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Patterns of Party Change in Central and Eastern Europe, 1990-2015

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Patterns of Party Change in Central and Eastern Europe, 1990-2015

Abstract

While parties in many new democracies frequently split, merge, change labels, and make and break electoral alliances, comparative systematic research on how these changes are related to each other is limited. This study addresses this gap by conceptualizing change as a result of intra-party conflicts, conflicts in or consolidation of existing electoral alliances, and the formation of new alliances and mergers. We develop measures for each type of change using an original dataset that covers almost 800 party-electoral term dyads in 11 countries in Central and Eastern Europe in the period between 1990 and 2015. Our findings contradict the idea of party change as a uni-dimensional phenomenon. Instead we find that intra-party splits, exits from existing electoral alliances and their consolidation through mergers, and the formation of new alliances and mergers do not co-occur. Thus, parties and their alliances structure political competition in Central and Eastern Europe relatively well. Our findings also suggest that negative consequences of party change on representation and accountability are limited, as under the relative absence of multiple and nearly simultaneous changes in party identity the electorate should be able to follow party evolution.

Wordcount: 8043.

1 Introduction

Political parties and party systems are crucial institutions for the functioning of a modern representative democracy. Among other functions, political parties aggregate and represent various interests in policy-making and ensure the accountability of democratic government to voters. The ability of parties to fulfil these functions varies across democracies and time periods though. The literature on third wave democracies, in particular, has called into question parties' ability to assure voter representation, electoral accountability and effective governance. One of the key weaknesses of parties in young democracies is their instability. The change in party alternatives occurs in various ways: parties do not simply only enter and exit electoral competition, but they also split, merge, and form and dissolve electoral coalitions.[1] These complex changes of identity have important consequences on democracy: they may undermine voters' representation by confusing them about parties' policy positions, impede the formation of stable partisan identities, and prevent voters from holding parties accountable.[2] Consequently, the literature has made substantial efforts in conceptualizing these types of party change and analyzing their patterns, causes, and consequences (Casal-Bertoa, Deegan-Krause and Haughton, 2015; Ceron, 2015*b*; Golder, 2006; Ibenskas, 2016; Kaminski, 2001; Litton, 2013; Marinova, 2015).

However, an important gap in this scholarship, addressed by the present study, concerns the lack of theoretical and empirical analysis of the relationship between different types of party instability. Parties may split, merge, or form and dissolve alliances (nearly) simultaneously. Alternatively, each of these types of party change may occur in isolation from the others. Implications for democracy are substantively different depending on which pattern prevails. Specifically, if different party transformations occur in the same electoral period or in close temporal proximity, party alternatives would change almost unrecognizably between

[1] In this study, "electoral coalitions" and "electoral alliances" are used interchangeably to refer to joint candidate lists in national elections, as discussed in the section on data and measurement.

[2] Other consequences may be more positive: for example, electoral coalitions and mergers may reduce the share of wasted vote and increase the clarity of government alternatives to the electorate.

elections, and voters would find it very challenging to learn about parties' policy positions and therefore vote according to their policy preferences. Similarly, such complex transformations of party identity would decrease voters' ability to punish government parties for poor performance and/or to identify credible alternatives among the parties in opposition. In contrast, representation and accountability are less likely to be undermined if parties do not experience multiple transformations of different types simultaneously. As the basic contours of the party system remain unchanged between elections, the electorate is more likely to keep track of party evolution.

The relationship between different types of party transformations also has important implications on how we understand political competition in new democracies. This is because some of these changes, especially party splits, are a result of intra-party conflicts. The formation and dissolution of electoral alliances and mergers on other hand is largely an outcome of inter-party competition and cooperation. If we observe that these different types of party change tend to occur together, it would suggest that parties' ability to structure political competition is low. Party boundaries can be easily crossed by individual politicians or their groups, which suggests that they rather than parties are the main building blocks of political competition (Birch, 2003; Rakner, Svasand and Khembo, 2007).

An additional complexity is that many formations in young democracies, while formally electoral alliances or blocs, in fact can also be considered as parties due to relatively high levels of their institutionalization. Indeed, major cross-national comparative databases on political parties, such as the Chapel Hill expert survey on parties' positions (Bakker et al., 2015) or the Manifesto Project database, include multiple electoral alliances. Several examples are the Coalition for Bulgaria and the Union of Democratic Forces (which was a coalition until the mid-1990s) in Bulgaria, the Unity coalition and the Union of Greens and Farmers in Latvia, the Solidarity Electoral Action and the Left and Democrats in Poland, and the Slovak Democratic Coalition in Slovakia. The present study sheds light on the stability, longevity and, more generally, "partyness" of such alliances.

To address this complexity of party competition in young democracies, we focus on the change in party identities as a result of conflicts and cooperation at three levels: intra-party, intra-coalition, and inter-party. Specifically, at the intra-party level, we examine the presence (absence) of party splits as an indication of a conflict (cooperation) between various actors in the party. At the coalitional level, we conceptualize conflict as the dissolution of existing alliances, and the persistence of cooperation as the survival of these alliances or their consolidation through full-blown party mergers. Finally, we capture the formation of cooperation arrangements by previous competitors as the creation of alliances and merged parties by the parties that previously did not cooperate in electoral coalitions.

We measure these patterns of conflict and cooperation by drawing on a new database on party change (designed specifically for this study) in 11 countries in Central and Eastern Europe in 73 electoral terms in the period between 1990 and 2015. The dataset considers parties with at least 1 percent of the vote, and the total number of party-electoral term dyads is almost 800. This substantial data collection effort provides an important empirical contribution to understanding the development of parties and party systems in Central and Eastern Europe.

In the next section, we discuss the linkage between intra-party, intra-coalitional, and inter-party conflict and cooperation in new democracies, and the ways in which party change helps us to understand this link. We then address the measurement issues. The final two sections discuss the results of the analysis and their implications.

Intra-party and inter-party conflict and cooperation in new democracies

The study of intra-party politics is a diverse and rapidly developing field of research that includes a number of theoretical perspectives and empirical approaches (Giannetti and Benoit, 2009). This variety is a result of the importance and complexity of contemporary

political parties, in which internal party disagreements and tensions may arise for a variety of reasons and at different levels of party organization. What these multiple streams of research share however is their focus on the level of the heterogeneity of the behaviour and preferences of internal party actors, both individuals, such as legislators, activists and rank-and-file members, and collective ones, such as factions and tendencies.

One important reason why internal party politics should be studied is that it affects whether these various actors remain in the party. Indeed, exit (Hirschman, 1970) is an extreme form of internal party disunity. It can take various forms, including the defection of legislators to other parties (Ceron, 2015*a*; Desposato, 2006; Laver and Benoit, 2003; Mershon, 2014) and the formal withdrawal of activists from the party (Kölln and Polk, 2015; Kosiara-Pedersen, 2015; Scarrow, 2015). This research complements these important and relevant approaches by focusing on the defection of intra-party factions, groups or individual politicians that lead to the emergence of new parties. Such party splits (also referred to as fission and breakaways in this study) are important because they may change the dynamics in the party system by leading to the emergence of a successful splinter party and/or the electoral collapse of a parent party (Hug, 2001; Ibenskas, 2014). Furthermore, splits of government parties also threaten government stability (Ceron, 2015*b*).

So far, most advanced theoretical and empirical work on party splits has focused on established democracies (Ceron, 2015*b*; Giannetti and Laver, 2001). However, party fission has long been identified as an important characteristic of parties and party systems in young democracies (Lewis, 2000; Millard, 2004; Olson, 1998; Rose and Munro, 2003; Sikk, 2005; Spirova, 2007; Szczerbiak, 2001), and there is evidence to suggest that they are indeed on average more prevalent in these countries in comparison to older Western democracies (Ibenskas, 2014; Marinova, 2015).

A systematic study of party fission in young democracies is challenging though. This is not only because the fluidity of parties in many of these countries creates substantial data collection problems, but also because the concept of party itself is less well established. One

issue is that many so-called parties are actually electoral alliances or blocs that consist of multiple parties and other groups. Although such blocs exist in older democracies as well, as the analysis of the German Christian Democrats by Greene and Haber (2015) in this special issue demonstrates, these blocs tend to be rare and they have well-defined and stable memberships. In contrast, electoral alliances and blocs are an important feature of party landscape in almost every new democracy. For example, Ibenskas (Forthcoming) finds that on average 1.8 joint candidate lists competed in an election in Central and Eastern European countries. These alliances also vary greatly in terms of their stability and institutionalization. While some are dissolved after elections (Millard, 2004), others have persisted for a long time (e.g. the coalition between Fidesz - Hungarian Civic Alliance and the Christian Democratic Party in Hungary or the Green and Farmers' Union in Latvia) or developed intricate procedures and rules of cooperation (e.g. the Union of Democratic Forces in Bulgaria, the Democratic Convention in Romania, and the Solidarity Electoral Action in Poland in the 1990s). Given the longevity and institutionalization of these alliances, their termination by constituent parties may be considered (and have been considered in the literature) as party splits. Furthermore, anecdotal evidence suggests that some of these intra-coalitional conflicts overalap with splits of their constituent parties, which would require a systematic study of party fission to consider both intra-party and intra-coalitional levels.[3] However, more systematic evidence on the relationship between party and coalition stability is not available in the literature.

An additional complication arises because many observers of the politics of new or young democracies consider splits of parties or dissolutions of alliances as being intrinsically related to the formation of new alliances or permanent party mergers (Mair, 1997). According to this view, in the context of limited ideological structuration of party competition, weak voter partisanship, and low party institutionalization, parties or their alliances are just temporary

[3]For example, the dissolution of the ethnic Russian alliance For Human Rights in a United Latvia (PCTVL) in 2003-2004 was followed by the splits of two of these parties, leading to the formation of a splinter party.

and expedient formations, and as such are of minor importance in understanding political competition. Instead, individual politicians are the main building blocs of political competition in this "floating party system" (Birch, 2003; Millard, 2004; Rose and Shin, 2001; Szczerbiak, 2001). The party landscape can therefore be easily transformed through the dissolution of existing parties and alliances and the formation of new coalitions and merged parties if these re-combinations help individual politicians to reach office (Rakner, Svasand and Khembo, 2007).

While the "floating party system" view quite precisely describes political competition in many democracies in Africa, Latin America, South-East Asia and Eastern Europe, it is more controversial with regard to countries in Central and Eastern Europe. One the one hand, it has been challenged by a number of studies that find quite stable and structured party competition in most Central and Eastern European countries following the chaotic decade of the 1990s (Bakke, 2010). Many states in the region have adopted party regulation (Casal Bértoa and van Biezen, 2014) that limited the participation of non-party actors (for example, social movements or trade unions) in elections, thus eliminating some fuzzy alliances and groups. Furthermore, party competition based on ideological grounds has emerged (Kitschelt et al., 1999; Rohrschneider and Whitefield, 2012; Rovny and Polk, 2015) and at least some parties established relatively strong party organizations (Gherghina, 2014; Tavits, 2013). On the other hand, the strength of membership organizations remains weaker in Central and Eastern Europe than in Western Europe (Van Biezen, Mair and Poguntke, 2012), the level of party organizational change is higher (Marinova, 2015), and all countries in the region continue to experience high levels of new party entry, including the emergence of centrist parties with fuzzy ideologies (Bågenholm, 2013; Hanley and Sikk, 2014; Pop-Eleches, 2010; Sikk, 2012).

This research makes a contribution to this debate on the strength of parties in new democracies by focusing on the extent to which conflicts and cooperation at three levels (intra-party, coalition, and party systemic) overlap. Specifically, at the intra-party level, we

examine the presence (absence) of fission as an indication of a conflict (cooperation) between various groups in the party. At the intra-coalitional level, we conceptualize conflict as the dissolution of existing alliances, and the persistence of cooperation as the continuation of these alliances or their consolidation through full-blown party mergers. Finally, we capture the formation of cooperation arrangements by previous competitors as the creation of new alliances and merged parties by the parties that previously did not cooperate in electoral coalitions.

According to the approach that emphasizes high instability of parties and party systems in Central and Eastern Europe, the patterns of cooperation and conflict should substantially overlap at all three levels, thus making intra- and inter-party cooperation and conflict indistinguishable. This approach suggests the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: Intra-party and intra-coalitional conflict and inter-party cooperation are likely to co-occur.

If, however, parties in Central and Eastern Europe are relatively strong institutions, the patterns of conflict and cooperation at the intra-party, coalitional and party system levels, while more frequent than in most Western democracies, should occur independently from each other. This forms an alternative hypothesis of the present research.

Data and measurement

To test these hypotheses, we measure the change in individual parties in 11 current EU member states in Central and Eastern Europe from the first democratic election in each country to year 2015.[4] Our unit of observation is party-electoral term, but, as discussed below, we examine the relationship between different types of change of individual parties both within a single electoral term and across multiple electoral periods.

[4]For the Baltic states, the elections held in 1990, when these countries were still part of the Soviet Union, are not considered because, in comparison to other founding elections in the region, they were dominated substantially more by the opposition between democratic opposition movements and communist parties. Furthermore, the data for these elections, especially in Lithuania, is also incomplete.

As we are interested in the patterns of intra- and inter-party conflict and cooperation, our analysis encompasses only those parties that persisted throughout the term (including also the parties that joined an electoral alliance or merged with other parties). This excludes all new parties that emerged during the term. Thus, if election i starts the electoral period and election *i+1* ends it, we exclude those parties that competed only in election *i+1* but not in election i. Conversely, we also exclude all parties that dissolved or hibernated throughout the term, that is, the parties that competed only in election i but not in election *i+1*. Furthermore, we only include those parties that received at least one percent of the vote in election i.[5] This removes parties with miniscule electoral support that are very unlikely to have any political importance. However, the vote share of the parties in election *i+1* does not affect their inclusion in the dataset. This assures that we do not leave out the parties that may have lost most or all of their popular support during the electoral term (not an unusual occurence in Central and Eastern Europe), but were relevant in the beginning of it. In total, the dataset includes 796 party-electoral term dyads in 73 electoral terms.

To capture the patterns of conflict and cooperation at the intra-party, coalitional, and party-systemic levels, we use six dichotomous variables. In the remainder of this section, we describe their coding.

Intra-party conflict and cooperation

We capture intra-party conflict and cooperation by the occurence of a *split*. A split is operationalized as the foundation of a new party (splinter party) by politician(s) that were formerly affiliated with another party. We only include those splits after which the splinter party participated in election *i+1* as an independent entity or as part of an electoral coalition. Thus, the switching of individual members or splinter factions between parties is

[5]For countries with bicameral legislatures, we consider only the results of the elections to the lower chamber. The vote share of the parties that participated in electoral coalitions is estimated as the product of (1) the vote share of the electoral coalition and (2) the ratio of seats won by each party in the election and the total number of seats won by the coalition. For coalitions that received no seats, we assume that all constituent parties of the coalition obtained equal vote shares.

not considered as fission. In total, we record 154 cases of splits, or 19 percent of the total number of party-term dyads.

Intra-coalitional conflict and cooperation

Intra-coalitional conflict and cooperation is operationalized by three variables. The first variable indicates an *exit from an electoral coalition*. We operationalize electoral coalitions as joint candidate lists. Thus, we do not include weaker forms of electoral cooperation, such as public commitments to govern together (Golder, 2006), because parties give up a very limited degree of their autonomy when making such commitments. The focus on joint candidate lists is also justified by the fact that the countries analysed in the present study used PR or mixed electoral systems. The only exception is the 1990 election in Croatia, for which majoritarian electoral system was used. We code joint candidates in single-member districts for this particular election.

An exit from an existing alliance is coded when we observe that, for each party, in election *i+1* this party is not in an electoral alliance with at least one of the parties with which it was in coalition at the time of election *i*.[6] In the case of a two-party alliance in election i, this means that an exit is recorded when the two parties compete independently or in different coalitions in election *i+1*. In contrast, if the alliance of the two parties is enlarged at election *i+1* because another party or parties join it, we do not consider that any of the two original parties left an alliance. In the case of an alliance in election i that involves more than two parties, an exit is coded if at least one of these parties leaves the alliance. The total number of exits was 188, or 24 percent of 796 observations in the sample.

The second variable, *exit label change* captures the exit from an electoral alliance not by examining the observable changes in its membership, but by comparing the label of the party with the labels under which it participated in elections i and *i+1*. While the change in parties' labels is still an under-researched area of party politics (but see Kim and Solt

[6] As previously mentioned, we only consider parties with an estimated vote share of 1 percent or more.

(2015)), in the Central and Eastern European context we observe that the change in *electoral labels* - the labels under which parties compete in elections - is closely related to the exit from and entry to alliances by parties. This is because only in some cases electoral alliances adopt the name of one of their constituent parties (e.g. the list of the Civic Platform in the Polish election in 2001 also included representatives from the Conservative People's Party). More frequently, alliances use labels that combine the names of their constituent parties (e.g. the alliance between the Social Democratic Party and the New Union in the 2004 election in Lithuania was called Working for Lithuania: Lithuanian Social Democratic Party and New Union) or adopt a different name from those of its constituent parties (e.g. the Unity alliance that participated in the 2010 election in Latvia included the New Era, Civic Union and Society for Different Politics). Thus, parties change their electoral labels as they switch in and out of electoral coalitions.

We exploit this information to develop an additional measure of the exit from an electoral alliance. Specifically, an exit is coded if (1) party's label both at the time of elections i and election $i+1$ is different from its electoral label in election i, and (2) the electoral label of the party changes between elections i and $i+1$. The logic behind the coding of this variable is the following. First, by observing that the *party label* during election i is different from its *electoral label* in this election, we are able to infer that it competed this election as a member of an electoral alliance. For example, all parties that were members of the Working for Lithuania and Unity alliances had different names than the labels of these coalitions. Second, by observing that the electoral label changes between elections i and $i+1$, we infer that the party left the alliance by election $i+1$, either to compete in elections alone or in alliance with other parties. For example, in the Lithuanian example, the Social Democrats and the New Union competed under their own labels in the 2008 election (next parliamentary election after the one in 2004). However, the party may also compete under different electoral labels in elections i and $i+1$ if the electoral alliance in election i was transformed into a merged party by election $i+1$, and that merged party adopted the label of the alliance. The

Unity alliance in Latvia is an example of this pattern, whereby the three parties that formed this coalition in 2010 merged into a single party, also called "Unity", by the next election in 2011. To account for such cases, we do not code an exit if the label of the party at the time of election *i+1* was the same as the electoral label under which the party ran in election *i*. Using these criteria, we record 195 exit label changes.

This measure complements the measure that directly examines the membership of alliances in two ways. First, it does not consider as exits those cases when the party that left the alliance was too insignificant for that coalition to change its label. For example, the alliance of more than 10 parties called the Union of Democratic Forces did not change its label between the 1991 and 1994 elections even if some of its constituent parties (e.g. the Democratic Party) left it in this electoral term. Second, we are able to capture the cases when a party was a member of an electoral alliance that included various factions, groups and individual politicians that were insufficiently organized to be considered as parties or were too small to be included in the dataset. For example, the Communist party in Czechoslovakia participated in the Czech National Council election in 1992 in a coalition with a miniscule "Democratic Left" group under the label "Left Bloc", but reverted to its own party label by the 1996 parliamentary election. The change in the electoral label of the Czech Communists provides information about the change in the coalitional affiliation of this party, which would otherwise would have been missed given that the support of "Democratic Left" was too low for it be included in the dataset.

While the aforementioned two variables capture the intra-coalitional conflict, we also include a variable that indicates the consolidation of an alliance through a *merger*. Specifically, this variable indicates the cases where two or more autonomous parties that were members of the same electoral alliance in election i amalgamate into a single party by the time of election i. We record 78 cases of a party participating in such a merger, which represents 10 percent of our sample.

Inter-party cooperation

Two variables measure the participation of the party in new coalitions and mergers. The first one, *a new coalition or merger*, indicates that the party participated in the formation of a new electoral alliance or merged party during the electoral period.[7] We define a new electoral coalition as an alliance present in election *i+1*, which includes at least one party that did not coalesce with other parties in this alliance in election *i*. Similarly, we define a new merged party as a merged party that participates in election *i+1* and includes at least one constituent party that did not form an electoral coalition with other constituent parties in election *i*. Thus, if the electoral alliance or merged party in election *i+1* includes two parties, our coding criteria require for these two parties not have been in an electoral alliance in election *i*. If more than two parties join the alliance or merged party before election *i+1*, then at least one of these parties must have contested election *i* either independently or in a different alliance than the rest of the parties in that particular coalition or merger.

New inter-party cooperation is also operationalized by *entry label change*. As discussed above, changes in electoral labels provide an alternative way to identify the formation of new coalitions as opposed to tracking the membership of these alliances directly. We code label changes as a result of the entry to the alliance if (1) party's label at the time of election *i+1* is different from its electoral label in this election, and (2) the electoral label of the party changes between elections *i* and *i+1*. The first condition suggests that the party participated in an alliance in election *i+1*. The second condition indicates that the party either competed in election *i* independently, or as a member of an alliance whose name was different from that which it joined at the time of election *i+1*. In combination, they indicate that the party either joined a new coalition, or switched between different coalitions in a given electoral term.[8] The total number of exit label changes was 274.

[7] While a more nuanced analysis would consider new party mergers and new coalitions separately, in the present research we combine both in the same category because our main goal is to measure inter-party cooperation that did not exist in the previous election.

[8] It is also possible that the label of the alliance changed between elections *i* and *i+1* while the party remained its member. We argue, however, that the change in the label of the alliance indicates important

Empirical analysis

This section summarizes the results of two sets of analyses with different levels of aggregation. First, the relationship between different types of party change within a single electoral term is examined. Party-electoral term is an appropriate unit of analysis because splits, mergers, and electoral alliances that occur during it are more likely to be directly related or caused by each other than those that are spaced throughout several electoral periods. Furthermore, from a normative perspective, it is most relevant to know how much parties change in a single term since changes that are highly concentrated in time are most likely to confuse the electorate as opposed to multiple changes in party identity that happen in a longer period of time. Nevertheless, to check the robustness of our main results, we also present analyses that aggregate all changes experienced by each individual party in our sample.[9] Thus, we compute the share of electoral periods (from the total number of terms in which the party was present) in which the party split, exited an electoral alliance, changed its label as a result of an exit, participated in a consolidating merger, entered an electoral alliance, and changed its label as a result of the entry into an alliance. The relationship between the variables is examined using Pearson and tetrachoric correlation, exploratory factor analysis, and Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA).[10][11]

As the first step of our analysis, Table 1 presents the matrix of tetrachoric correlation coefficients for our six dichotomous variables. The table indicates high correlation (0.87) between two variables that capture intra-coalitional conflict (exit and exit label change).

changes in its membership, which can be conceptualized as the foundation of a new alliance in election *i+1*.

[9] In the case of splits, we consider the main successor party as a continuation of the original party; in the case of mergers, we consider the merged party as a continuation of one of the constituent parties if the latter was substantially larger than other constituent parties (specifically, a merged party is coded as a continuation of the largest component party if the vote share of the latter is equal to or higher than 75 percent of the total vote share of all constituent parties).

[10] Tetrachoric correlation analysis makes an assumption that dichotomous variables represent latent continuous variables. This assumption is justifiable for all six variables presented above. For example, while a split is a dichotomous variable in our analysis, in fact splits may differ with regard to the share of the members of the parent party who join the splinter group.

[11] MCA is a well-established exploratory technique for analysing multivariate categorical data (Bartholomew et al., 2008; Greenacre, 2007; Le Roux and Rouanet, 2010). It allows us to scale our categorical raw data on party change along the lines of one or several dimensions.

Surprisingly, the consolidation of existing alliances through mergers is also positively related to the exit from alliances, although rather weakly (the magnitude of the coefficients of correlation between this variable and the two exit variables is between 0.2 and 0.3). This indicates a pattern whereby only some parties in an electoral alliance merge into a single party, while others leave the coalition. For example, the Liberal Democratic Party in Estonia, while a member of the Fatherland alliance in the 1992 election, did not merge with the other four member of this coalition, and did not coalesce with the merged party in the next parliamentary election in 1995. Furthermore, the two variables that measure new inter-party cooperation - entry and exit label change - are also highly correlated (0.81).

Table 1: Conflict and cooperation within a single legislative term: tetrachoric correlation

Variable	Split	Merger	Entry	Label entry	Exit	Label exit
Split	1.00					
Merger	-0.03	1.00				
Exit	-0.04	0.21	1.00			
Label exit	-0.07	0.28	0.87	1.00		
Entry	0.02	0.17	0.44	0.30	1.00	
Label entry	0.04	0.17	0.31	0.49	0.81	1.00

Table 1 also indicates that the relationship between intra-party conflict, intra-coalitional conflict and the formation of new coalitions and merged parties is weak in contradiction to Hypothesis 1. The correlation between party fission and the remaining five variables is particularly low, with none of the coefficients exceeding 0.1. The association between intra-coalitional conflict and new inter-party cooperation is only somewhat stronger. Specifically, the pairwise correlations between the variables entry and entry label change on the one hand and exit and exit label on the other hand range between 0.3 and 0.5. This indicates that individual political parties switch between different electoral alliances relatively rarely. Additionally, the correlation between the occurrence of consolidating mergers and each of the two variables of inter-party cooperation (entry and entry label change) is also low at

0.17.

Table 2: Conflict and cooperation within a single legislative term: exploratory factor analysis of tetrachoric correlation matrix (varimax rotation)

Variable	1	2
Split	0.02	-0.08
Merger	0.17	0.24
Exit	0.43	0.78
Label exit	0.29	0.95
Entry	1.00	0.01
Label entry	0.81	0.26
Initial eigenvalues	2.70	1.10

Extraction method: maximum likelihood.

Similar patterns emerge in an exploratory factor analysis (see Table 2). Based on the scree plot, we extract two factors. The first factor is most related to the two variables of inter-party cooperation. Exit and exit label change are also somewhat associated with this factor (loadings are between 0.3 and 0.4), but much more less so than with the second one. The loadings of the merger and especially fission variables on both factors are low. This provides further evidence against Hypothesis 1.

Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA) allows us to uncover the dimensionality of our data more fully. We interpret the first four dimensions from the MCA solution. They have eigen values of 0.36, 0.20, 0.17 and 0.16, meaning that they all either exceed or are very close to the threshold of 0.167 that establishes whether an axis is sufficiently important to be interpreted.[12] In contrast, the fifth factor has an eigen value of only 0.08.

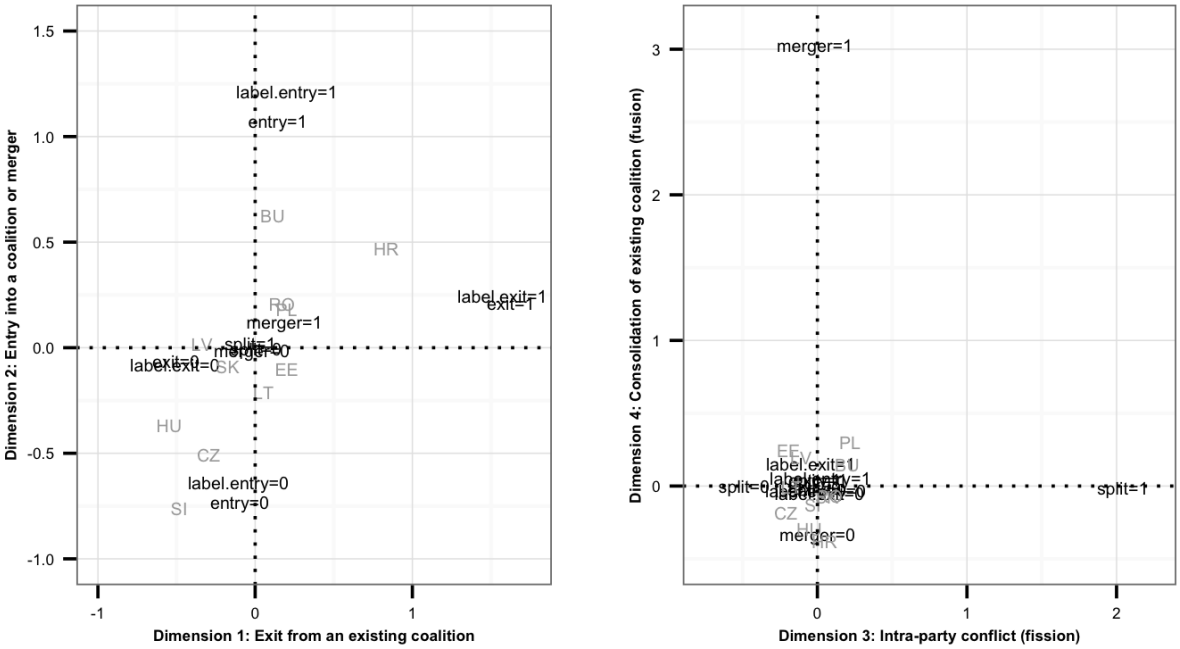
The results of MCA are summarized in Figure 1, which presents, in two separate plots, the coordinates of each of the 12 variable categories (i.e. dichotomous categories for the presence or absence of six variables of party change) on all four dimensions.[13] As in the factor analysis, the first two dimensions capture the exit from existing alliances (Dimension

[12]Greenacre (2007, 140) recommends to interpret dimensions with eigen values above the ratio between 1 and the number of variables, which is 6 in the present analysis.

[13]To increase the interpretability of the results, we apply varimax rotation to the original MCA solution.

1) and the formation of new coalitions and merged parties (Dimension 2). Thus, on the first dimension (x axis in Figure 1), the scores of the categories that indicate the exit from alliances have high positive values (above 1) while the categories that measure the absence of the termination of alliances have relatively high negative values. The scores of all other variable categories on this dimension are close to 0. Similarly, the second dimension (y axis in Figure 1) contrasts the categories that indicate the participation of the party in a new electoral coalition or merged party and the absence of such cooperation.

Figure 1: Patterns of intra-party, coalitional and party-systemic conflict and cooperation: Multiple Correspondence Analysis



Note: 0 indicates the absence of a specific type of change and 1 indicates its presence. Abbreviations of country names indicate the location of the categories of the supplementary country variable. Varimax rotation as implemented in the "PCAmixdata" package of the statistical environment R was applied to the original MCA solution (Chavent et al., 2014).

The remaining two dimensions can be easily interpreted as the presence of intra-party conflict, as captured by party fission (Dimension 3), and the consolidation of an existing alliance through a merger (Dimension 4). No other categories have high scores on these two axes of the MCA solution. This confirms the findings in Table 1 about the low correlation

of these two variables with the remaining measures of party change.

Table 3: Conflict and cooperation across multiple legislative terms: Pearson correlation coefficients

Variable	Split	Merger	Entry	Label entry	Exit	Label exit
Split	1.00					
Merger	0.10	1.00				
Entry	0.03	0.11	1.00			
Label entry	-0.02	0.11	0.63	1.00		
Exit	0.02	0.15	0.38	0.33	1.00	
Label exit	-0.08	0.08	0.27	0.44	0.62	1.00

As a robustness check to our main results, we also examine the relationship between different types of change across time for each individual party in our sample. We find limited support to the notion that parties may experience different transformations at different time points of their existence. Specifically, Table 3 shows very similar patterns to those in Table 1. The only notable difference is the lower correlation between two measures of party exit, and also the measures of the entry to new coalitions and merged parties.

Table 4: Conflict and cooperation across multiple legislative terms: exploratory factor analysis (varimax rotation)

Variable	1	2
Split	0.01	-0.10
Merger	0.11	0.04
Exit	0.45	0.48
Label exit	0.40	0.91
Entry	0.99	-0.14
Label entry	0.67	0.18
Initial eigenvalues	2.37	1.10

Extraction method: maximum likelihood.

Exploratory factor analysis presented in Table 4 supports this conclusion. Based on the scree plot, we interpret two factors from the analysis. The first factor captures primarily

the entry to new coalitions and merged parties, although two variables of exit are also moderately associated with this factor. The second factor captures the exit from existing coalitions, although the loading of one of the exit variables on this factor is only of moderate magnitude. This suggests that when several electoral periods are considered, exit from and entry to electoral coalitions are more closely related than when a single period is examined. However, neither party fission or nor fusion are associated with any of the two factors.

Country-specific patterns

An important feature of MCA is its ability to place the so-called supplementary variables in the same space with the categories of the variables used in the analysis. To substantiate the results of MCA, we use the categorical variable for countries as a supplementary variable, and place its categories in Figure 1. Substantial distances between the categories of supplementary variables on the dimensions uncovered by MCA indicate that these variables are likely to account for the variation in the scores of this dimension. Le Roux and Rouanet (2010, 59) suggest that the differences of 0.5 are "notable" and the differences of 1 are "large".

The patterns of party change represented in Figure 1 suggest substantial variation at the country level. Bulgaria and Croatia stand out among other countries with regard to the propensity of their parties to enter and exit electoral coalitions. In contrast, exits from alliances and the formation of new coalitions and merged parties has been much less frequent in the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovenia. This is in line with the literature that suggests higher levels of party and party system stability in these three countries, at least in 2000s, although all of them experienced substantial party turnover in the 2010s. The remaining countries are placed somewhere in between these two extremes with regard to the propensity of their parties to enter and exit coalitions, although this hides substantial variation in the time period covered here. For example, Estonia was characterized by multiple electoral alliances in the 1990s, but not in the 2000s and 2010s.

The differences between countries are less prominant with regard to party fission and mergers that consolidate existing electoral coalitions, as the variance on both of these dimensions is lower. However, we observe that both splits and consolidating mergers are less frequent in Croatia, the Czech Republic, and Hungary, and more common in Bulgaria and Poland. Estonia and Latvia, on the other hand, experienced relatively fewer splits, but more mergers that were preceded by electoral coalitions.

Conclusion

The third wave of democracy resulted in many democracies with highly unstable parties and party systems. Not only that the levels of party entry and exit were high, but also the extent to which party alternatives changed because of splits, mergers, and various alliances seemed too high for systematic comparisons between these countries and older Western democracies with stable parties and party systems to be made (Mair, 1997). In the case of Central and Eastern Europe, while the levels of party change have decreased, they are still relatively high more than twenty years after the democratic transitions in these countries. This suggests that party instability may a permanent feature of the politics in these countries - and may become a characteristic of party competition in many older democracies as well (Deegan-Krause and Haughton, 2014).

This research makes a contribution to understanding party change through a systematic analysis of the relationship between its less researched forms - splits, mergers, and electoral coalitions. It conceptualizes these forms of party change as a result of political conflict and cooperation inside political parties, electoral alliances, and the party system. Using a new dataset on change in 11 countries in Central and Eastern Europe, we find that intra-party conflict, as indicated by party splits, intra-coalitional conflict, as demonstrated by exits from existing electoral alliances, the consolidation of existing electoral coalitions through party mergers, and the formation of new alliances and mergers occur largely independently from

each other. Parties may and do experience several of these changes, especially when several electoral periods are considered, but the evidence presented here suggests that they are driven by different causes (or are affected by the same causal factors but in different ways).

These findings have several important implications. They indicate that parties and their alliances, even if frequently unstable, and not individual politicians, are key players in the politics of post-communist democracies. Furthermore, the negative effects of party change on representation, accountability and government stability are likely to be more limited than often argued, because complex transformations involving multiple types of change are not very common. Finally, they also suggest that the aggregation of different types of change into a single index, while useful for getting a broad overview of party change, is less appealing when trying to understand why instability occurs and persists. Instead, systematic studies that distinguish between conflict and cooperation at the intra-party, intra-coalitional, and systemic levels are likely to provide more promising venues for future research.

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