democracies, I draw on Mair's (1996, 2001) framework of party system analysis which, building on Sartori's classical definition, considers that "the most important aspect of party systems [...] is *the structure of inter-party competition*, and especially *the competition for government*" (1997:206; emphasis in the original).⁸ The idea is that, although not the only one (see Bardi and Mair, 2008), the partisan competition for public office constitutes the "defining" arena of party system institutionalization (Mair, 2007). As a result, the institutionalization of a party system is considered to occur only when the patterns of interaction among political parties in successive periods of government formation become predictable and stable over time (Mair, 1997:206; Rybář, 2004). In order to assess the latter, Mair proposes to analyse three different, although clearly related, factors:

a) *Government alternation* or how completely the partisan composition of successive cabinets has changed at each new period of government formation.

b) *Governing formulae* or the extent to which successive competing cabinets are composed of the same line-up of parties each time they participate in the executive.

c) *Access to government* or the degree to which all political parties within the system have the chance to enjoy the spoils of office over time.

Putting them all together, Mair considers party systems to be institutionalized if (1) alternations of governments are either total or none, (2) governing alternatives are stable over a long period of time, and (3) some parties ("outsiders") are permanently excluded from participation in national government. Conversely, weakly institutionalized party systems are to be characterised by (1) partial alternations of governments, (2) no stable compositions of governing alternatives and (3) access to government granted to all relevant parties.

In order to minimize subjective judgements and opinions in the measurement of party system institutionalization, I quantitatively operationalize each of the factors suggested above (Table 1). First of all, the degree to which governing alternations of political parties are wholesale is captured by the so-called Index of Government Alternation (IGA), which simply adapts Pedersen's (1979) well-known index of electoral volatility to the measurement of a nation's ministerial volatility (MV). In particular, the latter is calculated by adding the net change in percentage of ministers (including the prime

⁷ "Interaction" refers to the creation and dissolution of coalitions and alliances as well as changes between cooperative and competitive behaviour.

⁸ There are three main reasons for choosing Mair's approach, namely: (1) it enables party system institutionalization to be analysed independently of the static parameters of the systemic units (i.e. parties); (2) it allows for different degrees of institutionalization to be specified; and, last but not least, it is eminently suited to "large-scale geographic and inter-temporal comparisons" (Müller and Fallend, 2004:804).

minister) gained and lost by each party from one government⁹ to the next, and then dividing by two. However, and because wholesale alternation (both total and none) can be reflected by scores at both extremes of the MV scale (both 100 and 0, respectively), if the MV initial score obtained according to the formula described above is lower than 50 (i.e. perfect partial alternation), the former figure will be subtracted from 100. If MV is higher than 50, the IGA will be equal to the initial MV score.

Table 1. Criteria and Operational Indicators of Party System Institutionalization

Dimension	Criteria	Indicators	Operationalization
<i>Stability</i>	Government Alternation	IGA: Pedersen's index of ministerial volatility (MV)	. If $MV \geq 50$, then $IGA = MV$. If $MV < 50$, then $IGA = 100 - MV$
	Governing Formulae	IFA: % ministers of all familiar governments	. If the very same combination = 100% . If entirely new combination or new party forms single party government = 0% . If part of the new government is familiar = % of the familiar part . If a party earlier in government forms a government on its own = 100 - % of previous coalition partners
	Access to government	IC: % ministers from "old" governing parties	"Old" governing parties (see Sikk, 2005)

Source: Adapted from Casal Bértoa and Enyedi (2010:19)

The second criterion, based on assessing whether or not the party or combination of parties has governed before in that particular format, is captured by the Index of Familiar alternation (IFA), which measures the percentage of ministries belonging to familiar combinations of parties with the caveats signalled in table 1. Finally, and in clear contrast to the previous two factors, access to government is easily measured by the Index of Closure (IC) which simply takes into consideration the percentages of ministries belonging to "old governing parties".¹⁰

Because time is particularly important when trying to measure the level of party system institutionalization in a country (Mair, 1997), I also take into consideration all the years a particular cabinet has lasted, understanding that if there have been two or more cabinets in one year, then the averages of the scores for the different above-cited government features are considered to characterize the year better than any of such individual factors (Casal Bértoa and Enyedi, 2010:20). Finally, and in order to avoid measuring incompatible scores, I use the standardized (z-) score of the three variables. The addition of all those three z-scores gives the final degree of system institutionalization in what I have named "composite index of party system institutionalization" (iPSI) which, giving weight to all the elements of stability, has the advantage of paying due attention to it as the sole dimension of institutionalization.

⁹ For distinguishing between cabinets, I consider *new* governments to be only those which include a change in the partisan composition of the cabinet and/or those immediately constituted after new elections have been held (Casal Bértoa and Enyedi, 2010:13-14).

¹⁰ Building on Sikk (2005:399), *old governing parties* are considered to be all those parties which have already been constituent part of a previous government, both under similar or different names (but not structure).

Party System Institutionalization in East Central Europe

Kostelecký (2002:177), echoing the conclusions of the majority of scholars, has suggested that “the party systems of East-Central Europe resemble those of Western Europe much more now, in the beginning of the new millennium, than they did in the early 1990s” (see also Ágh, 1998; Bakke and Sitter, 2005; Birch, 2003; Kitschelt *et al.*, 1999). Although this is largely true, the comparison with the West should not be exaggerated: even if two of the most institutionalized party systems in the region are to be found in East Central Europe (i.e. Hungary and the Czech Republic), the patterns of inter-party competition of the other two “Visegrad” countries are still very far from becoming well established (especially in Poland).

Hungarian scholars argue that “still qualifying as volatile according to the standards of later twentieth century Western politics, Hungary has produced one of the most consolidated party systems in the post-communist world” (Enyedi, 2006:178; also Lewis, 2006; Tóka and Henjak, 2007). This observation is certainly correct even when compared to other highly institutionalized Western European new democracies (e.g. Greece, Spain, etc.). Thus, in Hungary, where the mechanics of competition for government took shape rather quickly in a “left” (i.e. MDSZ-SZDSZ) vs. “right” (FIDESZ plus other minor conservative parties) contest, the patterns of inter-party competition for government have shown remarkable stability. The result is that, almost from the very beginning and certainly from 1998, the Hungarian party system can be considered to be the most institutionalized in post-communist Europe in general (Casal Bértoa and Mair, 2010) and in East Central Europe in particular (see figure 1).

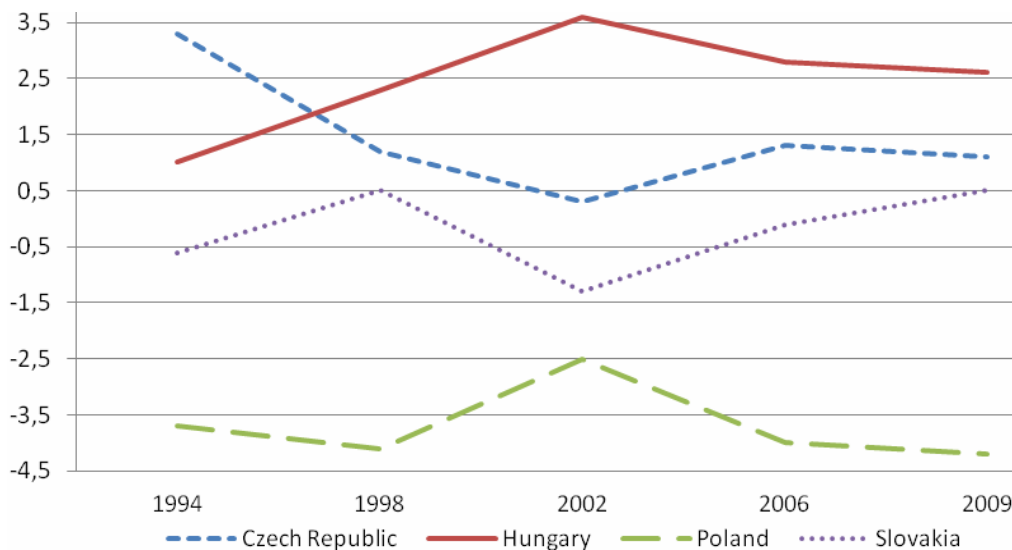
Czech Republic’s party system is more institutionalized than the other two, but definitely less than Hungary’s. Interestingly enough, the truth is that while there have been fewer governments in the former (all of them after elections) than in the other three countries, the Czech party system displays a rather mixed picture in relation to the first criterion here examined. Thus, while only half of the alternations were partial, all of them took place during the first ten years of democratic politics. In this sense, and in clear contrast to the previous pattern, the current tendency is towards more and more partiality. In the same vein, governing formulae (clearly familiar up to 1998) have opened up with the inauguration of the new century, although never with the levels of innovation experienced in both Slovakia and Poland. Notwithstanding however this recent wave of destabilization, the direction of competition in the Czech Republic, as much as in Hungary, continues to point to a “bipolar structure” (Lewis, 2006:570) opposing two different camps: the social-democrats (ČSSD) and the liberal-conservative (ODS), with the Christian Democratic Party (KDU-ČSL) in the role of a hinge (party). Finally, access to government may be considered to be closed, as since 1992 only three main parliamentary parties (ODS, ČSSD, and KDU-ČSL) have participated in government, while the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSČM), the third largest party in parliament, and other minor extremist parties, have been systematically excluded.¹¹

In comparison with the previous two cases, the Slovak party system is weakly institutionalized (iPSI<1.0). Although, in clear contrast to Hungary and the Czech Republic, government alternations have had an irregular character (i.e. between elections), a certain tendency towards wholesale alternation was already obvious in 2006. Unlike the previous two cases, however, the degree of formulae familiarity has been rather low, with eight (out of nine) different combinations of political parties. Likewise, access to executive positions can be considered to be still open, as all “relevant” parties – including the radical right, the Hungarian minority, and various newly formed parties – have had the opportunity to enjoy office at least once.

¹¹ It should also be borne in mind that from 1992 until 1998, the extreme right-wing SPR-RSČ was also recurrently excluded from participating in office, despite having more seats than the Civic Democratic Alliance (ODA), a permanent member of the governing coalition until 1998.

As it follows from figure 1, the Polish party system is, by far, the least institutionalized of the four. Here government alternation has been predominantly irregular and partial, although some instances of wholesale alternation (the least) could also be observed. Moreover, because innovative coalition governments have been the norm (e.g. socialist with peasants, conservative with liberals, conservative with populists, or liberals with peasants), it features also very low in terms of the second criterion (i.e. governing formulae). Last but not least, access to power can be considered to be also particularly open: indeed, if we take into account all the parties with parliamentary representation since 1993 (13 in total), by 2009 only two parties (KPN, ROP) had not formed part, at least once, of the government.¹²

Figure 1 Party system institutionalization (iPSI) in East Central Europe (1994-2009)



In summary, examination of the iPSI scores displayed in figure 1 produces a clear conclusion: party systems in East Central Europe have institutionalized in different ways and at different rates. In particular, and as it follows from the figure above, two certainly opposite cases can be distinguished: one at the top end and another at the bottom of the institutionalization scale, namely, highly institutionalized ($iPSI \geq 2$) Hungary and under-institutionalized ($iPSI \leq 0$) Poland (respectively). The remaining 2 systems cluster, however, around the centre – but within the institutionalized camp ($iPSI \geq 0$). Still, a relatively clear cleavage can be observed between relatively institutionalized ($iPSI \geq 1$) Czech Republic and weakly institutionalized ($iPSI < 1$) Slovakia.

Sources of Party System Institutionalization: Methodology

Comparative political theory offers different possible (co-)explanations for the distinct levels of party system institutionalization observed in new and old democracies, namely: institutional, sociological, historical, economic, temporal, and international (table A2 in the appendix). In this paper, where the number of alternative explanatory variables (16) clearly dwarfs the sample of cases available for analysis (4), I will make use of a “most-similar-systems” design, a methodology

¹² Moreover, and although the Movement for an Independent Poland (KPN) leaves no place to doubt, the case of the Movement for the Reconstruction of Poland (ROP) could be debatable, as their main leaders (e.g. Jan Olszewski and Antoni Macierewicz) not only participated in government (as members of equally-minded parties, i.e. ZChN or LPR), fulfilling very important positions within different cabinets.

particularly well suited for this kind of “area studies” (Przeworski and Teune, 1970) and, on the whole, extremely useful for analyses which, run at the systemic level (Anckar, 2008:4), present the so-called “small N, many variables” problem (Lijphart, 1975:163). Thereby, the idea is that by carefully matching all the cases under study across the different (potential) explanatory factors found in the institutionalization literature, I can reduce the number of (possible) “causal linkages” to the minimum and, therefore, be able to achieve a more “focused” comparison which simply centres on those *relevant* “independent” variables that might account for the differences degrees of systemic institutionalization observed (Anckar, 2008; Peters, 1998; Rockman, 1997; Landman, 2000).

In this context, and as it follows from table A3 (see appendix), the natural experiment produced by the dissolution of Czechoslovakia in 1993 and the comparison of its two former federal states, characterised by identical (not just similar) “background conditions”, will be exceptionally useful when trying to hold constant certain crucial independent variables (i.e. the length of previous democratic experience and authoritarian break as well as the year of political transformation). Likewise, the fact that both Hungary and Poland display a completely opposed degree of systemic institutionalization despite sharing a common communist legacy (i.e. national-authoritarianism) allows me to exclude historical “path-dependence” as a possible explanatory variable. Moreover, and because we are dealing with countries which match closely in terms of system of government (all are centralized states), party funding regulations (both parliamentary and extra-parliamentary parties are state funded), political culture (as heirs of the Habsburg empire all belong to the Catholic sphere), the time of transition (all democratized during the so-called “3rd Wave”), as well as their proximity to the Western European region (all joined the European Union on May the 1st, 2004) I am able to exclude four more rival “causal” factors (i.e. nature of state, party funding, sequence/time of transition, and international). Finally, the four countries here analysed not only share a common economic past based on centralized planning, but also a rather similar economic development since the time of transformation in 1989/90. As a result, economic structural differences (e.g. GDP, inflation, unemployment) are not enough to explain the distinct levels of systemic institutionalization observed. All in all, then, I am left with only four divergent crucial variables, namely: party institutionalization, parliamentary fragmentation, type of regime, and cleavage encapsulation. Let’s examine now each of them in turn.

Sources of Party System Institutionalization in East Central Europe: Institutional and Sociological

1. Party Institutionalization

According to the literature, a first prerequisite for the institutionalization of the party system as a whole is having a system whose member units (i.e. political parties) are themselves also institutionalized. The logic is that if party system institutionalization as a process is all about routinizing patterns of competition and alliances among a manageable number of parties, then party institutionalization, understood as *the process by which parties evince stable roots in society (social rootedness) and consistent patterns of internal organization (organizational systemness)*,¹³ certainly constitutes a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for the institutionalization of the party system as a whole (Casal Bértoa and Mair, 2010). In other words, institutionalization (i.e. electoral stability and organizational continuity) will allow political parties to manage their wider environment successfully and endure over time (Rose and Munro, 2003; Toole, 2000), generating an air of permanence and durability which is in itself conducive to the regularity in the actual patterns of partisan interaction

¹³ Although party institutionalization is a “multifaceted [concept], difficult to operationalize, and sometimes conducive to tautological argument” (Gunther and Hopkin, 2002:193), the truth is that the majority of scholars have considered it to be characterized by two different dimensions, namely: rootedness and systemness (Webb and White, 2007:11). See also Casal Bértoa (forthcoming).

(Mainwaring and Scully, 1995). Conversely, if parties fail to institutionalize, the structure of competition will remain open to challengers by newcomers, making partial alternation as well as access to government easier, and (formula) innovation more likely.

As in the case of party system institutionalization, there is a great deal of disagreement among scholars concerning the ways of operationalizing the dimensions of party institutionalization. In this context, the number of indicators is infinite: for instance, party discipline (Panbianco, 1988); party identification (Dalton and Weldon, 2007; Mainwaring, 1998); levels of professionalization (Johnson, 2002) and personalism (Dix, 1992; Mainwaring and Torcal, 2006; Mény, 1990), the capacity of parties to sponsor parties cross-nationally (Rose and Mackie, 1988), the percentage of independent candidates (Birch, 1998; Moser, 1999; Protysk and Wilson, 2003), to name only a few. Unfortunately, however, and notwithstanding their validity, none of these scholars has been able to measure in the same analysis both rootedness and systemness.

In order to avoid this lacuna, I have opted in the current paper for evaluating the two abovementioned dimensions separately. Thus, rootedness in society will be calculated using Lewis' Index of Party Stabilization (IPS), which involves the progressive enhancement of the proportion of the total vote for political parties in a given election over time - by 20% for a party's second appearance in parliament, 40% for the third, 60% for the fourth, 80% for the fifth, and so forth (Lewis, 2006:574-575).¹⁴ On the other hand, average party age will help to assess the level of systemness observed in a partisan organization.¹⁵ As Dix already recognized "the logic is that, with some exceptions, [...] effective institutions grow slowly, and the older and organization is, the more likely it is to endure even longer" (1992:491).

Table 2. Party and Party System Institutionalization in East Central Europe

Country	Party Institutionalization		iPSI
	<i>Rootedness (%)</i>	<i>Systemness (age)</i>	
Hungary	85.9	21.0	2.6
Czech R.	77.0	18.5	1.1
Slovakia	61.0	14.5	0.5
Poland	56.1	14.2	-4.2

Sources: Rootedness is calculated using the Index of Party Stabilisation (IPS) created by Lewis (2006). The average age of parliamentary parties is calculated on the basis of Bugajski (2002)

Table 2 displays the scores for each of the dimensions explained above.¹⁶ Assessing the data presented in the table, it is obvious that there are striking variations in the extent to which political parties have been institutionalized in the different East Central European countries. While both Hungarian and Czech political parties have stable roots in society and are characterised by moderately strong party organizations, Polish and Slovak political parties are only weakly institutionalized (both

¹⁴ The idea is that if a parliamentary party gets 35% of the votes in the first election, 40% in the second, and 10% in the third, IPS is calculated in the following way: 35+60 (i.e. 40+20)+50 (i.e. 10+40). Then, the enhanced representation score is divided by notional total score of 360 (i.e. 100% for the first election, 120% for the second, and 140% for the third) and multiplied by 100.

¹⁵ Average party age has been widely regarded by scholars as the most important measure of an organization (Dix, 1992; Huntington, 1968; Janda, 1980; Jin, 1995; Robert and Wibbels, 1999), with old parties considered to be more organizationally institutionalized than new ones.

¹⁶ This analysis only consider all those "relevant" political parties, understood as all those which have participated at least in the national legislative elections (Rose and Mackie, 1988:536), and have obtained 10 percent of the vote at least once in the period under study (Dix, 1992:491).

in terms of social rootedness and organizational systemness). In fact, and to the point that variance in the level of party institutionalization perfectly associates with differences in the degree of systemic institutionalization, I may conclude saying that the process of party system institutionalization in Hungary and, to a lesser extent, in the Czech Republic was fostered by the institutionalization of those countries' individual political parties themselves. On the contrary, weak party institutionalization is to be blamed for the rather low degree of systemic institutionalization in both Poland and Slovakia. In this sense, a "causal" relationship between the two variables is suggested.

2. Party system format/electoral system

The format of a party system also plays a crucial role in the process of institutionalization itself. Thus, and according to Sartori (1976:128), party system format has "mechanical predispositions", if only because the number and size of parties determine a set of functional properties which, in turn, indicate the possible "paths of interaction" parties have when competing for government. In this sense, by indicating the number (and strength) of "streams of interaction" (Sjöblom, 1968:174), the format of a party system clearly affects the ease with which parties interact and governments can be formed. The logic is, therefore, that "the greater the number of parties (that have a say), the greater the complexity and probably the intricacy of the [interactions will be]" (Sartori, 1976:120). More concretely, the more parties there are in a system: (1) the higher the probability that new cabinets contain parties from the immediately previous government (*partial* alternation); (2) the higher the number of possible combinations of parties in the executive (*innovative* formula); (3) the longer the period in which parties will have the opportunity to enjoy the spoils of office (*open* access). In other words, in a system where party leaders must follow manoeuvres among a large number of parties, predictability and stability in the structure of inter-party competition will be obviously hindered.¹⁷

Comparison among the four cases here analysed clearly suggests that the number of parliamentary parties in a system, measured according to Laakso and Taagepera's (1979) index, offers a very powerful explanation of the variance in the degree of institutionalization between the different party systems (table A3), with low levels of fragmentation being associated with high mean institutionalization (Hungary and the Czech Republic), and high fractionalization being associated with low systemic institutionalization (Slovakia and Poland). However, as we know from the literature, the number of parties is a function of a country's electoral system (Duverger, 1954; Lijphart, 1994; Riker, 1982; Taagepera and Shugart, 1989). Hence, and since the abovementioned analysis offers quite a strong confirmation of the impact of the number of parties on the level of institutionalization, I need to consider now to what extent differences in the national electoral systems accounts for the cross-national variation in mean levels of parliamentary fragmentation observed above.

Table 3, which groups each of the different electoral systems (sorted by electoral formula and effective threshold) and ranks them (in ascending order) according to the "effective" number of parliamentary parties (ENPP), offers rather strong support for this hypothesis. Thus, and in the first place, the systems featuring the least proportional formula,¹⁸ including the Hungarian "mixed" member system, are all located towards the top of the table, where the number of parties is rather low, while the systems with the most proportional formula are at the bottom.

Table 3. The systemic consequences of electoral systems in East Central Europe

¹⁷ For a theoretical and empirical account of the negative relationship between fractionalization and party system institutionalization see also Bartolini and Mair (1990), Birch (2003), Birnir (2005), Lane (2008), Mainwaring and Zocco (2007), and Tavits (2005).

¹⁸ Here I completely follow the general agreement according to which the largest remainder systems (i.e., Hare-Niemayer and Hagenbach-Bischoff, in this order) are the most proportional, followed by Sainte-Laguë and its modified version, with d'Hondt and all the majoritarian/plurality formulas bringing up the rear (Farrell, 2001; Lijphart, 1994; Loosemore and Hanby, 1971; Rae, 1971).

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Country	Time period	Electoral Formula	Effective threshold	ENPP
Hungary	1990-2006	Plurality/Hagenbach-Bischoff	10.7	3.0
Poland	1993-1997	D'Hondt	8.8	3.4
Czech R.	2002-2006	D'Hondt	4.9	3.4
Poland	2005-2007	D'Hondt	6.1	3.5
Poland	2001	Mod. Sainte-Laguë	6.1	3.6
Slovakia	1992-1994	Hagenbach-Bischoff	1.5	3.8
Czech R.	1992-1998	Hagenbach-Bischoff	2.9	4.2
Slovakia	1998-2006	Hagenbach-Bischoff	0.5	5.2
Poland	1991	Hare-Niemayer	6.9	10.9

Source (ENPP): Gallagher's "Electoral Systems" Web Site

Similarly, when looking at the different national electoral systems sorted by effective threshold, an association between the latter and the effective number of parliamentary parties emerges, although the picture is not so clear. Thus, systems with the higher "effective" threshold tend to produce a lower degree of parliamentary fragmentation and *vice versa*. The only exception to this rule is Poland's initial electoral system (1991), where a very proportional formula and mainly the absence of legal threshold deprived district magnitude (Lijphart's "effective" threshold) from its effect, giving rise to an atomized "system" with multiple "sofa"-parties. In fact, once this "exceptional" electoral system is eliminated from the comparison, the association between "effective" thresholds and ENPP is inescapable ($r = -0.824$, sig. at .05 level).

All in all, since both electoral formula and effective threshold prove to be quite strongly related to mean levels of parliamentary fragmentation, I can afford now a closer assessment of the relationship between electoral disproportionality,¹⁹ fractionalization, and party system institutionalization *per se*. The idea is to be able to determine to what extent each of the former two factors has (or not) an independent effect on the latter. In order to do so, a breakdown of different national periods (sorted by electoral system) according to format and disproportionality is offered in table 4.

Table 4. Parliamentary fragmentation, electoral disproportionality and party system institutionalization

LSq.	ENPP		
	<3	3-4	>4
>10	2.2 (Hungary, 2009)		-0.8 (Poland, 2000)
7-10		1.7 (Slovakia, 1997)	0.1 (Poland, 2004)/-0.6 (Poland, 2009)
4-7		1.7 (Czech R., 2009)	1.7 (Czech R., 2001)/1.3 (Slovakia, 2009)
<4			-7.3 (Poland, 1992)

In the event, as it is clearly evident from the results displayed above, parliamentary fragmentation exerts an impact on the level of institutionalization which is, simultaneously, dependent on the level of disproportionality. Hence, while it is clear that the more fragmented systems within each level of proportionality are characterised by lower levels of institutionalization (rows from left to right); the more disproportional systems within each format category are not systematically associated with

¹⁹ In order to measure the degree of disproportionality produced between the shares of votes and the shares of seats gained by each competing party, I employ here Gallagher's (1991) "least-squared" (LSq.) index, by now a long-standing measure (see Lijphart, 1994:139 or Morlino, 1998:92ff.).

higher mean levels of systemic institutionalization (e.g. Slovakia´ 1993-1997, Poland´ 1993-2000). In sum, there seems to be a causal chain going from the electoral system through parliamentary fragmentation to party system institutionalization. In other words, the electoral system (i.e. disproportionality) is the basic explanatory factor, whereas parliamentary concentration is a step on the way towards party system institutionalization.

3. Type of regime

Surprisingly enough, within this “institutionalist” canon the debate about the relative merits of the different regime types for the stability of the patterns of inter-party competition is perhaps the least known. Even if a first negative judgment on the effects of certain regime types (mainly presidentialism, but also semi-presidentialism) on party system institutionalization was passed by Linz in a multiauthored collection titled *The Failure of Presidential Democracy* (first published in 1994)²⁰ the truth is that this issue was merely neglected until Meleshevich (2007:chapter 8) focused on it.

As I have explained elsewhere (Casal Bértoa, 2010), in parliamentary systems the election of the head of state – usually appointed either by the sole governing coalition parties (if disposing of the generally required “qualified majority”) or as the fruit of a compromise among the majority of political forces which see this “almost compulsory” collaboration as totally *ad hoc* – has no effect whatsoever (neither positive nor negative) on the patterns of partisan interaction. In semi-presidential regimes,²¹ the popular election of the president not only contributes to foster parliamentary fragmentation (Filippov, Ordeshook, and Shvetsova, 1999; Golder, 2006; Linz, 1994) and delay party institutionalization (Colton, 1995; Moser, 2001) – two phenomena which, as has been explained, hinder systemic institutionalization – but also, and more importantly, has a direct (negative) impact on the structure of inter-party competition itself. The logic is that because presidential candidates need to appeal to a wider segment of the electorate, “broad” coalitions - most of the time across ideological lines - are likely to be formed. In this sense, an element of systemic instability is introduced either through the formation of a previously unseen cabinet coalitions or the inclusion of a party excluded from government up to that time.²²

A quick look at the four cases under study provides strong support for my argument regarding the negative relationship between party system institutionalization and type of regime (table A3), namely, that semi-presidentialism has been more damaging for the institutionalization of party systems in Poland and to a lesser extent in Slovakia (see below), than in parliamentarian Hungary and Czech Republic, where the head of state has been elected in the majority of cases either by the super-majoritarian governing coalition (e.g. Göncz in 1995 or Mádl in 2000; or Havel in 1993) or as a result of a compromise (either formal – e.g. Göncz in 1990 and Havel in 1998, or informal – e.g. Klaus in 2003) among governing and opposition forces. Moreover, even in those two cases when the election of the president did not respond to any of the previous patterns (e.g. Sólyom in 2005; and Klaus in 2008), the existing structure of competition was by no means threatened.

²⁰ In fact, and in clear contrast to parliamentarism, Linz saw the perils of semi-presidentialism for the stability in the structure of partisan competition as being as great as, if not greater than, those of presidentialism.

²¹ As with the notion of party system institutionalization, the concept of semi-presidentialism has been particularly prone to definitional problems (Elgie, 1999; Sartori, 1997) Here, I simply adopt Elgie’s minimalist definition of semi-presidentialism, by now the most common way of characterizing this type of regime (e.g. Kirschke, 2007; Protsyk, 2005; Schleiter and Morgan-Jones, 2006; Shugart 2005; Skach 2005), as a regime “where there is both a popularly elected fixed-term president and a prime minister and cabinet responsible to the legislature” (1999:13).

²² This is clear not only in single-round elections, where electoral plurality might depend on even the small number of voters those “unusual partners” might be able to provide, but most especially in majoritarian run-off elections like the ones in Slovakia (since 1999) or Poland, where political alliances have come closer to the process of coalition formation in a parliament in search of a prime minister.

In contrast to the previous two countries, in Poland the composition of the electoral alliances as well as of governmental coalitions has been determined from the very beginning by the patterns of inter-party collaboration established at the time of presidential elections. Thus, the November 1990 presidential elections, won by Solidarity founder and Nobel laureate Lech Wałęsa in the second round, played a critical role in the definition and shaping of the structure of competition in two different ways: on the one hand, it reinforced the pattern of fierce opposition between Solidarity and anti-Solidarity forces already present in the 1989 (semi-free) parliamentary elections; on the other, it constituted the last straw in the decomposition of the “Solidarity” camp into Christian-democratic/conservative (heirs of those who supported Lech Wałęsa) and liberal-democratic political forces (heirs of those supporting Mazowiecki); whose interaction, since then and with few exceptions, have been characterized by a severe political enmity and lack of will to cooperate. The following two presidential elections also had important consequences for the process of party system institutionalization in Poland. Thus, while Wałęsa’s defeat against Kwaśniewski in November 1995 prompted the parties of the right to “temporally” unite in the so-called Solidarity electoral Action (AWS) in order to contest the parliamentary elections in 1997 (Szczerbiak, 1999), and to collaborate “ephemerally” with the liberal Freedom Union (UW) up to June 2000; Kwaśniewski’s victory five years later brought forward the formal collaboration between the post-communist Alliance of the Democratic Left (SLD) and post-Solidarity Labour Union (UP) in both an electoral (Millard, 2002:362) and, later on, governmental alliance in 2001. However, no presidential contest had such a strong influence on the pattern of competition like the 2005 elections, after which Jarosław Kaczyński (Law and Justice’s leader), in compensation for the support received by his twin brother (Lech) during the presidential race, decided to cooperate – in parliament first, then in government - with Self-Defence and the League of Polish Families (LPR). The inclusion of these two anti-establishment-parties (Sokół and Śmigrodzki, 2005:195)²³ gave path to a new structure of partisan competition, that is, one based on economic rather than on cultural divisions (Jasiewicz and Jasiewicz-Betkiewicz, 2006; Szczerbiak, 2007).

Slovakia constitutes perhaps the most fascinating case in our research as it was a parliamentary democracy until 1999, when it switched to semi-presidentialism. In this sense, it constitutes a “natural experiment” which will enable me to examine whether change in the mode of election of the head of state has any influence in the level of party system institutionalization.

Like in Hungary and the Czech Republic, the first presidential elections in Slovakia had an indirect character and clearly responded to the already repeated demand for extraordinary consensus among the political parties: Michal Kováč, a former speaker of the last Czechoslovak Federal Assembly, was elected in the second ballot with the support of the two governing parties (i.e. the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia HZDS, and the Slovak National Party - SNS) and the main opposition party (the Party of the Democratic Left) (see Malová, 1994:416).²⁴

After the introduction of semi-presidentialism in 1999, the (negative) impact of presidential elections on the stability of the patterns of partisan interaction became visible only gradually.²⁵ Hence, on the one hand, the 1999 presidential contest only contributed to keep alive the structure of competition between Meciarists versus anti-Meciarists which would have otherwise disappeared

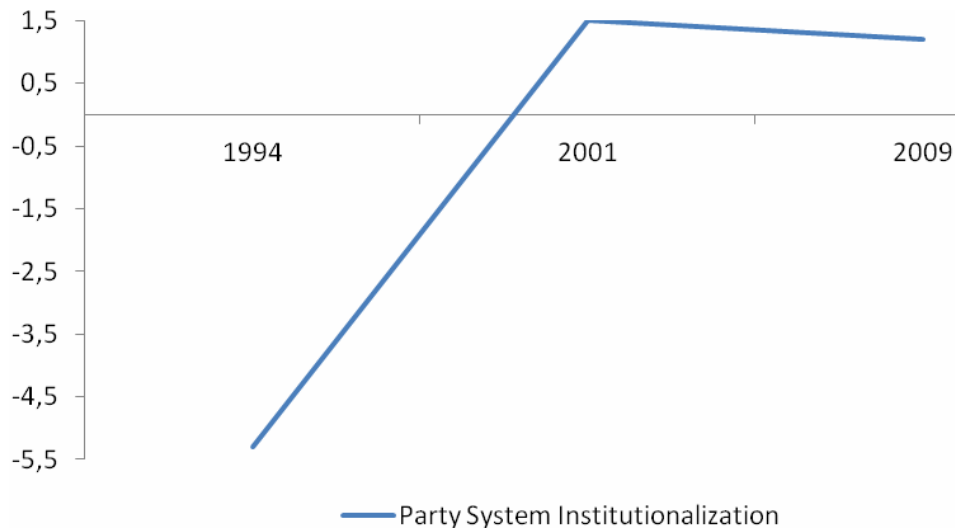
²³ In September 2001, needed of a coalition partner in order to secure a governing majority in the Sejm, the SLD considered a coalition with the populist-agrarian party Self-Defence led by Andrzej Lepper, although it was finally rejected in favour of SLD’s old coalition partner instead: the agrarian PSL. Previously, other extreme political forces like KPN or ROP had suffered the same fate.

²⁴ Altogether five rounds of elections were made from January to July 1998, but all of them were unsuccessful (Malová and Učeň, 1999:503-504). As a result, the presidency remained vacant.

²⁵ It should be borne in mind that my analysis does not include yet the last presidential contest (2009) as it is too early to foresee the implications it may have for the stability of the Slovak party system as a whole.

earlier as the result of simply partisan contestation in parliament.²⁶ On the other hand, the April 2004 presidential elections were the spark of a new structure of competition, as the rapprochement between nationalistic (SNS and HZDS´ splinter parties) and left-leaning forces (Smer) would have been inconceivable without Smer´s support to Gašparovič´s candidature.

Figure 2. Type of regime (change) and party system institutionalization in Slovakia



A quick look at figure 2, which displays the degree of institutionalization semi-presidentialism could have any impact on the party system clearly confirms the previous hypothesis: iPSI was higher in the period going from 1993 up to 2001, when the direct election of the president started to (negatively) influence the process of party system institutionalization, than afterwards. In fact, when looking at the whole period when parliamentarism exerted its positive impact, it is possible to appreciate a significative increase in the level of systemic institutionalization (i.e. from -5.3 in 1994 up to 1.5 in 2001).

It follows from all the above that, in clear contrast to parliamentary Hungary and the Czech Republic, semi-presidentialism in Poland, and in Slovakia since 1999, has “provided the potential for new axes of conflict without the mediating effect of long-established relationship among political parties” (Millard, 2000:59).

4. Cleavage structuration

Cleavages²⁷ are also closely related to the development of party systems. A significant number of scholars, inspired by the work of Lipset and Rokkan (1967), view party system institutionalization as a process in which the gradual consolidation and structuration of cleavages produces stable patterns of competition and reasonably durable party alignments (Kreuzer and Pettai, 2003:76-77). The main idea is that cleavages (“social” and/or “political”) affect party system development because they determine the political preferences of voters and elites, who with their decisions determine the balance of power among the different forces in any given legislative body, and therefore the way political parties

²⁶ It shouldn´t be forgotten that the 1998/1999 anti-Meciar coalition comprised the conservative SDK, the socialist SDL´, the ethnic SMK, and the populist SOP.

²⁷ Following Bartolini and Mair (1990), I understand “cleavages” as structured and persistent lines of division, requiring the presence of three different elements at the same time, namely: an “objective” basis for conflict, mobilization around this conflict and organizations that represent the various sides of this conflict (see Bakke and Sitter, 2005:260).

compete and ally. In sum, it is the existence of well-defined and well-organised cleavages that provide the bases of steady support for parties structuring the party system, therefore leading to strong partisan alignments and more resilient and predictable structures of interaction (Bakke and Sitter, 2005; Evans and Whitefield, 1993; Kitschelt *et al.*, 1999). It is within this school of thought that three different approaches on the sociological determinants of party system institutionalization in old and new democracies can be distinguished.

There is by now a considerable literature relating party system format and the number of cleavages in a political system. The idea is that “the more axes of cleavage there are within a society, the greater will be the number of political parties” (Taagepera and Grofman, 1985:343) and, therefore, the lower the degree of systemic institutionalization. The point of departure within this approach was initiated by Powell’s (1982) and Lijphart’s (1984) comparative works, which respectively concluded that social heterogeneity and the (high) amount “issue dimensions” encourages fractionalization.

A second group of scholars, echoing Offe’s (1991) “triple transition”, established a link between the type of cleavages structuring party competition and the level of party system stability in a country. Thus, and according to Evans and Whitefield (1993), who pioneered work in this tradition, the stability of a party system will be high, moderate or low depending on the predominance of ethnic, socio-economic or “political” (i.e. valence issues) cleavages, respectively (see also Birnir, 2007). In a similar vein, and around the same period, Kitschelt, either alone (1995, 2001) or with his colleagues (1999), suggested that in countries where economic-distributive cleavages are salient, party systems will be more structured than in countries where cultural or historical-regime cleavages predominate. In contrast, where neither economic nor cultural cleavages are prevalent, but they are combined with other (ethnic, geographical, etc.) divisions reinforcing each other, party appeals will remain weakly crystallized, favoring the formation of clientelistic parties and the lack of systemic structuration (1999:383-391).

A third approach, more in the tradition of Lipset and Rokkan (1967), prefers to focus on the strength a particular cleavage may have. Although many other scholars had attempted to study the abovementioned relationship before them (Alford, 1963; Devine and Stearns, 1985; etc.), it was in Bartolini and Mair’s *Identity, Competition and Electoral Availability* that a first attempt to measure cleavage strength independently of electoral behavior was made. In this work, and using an index of cultural heterogeneity and another index of organizational density, Bartolini and Mair found that the greater the strength of a cleavage (in their case “class”), the lower the level of electoral instability (1990:225, 243).

Table 4. Number, type, cleavage strength and party system institutionalization

Country	Number	Type	Strength (z-scores)	iPSI
<i>Hungary</i>	3.5	Post-communist	0.40	2.6
<i>Czech R.</i>	1.5	Economic	2.07	1.1
<i>Slovakia</i>	3.5	Ethnic	2.07	0.5
<i>Poland</i>	3.5	Religious	1.52	-4.2

Sources: the number of cleavages has been calculated on the basis of Lijphart’s “issue dimensions” (1984). For the type of prevalent cleavage, see Berglund *et al.* (2004) and Jungerstam-Mulders (2006). The strength of the prevalent cleavage has been calculated on the basis of its empirical and organizational dimensions (see Bartolini and Mair, 1990).

As it follows from table 4, neither the number nor the type nor the strength of a country’s cleavage(s) seems to exert no influence on the process of party system institutionalization in East Central Europe. Does it mean that Lipset and Rokkan were wrong when stating that the “freezing” of a

party system is determined by the way cleavages form and develop? The answer is, definitively, no. In my understanding, it is the way different cleavages relate to each other that really determines the degree to which party systems may or may not institutionalize. Thus, when cleavages are cross-cutting, parties will have it difficult to find ideologically contiguous partners with which to cooperate, as being close in one dimension may be accompanied by irreconcilable differences in another. Being forced to interact in multiplicity of non-coinciding directions definitively diminish the ability of parties to adapt to the *cross* pressures and stabilize the structure of competition. On the contrary, when cleavages are cumulative (i.e. coinciding), parties will tend to interact only with other parties within the same side of the cleavages, rejecting any cooperation that would lead them to cross such line. In this sense, cumulative cleavages, similarly to one-dimensional cleavage configurations, help to simplify the structure of competition in two different (and separate) blocs of parties, making the patterns of interaction more predictable and stable. In fact, when look at the eighth column in table A3, a striking finding appears: the lower the degree of cleavage cross-cuttingness, the higher the level of institutionalization observed in a party system. But let's see now how the previous analytical framework works, more specifically, in each of the four East Central European countries

Figure 3. Cleavages and approximate placement of political parties* in Hungary (1994...)²⁸

<i>Secular</i>	SZDSZ	MSZP		Fidesz	[FKgP]	[MIÉP]	MDF	KDNP	<i>Religious</i>
<i>Post-Comm.</i>	MSZP	SZDSZ		MDF	Fidesz	KDNP	[FKgP]	[MIÉP]	<i>Anti-comm.</i>
<i>Urban</i>	SZDSZ	MSZP		MDF	Fidesz	KDNP	[FKgP]	[MIÉP]	<i>Rural</i>

* Fidesz = Federation of Young Democrats/Hungarian Civic Party; FKgP = Independent Party of Smallholders; KDNP = Christian Democratic People's Party; MDP = Hungarian Democratic Forum; MIÉP = Hungarian Justice and Life Party; MSZD = Hungarian Socialist Party; SZDSZ = Alliance of Free Democrats.
Sources: Benoit & Laver (2006), Enyedi (2006) and Vachudová & Hooghes (2009)

According to the majority of scholars, three different but reinforcing cleavages (i.e. post-communist, religious, and urban-rural) have structured the Hungarian party system since 1994 (figure 3), dividing the political spectrum in two different and stable political camps: “a socially conservative, religious, somewhat nationalist, and anti-communist camp [...] and [...] a secular, morally permissive and generally less nationalist camp” (Tóka, 2004:322; see also Enyedi, 2006; Körösenyi, 1999). This has led to an almost two-party system where parties of the centre-left and centre-right have colligated among themselves (even in different combinations), but never in a manner that would mean cooperation across the ideological boundary (centre-left with centre-right).

Figure 4. Economic cleavage and approximate placement of political parties* in the Czech Republic²⁹

KSCM	SZ	CSSD	[SPR/RSC]	[HSD/SMS]	KDU/CSL	[US/DEU]	[ODA]	ODS
<i>Statist</i>								<i>Liberal</i>

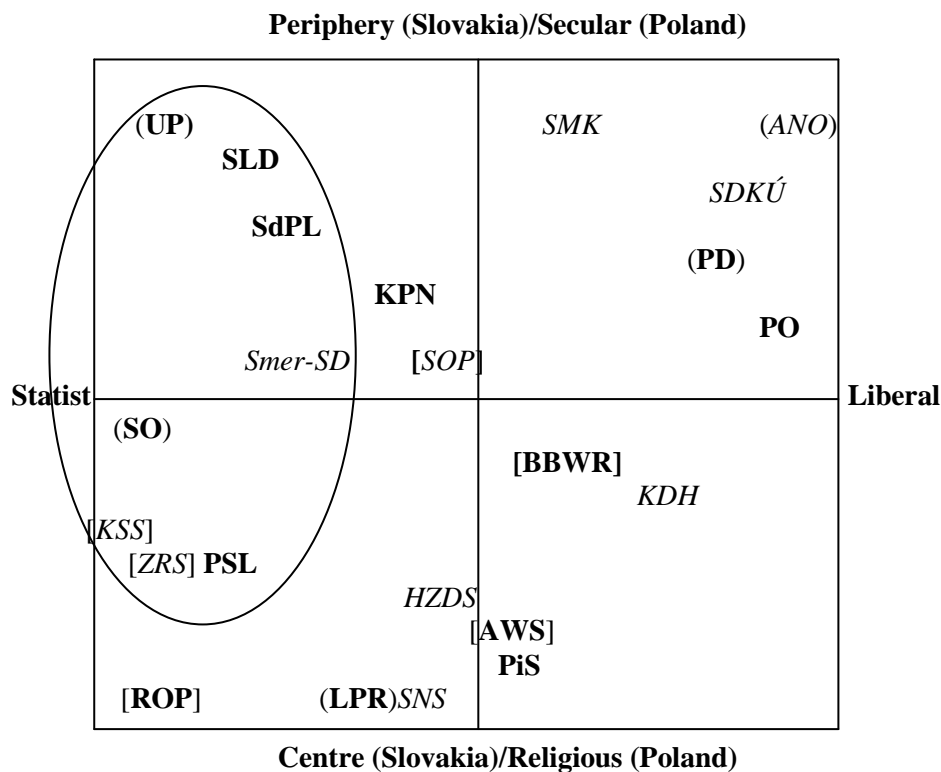
* CSSD = Czech Social Democratic Party; KDU/CSL = Christian and Democratic Union/Czechoslovak People's Party; HSD/SMS= Movement for Autonomous Democracy/Party for Moravia and Silesia; ODA= Civic Democratic Alliance; ODS = Civic Democratic Party; SPR/RSC = Union for the Republic/Republican Party of Czechoslovakia; SZ = Green Party; US/DEU = Freedom Union/Democratic Union.
Sources: Benoit & Laver (2006), Evans & Whitefield (1998), Kitschelt *et al.* (1999) and Vachudová & Hooghes (2009)

²⁸ Currently defunct political parties are placed between square brackets.

²⁹ Currently non-parliamentary parties are placed between brackets.

In a similar vein, the predominance of an unique (i.e. economic) cleavage in the Czech Republic (see Brokl and Mansfeldová, 2003; Kitschelt *et al.*, 1999:230) has facilitated the “crystallization of the ‘traditional’ left-right political spectrum” (Mateju *et al.* 1999:235) with the Christian-Democrats in the centre playing the role of a hinge party (figure 2). On the contrary, in Poland and Slovakia the predominance of two cross-cutting cleavages (axiological³⁰ and economic) have led to the formation of ideologically very heterogeneous and, consequently, short-termed political alliances (figure 5).

Figure 5. Cleavages³¹ and approximate placement of political parties* in Slovakia and Poland³²



* Political Parties in Slovakia (in italics): ANO = Alliance of the New Citizen; HZDS = Movement for a Democratic Slovakia; KDH = Christian Democratic Movement; KSS= Slovak Communist Party; SDKÚ-DS = Slovak Democratic and Christian Union-Democratic Party; Smer-SD = Direction/Social Democracy; SMK = Hungarian Coalition; SNS = Slovak National Party; SOP = Party of Civic Understanding; ZRS = Association of Workers of Slovakia. Political parties in Poland (in bold): AWS = Solidarity Electoral Action; BBWR = Non-partisan Bloc for Support of Reforms; LPR = League of Polish Families; PiS = Law and Justice; PO = Civic Platform; PSL = Polish Peasant Party; ROP= Movement for the Reconstruction of Poland; SLD = Alliance of the Democratic Left; SO = Self-Defence; UP = Union of Labour; PD = Democratic Party.
Sources: Benoit & Laver (2006), Gyárfášová & Krivý (2007:82), Vachudová & Hooghes (2009) and Markowski (2006, 2007)

³⁰ While in Slovakia the axiological cleavage takes the form of the classic centre vs. periphery (Rybář, 2006), in Poland it is characterised by religiosity and communist “nostalgia” (Castle and Taras, 2002; Jasiewicz, 2007; Szczerbiak 2006).

³¹ I have included inside the circle all those parties with a certain post-communist background (both in terms of ideology and support). Still, it is important to remark that only in Poland it is possible to talk of a “post-communist” *cleavage* (Grabowska, 2004).

³² Currently non-parliamentary parties are placed between brackets. Extinct parties are located between square brackets.

In particular, and with the exception of Meciar's 4th cabinet, every Slovak coalition government since 1994 has always included political forces from at least two different political camps, at time even three. This was the case of the 1994 Moravcik's and 1998 Dzurinda's "rainbow" cabinets which comprised five political parties/groups ranging from the centre-right to the centre-left of the political spectrum (Szomolányi, 2003). In fact, each of these two government was so ideologically heterogeneous as to bring together the conservative DS, with the liberal DÚ (AD and APR in 1994) and the religious KDH (all of them anti-communists) on the right, and the post-communist SDL' and the historical social-democrats (SDSS) on the left, together with the populist SOP, the ethnic SMK and the environmentalist SZS. Dzurinda's and Fico's cabinet in 2002 and 2006, respectively, following a similar pattern, although the level of ideologically homogeneity increased to a certain extent. Thus, the former included again Christian Democrats (KDH) with the Catholic Hungarian SMK (now itself divided along two different economic trends: liberal and populist), together with the liberal-secular SDKÚ (DÚ's successor) and the neoliberal-anti-clerical ANO. In a similar vein, the current government also includes parties from two different camps, namely: the national-authoritarian (with the religious HZDS and SNS) and the socialist (secular) Smer (Henderson, 2002; Hlousek and Kopecek, 2008; Rybár, 2006; Szomolányi, 2003). This is not to say, however, that the national-authoritarian based government constituted an ideologically homogeneous "oasis of peace". In fact, the parties forming Meciar's cabinets in 1993 and 1994 also quarrel over economy (ZRS/HZDS vs. SNS) as well as religion (ZRS vs. HZDS/SNS). However, the fact that they shared a common view on the way the process of national (both in terms of identity and institutions) building should develop certainly helped to make the patterns of partisan interaction at the beginning of the 1990s displayed a more predictable, although not so much stable, than ever afterwards (see figure 1).

In Poland, where the social protectionist camp (socialists - SLD, SdPL, UP - and populists - PSL, Samoobrona and LPR) differs from the pro-market camp (liberals - PD and PO - and conservative PiS) in terms of economy; the secular camp (socialists + liberals) from the religious camp (populists + conservatives) in terms of religiosity; and the post-communist successor parties (mainly SLD, SdPL and PSL) from all the other parties in terms of "nostalgia" for the previous (communist) regime, parties have had it very difficult to establish stable governmental coalitions and/or electoral alliances. As a rule, cabinets have been short-termed and the only one to endure the whole legislature (SLD-PSL from 1993 up to 1997) was characterized by its quarrels, rather than by its agreements. Moreover, and what is more striking, not even one of the coalition governments in Poland managed to unite all parties from the same political field.³³ In the majority of cases, not even two parties from the same political field (the only exceptions are Suchowska's 7-party cabinet - if not then, when?). This would explain, certainly, the lower level of party system institutionalization observed in Poland in comparison to Slovakia.

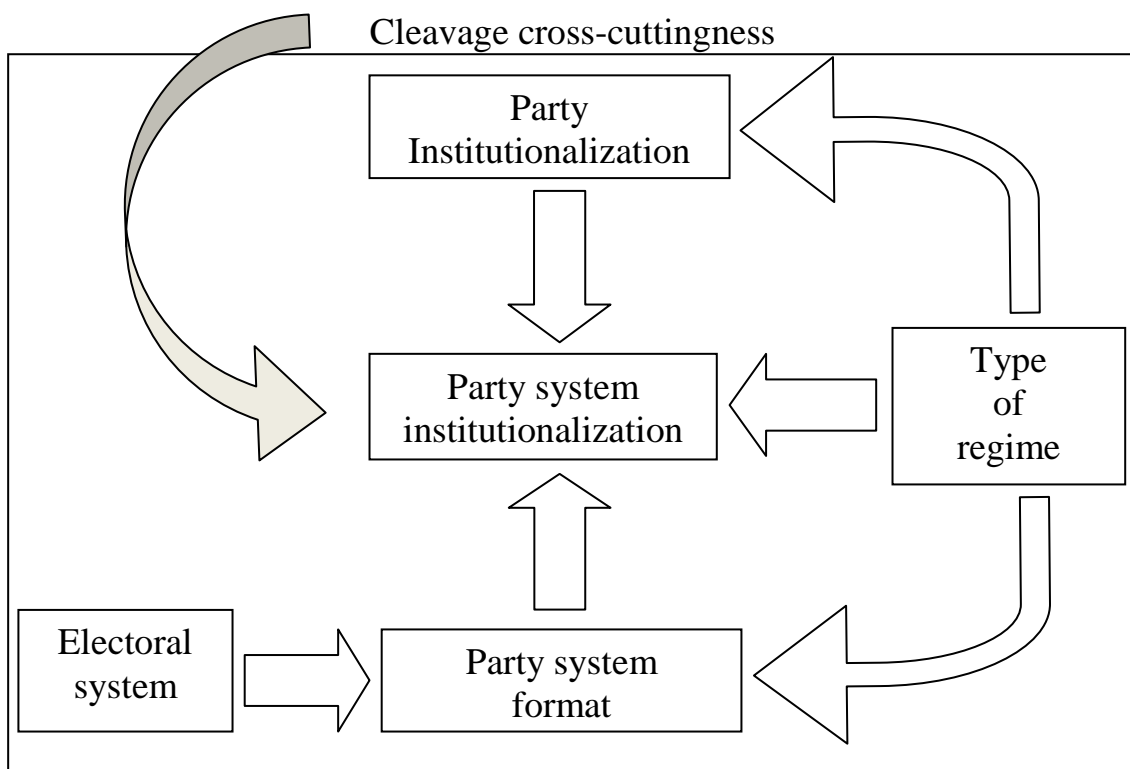
Conclusion

Since Mainwaring and Scully (1995) trumpeted the important consequences party system institutionalization may have for the consolidation of democracy in young political systems, much has been written about the level of systemic institutionalization in new democracies, yet the question of *why* some competitive party systems institutionalize while others do not has not received the necessary attention. In order to begin to fill this gap in the literature this paper has provided an analysis of the "causal mechanisms" of party system institutionalization in East Central Europe, producing some clear conclusions (figure 6).

³³ The only exception was AWS (2000-2001) and PiS (2005-2006) minority governments, which on the other hand, required the parliamentary support of political forces from other different ideological fields (ROP in 2000, or Samoobrona and LPR in 2005).

First of all, my analysis indicates that party institutionalization plays an essential role in party system institutionalization. The idea is that as individual political parties institutionalize (i.e. develop stable roots in society and build solid organizations), they are likely to remain consistent in terms of ideology and interact only with other like-minded parties. By making party choices more stable and coherent for the electorate, parties and their leaders help voters to express their political preferences more consistently, thereby avoiding unexpected consequences in terms of the balance of power as well as instability in the patterns of inter-party competition for government. Second, party system format has also an important impact on party system institutionalization. Low levels of parliamentary fragmentation allow a relatively small number of possible interactions, making the patterns of partisan cooperation and collaboration more predictable and, hence, stable. However, because the number of parties in a system is itself a function of the electoral system, this means that the latter also affects institutionalization. Third, and in clear contrast to parliamentary regimes, semi-presidentialism seems affect the process of party system institutionalization in two ways: direct and indirect. The direct effect of popular election of the president is to require from any presidential candidate a broader electoral base, one that may cut across ideological lines, and introduce the potential for instability (and unpredictability) in the patterns of interaction among the different political forces. The second mechanism, following the common knowledge in the literature, simply points to the negative impact of semi-presidentialism on both party institutionalization and fractionalization, as discussed above.

Figure 6. Party system institutionalization in East Central Europe: “causal mechanisms”



Last but not least, party system institutionalization will also depend on the mode cleavages form and develop. Thus, institutionalization will be enhanced in those systems with a one-dimensional or cumulative-coinciding cleavage structure, as political parties and voters will be structured by those coinciding line(s) of division into two clearly defined alternative blocs, making the structure of partisan competition stable and predictable over time. On the contrary, in systems where cleavages

have a cross-cutting character, party system institutionalization will suffer as parties will have to cooperate across dividing ideological lines, which will convert any possible alliance in *ad hoc*, ephemeral and unpredictable. In this sense, this paper tends to build a bridge between those scholars counterpoising arguments that emphasize sociological dependence to those that emphasize the incentives create by formal institutions, and *vice versa*. All in all, my findings show complementarity rather than conflict between those two approaches to explanation.

In conclusion, party system institutionalization in new East Central European democracies has been enhanced by both supportive institutional structures and strong cleavage structuration. The next step in research should be to extend the cases beyond the East Central European region in order to discover, with the application of a more sophisticated and dynamic methodology, more precise causal explanations that could permit greater generalization.

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Appendix

Table A1 Dimensions of party system institutionalization proposed by selected scholars

Author(s)/ Subject of Study	DIMENSIONS OF PARTY SYSTEM INSTITUTIONALIZATION								
	<i>Complexity & Coherence</i>	<i>Adaptability</i>	<i>Autonomy/ Boundary</i>	<i>Stability</i>	<i>Affiliation patterns</i>	<i>Scope/ Stable Roots</i>	<i>Legitimacy</i>	<i>Party Organization</i>	<i>Mutual acceptance</i>
Huntington (1968) Political Institutions	X	X	X						
Welfling (1973) African Party Systems		X	X	X		X			
Mainwaring & Scully (1995) Latin American Party Systems				X		X	X	X	
Morlino (1998) Southern European Party Systems				X					
Mair (2001) Western European Party Systems				X					
Bielasiak (2001) Post-Communist Party Regimes				X					
Randall & Svåsand (2002) Third World Party Systems			X	X			X		X
Kreuzer & Pettai (2003) Baltic States Party Systems					X				
Meleshevich (2007) Post-Soviet Party Systems			X	X					
Lindberg (2007) African Party Systems				X					

Note: Based on Meleshevich (2007:12)

Table A2 Sources of party system institutionalization according to selected scholars

Type	Factors	Author(s)
<i>Systemic</i>	Party Institutionalization	Sartori ([1968] 1990), Roberts & Wibbels (1999), Toole (2000), Madrid (2005)
	Party System Format	Bartolini & Mair (1990), Mainwaring (1999), Birch (2003)
	Polarization	Roberts & Wibbels (1999), Tavits (2005), Madrid (2005)
<i>Institutional</i>	Electoral System	Bartolini & Mair (1990),
	Nature of State	Mainwaring (1999)
	Type of Regime	Mainwaring (1999), Meleshevich (2007)
	Party Funding	Huntington (1968), Roper (2002), Birnir (2005), Spirova (2007)
<i>Sociological</i>	Cleavage Formation & Development	Lipset & Rokkan (1967), Bartolini & Mair (1990), Madrid (2005), Birnir (2007)
	Political Culture	Almond & Verba (1956), Mainwaring (1999)
<i>Historical</i>	Legacies of Communism	Kitschelt <i>et al.</i> (1999)
<i>Economic</i>	Economic Development & Performance	Remmer (1991), Mainwaring (1999), Roberts & Wibbels (1999), Tavits (2005), Madrid (2005), Mainwaring & Zocco (2007)
<i>Temporal</i>	Previous democratization	Remmer (1985), Kitschelt (1995), Pasquino (1990)
	Length of Authoritarianism	Remmer (1985), Bennett (1998), Hamman & Sgouraski-Kinsey (1999)
	Time of transition	Kitschelt (1995), Mainwaring & Zocco (2007)
	Length of democracy	Converse (1969), Lipset & Rokkan (1967), Bartolini & Mair (1990)
<i>International</i>	EU Conditionality	Vachudová (2008), Vachudová & Hooghe (2009), Ladrech (forthcoming)

Note: Based on Johnson (2002)

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Table A3 Sources of party system institutionalization in East Central Europe: “MSSD”

Country	Systemic			Institutional				Sociological		Historical	Economic	Temporal				International
	PI	ENPP	ID	LSq.	ToR	NoS	PF	Cleavage ³⁴	PC	LoC	GDP growth	LoPD	LoA	ToT	YoD	EU cond.
<i>Hungary</i>	21	3.0	3.8	10.8	P	C	1	0.83	-1.2	Bur.-author.	1.7	2	42	3 rd Wave	20	High
<i>Czech R.</i>	18.5	3.9	6.9	6.3	P	C	3	0.87	0.4	Nat.-accom.	3.0	23	42	3 rd Wave	19	High
<i>Slovakia</i>	14.5	4.7	5.2	6.5	Sp ³⁵	C	3	0.89	-0.4	Patrimonial	4.3	23	42	3 rd Wave	19	Very high
<i>Poland</i>	14.2	4.7	4.3	8.3	Sp	C	3	0.90	-0.1	Bur.-author.	4.2	8	44	3 rd Wave	20	High
<i>Difference</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>

Sources: Party Institutionalization (PI): average age of parliamentary parties calculated on the basis of Bugajski (2002); Parliamentary fragmentation (ENP): Gallagher’s “Electoral Systems” Web Site; “Left-right” Polarization (ID): own calculations using Abedi’s (2002) index; Type of regime (ToR): Moestrup (2007:47); Party Funding (PF): Birnir (2005:922); Cleavages (cross-cuttingness): Selway (2009:79-81); Political culture (PC): Inglehart & Welzel (2005); Legacies of Communism (LoC): Kitschelt (2001); GDP growth: World Development Indicators Online (WDI); Length of Previous Democracy (LoPD): Rivera (1996:182); Length of Communism (LoA): Magone (1998:220); Time of Transition (ToT): Huntington (1991); Years of democracy (YoD): Müller-Rommel *et al.* (2004:871); EU conditionality (EU cond.): Vachudová (2008)

³⁴ Hungary: religious and regional (i.e. urban vs. rural); Czech Republic: economic and religious; Slovakia: ethnic and economic; Poland: religious and economic.

³⁵ Slovakia became semi-presidential only after the constitutional amendment of January the 14th, 1999; before it was parliamentary.

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