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The nationalisation of post-communist party systems[1]

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26 November 2009

The nationalisation of post-communist party systems

Party nationalisation, defined as the homogeneity of party strength across a country, has recently become a major issue in research. Even though territory is a salient political question in the post-communist countries in Europe, party nationalisation in these countries has been neglected by the literature so far. This article presents data on party nationalisation for twenty countries over the period 1990-2007. It shows that the nationalisation of party systems in post-communist democracies is closely related to the territorial structure of social divides, except for cases where the electoral systems provide for a high degree of nationalisation, or where super-presidentialism inhibits the creation of strong nationalised parties.

Keywords: Electoral geography; party nationalisation; Central and Eastern Europe; post-communist politics; ethnic minorities.

Introduction: Why study party nationalisation?

Territorial factors have been neglected by most of the literature on party systems for years, as many scholars have taken for granted that political parties usually have *nationalised* structures, meaning that they exist and compete countrywide. Regional political arenas and the role of non-countrywide political parties and regional party systems (low party nationalisation) have become intensively debated recently.[2] Studies on party nationalisation question whether political parties and party systems are homogeneous in a whole country, or if there are substantial spatial differences in political preferences, electoral competition, and the electoral strength of political parties (Jones & Mainwaring, 2003; Caramani, 2004; Ishiyama, 2002).[3] With their strong territorial divides, highly regionalised party systems, and multi-ethnic make-ups, the former communist democracies in Europe such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, or Ukraine, appear to be a particularly relevant set of cases for this research field.

This study extends the party nationalisation research to post-communist democracies. It not only provides the first measures of party nationalisation for twenty countries and 95 elections in Central and Eastern Europe, but it also offers new explanations to why in certain countries the main political conflicts are territorially based while other places lack any territorial dimension.

Nationalisation of political parties plays is relevant both for politics in practice, and for many concepts in political science.The most dramatic cases, where territorial divides became infamous, are linked to wars (e.g. the "American Civil War", Bosnia), or to geopolitical

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[2] Previously, researchers treated party systems rather as a national unit, not focussing on the regional heterogeneity, and only few studies (for instance Rose & Urwin, 1975) addressed the subject.

[3] Related terminologies focus, more or less explicitly, on the heterogeneity across electoral districts, speaking of *party aggregation* (Chhibber & Kollman, 2004; Allik, 2006), *district heterogeneity* (Morgenstern & Potthoff, 2005), or *cross-district linkage/party-linkage across districts* (Cox, 1999; Hicken, 2005; Moenius & Kasuya, 2004).

struggles (e.g. Ukraine). However, in countries with strong territorial divides, regional or local political autonomy can allow a close reflection of the political will of regional constituencies by the regional or local governments. Non-territorial divides cannot be ameliorated through decentralisation, but on the other hand, they can also not become catalysts for separatist movements. Party nationalisation is also closely related to the effect of electoral systems. Territorially based electoral districts are the key element of the mechanism of many electoral rules, so that the territorial structure of political parties makes a crucial difference for the effect of electoral systems. Finally, spatial variance in the voters' preferences can be reflected in regionally differentiated *policies*.

This study tests the two main concepts that have dominated the discussion on party natio-nalisation so far, focusing on twenty countries in Central and Eastern Europe. It innovates by showing the relationship between territorially based ethnic divides, which are measured with a new indicator, and the nationalisation of party systems through a systematic quantitative analysis. The study focuses on the aggregated measure of party *system* nationalisation as dependent variable, with countries as units of analysis. Most variables that are considered to affect the nationalisation have an effect on the whole party system, and not only on single parties. This is why aggregated measures of the nationalisation of party *systems* are fairly representative for the nationalisation of single parties too, especially in party systems that are divided along ethnic lines.

Showing the connection between ethnic divides and the nationalisation of party systems leads to a profoundly different conclusion from the ones of the previous research on the phenomenon. The institutional explanation, looking at the role of the centralisation of govern-ments (Chhibber & Kollman, 2004), appears not to hold for the post-communist democracies. Instead, I base my explanation on the role of social divides and political cleavages (Caramani, 2004) and on the impact of national electoral thresholds. These models offer a very accurate

explanation of the varying levels of the nationalisation of party systems in Central and Eastern Europe. The findings might also help to anticipate the territorial structure of party systems, and contribute to a better prediction of institutional effects, which greatly aids institutional engineering.

The focus on Central and Eastern Europe offers a sample of easily comparable cases with similar contextual factors, such as the legacy of their communist past and their recent political transition. On the other hand, the different political, social, and economic histories, compared to their Western counterparts, might explain why I come to different results than earlier studies. The high variance in the nationalisaton of party systems across post-communist countries is suited for a comparative analysis.[4]

The first part of this article reviews the relevant literature and presents the explanatory approaches that will be employed. This is followed by a description of the development of party nationalisation in 95 elections, and a multivariate analysis of the effect of decentralisation, territorial ethnic divides, and electoral systems on party nationalisation.

Four explanations of party nationalisation

Political parties win their seats within electoral districts, so that from a pure electoral system perspective, a party does not need to be organised across districts in order to win seats in parliament. Nevertheless, even in countries with many electoral districts, parties join in a national structure. This section discusses several aspects that explain the formation of national party systems, and that might help to explain cross-country variance in party nationalisation.

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[4] Party nationalisation has been studied earlier for a sample of eleven countries in the region. One of the major findings is that district size is closely related to party nationalisation (Tiemann, 2005). However, the findings of this study seem to be little robust, because of a potential bias in the measure of party nationalisation, which shows much higher values when there are many territorial units, such as electoral districts, than when we employ only a few territorial units. Accordingly, artefacts emerging from this operationalisation, relying on the number of districts, can hardly be distinguished from real impacts of district size.

Centralised state, centralised parties – or the other way round?

The prevalent school describes party nationalisation as a consequence of the centralisation of power. Most important institutional explanations rely on the dominance of national executives over parliaments (Cox, 1997, pp. 186-193), on presidentialism (Hicken, 2003; Kasuya, 2001; Samuels, 2002; Cox, 1997, pp. 187-190), and on unitary and centralised states (Chhibber & Kollman, 2004; Harbers, 2009).

One of the two mentioned institutional dimensions are legislative-executive relations. The arguments that are used in the literature are diametrically opposed to each other. Certain authors focus on strong presidential offices, arguing that presidential electoral campaigns might help for the formation of national political parties, in linking the party system to nationally competing presidential candidates (Hicken, 2003, p. 4; Samuels, 2002). Presidential candidates rely on party sections as local resources for their elections, while legislative candidates profit from linkages to the presidential campaign (Samuels, 2002, p. 468; Kasuya, 2001, pp. 15-18). In turn, powerful presidential offices deprive political parties of the function of government formation, notably if the president is not elected as a partisan candidate. Hence, nationalisation through presidential campaigns should only be expected if presidential candidates are closely linked to political parties, and if elections for the executive and the legislature are held simultaneously (Hicken, 2003; Kasuya, 2001; Clark & Wittrock, 2005).

In the super-presidential systems of Central and Eastern Europe, this is not the case. A different literature has, however, supposed a different link of party nationalisation to the executive-legislative relations. It highlights the function of parliamentary elections to indirectly elect the prime minister, and if this view prevails, *strong parliamentary executives* might be responsible for high party nationalisation (Hicken, 2003; Cox, 1997). In countries where the parliament elects the government, voters and political actors attribute much more

responsibility for national policies to the parliament than in presidential regimes (Tucker, 2002, p. 58). This, in turn, increases the importance of national political parties, while in (certain) presidential systems, there might be no incentives for parties to organise nationally.

> "The fully separate selection process of the executive and assembly and the lack of mutual dependence once in office permits voters and campaign contributors to demand different things of their executive and legislative candidates. As a result, voters need not demand that their legislators show loyalty to a party label" (Shugart & Haggard, 2001, p. 84).

Certainly, under PR, there are other institutional incentives for political parties to nationalise – the electoral competition is structured around party lists, and often there are national compensation mechanisms inhibit parties to compete countrywide. In single-seat district electoral systems, similar incentives are lacking: candidates are elected directly, and the electoral system does not encourage candidates to link to a political party or an electoral list. In the absence of any other systemic needs for nationwide party linkages, the form of government might play a particularly important role in electoral systems without partisan elements. Accordingly, I expect that party nationalisation is higher in PR elections and in parliamentary regimes.[5]

Secondly, *centralisation of government* has been employed as an institutional explanation of party nationalisation (Chhibber & Kollman, 2004; Cox & Knoll, 2003). In heavily centralised states, national political issues matter more to voters, because at this level of government the most substantial policies are decided. Political actors have little interest to organise on a local or regional level if there are no political responsibilities at this level, so that "local parties are abandoned altogether and disappear" (Chhibber & Kollman, 2004, p. 222). Decentralisation opens space for regional political parties (Blais & Carty, 1991, p. 85).

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[5] Concerns about endogeneity problems – it might be the case that presidential regimes are established at the absence of strong national parties – can be ruled out, recognising that Geddes (1996, p. 29) demonstrated that strong presidencies "were established prior to, or at the same time as, freely elected legislatures".

While for the study of certain countries, the *centralisation of government dimension* explains the variance fairly well (cf. Chhibber & Kollman, 2004), namely if these countries elect by plurality vote (USA, Canada, India, and UK), there might be reservations about this explanation and its causality in the Central and Eastern European case, for three reasons. First, the presented idea relies in large part on the indirect election of the prime minister, assuming single party majority governments and the existence of two main national parties, which compete against each other.[6] Such cases are rare in Central and Eastern Europe, not at least due to the widespread application of proportional representation (PR) and mixed electoral systems. If parliamentary majorities for a single party are rare, small parties, even regional ones, can gain a lucrative role as kingmaker, and in change obtain particular benefits. [7] They might for instance press for increased regional autonomy. Hence, even in highly centralised states, there is no need for the voters to abandon small or regional parties.

Second, even in a two-party competition, the two main competitors might as well be based on regional divides or interests (for instance in Ukraine, cf. Katchanovski (2006)). In such a case, party nationalisation will be low, even in a unitary state. To be precise, we might expect that countries with dominant regional cleavages might adopt a decentralised administration, so that the combination of strong centralisation and regional conflicts might be rare.

Thirdly, the centralisation hypothesis presumes that the institutional structure of the state gives incentives for the (non-)formation of regional parties. However, the contrary might be the case too: Regionalist parties, when participating in governing coalitions, might demand a stronger political or financial decentralisation (Heller, 2002; Chhibber & Kollman, 2004, pp.

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[6] In a two-party system, where a single party holds a majority of parliamentary seats, small regional parties have hardly any coalition potential at the national level. Instead, the group's interests might be better represented if it decides to align with the large parties, and thus be represented in governments.

[7] Even in Westminster systems, governments often rely on the support of regional or ethnic parties.

226-227).[8] Federalist institutions might "reduce the expression of regional protest in the party system by opening up institutional channels of voice" (Caramani, 2004, p. 292). They might be introduced reacting to the emergence of regionalist parties. Party nationalisation might be not only the consequence, but also the cause of state centralisation.

The cleavage hypothesis

Alternatively, party nationalisation might be explained as a consequence of the territorial structure of social or socio-economic divides (Lipset & Rokkan, 1967). Caramani (2004, p. 15) addresses the *centre-periphery* and the *urban-rural* cleavage as "territorial" divides, connected to low levels of nationalisation. In contrast, "functional" cleavages, such as the economic cleavage in Western Europe, do not have a territorial character, so that parties organising along such cleavages are highly nationalised (cf. Caramani, 2004; Cox, 1999, p. 159).

The explanation of party system structures by cleavages has been criticised though, because cleavages do not convert into parties as a matter of course, but this is produced by the political system itself (Zielinski, 2002, p. 187). Looking at Central and Eastern Europe, only a few scholars are looking for similarities of political divisions with social cleavages in Western democracies (Kitschelt et al., 1999). The view overwhelms that cleavages, especially if they are narrowly defined, are of limited relevance in the region (Elster et al., 1998, pp. 247-270). However, one social divide[9] appears to be an exception to the rule: The ethnic divide[10] is salient in Central and Eastern Europe (Evans & Need, 2002) and helps many parties to mobilise their voters (Elster et al., 1998, p. 252). Ethnic minorities exist in almost all

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[8] A typical case are the regional parties in the recent government in Spain (Agranoff, 2005; Hopkin, 2009).

[9] I employ the term social divide rather than cleavage, acknowledging that these divides have different characteristics from the cleavages described by Lipset and Rokkan (1967).

[10] Lipset and Rokkan (1967, p. 10) refer to it as the *cultural* or *centre – periphery cleavage* , while in the view of Kitschelt et al. (1999) it is part of a greater cultural cleavage.

countries, and they vote in large numbers for their own parties. Furthermore, issues related to ethnicity help as well nationalist parties of the titular nation to mobilise their voters.

The investigation of ethnic divides in order to explain party nationalisation degrees may yield promising results, as many of the ethnic minorities in Central and Eastern European countries are territorially settled. If such ethnic divides become manifest in party politics, then the ethnic structure of a country will explain why the electoral strength of political parties varies across regions.

Ethnic and national identities have been discussed as constructed categories (cf. Evans & Whitefield, 2000), and the unification of the nation state and a homogeneous ethnic structure have been identified as a two-way process (Caramani, 2004, p. 23). Ethnic awareness of (parts of) the population can be engineered (through education, media, use of language, etc.) or forced through violence ("ethnic cleansing", genocide). A prime example from the most recent history of the region are the wars in former Yugoslavia.[11]

However, in the post-1990 period, ethnic identities were substantially more stable than the party systems. Indeed, all current ethnic categories in Central and Eastern Europe have earlier roots, and even if ethnic perceptions might underlie a slow change, all ethnic group that can be identified today were already considered to be distinct ethnic groups before the recent transition.[12] Accordingly, the ethnic structure is almost an exogenous variable in the region.

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[11] Exactly speaking, a causal loop of ethnic identity, party nationalisation, and the centralisation of the government might be theoretically the most appropriate expectation (Bochsler, 2006).

[12] Problematic groups, because variably treated as ethno-regional minorities or part of the titular nation, are Moravians (Czech Republic) and Silesians (Czech Republic and Poland). Moravians oscillate between an ethnic and a regional group (Fowkes, 2002, p. 129). In Poland, there is a minority with a distinct regional identity in Opole-Silesia, but for economic reasons and higher prestige, they declare as ethnic Germans (Zarycki, 2002). In both cases, I rely on their self-declaration in the national censuses. In the countries of former Yugoslavia substantial parts of the population in some territories were forced to migrate or massacred on ethnic grounds in the wars of the 1990s, with Bosnia and Herzegovina as most affected case. The population declaring as ethnic Russian in the Baltic States declined in numbers (Campos & Kuzeyev, 2007, p. 626), but this decline was arguably much less important for the party systems than the lower citizenship rate among ethnic minorities in Latvia and Estonia.

Still, being aware of the possibility of two-sided processes, particular attention is devoted to the ex-Yugoslav, and particularly to the Bosnian case in the empirical part of this article.

Ethnic mobilisation is constant at a very high level across the region, so that the results of such analysis do not stem from different levels of mobilisation. There are different motives for ethnic mobilisation (see, for instance, Brubaker, 1996; Kymlicka, 2002, p. 20; Evans & Need, 2002, p. 656). However, mobilisation appears as a common constant for all countries under study, so that there should not be any problem of circular dependency.

The intervening character of electoral systems

Electoral systems might exert constraints against the formation of regional parties (Cox, 1999, p. 159). My main focus relies on national legal thresholds, which exclude parties below a certain *national* vote share from representation in parliament (cf. Taagepera, 1998). The thresholds in Central and Eastern European democracies, reaching from 2.5% (Albania) up to 6% (Moldova) of the national vote, seem rather moderate. However, what is not particularly high for a national political party throws regional competitors out of the electoral race. A party, which is only competitive in a region with 10% of the national voters would need to get half the votes in this region to pass a national threshold of 10%. Under substantial national legal thresholds, regional parties can thus only get access to parliament if their region is sufficiently large *and* if they have a fairly dominant position in their region, or alternatively, they can anticipate that they have no changes to get elected, and not even compete.

Different from legal thresholds, small electoral districts do not have a special effect on party nationalisation. Since electoral districts are territorially defined, such with a small number of seats exclude locally small parties, but they do not particularly affect regional parties.

Many of the minorities are rather small, so that legal thresholds might exclude minority parties from representation, and keep party nationalisation at high levels, even in countries with territorial ethnic divides.[13]

The development of party nationalisation over time

Lastly, time might play a role for party nationalisation, particularly in party systems in formation. In Western democracies, party nationalisation increased in line with the economic, social and cultural modernisation and integration of the society (Caramani, 2004). Unlike Western European countries during the time of enfranchisement, Central and Eastern European economies and societies were mainly modernised and nationally integrated, when the countries were democratised. The starting point for the development of party systems and party nationalisation is thus not comparable in Central and Eastern Europe and in Western Europe. An initial lack of organisational strength of political parties (Olson, 1998, p. 434) might imply that party nationalisation was lower in a first period than in later elections. High inter-election volatility, as experienced in many countries in Central and Eastern Europe, might lead to the erosion of local party strongholds and to increasing party nationalisation.

Cases and operationalisation

Despite the importance of party nationalisation for the analysis of party systems, it has only recently been measured and explained for a broader number of countries. It is still little investigated for Central and Eastern Europe. The region is particularly interesting for the study of party nationalisation due to the importance of territorial conflicts, and given that many external factors are constant, it is suited for comparative analyses. All countries of the

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[13] Some half-hearted variants of national legal thresholds do not hinder any party from winning seats in parliament, but hinder small parties below the threshold from winning a few remainder seats or bonus seats at the national level (Slovenia in 1992/96 and Poland in 1991). Such weak thresholds do not inhibit small parties from winning district seats, and thus should not be an obstacle for the creation (and the success) of regional political parties.

region have experienced a communist legacy and started democratisation almost at the same time. On the other hand, the range of possible socio-economic cleavages is much smaller than in Western democracies, except for ethnic divides, what allows me to focus on ethnicity for my investigation. Ethnicity is easily measurable, because ethnic identities are very stable in the region. The investigation of young democracies is further interesting, since elections in early stages of democracy are crucial for the establishment of party systems and merit scholarly attention.

Many previous investigations on party systems of post-communist countries have selected only the most stable post-communist democracies, or the ten new EU members, and studies on party nationalisation have remained limited to one or very few countries (Ishiyama, 2002; Meleshevich, 2006). This article provides for the first time a broad inventory of party nationalisation in Central and Eastern Europe, covering the period of 1990-2007 in twenty countries, and 95 elections all together.[14] Only not (reasonably) competitive elections are excluded.[15] An exclusion of the less stable democracies in the Western Balkans, as done in other analyses, would exclude the least nationalised cases. Given that the regional fractionalisation of the party systems in some ex-Yugoslav countries might be a factor that contributes to political instability, an exclusion of these cases might be an indirect way of selecting the cases on the dependent variable. The inclusion of all twenty post-communist democracies in Europe allows more reliable results of comparative analysis.

Measuring party nationalisation requires electoral results at sub-national levels such as regions, districts, municipalities, or counting circles. I built a new database on electoral

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[14] Serbia, Montenegro, and Kosovo are included as separate cases after 1996, because there were no more common elections to the joint parliament of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. De facto, since the late 1990s, the highest relevant elected and representative bodies were the Serbian, the Montenegrin, and the Kosovo parliament.

[15] Belarus, elections in the 1990s in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and later in Serbia, and the 2007 elections in Russia are excluded.

results from Central and Eastern Europe at the regional and local level, including elections held in the period 1990-2007. Electoral results from ten countries for the period 1990-2001 were available from the University of Essex.[16] Further datasets were collected by the author. All in all, my database includes 66,623 sub-national units (such as districts, regions, munici-palities, or polling stations) from 95 elections (Bochsler, 2010, forthcoming).

The nationalisation of political parties and party systems has been studied with many different measures, and the quality of indicators has importantly improved with ongoing evolution. Nevertheless, many measures still have potential shortcomings that might lead to problematic outcomes when different parties or party systems shall be compared (see Caramani, 2004; Bochsler, 2009, for an overview). Many measures are insensitive to transfers of votes from one party to another, they weight large and small districts equally, even if this typically leads to an unequal treatment of urban and rural parties, or they are biased by the number of territorial units taken into account. Hence, they are not useful for the comparison of different countries with a different number of territorial units. Conclusions obtained on the basis of such measures risk to be artefacts of the employed measures.

Therefore, for the operationalisation of my dependent variable, I employ the standardised party nationalisation score (Bochsler, 2009), which accounts for the mentioned problems. Based on the Gini coefficient of inequality, it measures the territorial heterogeneity of electoral support for political parties or party systems, considering differences in electoral support in territorial units, such as electoral districts, regions, or municipalities. The maximal value of one (high nationalisation) would be reached when the relative party support (vote

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[16] The Essex database provides regional electoral results for one up to four elections per country, altogether twenty-three datasets (elections) could be used for my purposes, partially supplemented with further data.
Election result database of the "Political Transformation and the Electoral Process in Post-Communist Europe" at the Department of Government, University of Essex. The database is accessible at http://www.essex.ac.uk/elections/.
In the case of some of the mixed electoral systems, the datasets needed to be completed with further data, because the Essex database provides sub-national results only for one of both tiers.

share) is perfectly equal across all units, whereas in cases where (almost) all the votes are concentrated on a small part of the territory, the score indicates the value zero.

Among the explanatory variables in my model, political decentralisation might be measured either through constitutional strength of regional or local governments, or through budget decentralisation. I choose the second option, due to the better comparability,[17] and because local or regional governments exist, but in many cases lack a real autonomy, due to insufficient transfer of government funds. While party nationalisation data is provided for the whole period 1990-2007, the available data on financial centralisation in Central and Eastern Europe allows only a cross-country analysis, but no systematic analysis of the development over time.[18] In the few countries where longitudinal quantitative data is available, the level of financial centralisation varied only little over time.[19]

When studying ethnic divides as a variable to explain the structure of a party system, it is relevant to identify all existing ethnic groups (to the extent possible), independently of the politicisation of their ethnic identity, in order to avoid that the case selection is biased by the existence of political parties which mobilise on ethnic divides. The most popular database on ethnic minorities (Gurr, 2005) has been criticised, because it looks primarily at minorities in conflict, and might be not appropriate for the purposes of the study of party nationalisation,

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[17] Partial data on the strength of local governments may be found in the World Bank Database on Political Institutions (Beck, 2001), but both databases are incomplete.

[18] Accessible sources with longitudinal data neither provide it for all the relevant cases, nor for the whole range of time, covering usually just two elections per case for only a part of the countries.

[19] The EU member states are covered by the World Bank Fiscal Decentralization Indicators. Data based on the Government Finance Statistics Manual 2001, available at http://www1.worldbank.org/publicsector/decentralization/fiscalindicators.htm. The average for the last three years contained in the 1996-2000 period was calculated. Data for non-EU member states (found in Davey, 2005; Marcou, 2005; for Ukraine: Yilmaz et al., 2003, p. 138) refers to the years 2000 or 2003. Where different sources contained data on the same country, they were usually congruent; in the cases of Croatia and Romania, data which appeared more solid and not out-of-date were used.

including only politicised ethnic conflicts.[20] Other databases avoid this problem (Alesina et al., 2003; Campos & Kuzeyev, 2007), but do not contain data on the regional structure of the ethnic groups. In order to identify all relevant groups, I rely on different, complementary sources. I have cross-validated census data with the information from independent sources, such as the reports of human rights organisations.

Expecting that only geographically concentrated ethnic minorities can have an impact on party nationalisation, I do not measure ethnic fractionalisation, but rather, to what extend the ethnic groups live concentrated.[21] The *indicator of territorial ethnic divisions (e_C)* is a mea-sure of fractionalisation that counts all territorially concentrated minorities against a basis of groups consisting of the ethnic majority (or the largest ethnic group) and all non-concentrated minorities.[22] If all groups are geographically concentrated, it is identical to the Hirschmann-Herfindahl index.[23]

The level of national legal thresholds is taken from my novel database (Bochsler, 2010, forthcoming). Likewise, I include average district magnitude *m*, included in my database, as a

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[20] In Central and Eastern Europe, certain larger groups are not included, such as the Moravian minority in the Czech Republic, which does not express any particular political demands. MAR codes certain ethnic groups jointly when they have common political interests (such as different Slavic groups in Moldova).

[21] Cox and Knoll (2003) rely on ethnic fractionalisation, since "ethnic groups do often tend to segregate residentially".

[22] I calculate the probability that two randomly selected members of a society belong to different groups which are geographically separated by a territorial boundary. I consider a minority as geographically concentrated, if a majority of the group is in a small part of the territory, relying on census data, or if not available, on qualitative information. For a more precise operationalisation, more detailed data would be needed.
The indicator of territorial ethnic heterogeneity is calculated as follows:

$$e_C = 1 - \left(g_L \sum g_{NCi}\right)^2 - \sum g_{Ci}^{\ 2}$$

g_L population share of the *largest* ethnic group
g_{NCi} population share of the *non-concentrated* ethnic minority i (except for the largest ethnic group)
g_{Ci} population share of the *territorially concentrated* ethnic minority i (except for the largest ethnic group)
My operationalisation neglects if several concentrated minorities live in the same are, because such information is not systematically available. The resulting error, however, is of minor nature, since there are to my knowledge no cases where several *larger* minorities live in the same area.

[23] g_i population share of ethnic group i

$$HH = 1 - \sum g_i^{\ 2}$$

The index is used among others by Fearon (2003) or Alesina et al. (2003).

control variable. District magnitude has been hold accountable for party nationalisation (Cox, 1997). Finally, the impact of time is measured through the ordinal number of the election, in a raw of democratic elections by country. Particularly, in the initial elections, a part of the party system might be little institutionalised and nationalised, so that the highest change rate is expected in early stages of democratic consolidation. This is operationalised using the inverted ordinal number of the election *(T = 1/number of election)*.

Party nationalisation in Central and Eastern Europe

The nationalisation of party systems varies substantially among the investigated countries. For some elections, nationalisation amounts to more than 0.9, which means that the vote distribution is almost perfectly homogenous across the country. In single-seat district elections in Russia and Ukraine, party nationalisation scores are considerably lower than any recent election in Western Europe or in America, often below 0.3. Both countries experienced an inflation of local, non-partisan candidates in single-seat districts (see below). Further, party nationalisation scores of Bosnia and Macedonia are extremely low (table 1).

xxx include table 1 about here xxx

In-depth election studies have employed aggregated data to illustrate territorially based patterns of party support in Central and Eastern Europe, and to track them back to socio-economic characteristics of the regions and municipalities. One clear pattern emerging from the analysis of territorial data is that in several countries, the electoral geography is closely linked to the ethnic structure of the territory, notably in several Balkan countries (Bosnia, Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia, Macedonia), in the three Baltic states, and in Slovakia.[24] Further, the urban-rural divide determines electoral behaviour in several post-communist democracies

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[24] See Bochsler (2008, pp. 67-70) for an overview.

(Elster et al., 1998, pp. 248-249; Johannsen, 2003). Peasant parties have temporarily been successful in rural areas of Poland and of Russia, but failed to establish a stable electorate.[25] Mostly, electoral results vary between cities and the countryside, even if not as strongly as along ethnic line. The urban-rural divide is however not as clear-cut and stable as the ethnic one, it varies less across countries, and it is partly the result of politically initiated economic reforms of the post-communist period, so that the variable is not exogenous to my model.

Before moving to the cleavage explanation and the role of super-presidential systems, I first test the centralisation hypothesis, discuss reservations about the direction of the causality, and show why it does not help to explain party nationalisation in Central and Eastern Europe.

The centralisation approach and the direction of causality

Lacking of time-series data for decentralisation, my analysis of the government centralisation hypothesis is limited to a cross-sectional comparison of twenty countries for the period around 2000. (Due to the limited number of observations, I rely on a bivariate analysis.) Figure 1 reports how party nationalisation is related to the centralisation of government expenses (PR elections considered). Most countries in the region are heavily centralised. There is a positive trend, in the sense of the hypothesis: decentralised countries more often have regional party systems, centralised countries nationalised ones. The correlation relies, however, solely on the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, with extreme decentralisation and very low party nationalisation. After the exclusion of Bosnia, the correlation vanishes.[26]

xxx Include Figure 1 about here. xxx

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[25] Cf. Wegren and Konitzer (2006, p. 685); Szczerbiak (2001), and many others.
[26] If Bosnia is included, the correlation coefficient amounts to 0.688 (99% significant). If Bosnia is excluded, the coefficient amounts to 0.03 (and the relationship is statistically significant only at 10% probability).

Bosnia is thus the possible key case for a relationship of weak party nationalisation and extreme decentralisation, and "central government institutions exist largely on paper" (International Crisis Group, 1999, p. 3). However, in this case, the causal sequence of the regional disintegration of the party system and decentralisation (if there is such an immediate link at all) goes the other way round (Bochsler, 2006): In a nutshell, in the initial democratising elections in 1990, when Bosnia was still centralised and a Republic of former Yugoslavia, a new party system emerged, consisting mainly of three ethnically oriented parties, representing the main ethnic communities. The ethnic separation of the political parties has not changed by today. However, in the five years to come, Bosnia experienced war, genocide, and ethnic cleansing, which was only stopped in the Dayton peace agreement that provided an extremely decentralised structure of the state. The historical sequence reveals that the ethnically-based and disintegrated party system of 1990, already split along the same ethnic lines as after the war, was putting the basis for the extreme decentralisation of 1995.

It might be too early to assess whether low party nationalisation has similar consequences all across the region, although there are other countries with weak nationalised party systems that have recently discussed or even decided steps to decentralise the administration.[27] Following the 'Ohrid framework agreement' of 2001 in Macedonia, municipalities gained substantial autonomy. Municipal borders were re-drawn, in order to allow the self-government of the Albanian-speaking minority, and to settle the ethnic conflict. Hence, in this case too, decentralisation was anticipated by the split of the party system into ethno-regional parties, more than a decade earlier.

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[27] All federal countries in the region dissolved after the collapse of communism. In these cases, the formation of new parties in the newly emerging states (at this time sub-national entities) preceded the dissolution or the separatism and the disappearing of the central government.

In brief, in Central and Eastern Europe, the correlation between government centralisation and party nationalisation relies on a single case, for which the often assumed causality that centralisation of the government leads to party nationalisation can be dismissed. More recent development in Macedonia reinforces the view that in Central and Eastern Europe, changes in decentralisation are anticipated by the emerging of regionally based parties.

The ethnic divide and the electoral system model

Instead of the decentralisation approach, I explain party nationalisation through social divides. Following a broad number of studies, I operationalise this approach relying on ethnic diversity (Ordeshook & Shvetsova, 1994; Mozaffar et al., 2003, to name a few). I expect that stronger territorial ethnic divisions e_C will be related to lower party system nationalisation n.

$$n = \alpha + \beta_1 * e_C + \varepsilon$$

For countries without any concentrated ethnic groups ($e_C=0$), party nationalisation might be high, but still not perfect. Other territorial divisions might impede party nationalisation from being perfect, and to some extent, random variation of district results contributes to imperfect nationalisation. The intercept α, estimating party nationalisation at the absence of any territorial ethnic divides, will thus be slightly lower than 1, while the slope β_1 is expected to be negative. Since both e_C and n are measured on a scale from 0 to 1, and assuming a linear relationship, the absolute value of the slope needs to be smaller than the intercept, $|\beta_1| < \alpha$. Otherwise, our model would predict that in countries with many territorial ethnic divides, party nationalisation is negative. The slope β_1 depends on the strength of the translation of territorial ethnic divisions into the party system, and if parties are a mirror of the ethnic structure of the country, $|\beta_1|$ will be close to α. In Central and Eastern Europe, where ethnic divides are fairly important for party competition, $|\beta_1|$ will be reasonably close to α. High national legal thresholds might have a moderating impact on the translation of territorial

ethnic divisions into party nationalisation, while in the absence of national legal thresholds, territorial ethnic divisions have a non-moderated impact on party nationalisation.[28]

The two super-presidential systems in the region, Russia and Ukraine, are identified through a dummy variable.[29] In both cases, presidential and parliamentary elections were held non-concurrent for the elections under study,[30] and presidents were absent from party campaigns for legislative elections (Moser, 2001, p. 102). The presidential regime in Russia is considered to have subverted party formation (Hale, 2006, pp. 205-209). An interaction term *pres*SSD* identifies elections in super-presidential regimes and in single-seat districts. Further control variables are included for single-seat district elections (SSD), for elections in the single-seat district tier of mixed compensatory electoral systems (SSD*comp), and for the inverted ordinal number of elections (1/T).

The model is tested in an OLS regression, with two specifications including only elections under PR, and overall 81 cases,[31] and two further models extending the view on elections in single-seat districts, or mixed electoral systems, counting up to 103 cases (table 2). All four models reveal a substantial impact of concentrated ethnic groups, moderated by national legal thresholds. While in countries with no legal threshold or a moderate one, a clear negative relationship of territorial ethnic divisions and party nationalisation emerges, this changes

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[28] Differentiated thresholds, mostly applied for multi-party coalitions, are not considered.

[29] Presidential power is measured through the expert survey by Fish (2006, p. 11). Systems with presidential power of 0.5 or above are coded as super-presidential. This criterion divides the cases in two clear groups. Fish's measure, because it is based on the wording of the constitution *and* constitutional practice. Presidential *superpower* is sometimes given through practice, such as the use of veto power through the president. The classification corresponds widely with Clark and Wittrock (2005, p. 183).

[30] In Russia, parties have negligible importance in presidential elections and in government formation (Oversloot & Verheul, 2006). Among the super-presidential systems, only in 1994 in Ukraine, parliamentary and presidential elections were held in the same year, but the parliament was elected three months ahead of the presidential elections, so that a major impact can be excluded. The second Russian president Vladimir Putin has attempted to get more links to the party system. However, Russian elections after 2003 were not included in this study.

[31] In the case of mixed electoral systems, for the PR part of these systems. The Czechoslovak elections 1990 and 1992 are excluded, because the legal threshold applies at the level of the sub-entities (Czech Republic/Slovakia), and it can thus not be operationalised in line with the other thresholds.

under high national legal thresholds – in the countries under study the highest threshold amounts to 6%. There, territorial ethnic divisions do not have any impact on party nationalisation. The effect is statistically significant in all four models. Models 1 and 3 demonstrate that the magnitudes of the effects highly correspond with the expectations. The two models, which do not control for the degree of centralisation (which might be a consequence, rather than a cause of party nationalisation), report a very high level of party system nationalisation. In the absence of territorially based ethnic divides, slightly rising after increasing democratic experience, it amounts almost to 0.9. Where territorial ethnic divisions exist, party system nationalisation is much lower. In models 1 and 3, the absolute value of the coefficient $\beta_1 \approx$ -0.7 is almost as high as the negative value of α, from which it follows that in Central and Eastern Europe, territorial ethnic divisions are strongly reflected in low party nationalisation.

xxx Include table 2 about here. xxx

In the third and the fourth model, I include all elections, both in PR and in single-seat districts. For double ballot elections under mixed electoral systems, both the PR and the single-seat tier are included separately, since both theoretically and empirically, substantial differences between both tiers might be expected and are observed (figure 2). (Alternatively, one might include only one type of electoral systems, such in models 1 and 2, or calculate an overall average score for mixed systems, which however would be little satisfactory, given the widely varying results for both tiers.) The most pronounced differences between both tiers can be observed in the mixed electoral systems of Russia and Ukraine (and to a lower extent in Lithuania) where national parties could hardly establish successful candidates in single-

seat districts, and in many districts did even not compete (White et al., 1995, p. 199; Moser, 2001; Birch, 1998, p. 98).[32]

xxx include figure 2 about here xxx

Super-presidential regimes, jointly with elections in single-seat districts, lead to much lower nationalisation of party systems. While both under PR and in (semi-)parliamentary regimes, there are institutional reasons for candidates and voters to align with national parties,[33] no similar institutional incentives exist in single-seat districts, and in super-presidential systems (where presidential and parliamentary elections are not simultaneously). Neither does the logic of the electoral system encourage candidates to link over district borders, nor do the parliamentary elections have the character of nationwide elections of the prime minister, so that party nationalisation remains low. This mainly explains the peculiarities of single-seat district elections in Russia and in Ukraine. Other variables are not statistically significant at the conventional levels.

Specifications 2 and 4 include the degree of centralisation of government spending (in 2000, or close to, see above) as an explanatory variable. Despite the inclusion of this variable – which is arguably not exogenous to the dependent variable – the main effects are still clearly statistically significant.

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[32] Similarly to local parties that compete in one constituency only, independent candidates can be accorded a very low degree of party nationalisation. Party nationalisation is understood as the establishment of national parties and party labels that dominate in national politics. There is no major difference between a local candidate which is supported by a personal electoral committee or cases where a local political group, declaring as political party, supports a candidate. Certain candidates who belong to a nationwide party run as independents in a district (Moser, 1999, p. 148), but lacking systematic data, we need to treat them as independents.

[33] Drawing on the experience of post-Soviet countries, Ishiyama and Kennedy (2001) conclude that single-seat district elections in conjunction with superpresidentialism might damper party institutionalisation. Their study further suggests that the strength of the presidential office is rather positively correlated with party institutionalisation, but this is derived from a selection of countries all with very strong presidencies.

Besides the role of super-presidentialism, political legacies of the post-Soviet space, and socio-economic aspects have also been discussed to explain the low party institutionalisation in Russia and Ukraine.[34] Hale (2006, pp. 4-5) lists ten competing ones for the Russian case. However, many of them have not been tested systematically in cross-country analyses. While most of these explanations are plausible for the explanation of the outcomes that are observed in Russia or Ukraine, they would similarly apply for other post-communist countries, or for all electoral systems, so that they can not explain why only the single-seat district part of the Russian and Ukrainian electoral system.[35]

Conclusion: The determinants of party nationalisation

This study has shown that party nationalisation in post-communist democracies is closely related to the territorial structure of social divides, except for cases where the electoral systems provide for a high degree of nationalisation, or where super-presidentialism hinders the creation of strong nationalised parties. While previous research has held that social cleavages play a lesser role in post-communist democracies (Elster et al., 1998; Sitter, 2002), this study emphasises the importance of ethnicity as a major and stable social category. The party systems and namely the territorial structure of the parties' electoral strength often reflect ethnic patterns. In order to investigate this relationship, this study proposes a new way to measure the territorially based ethnic fragmentation of countries.

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[34] Oversloot & Verheul (2006); Moser (1997, 1999, 2001); Birch (2000); Ishiyama & Kennedy (2001); Herron (2007); and many others.

[35] A full overview of competing hypotheses and their empirical tests is included in Bochsler (2008). For instance, the weakness of national political parties in Russia is often explained as due to the short democratic experience and the authoritarian legacy (White et al., 1995, p. 199; Moser, 1999, pp. 147-148), but in other countries with an authoritarian legacy and a mixed electoral system (e.g. Albania), national political parties dominate the elections. Moser (1999, p. 162) has found that the introduction of party labels on the ballots in the single-seat district tier reinforced partisan candidates. Hence, party labels even in Russia seem to be beneficial. The literature mentions that the registration rules for parties and candidates have weakened party development both in Russia (Moser, 1995, p. 382) and in Ukraine (Birch, 1998, pp. 111-112). Pre-electoral rules might have contributed – in conjunction with other factors – to the costs to form other small and regional parties for the district tier, and discouraged party formation. However, the occurrence of dozens of parties, among them very small ones, on the electoral lists suggests that even small parties could pass the demanding registration procedure.

Apart from that, this study argues for the impact of national legal electoral thresholds on party nationalisation. High legal thresholds exclude regional parties from competition, hinder territorial divides from being manifested, and this way increase thus party nationalisation.

In Russia and Ukraine, there are a couple of elections under a single-seat district system, where party nationalisation is much lower than in other comparable cases. Both countries applied (most of the time) mixed electoral systems, combining PR wit single-seat districts. However, party nationalisation was only low in the single-seat district part of the elections. Super-presidentialism is a plausible explanation for these results: in countries where the executive is not formed based on a parliamentary majority, but relies on the president, there are few reasons for candidates to join national parties, especially if there is no PR that provides important incentives for party formation. The bureaucratic costs of forming or joining a national party are quite high both in Russia and Ukraine. Given that these findings rely mainly on these two outliers, only a broader study including additional evidence from other cases might allow a more solid empirical examination.

My study shows the impact of social divisions and of legal thresholds on party nationalisation in a quantitative analysis. With regards to the common decentralisation hypothesis, it comes to a pronouncedly different conclusion than the main argument of previous comparative research (Chhibber & Kollman, 2004; Cox & Knoll, 2003). The few cases in Central and Eastern Europe, which underwent a process of decentralisation, teach us that this was anticipated by low party nationalisation, and ethno-regional political parties pressured for a decentralisation of the state, so that the causal relationship appears to go in the opposite direction than commonly suggested. Rather than decentralisation, both the ethnic structure and national legal thresholds allow a very accurate explanation of the varying levels of party nationalisation in post-communist democracies.

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Figures and Tables

country	PR* mean	(S.E.)	N	single-seat districts* mean	(S.E.)	N
Albania	0.83	(0.06)	3	0.84	(0.04)	4
Bosnia	0.45	(0.02)	5			
Bulgaria	0.86	(0.02)	6			
Croatia	0.80	(0.01)	3	0.77	(0.02)	3
Czech Rep.	0.89	(0.03)	4			
Estonia	0.77	(0.06)	5			
Hungary	0.89	(0.04)	5	0.86	(0.07)	5
Kosovo	0.73	(0.03)	3			
Latvia	0.75	(0.02)	5			
Lithuania	0.87	(0.02)	3	0.62	(0.05)	4
Macedonia	0.69	(0.03)	2	0.63	(0.02)	2
Moldova	0.82	(0.03)	4			
Montenegro	0.83	(0.03)	4			
Poland	0.84	(0.04)	5			
Romania	0.79	(0.04)	5			
Russia	0.87	(0.04)	4	0.27	(0.07)	3
Serbia	0.88	(0.04)	3			
Slovakia	0.82	(0.01)	4			
Slovenia	0.88	(0.01)	5			
Ukraine	0.72	(0.04)	3	0.29	(0.08)	3
Total	0.80	(0.11)	81	0.64	(0.24)	24

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of party system nationalisation in twenty countries, 1990-2007.

* including PR resp. single-seat districts in mixed electoral systems
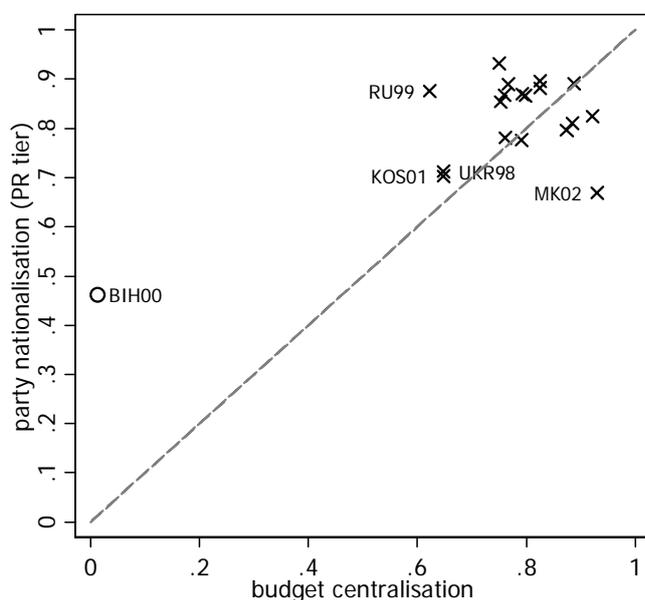The database and the sources can be accessed on www.bochsler.eu.

Figure 1: Budget centralisation and party nationalisation (PR tier), 1998-2001.

O Bosnia and Herzegovina, X other countries

For countries with several elections in the period, the closest elections to 2000 were taken. (Bosnia: 2000, Moldova: 2001) In the case of Macedonia and Ukraine, the 2002 elections were included, because no sub-national data is available for the PR tier in the 1998 elections (in both countries under a mixed electoral system). 17 cases with available data.
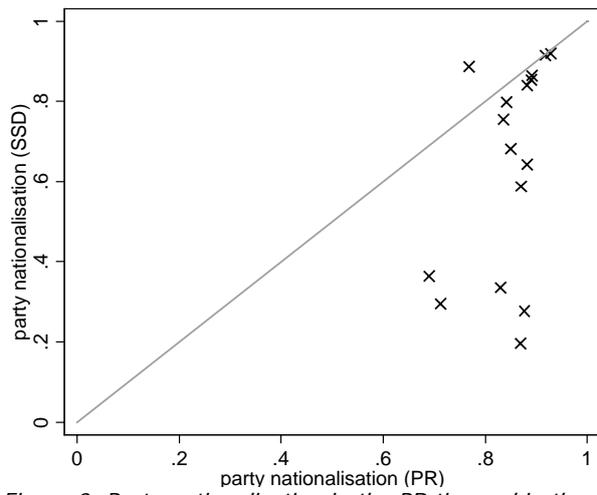
Figure 2: Party nationalisation in the PR tier and in the single-seat district tier in mixed electoral systems. The line shows the equality line, where party nationalisation is equal in both tiers.

Regression model	(1) only PR elections			(2) only PR elections			(3) all elections			(4) all elections		
Dependent variable: Party nationalisation	B	S.E.	VIF	B	S.E.	VIF	B	S.E.	VIF	B	S.E.	VIF
Constant	.90	.03		.73	.11		.92	.03		.84	.05	
Territorial ethnic divisions (e_C)	-.69**	.07	2.15	-.45**	.16	6.90	-.71**	.06	2.21	-.61**	.08	6.04
National legal threshold (t)	-.33	.54	2.99	.84	.71	4.27	-.29	.51	4.69	.22	.57	5.91
Interaction ethnic divisions/ threshold ($e_C * t$)	9.67**	2.71	2.78	3.31	3.22	5.70	9.39**	2.54	3.21	6.41*	2.86	5.28
Number of election (inverted) (1/T)	-.04	.03	1.14	-.05(*)	.03	1.15	-.07*	.03	1.15	-.07*	.03	1.19
Degree of centralisation (cen)				.16(*)	.09	3.80				.07(*)	.04	3.55
Single-seat district elections (SSD)							-.02	.02	2.67	-.02	.02	3.02
Single-seat district tier in compensatory systems (SSD*comp)							.02	.03	1.79	.04	.03	2.34
Superpresidential systems (pres)							-.05	.07	1.77	-.04	.07	2.12
Interaction superpresidential/ SSD (pres* SSD)							-.46**	.06	2.27	-.45**	.07	2.43
N	81		2.27	74		4.36	103		2.47	96		3.54
countries (clusters)	20			19			20			19		
R^2	0.768			0.822			0.895			0.910		

Table 2: OLS regression to estimate party system nationalisation, robust standard errors, cases clustered by country.
**significant at $p < 0.01$; *significant at $p < 0.05$; (*) significant at $p < 0.1$.